

AN ANALYSIS OF WIDOWHOOD
AND LEARNING EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG WIDOWS

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AN ANALYSIS OF WIDOWHOOD
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An Analysis of Widowhood and Learning Experiences of Young Widows

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ABSTRACT

An Analysis of Widowhood and Learning Experiences of Young Widows

Widows, both in Turkey and globally, display low levels of education and high levels of poverty. The patriarchal society structure and discrimination complicate the lives of especially young widows with children. Yet, there is a striking lack of studies on the educational experiences and coping mechanisms of the widows which develop in response to the painful changes in their lives following their husband's death.

Accordingly, the aim of the present study is to analyze the urban young widows' educational experiences and to explore whether education is a part of widows' life for the purpose of overcoming the novel problems caused by patriarchy. Semi-structured interviews were carried out with ten women from Istanbul under the age of forty-five that were widowed at least two years ago and have at least one under-eighteen child. The results confirmed the radical nature of the changes in their lives by demonstrating increase in poverty, employment difficulties, appearance of new responsibilities, alterations in the relations with family and acquaintances, serious oppression from both their own family and husband's family, and serious social discrimination. Whereas for the illiterate widows the education turns into an urgent need, for women with higher educational status other types of problems become more salient. Consequently, the women require a specific institutionalization of education and support tailored to their conditions. Since there is no such institution in Turkey, the women try to fulfill these needs within their own networks.

ÖZET

Eşi Vefat Etmiş Genç Kadınların Dulluk ve Öğrenme Deneyimlerinin Analizi

Türkiye'de ve dünyada eşi vefat etmiş kadınların eğitim seviyelerinin düşüklüğü ve yoksullukları dikkat çekmektedir. Toplumun patriarkal yapısı ve ayrımcılık özellikle çocuğu olan eşi vefat etmiş genç kadınların hayatını daha da zorlaştırmaktadır. Eşi vefat etmiş kadınların eğitim deneyimleri ve eşleri vefat ettikten sonra hayatlarında yaşadıkları zorlu değişimlerle baş etme mekanizmaları hakkında neredeyse yok denecek kadar az çalışma bulunmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın amacı kentte yaşayan eşi vefat etmiş genç kadınların eğitim deneyimlerini ve eğitimin patriarkal toplumsal yapının yarattığı zorlu problemlerle baş edebilmelerindeki konumunu analiz etmektir. En az iki yıl önce eşi vefat etmiş, en az bir tane on sekiz yaş altında çocuğu olan, İstanbul'da ikamet eden kırk beş yaş altındaki on genç kadınla yarı yapılandırılmış sorular yöneltilerek görüşmeler yapıldı. Eşi vefat etmiş kadınların hayatında hızla yoksullaşma, iş bulma zorlukları, başetmeleri gereken yeni sorumluluklar, aileleri ve çevreleriyle olan ilişkilerinde değişimler ve toplumsal ayrımcılık şeklinde radikal değişimler olduğu sonuçlarına ulaşıldı. Okuryazar olmayan kadınlar için eğitim acil ihtiyaca dönüşmekte, eğitim seviyesi daha yüksek kadınlar içinse farklı sorunlar gündeme gelmektedir. Bu yüzden kadınlar kendine özgü bir eğitim ve destek kurumsallığına ihtiyaç duymaktadırlar. Türkiye'de böyle bir kurum olmadığı için kadınlar kendi çevrelerinde bu ihtiyaçlarına cevap aramaktadırlar.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The widow or the widower is defined as a person whose spouse has died.

Widowhood in general is the state of being a widow or widower. Even though widowhood may represent both sexes, gender connotes different types of status for women and men. For women, the definition of widowhood is expandable in the sense that it means more for a woman than a man: Whereas widowhood corresponds to a phase in the case of men, for women it defines a social status. In general, widowhood is accepted to disappear when the widow or the widower remarries. However, Lopata (1996) argues that, due to the social consequences of being a widow, the woman carries widowhood for the rest of her life as an identity. The implication here is the fact that after the death of the husband, the woman is going to take all her decisions under the influence of conditions imposed upon her by this identity. Accordingly, in the case of women widowhood is a continuous status that is not removed with remarriage. This is the broadest definition of a widow.

Widows in general correspond to the poorest and most in need of support segment of the society. Widows who experience societal obstacles in their inclusion in the social and economic life are deprived of their social rights. On the other hand, young widows under the age of 45 are the most vulnerable group of the widows who face all the difficulties of being a widow such as unemployment and discrimination. Additionally young widows are expected to deal with the difficulties of being single mothers. It is difficult for single mothers to answer their children's needs, especially those educational in nature. The difficulty is not solely a financial one, but also stems

from a lack of knowledge about how education is organized. These practices require a social interaction and a certain level of education. Young widows, after the death of the husband, find themselves in charge of such tasks, which are unfamiliar and complicated for them, and particularly so if they are illiterate and poor.

Sexual segregation and gender based discrimination in general and widow stereotypes in particular are additional sources of young widows' problems. In the case young widows, widowhood mostly emerges suddenly; accordingly women do not possess a chance to prepare themselves for the situation not only economically but also psychologically. Besides the difficulties arising due to raising their children without a father, the cultural pressure of the society makes the whole experience more cumbersome. The remarriage decision for a widow is complicated too. This is partly because the decision to remarry can not be taken autonomously by the widow due to the involvement of her family and the husband's family. For example, the family of the husband usually attempts to obtain the parental rights of the children in the case the mother is going to remarry, or the widow is pushed to remarry solely because of poverty.

Furthermore, prejudice and stereotypes are other barriers for the widows to start a new life. Common beliefs about widows state that they are sinister and should mourn for the deceased husband till the end of their life. All these factors contribute to the fact that a young widow should confront the challenges alone.

In Turkey, from the state's perspective, the issue of widows is brought forward with reference to poverty, helplessness and policies about orphans. Nevertheless, there are nearly no official statistics that are kept about widows and no programs are being developed that aim to remove the conditions responsible for the

production of discrimination against widows. There is a similar attitude displayed by the civil society institutions that operate in the field of women rights. Currently, these institutions do not even possess general data about widows let alone generate new projects for them. Thus, whereas the widows' problems, living conditions and relations with educational institutions are completely invisible, Turkey is a country with one of the worst records for discrimination against widows (World Public Opinion [WPO], 2009).

According to the 2015 population survey, in Turkey widows over the age of 15 make up 9.31% of the women population and 4.2% of the widows population is younger than 45 years old (Turkish Statistical Institute [TUIK], 2015).

Among the illiterate population over the age of 15, %52 is occupied by widows (TUIK, 2013)¹. Thus, while we talk about illiteracy in Turkey, we are, to a significant degree, are considering mostly widows without even being aware of it. That widows, despite this level of educational deprivation, are not considered an important segment of the society in the field of adult education is all the more striking. In Turkey where the society is full of prejudices against widows, the widowed women are invisible in many areas of life including education.

Financial problems establish another major challenge for widows. After the death of the husband, young widows need a job to solve their financial problems. But most of the widows are not well educated and lack work experience. Accordingly, it gets rather difficult to find a job. In Turkey 91.01% of widows are not employed. Among the employed widow population of 8.5%, the leading employment sector of widows is agriculture with 62.2% (TUIK, 2013). In the urban areas, widows mostly

¹ The household labor force survey has adopted new regulations in order to ensure full TUIK's compliance with the European Union since the February 2014 period. Because of this adaptation, labor force statistics do not contain marital status and education correlation after the year 2013

work as *gündelikçi* (“cleaning woman”) or as *parça başı işçilik* (piecework handworkers), and perform patient care or babysitting at home (T.C. Başbakanlık Sosyal Yardımlaşma ve Dayanışma Genel Müdürlüğü [SYDGM], 2010). Their work is unregistered and the conditions are usually very difficult.

In the present study, young widows are described as women who lost their husbands and did not remarry. In line with the terminology used so far, the widows under the age of 45 are considered young widows as Parkes definition (as cited in Haase, 2008, p. 13), and this applies also to widowers. There is a global increase in young widow rates and the possible reasons behind that trend will be provided in the Literature section in detail. Worldwide, the young widow ratios are higher in poorer countries. Besides, all over the world the remarriage rates of widows are lower than widower remarriage rates. To sum up, higher young widows ratios indicate poverty, high worker death probability, civil war, and low remarriage rates. Accordingly, widows, and especially young widows, are one of those social groups who are deprived of educational right at most. Widows require education in order to survive financially and socially, and therefore in some countries the formation of certain specialized nonformal education institutions aims to fill this gap. Nevertheless, there is no such nonformal education institution in Turkey.

The totality of these struggles reveals that after the death of the husband, widows have to fight too many troubles. Not only do they need education while trying to overcome their problems but it is exactly these very problems that educate them about their new life. Consequently widowhood can serve as a subject in education studies.

1.1 Statement of the purpose

The aim of the study is to analyze the urban young widows' educational experiences and to explore whether education is a part of widows' life for the purpose of overcoming the novel problems caused by patriarchal society.

1.2 Research questions

The study seeks answers to the following questions:

1. How do widowhood at a young age change their life?
 - Economically
 - Relations with the relatives
 - With respect to their position in the society
2. How do they go through learning experiences after the death of the spouse?
 - By attending educational activities
 - In order to cope with the challenges of being a widow
3. How do they perceive the change in the life of their children as a result of the death of the spouse?
 - As a single mother
 - While dealing with their children's educational needs
 - While learning with and from their children

1.3 Significance of the study

Lanthier (2004), who studied widows in third republic France, states that even though there are some studies on widows, the widows themselves continue to remain invisible:

We only see such women as agents when we look at the associations that they formed, and even here, widows are apprehended only in a collective light and serve mainly as an example of the new ways in which citizens and noncitizens related to a newly interventionist state. The women themselves remain hidden. (p. 196)

Similarly, Odimegwa (2010) argues that despite the presence of studies on social and political relations of women in general, there is lack in the world literature when it comes to the life and practices of widows. Korang-Okrah (2012) describes her study on widows as “the study was designed to focus on the widows’ descriptions and constructions of their experiences, challenges and survival strategies in relation to the loss of their property rights, which is a significant gap in the literature” (p. 32).

Similar to the other countries widowhood is a special concept in Turkey too. Nearly all of the society has preconceived opinions about widows. However, these opinions are shaped by sexual segregation and patriarchy, and the widow herself is still unseen and unheard. In spite of all that, only a very limited number of academics have studied widows in Turkey. Under the topic of education there is virtually no study about widows. The current study may identify the need for more attention to this subject.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to present literature review of the study. The conditions of the widows that differs them from the other social groups, young widowhood, widows' relations with education and widows' in Turkey will be held in this chapter.

2.1 Widowhood and widows

Widowhood materializes as a process that holds for all people losing their spouse. However, this process signifies a different identity and status in the case of widows which distinguishes them from widowers and even other segments of the society.

It may be argued that it is the grief after the loss of the spouse that is common to widowhood for both men and women. Nevertheless, psychological studies on this grieving process reveal men and women go through this process differently. Oakes (1990), who studied the widow's place in society in early modern England, draws attention to the difference of the widowhood experience between men and women. She states that even though widowhood is a devastating experience not comparable to any other grief independent of sex, after the end of the grieving process, the society expects that the man renews himself, but the woman is to continue her life with the status of a widow. In this regard it may be argued that the woman, who is aware that the widow-identity awaits her, is holding a different kind of grief.

It is observed that there are much more widows in the world compared to widowers (Rimert, 2001). Additionally, cultural approaches to widowhood bear similarities in the whole world. Widowhood becomes an identity that shapes and

accordingly limits the relations of the woman within family and society. In this respect, Geekie (2011) argues that widowhood is a women's problem and that it unites them. Nevertheless, to describe widowhood as a women's problem is not enough to explain the status of widows within the society. Historically as well as globally, among women, widows can be described as the most socially excluded, and as subject to judgment and blame. Galvin (2003) expresses, it would be no exaggeration to say that they are the most oppressed among the oppressed women.

Even by looking at the etymological roots of the word *widow*, we are able to find clues to the position described above. In Turkish, the word for widow, *dul*, appears at first as a unisex concept that applies both to men and women. Nevertheless, when we look at the origins of the word we realize that it is used to describe women. The word can be traced back to words *tul* (noun form) and *tullamak* (verb form) (Nişanyan Sözlük, n.d). In the traditional Turkish culture, it used to be common that the tail of a horse be cut / docked if the owner dies waging war. Kazakhs refer to this act as *tullamak* (Erdoğan, 2003). Over time, this grieving tradition applied to horses has been adapted to women. Globally, it is a quite common tradition that widows cut their hair for the display of their grief. In a similar fashion, Raman (1992) explains that in Tamil language *amangali*, the word for widow, has in its roots the word for *auspiciousness* and that this is a reference to female sexuality that is seen as the origin of both evil and good. In English, *widow* can be traced back etymologically to *empty* (Odimmegwa, 2010). It is possible that one can find more such examples.

The experience of widowhood contains common elements for all women has to do with the relationship between patriarchy and the nuclear family (Rimert, 2001).

Depending on these relations, the main factors that determine the living condition of widows appear as the links of the woman with the state and the law, family, children, labor, cultural oppression and social roles.

In societies based on the foundation of the family, the mechanism of the state views marriage and family as the guarantee of order, peace and national progress. In societies based on the foundation of the family, the mechanism of the state views marriage and family as the guarantee of order, peace and national progress. In liberal societies too, the politicians present the liberal family structure embellished with a masculine father figure and the image of the dedicated and educated mother as the surety of the nation. From this perspective and in the eyes of the state, unmarried women remain outside the system. For instance, in 1850's the Mexican government was arguing that behind all social problems there is the collapse of the traditional husband headed family structure among the poor (Vicente, 2012, p. 142). Within the male dominated family structure, the arrival of the bride is seen as a threat from the beginning. The task of assimilating the threat into the family order belongs to the mother of the man (Galvin, 2003, p. 52). In the case where the man dies, the threat of the woman against the family order gets out of control and at this stage the other relatives of the man start to intervene. This circle of oppression experienced by widows is visible in nearly all societies. Gross (2001) defines this special situation in which the marriage relations continue despite the disappearance of the man as "some kind of twilight existence for women" (p. 5). Hinshaw (2011), on the other hand, underlines the continuity of the man's presence on woman by describing them as "living grave-stones" (p. 262).

Another element that defines the status of widows within the society is their

yetims (children whose father died, orphans). The process of preparing the children for adulthood is also within the responsibility of the family, to be precise, the intact family containing a father. Accordingly, the widow as a single mother is not perceived as fit for this task. She is criticized yet not helped by the society (O'Neill, 1984). Hence, the social control over widows with dependent children is twice as much.

Korang-Okrah (2012) identifies women's responsibilities as reproduction, production and community engagement in the case of Ghanaian women that applies to other societies too. This set of responsibilities defines the woman within home. Mitchell (2006) argues that it is especially the industrial revolution that has pushed the woman into the domestic life while rendering the man the subject of production outside home. This aspect of the division of labor makes the woman dependent on the husband (Guckin, 2001). Therefore, the most important problem experienced by widows is poverty. While most women fail to find a job due to their lack of education and experience, the employed few are struggling with social prejudices. According to O'Neill's (1984) research, the most concrete examples for the social prejudices targeting working widows can be found in the ads used by insurance companies from 1930 to 1960. In these ads, the obligation of the widow to find a job after the death of the husband since the man did not have a life insurance policy is presented as an utterly humiliating situation. In these ads that feature widowhood theme very frequently, the working widows are presented as stylishly dressed and affectionate mistresses, the widows that do not need a job since the husband was insured are shown in domestic uniforms, and the man is asked which one he wants to have. In the same ads, the holy duty of the widow is defined as taking care of the children at

home and attention is drawn to the misery of the children of the working widow (p. 159).

The widow suffering from unemployment and poverty also faces serious challenges for obtaining her legal rights and the security provided by the state. That the widows fail to receive inheritance rights after the death of the husband is a historical and global problem (Korang-Okrah, 2012; Llewellyn, 2000; Oakes, 1990). Even in countries with legal protection for the inheritance rights of the widow, many women still fail to profit from these rights due to several factors such as pressure by the man's family, lack of education and knowledge in these matters, and social condemnation for women trying to secure their rights at local authorities (Oakes, 1990). In many countries pension is on the agenda for those poor widows without any inheritance option. Together with the insufficiency of the pensions, also the reasons for the pension are controversial. Gross (2001), in her studies on widows, draws attention to the patriarchal nature of these pensions. The economical dependency of the woman on her father, brother or husband is actually reproduced when the state replaces them in their absence. In this sense the pensions are never enough to let the widow reach economic independence and they also serve the establishment of a control mechanism for the moral status of the widow by the state. Another characteristic of the pensions corresponds to their role in honoring the men who died for their nation and turning the widow into an element of national politics. In this vein the widow is expected to gain a representation that conforms to the national form (Gross, 2001; Lanthier, 2004), a situation that we find also in Turkey. The following sentence is from the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey: "The state shall protect the widows and orphans of those killed in war and in the line of

duty, together with the disabled and war veterans, and ensure that they enjoy a decent standard of living". This law was for the first time included in the 1982 constitution. Whereas the previous constitutions mentioned social rights and the responsibilities of the state in general, for the first time with the 1982 constitution there was a separate reference to *şehit dul ve yetimleri* (war widows and orphans) in an article. As a starting point, the state defines the widow as its responsibility after the death of the man that represents the state during an official mission. In this respect, after the death of the husband the widow will be this time under the oversight and assurance of the state. To prevent the man from worrying about the family while he fulfills the duties of the state can be seen as another function of this law. In short, the state's approach to the widow is motivated first and primarily by the national continuity. Presently the widows and orphans of martyrs continue to enjoy additional rights compared to others. (Türk Silahlı Kuvvetleri, n.d.). Moreover, state ceremonies are held with the participation of widows of martyrs, and they serve as national symbols with their Turkish identity. In direct opposition to that, the Kurdish widows whose husbands are killed in the conflict by the state are subject to the discriminatory and oppressing acts of the state officials. Especially at times of intensified armed clashes, for these widows it becomes nearly impossible to reach their social rights. In the case of the Kurdish war widows who join the political struggle, Kurdish political parties or NGOs (such as The Peace Mothers) function as zones of social and emotional support and contribute to their empowerment. Indeed, usually these zones and their own efforts are their only sources of support (Kuloğlu Karşlı, 2012).

2.2 Young widows

In line with the terminology used so far, the widows under the age of 45 are considered young widows, and this applies also to widowers (as cited in Haase, 2008, p. 13). Young widows who lost their husbands within the last three years are considered to experience the most difficulties among all widows and widowers (Mastekaasa, 1994).

The severity of the troubles the widows go through varies according to the age of the widow. That the experience of widowhood, if it hits the person earlier in life, leads to more stress relative to older age has been shown in many studies (reviewed in Derman, 1999). The majority of studies addressing this difference are on the processes of bereavement and grief, and they reveal certain common characteristics. That people widowed at a younger age have elevated levels stress is explained with being unprepared for the loss of spouse at that age and the feeling of a story half told (Larman, 2003). The intensity of the grief of young widows is treated in relation to their search for a new identity, the presence of dependent children, economic difficulties and social isolation, among others (Derman, 1999; Haase, 2008; Guckin, 2001; Malec, 2008).

In most studies on widowhood, next to the focus on grief and bereavement, we find a lack of a focus on gender. Nevertheless, these studies discuss the sources of stress which include social isolation, family relations, children, and economic difficulties, which we treat as gendered factors. On her study on widow and widower bereavement, Larman (2003) observes that the married woman creates her social relations through her husband and with couples, and that after widowhood, she can not spend time with her couple friends as she used to. Derman (1999), on the other

hand, argues that the young widow is excluded from couple companionate relationships and that she finds herself lonely and deprived of friends. It is not only the couple friends, the widow finds herself isolated from, but also from her relatives. One likely reason behind this is the common perception of the widow in her vicinity as a man hunter. Therefore, the vulnerable widow needs to learn to find the relevant social support mechanisms (Haase, 2008). Additionally, it is also possible that the young widow is excluded or oppressed by the family of the husband so that she can not claim her inheritance rights, which causes further isolation. (Ngaruiya, 2008).

For young widows, how they answer the question of whether they are married corresponds to a conflict of identity, even if they live with their own families, which deepens their stress. Due to that, many widows continue to wear their wedding ring. Whereas some do so since they still consider themselves married, others keep wearing the ring in order not to look like they are not feeling enough grief or longing for their husband. Another reason is to prevent others from thinking that she is looking for a new spouse or has an interest in men. (Haase, 2008).

Many young widows who return to their parents' house and enter their region of authority lose not only the status of a wife, but also that of an adult by becoming the child of the family once again. This enforces her to ask the approval of the family in all her decisions. Nevertheless, unlike a child, the widow can not be a person who can laugh at will and take it easy. Rather, she must control her behavior very strictly in the presence of men and protect her reputation and her image as a widow. Moreover, she still has to attend to her duties such as caring for her children and honoring the memory of the her husband, and the respect she will earn from the family and the society is conditional on her success with these duties (Llewellyn,

2000). In Morgan's study (as cited in Derman, 1999, pp. 38-39) nearly half of the young widows declare that their family life makes their lives even more difficult. On the other hand non-family relations are declared more favorable and most of the widows coded widow support groups as positive.

The social isolation is all the more apparent in the case of widows with dependent children. In the case of widows with dependent children – that is, younger than 18 years old – the stress levels are particularly high, independent of whether they live with their family or not (Derman, 1999). Even though the economic difficulties of young widows with children are usually covered in the literature on single motherhood, there are also studies specifically focusing on the relations of these widows with their children. These studies reveal that young widows have difficulties in deciding how to cope with the grief held by their children. The widows with sons are worried more about the lack of a father figure. Widows in general are better at sharing their emotions with their daughters (Derman, 1999; Guckin, 2001; Korang-Okrah, 2012; Lee, 2003; Malec, 2008). Especially widows with children below the age of 6 suffer from the lack of help for their children from any support group (Guckin, 2001). That the widows are expected to flawlessly fulfill their child rearing duties emerges as another element of pressure upon them (Khosravan et. al., 2013). In most circumstances, this expectation is coupled with negative views on widows seeking support from other people and religious organizations, since this is considered inappropriate for widows, even if they are having financial problems. (Odimegwa, 2010).

One of the most significant difficulties of widowhood is the intense pauperization they go through. The disappearance of their resources and the lack of

knowledge on financial matters enhance the problem (Derman, 1999). Bahr and Harvey's (1980) study addressing 44 of the widows of the 1972 Sunshine Mine Fire, education and income levels appeared as the most important factors determining the quality of life for the young widows of the working class.

Certain studies focusing on the sources of widows' stress emphasize their differences with divorcees (Heinemann, 1980). In Turkey, the similarities and differences between divorced women and widows are open to debate. Whereas in many other languages the divorcees and widows are distinguished from each other, it is common in Turkish to refer to both groups as *dul* (widow). Social discrimination against divorced women is also quite common (WPO, 2009). Divorced women too are paying the price for stepping out of the family institution. However, traditionally the social superstitions about widows are usually not directed at divorced women. Nevertheless, for some societies it is reported that the divorced women are subject to more intense social pressure than widows (WPO, 2009).

Wineman (1999) diverges from the consensus in literature by claiming that divorced women have a harder time than widows. She argues that widows are honored with rituals for the deceased husband and the support from the family and friends, and that the divorced woman is isolated due to the lack of the rituals and the support. This evaluation can be considered an example for a common belief that is wrong. The society tends to perceive the compassion for the widow and the grievance rituals as forms of support rather than patriarchal practices. Yet what makes the life of a divorced or widowed woman difficult is the look of the society at the lonely woman. And the widows can be distinguished from the divorcee in terms of their lower level of education, financial difficulties, their relation to the deceased

husband's family and problems concerning child care (Heinemann, 1980). As we have seen, the low level of education and poverty characterize the widow's life in the whole world. It appears some likely reasons include:

- The majority of the widow population consists of older adults. Considering that women used to receive lower levels of education in the past, these widows are poorly educated, and hence unemployed and poor.
- The likelihood of getting widowed at an early age increases drastically with risks such as harsh and insecure work conditions (mining etc.), war, plagues, and unhealthy living conditions. These risks usually concern the poorly educated living in poverty.
- In most societies, the remarriage probability of young widows, who are poorly educated and have children, is very low. Young widows enjoying economic independence and high level of education are much more likely to start a new life with a new partner. The widow population comprises those without the ability to remarry.

2.3 Widows and education

The level of education a widow has attained before widowhood has a very significant influence on their living conditions. (Bahr & Harvey, 1980; Guckin, 2001; Heinemann, 1980; Lee, 2003; Winn, 1981). Winn (1981) argues that for bereavement adjustment, level of education is a more important factor for widows than widowers. In another study, Guckin (2001) states that together with the level of education, also the quality of education influences the widow's ability to network and seek support. The widows that make up the sample of this study report that if they had the chance

to change anything in their lives, they would have received more education. Considering the influence of the education, income and age variables on the process of social isolation that appears as a significant adversity for widows, it was observed that middle-aged and low-education widows are unhappy even if they had functioning social links. Younger and better educated widows and those with sufficient income are less dependent on their relatives and have higher morale (Bahr & Harvey 1980). In rural areas, widows with higher education enjoy improved agricultural productivity and more economic security. The level of education correlates positively with the quality of the widow's relations with her children, too (Lee, 2003). Younger widows with a low level of education experience more intense social isolation, have more worries about harm that might come from other people and are able to trust only their relatives. In cases where the relatives distance themselves from the widow, their social isolation gets very deep (Heinemann, 1980).

A very important variable that is under the control of widow's education level is their ability to access their legal rights. After the death of the husband, the access to the inheritance rights is usually possible only after some struggle (Ngaruiya, 2008). Korang-Okrah (2012), who draws attention to the particularly low levels of literacy among the widows, describes examples of widows who lose all their inheritance rights to the husband's family, can not access information about their rights that arise after the death of the husband, and the shame and humiliation they face due to their illiteracy. As a result of illiteracy, many widows are clueless about their legal rights and afraid of applying to the local authorities. Economically speaking, widows without the prospect of a job become even more fragile. From divorce to the inheritance law, women in Turkey too experience injustice due to legal

loopholes and social pressure (Dedeoğlu, 2009; Kadının Statüsü Genel Müdürlüğü, 2012). The economically and educationally disadvantaged position of widows prohibits them from letting the laws operate in their favor. Especially right after the death of the husband, the widows need to manage many legal and bureaucratic mechanisms in order to benefit from their social rights.

The educational needs of their children are a serious challenge for widows who have school-aged children. If the children of the widow are successful at school, and if their educational needs are met, there is increase in the links the widow establishes with the field of educational (Korang-Okrah, 2012). Even though one might expect a decrease in school performance due to the absence of the father, this is not the case and there might even be an increase in school success (Guckin, 2001). This might be both due to the attention the mothers pay to the education of their children and the children learning to take responsibilities early in life. In one study conducted in Turkey, whereas girls with widowed mothers had an increased level of school attainment, the reverse was observed for the boys. It is possible that sons tend to get distanced from the school in order to earn money (Göksel, 2009). Another tentative explanation for the drop in the school success of boys considers that they may turn more rebellious due to the lack of a father figure during puberty (Guckin, 2001). When worldwide trends are considered, one observes that if the children receive educational support, there is a high level of engagement for their success. If such support can not be secured, the children tend to quit school with the daughters taking of their younger siblings at home and sons joining their mother in the workforce. Yet another difficulty faced by widows in the context of the education of their children corresponds to their lack of knowledge in dealing with school

related matters and decisions since these used to belong to the responsibility repertoire of the husband. (Korang-Okrah, 2012).

2.3.1 Nonformal/informal acquisition of basic knowledge and skills

We may say that young widows establish their most intense relations with the formal education system through their children. In many countries, the low level of education and even illiteracy of widows is very salient (Ali, 2006; Geekie, 2011; Guckin, 2001; Korang-Okrah, 2012; Lee 2003; Munoz, 2011; Ngaruiya, 2008).

Widows require education in order to survive financially and socially, and the formation of certain specialized nonformal education institutions aims to fill this gap. Some of these institutions offering education to widows are briefly described below.

The Sharda Sadan (Home for Learning) was opened on 11 March 1889 by a women rights activist known as Pandita Ramabai in Mumbai (Maharashtra; India). The goal of Sharda Sadan and Pandita Ramabai was to teach young widows for a profession and accordingly take them out of their traditional roles at home. The Sharda Sadan contained gardens, fields, an oil press, dairy, laundry, departments for baking, sewing, weaving, and embroidery (Devi, 1995). The school at Sharda Sadan was providing education and vocational training for thousands of young widows. (Hirst, 1979).

Moshi Widows Education and Counseling Center (MOWECCE) in Kilimanjaro has been offering educational opportunities to widows since 2001. MOWECCE, in a document from 2006, describes its mission as follows: to sensitize, educate, and counsel widows and the community-at-large, to promote the status of widows' rights locally, to raise awareness and understanding of the problems

encountered by widows in the urban and rural districts of Moshi, Tanzania (Geekie, 2011).

In her study on MOWECCE, Geekie (2011) reports that together with the seminars it offers on gender equality, economic rights and health, the center provides social support, personal and legal counseling and small loan programs. These actions which had a wide circle of impact contribute to the strengthening of women, sharing of their experiences with each other and increasing their local effectiveness. In this way, women in production are brought together, have more chances to introduce their products to the local markets and accordingly gain more power in the social sphere. With the mediation of the organization, women who used to ask the permission of men for everything they do learn to take their own decisions by displaying solidarity with each other.

Widow Development Organization (WIDO), a Nigerian NGO opened in 2010 to support widows and their children, is still providing educational services for this purpose. The organization that defines its goal at the widoafrica.org website as the improvement of widows' status in the society is providing educational services on income activity and agriculture, similar to MOWECCE.

Kabul Widows Humanitarian Assistance (KWHA) in Afghanistan has been active for widows since 1996. The educational activities of the organization that manages schools for widows comprise especially health and nutrition related services. The widows that attend educational programs and vocational training on kitchen-gardening and income generation are able to become proficient in different skills including poultry production and trade (Gardner & Mohamed, 2002).

These examples show that NGO guided schools and educational activities for

widows and their children are usually encountered in developing countries. The common goals of these educational institutions include the participation of women in economic activities, improvement in their legal rights, and changes in their status in the society. In developed countries, on the other hand, it is more common to find religious institutions or NGOs for emotional support.

The loss of the husband at a younger age, compared to a later phase in life, is an unexpected situation with no preparations in advance. As such, the young widow is to learn how to deal with two problems simultaneously. She has to confront her new social status that comes about after the change in the marital status on the one hand, and she has to get become part of the economic and social relations outside the home in order to maintain her life on the other (Silverman, 2004; Thomas,1982). For many low class widows, the group with especially high illiteracy rates, finding a job or dealing with the discrimination against widows, and the protection of their rights pose even more serious challenges. (Ali, 2006). Therefore, young widows enter an intensive phase of learning as a result of the dramatic change in their lives. This process that comes with their new life has the ability to become instrumental for the adaptation of the woman to the novel and socially demanded role. From another perspective, it may even be seen as strengthening the widow.

The first step of the learning process crops up as early as the widowhood rites. In many countries, rituals with similar characteristics are performed for widows after the death of the husband, which are not observed for other instances of death. Akan (Ghana) widows explicitly state they find these rituals educational and informative. Through these rites, the widows is taught the culture of the society concerning widowhood and how to live on as a lonely woman (Korang-Okrah,

2012). Similarly Ngrariuya (2008) states that the rites serve as a kind of esoteric teaching while the widow is being transformed according to her new social status. The arrangements following the death of the husband give clues about how the widow is going to reshape her life (Galvin, 2003).

The second channel of learning process corresponds to the widow's new status in the society. The limits of a widow's role as a wife during marriage are decisive in the inclusion of widow in economic and social life. Hence, widows say that they need emotional preparation for widowhood as much as financial preparation (Thomas, 1982). Korang-Okrah (2012) argues that this need becomes this important due to a lack of social capital, and adds that women with higher social capital enter a quicker phase of comprehension and learning thanks to their social relations. Widows describe that the death of the husband has forced them to improve themselves and to learn new things such as the ability to make decisions on their own. Even though their social relations bear importance within this context, the pressures about what they may and may not do, established by the female relatives of the husband such as their sisters-in-law, erect barriers in front of their learning process (Korang-Okrah, 2012). The middle class and elite widows, on the other hand, which have higher levels of education, enjoy to a certain degree a more positive status and respect from the husband's family. Accordingly, it may be argued that their attempt at learning the outside world that goes beyond seeking emotional support, encounters less resistance (Ali, 2006). On the other hand, in rural regions with especially high illiteracy rates, women who are not allowed to act in the absence of male supervision are faced with serious difficulties in their access to social rights. Therefore, the young widow has to pick one of the two options. Either she is going to submit their life once again to the

domination of a man, or in spite of all discrimination and pressure, she if going to learn the life out there (Galvin, 2003). As the obstacles in front of widow remarriage, we may assess that the latter option is more likely and that this will open the doors to learning. Munoz (2011) quotes these words of a widow: “The desire to live has been another boost for me to learn. I learned that I need to define purpose and goals in my life and for my children.” (Munoz, 2011, p. 137)

Munoz claims that women, who push themselves hard after widowhood in order to make their own decisions, earn their bread and reestablish their life, experience an extraordinary learning process and become stronger as a result.

Although in most cases learning process of the widow presents itself as an individual experience, the involvement of certain institutions is possible. The religious institutions always have keen interest in widows and orphans. The widows get in touch with these institutions since they may be a source for basic necessities such as food, clothing and shelter and provide them with a rigorous education and a moral upbringing. Institutions aim at reproducing their appropriate class and gender roles. Their main target can be seen as reforming especially the poorer widows in order to convert them to more productive members of society. In this regard, while these religious institutions indirectly open a zone of education for the widow, their basic goal is not the strengthening of the widow since their efforts for the preservation of the widow as morally decent mothers are in parallel with social prejudices assuming that lonely women pose social and moral threats to the society (Vicente, 2012).

Similar to Turkey, in some cultures parents tell their daughters while they are getting married “We send you in a white wedding gown to your husband’s house; we

will get you back in a white coffin” (Sharif, 1994, p. 96). This reflects a common element across cultures in which the daughter is taught by her family that the worst thing that may happen to her after they marry and leave the home for their new life is to return to the parent’s house. Accordingly, the contribution of the widow’s family to her struggle in fixing her life up again is usually negligible. Thus, both the husband’s and widow’s families are associated with more pressure on the widow, rather than the change they will go through. The widow facing a profound gender bias finds that her coping mechanisms for the cultural and traditional oppression of the society are limited with economic, social and cultural despair (Ali, 2006). Consequently, the significance of other widows as the sole social group that may understand a widow can not be overlooked. Most widows report that their biggest source of support is other widows. Similarly, widows, if asked what need the most, answer that they need the other widows. This shows us that an approach to solidarity with widows must be with widows rather than for widows (Rimert, 2001). Malec’s (2008) results confirm this by showing that the widows derive most of the support from new social ties with other widows. The relationship built among widows has the quality of an informal acquisition of basic knowledge and skills channel that goes beyond an typical form of solidarity. Widows also say that they themselves want to get involved in educational studies by sharing their experiences with other widows and women. Whereas some widows consider doing so with a straightforward transmission of experience, others declare that their contribution might be the creation of groups within widows and providing counseling and education to the recently widowed (Korang-Okrah, 2012). One concrete example can be found in the institutions established by Maharishi Karve and Pandita Ramabai (Agnew, 1976), where widows

were receiving education so that they can serve as teachers to other widows. These initially illiterate widows have become able to provide education to widows in their home villages and town after a few years (Agnew, 1976). Similarly, in Tamil in 1985, young widows were educated by with industrial training in order to become teachers of themselves (Raman, 1992). In one program for education within widows, three types of groups were established: Self-help groups, women's consciousness raising groups, and confidant groups. In six months, positive results were obtained from all three group types, with consciousness raising groups coming on top (Thomas, 1982).

Another discussion in widow-to-widow education concerns the position of elite and educated young widows. The question of whether middle class, educated widows are simply the victims of the social pressure on widows, or subjects with transformative power to change the social status widows remains at the core of this discussion. These widows report that the contact they establish with lower class and uneducated widows enables them to find out about each other's experiences, and that this can become instrumental for transforming the status of the widow in the society. In this way, the middle class, educated widows believe that they might serve to make the voice of the poor and uneducated widows heard by others (Ali, 2006).

The *Widow-to-Widow* program deserves special attention since it is clear example of how widows enter a learning process over each other. The original widow-to-widow project was initiated in 1970 and led by the psychologist Silverman. It is a psychological counseling project designed for widows in the grieving process. In 1994 the project, which has gone through changes over the years and is still active today, was providing support for widows over the phone with 750 women. After the selection of a target geographical region, 5 widows native to that

region, who have been widows at least for two years, start to work as volunteers after the education they receive. Thereafter, the widows of the region and the volunteers are introduced to each other so that the experience of learning from others like themselves will be possible. The results of the project reveal that the widows become important figures in each other's lives while they try to deal with changes in themselves and their lives, which goes beyond the process of grievance (Silverman, 2004, p. 16).

2.3.2 The educational status of widows in Turkey

According to 2013 data (TUIK, 2013), 51.8% of widows above the age of 15 in Turkey are illiterate as shown at Figure 1. Another 13.1% are able to read and write, nevertheless they have never finished any school. The percentage of primary school graduates is 26.3%. Widows who have an education level above primary school correspond to only 7.5%. The education level of widows is way below average educational level of women, which is itself already low.

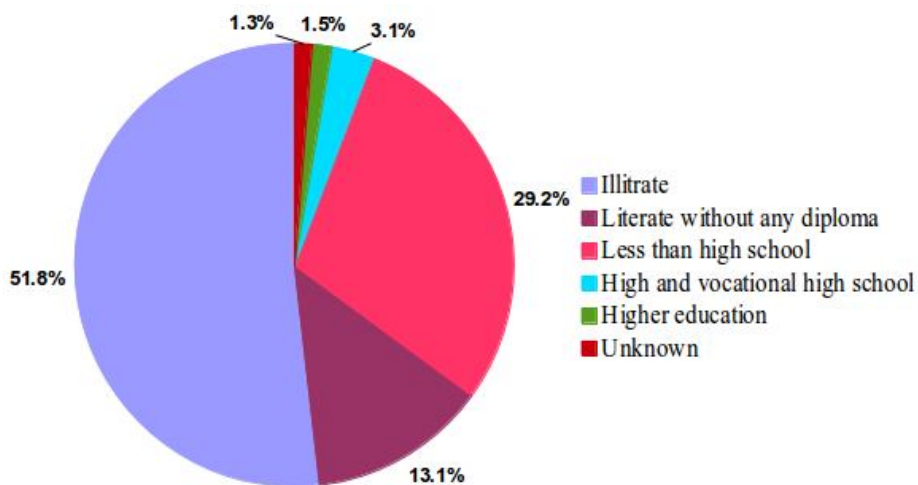
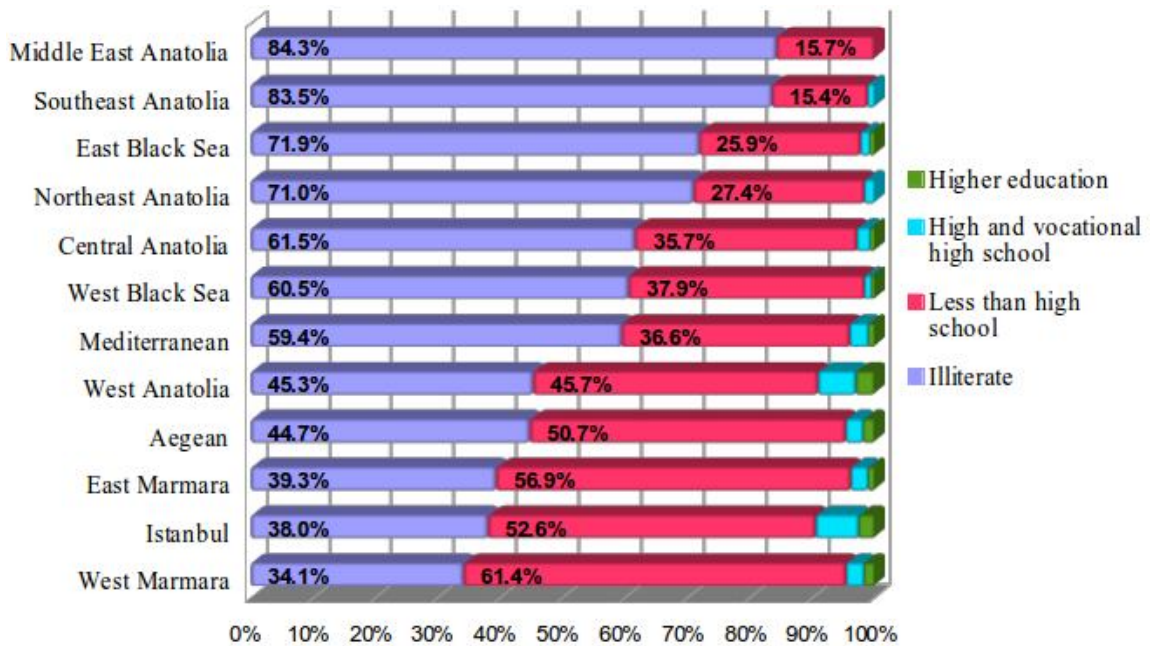


Fig. 1 Educational status of widows in Turkey (TUIK, 2013)

The distribution of the level education according to regions as shown in Figure 2, differs (TUIK, 2013). In Middle East Anatolia 84.3% of widows are illiterate, the same statistic for Southeast Anatolia is 83.5%. With 34.4%, the widow illiteracy rate is lowest in West Marmara. The high illiteracy rates of widows suggest



that the same may hold for widows under the age of 45.

Fig. 2 Educational status of widows by region (TUIK, 2013)

If we consider the whole of the population, 3.9% of the population over the age of 15 is illiterate. Literates without formal school degree make up 6.7% of the population. If we compare different social groups according to their level of education, the differences between men and women, on the one hand, and the relatively low levels of education of widows compared to the rest of the woman population, on the other, appear quite salient. As it is shown in Figure 3, among the illiterate population over the age of 15, the men make up only 16.6%. Another 30.6%

is occupied by women who are not widows (And widows %52). Thus, when we are talking about the illiterate population of Turkey, we are, to a large, are actually talking about widows. Nevertheless, there is no awareness about this fact. Parallel, to that, we find that widows make up only 1.2% of the population with an educational level beyond primary school (TUIK, 2013).

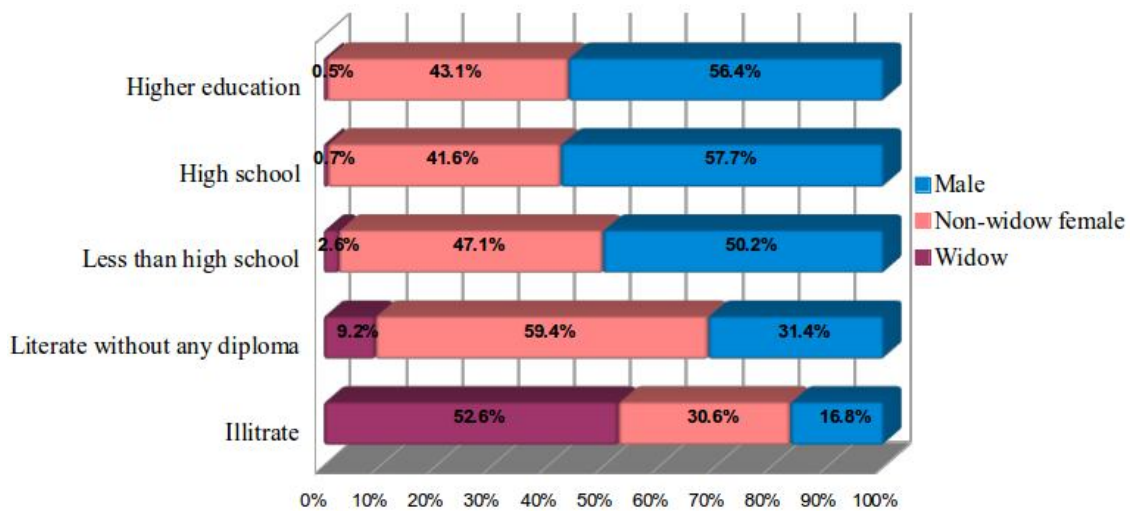


Fig. 3 Educational status of the age 15+ population (TUIK, 2013)

Low levels of education and high illiteracy rate of the widow population are not phenomena specific to Turkey but are also found in the rest of the world. Indeed, Owen (2001) claims that the poverty of widows is primarily caused by their low level education and illiteracy. She underlines that these factors render the widow unable to support themselves and their families. In this regard, the lack of education of widows is a theme that has to be treated within the field of adult education.

The educational programs aimed at widows usually intend to teach the widow literacy, a profession and the means to obtain the income that will be enough for maintaining her life (Korb, 2010). In Turkey, there is no educational program

specifically for widows, and there is no data about their participation in public literacy courses.

To sum up, there are two facets of the educational status of the widows if it is approached via the relationship between gender and education. First, the widows are the most educationally impoverished group among women, who, unlike men, are not able to gain access to their educational rights due to sexist practices. With this in mind, any educational possibility open to the participation of widows is going to improve their living conditions. Second, the social exclusion of widows is based on the patriarchal content of the education in Turkey, with the economic, social and cultural pressures upon them being rooted in the curriculum of education. In this regard, together with the short-term benefits of education for widows, one needs to consider the role of the education system as a whole in the reproduction of the difficulties of the widows within the society.

2.4 Culture and widows

One of the most significant factors determining the living conditions of widows corresponds to the cultural structure of the society. For instance, the declaration of the Widows Without Rights conference (2001) that was held in London and organized by United Nations Division for the Advancement of Women, Department of Economic and Social Affairs emphasizes the importance of social and cultural exclusion in the rights violations against widows (Owen, 2001).

Despite differences in their social and cultural characteristics, in many countries of the world forms of cultural discrimination against widows bear similarities. Behind the similarities in discrimination in different countries lies the

patriarchal mentality for the governance of women that is common to all social and cultural structures (Owen, 2001).

In societies where the social structure is based on marriage, the existence of woman too consists of the definition of marriage. In this regard, women who remain outside the institution of marriage become a point of tension. Buitelaar (2002) exemplifies this situation with the practice of widows living with old unmarried women in the same shelters in 18th century France. It is underlined that when marriage is defined as a zone in which the sexual relationship and the female sexuality are controlled by the man, virgins and widows are perceived as an anomaly. Nevertheless, there are features that distinguish widows from virgins. Unlike the sexual inexperience of the virgin, that the widow is sexually experienced puts her in suspicious position in the eyes of the society. Thus, the widow is in a position, where her sexuality can not be controlled by marriage or a man. In the same work, the example given for the widows' potential of disaster and destruction is the fact that in Arab culture widows are addressed with the word *fitna* as "fitna means chaos or destruction, but the term is also used to refer to women's power of fatal sexual attraction over men, which, if not controlled, causes sexual disorder" (Buitelaar, 2002, p. 9).

With marriage, the control over the sexual identity of the woman is transferred from the father and other male relatives to the husband. In this sense the notion of *namus* (honor) is rooted in many cultures and serves this control over the female sexuality. Hasan (2002), while investigating the political origins of the notion of *namus*, stresses that it actually consists of patriarchy and state policy. She states that whereas the patriarchy uses the notion of *namus* in order to pacify the woman,

the state makes it instrumental for the reproduction of its authoritarian and oppressive form within the family and the woman. Widows fall out of this control circle of namus. Therefore, already during the first days of their widowhood, widows need to prove that their namus and chastity will be protected. The grievance clothing worn by widows typifies the first step of this obligation. The grievance clothing, by assuring that the widow dresses differently from other women, carries the quality of widow's removal and exclusion from the society. In many cultures, the proof that the widow is chaste is found in the clothes worn by her that nullify her sexual identity (Buitelaar, 2002).

The efforts of hiding the identity of the widow as a woman that we have seen in the case of grievance clothing, might even reach the killing of the widow. In India, the tradition of Sati in which the widow is burnt to death together with the body of the deceased husband was practiced until as late as 1971 (Vaid & Sangari, 1991).

Traditions applied to widows in Igboland (Nigeria) after the death of the husband provide examples for the cultural approach commonly found in Africa. In some regions of Igboland, widows are not allowed to have contact with their children and relatives for 27 days. Her food is prepared separately, and she can only eat it with the help of another widow and that without touching the food with her own hands. She is asked to take a special bath in order to become cleansed of her demon that killed her husband. She can not touch her own body and can scratch herself only with a stick. Her impurity lasts for 27 days and on the 8th day after the death of the husband, she is taken to the shrine by four naked men where she has to perform sexual acts with the priest which also serves her purification. Her hair is scraped and she has to sit on the ground. She can only talk if absolutely necessary and then only

with whispers. (Odimegwa, 2010, pp. 4-7). Similarly, Akan (Ghana) widows are subject to humiliating traditions. Some of these traditions can be summarized as: Sleeping in the same room with the corpse till day-break; fasting and/or eating twice a day, avoiding starchy and tuber foods; bathing in cold water three times a day; sleeping with male shoes at the doorstep to ward off the husband's ghost. If there is a polygamous marriage, the widows were made to go around their husband's house 12 times in the middle of the night, without wearing shoes, before his funeral ceremony (Korang-Okrah, 2012).

In India, together with the tradition of Sati explained above, the destruction of the widow in the social sphere is also practiced. That the widows are banned from attending weddings, festivities and other social organizations displays the heavy burden of traditions (Hirst, 1979).

In Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Azerbaijan) we find that the tradition of levirate (patriarchal practice of a widow marrying her husband's brother) is widespread (Liczek, 2007). In Nepal, widows have to wear white for the rest of their lives which again renders them invisible in the sense of their sexual identity and make them carry the widow identity forever (Galvin, 2003).

At first sight it might appear that the worst widowhood traditions concerning widows are found in Africa and India. However, the origins of these traditions are common to all world cultures. When we inspect the literature on early modern French, we find the suggestion that widows wear grievance clothing and that this is presented as a practice that honors the husband. When we summarize the examples brought together by Llewellyn (2000), who investigated the works of writers of the

time, we see that Desiderius Erasmus, and Michel de Montaigne agree that the task of the woman is motherhood and obedience to the husband, that the widow is a threat to the society and should not be left free, that she should not complain of poverty and open her mouth only if she is to pray to God, that they remain silent in the society, that they devote themselves to the work of God and abstain from worldly pleasures, that they remain isolated and obedient. Moreover, Montaigne praises how Indian widows commit suicide and adds it is a shame that a widow lives on after the death of the husband. According to him, a good woman dies with the husband, if she chooses to live, she is a sinner. If we switch our attention to early modern England society, we see that it was common that widows were taken as witches (Oakes, 1990). Only if they stay away from men, and if they devote themselves to their children and the God will they be able to suppress their beast within. As these examples demonstrate, independent of the belief system and economic development of the country, in all patriarchal societies based on the family, the treatment of the widow as evil and a sinner who is responsible for the death of the husband is a common theme.

Even on this day, we see that it is quite widespread that widows continue to grieve their husband's death and pick their clothes accordingly. In a recent study conducted in 2012 and addressing young Iranian widows (Khosravan, Salehi, Ahmadi, & Mansoorian, 2013), the women are describing similar forms of cultural oppression. They report limitations on their cloths and make-up and add that they have hardships due to the beliefs regarding widows. It is commonly believed that they are source of bad luck that it was this bad luck which led to the death of the husband, and accordingly, they are not let to attend wedding ceremonies so that they

will not taint the marrying couple with their bad luck. All these and other examples show contemporary examples of cultural discrimination against widows (Khosravan et. al., 2013). These beliefs also function as an obstacle for the re-marriage of the widow.

The WPO poll reported in 2009 is based on interviews with more than 16.000 people from 17 nations and reveals that levels of discrimination against widows and divorced women are quite high. Authors of the report state that their study represents 59% of the world and that discrimination is a wide-spread attitude. The results of the study reveal that 71% and 73% of the participants reported that they think divorced women and widows suffer from discrimination, respectively (WPO, 2009).

2.4.1 Remarriage

All over the world, the remarriage rates of widows are lower than widower remarriage rates. In some European countries where it is traditional to let widows remarry, remarriage's function is to reduce the poverty and ensure the protection of women with the widow having no say in who to marry. On the other hand, we see that widowers tend to marry women much younger than themselves. This ensures that the man will have someone to take care of him in old age and illness. That older widowers marry younger women also reduces the number of suitable men the widows of the same age group could marry (Owen, 1996).

Buitelaar (2002) is critical of the recent practice of associating the relatively longer life expectancy of women with this difference between widow and widower rates. She argues that this difference stems from the male and female identities, and adds that it is a consequence of relations of power, higher independence of men due

to distribution of sex in the work force, and social gender roles. In her investigation of Third World widows, Owen (1996) summarizes the reasons behind why widows refuse to remarry. To have experienced the hardships of marriage, concerns about the likely difficulties between her children and a stepfather, the possibility of losing the rights obtained over the deceased husband, and the high probability that, due to their widowhood, they will be taken as a second (or more) wife are among those reasons (Owen, 1996, pp. 121-122).

There are other studies that focus on the remarriage of widows in Africa more in depth. Ngaruiya (2008) observes that the attitudes of different ethnic groups in Nairobi toward the remarriage of widows are similar. He explains how difficult it is for widows to remarry and that in case they insist on remarriage, they will lose all the remaining assets and rights they received over their deceased husband. Furthermore, he argues that this is also related to the previously high rate of levirate marriages. Nevertheless, since increasing urbanization correlates with improved economic rights for women and an increase in new job opportunities apart from working the land, the family of the husband perceives it a threat that the widow might sell the land inherited from the husband, and accordingly, the likely remarriage of the widow is being viewed more and more negatively. Similarly, Odimegwa (2010) describes how in Igboland (Nigeria) the widows and divorcees are perceived as dirty, dishonored, and even as prostitutes. In their case, however, remarriage is totally forbidden by the priests. In Igboland, widows are in the same oppressed condition as orphans, aliens and the poor. In Kilimanjaro (Tanzania), on the other hand, the status of the widow is determined according to the husband's, and their most important task for the rest of their lives is to honor the memory of the husband. In this region, the

devotion to the deceased husband and the fear of losing the children or their mistreatment by the stepfather since they are considered members of the father's clan make remarriage nearly impossible. Most of the time, the remarriage means leaving the children behind with the family of the ex-husband. Consequently, most remarriages here take the form of levirate (Geekie, 2011).

If we now switch our attention to America, we again find that the remarriage of the widow is controversial. In Cayapa (Ecuador) whereas either widows or widowers were never able to remarry in the past, this has later become a possibility with certain limitations. Widowers are allowed to marry women who have not been married before but are nevertheless no virgins and hence considered sinners. They can also marry women who used to be married before. Widows, though, can only marry widowers. The marriage of an inexperienced young man to a widow is considered wrong and it is commonly believed that this is accordance with the teaching of Jesus (Altschuler, 1964). O'Neill (1984), studying the treatment of widows between 1920 and 1960, observes that the American people in general find the arrival of a new breadwinner more reasonable than the widows' replacement of the husband as the breadwinner. In this regard, remarriage is considered better than the woman entering the work life at the expense of her role as a woman. However, the remarriage of the widows, if it is because the deceased husband did not leave behind enough assets to live on, is considered a shame for him. As we have seen before, Rimert (2001) argues that it takes much less time for a widower to remarry compared to a widow. Thus, current trends indicate that in 2020 the widows will outnumber widowers by a factor of ten. In the case of late life widowhood, we see that whereas remarriage is common for widowers, it is particularly unlikely for

widows. Young widows, on the other hand, if they are economically well-off, are wary of remarriage. Moreover, we can argue that wealthy young widows stay away from remarriage due to the various freedoms provided by their solitary life. On the other hand, for many widows the loss of insurance and income obtained over the deceased spouse establish another obstacle for remarriage. In the case of young widows, one of the most important factors to be considered for the decision to remarry is their children. Even though the remarriage might entail positive aspects in terms of support for the children and the adoption of a father figure while they grow up, once again the possibility of a stepfather's negative attitudes toward the woman's children and the difficulty in meeting someone new due to the limited energy and time of a single mother, widows remain distant to remarriage.

In early modern French literature we encounter depictions of the approaches that determine how widows in France view remarriage. Some of the authors' ideas on widow remarriage include that widows should not fall into the devil's trap by being seized with their passions and that they should marry someone approved or proposed by their families in order not to feel themselves too free. Nevertheless, remarriage also contains the risk that the new husband might perceive the children of the widow as enemies. The essence of remarriage is the protection of the widow's chastity and children. (Llewellyn, 2000). In England within the same period, authors declare that it must be the chastity and not the liberty that should guide the decisions of the widow. Here we see how the male eye looks upon the discussion centered on the widow remarriage. This look finds the remarriage of the wife of a deceased man utterly jarring. Thus, the authors urge men to prepare their will before their death stating that their legal heir is their children and not their wife. Ultimately, the

woman's mission is to continue the bloodline of the man, not its handover. Thus, while remarrying someone, it is to be considered that he might act like a tyrant against the children (Oakes, 1990). In a study that compares the attitudes of widows toward remarriage in Asia and Europe in 18th and 19th centuries, it is argued that in Italy remarried widows become socially stigmatized. In Sweden, widow's remarriage is allowed by the church one year after the death of the husband. Whereas in China the remarriage of the widow is viewed in a negative light both by the state and the society, there are no strict attitudes or regulations in Japan (Kurosu, 2008). Kung (2009) explains that in contemporary China there is still a pressure against widow remarriage, which might be forbidden by the husband's family with the widow facing the prospect of losing all her wealth. The only way for the widow to protect her honor is to live in the house of the deceased husband. In Vietnam where widows were forbidden to remarry in the past, this is now approved with the condition that the new husband is otherwise ill qualified for marriage with a non-widow (Nguyen, 2001). Widows of rural Cambodia, as elsewhere, do not remarry since they think their children will be mistreated by the new husband (Lee, 2003). In urban Nepal the widows themselves disapprove widow remarriage. Here, in order not to terminate the fertility of the widow, a form of levirate labeled *niyoga*, in which the widow sleeps with the brother of her husband with the sole purpose of pregnancy, is practiced. The aim of *niyoga* seems to be to ensure that the woman continues the bloodline of the husband rather than someone else and to prevent the children of the widow being oppressed by a foreign man (Galvin, 2003). In countries where the belief that the new husband will mistreat the children is widespread, the patriarchal family structure defines the man as the head of the family and the widows there have a more negative

approach to remarriage compared to other women. In India where remarriage used to be treated very harshly, it was granted as a legal right to widows only in 18th century and that after creating enormous controversy. Still, remarriage in India is very rare and the remarried widows give up their wealth (Agnew, 1976).

In Central Asia, the woman whose husband has died is considered the property of the man's family. Even though levirate was banned in 1928 according to the Soviet law, it is still widespread. In the case of Turkmens, the remarried widow leaves her children behind with the family of the deceased husband (Liczek, 2007).

In Turkey, in the case of poverty and low level of education, remarriage is considered an option for survival. In regions where levirate and sororate (patriarchal practice of a widower marrying his wife's sister) are common, the widows are subject to forced remarriages (Sev'er & Bagli 2006). On the other hand, widows with sons are more likely to remarry than widows with daughters. In this case, traditional attitudes such as concerns about letting the daughter live with a stepfather and that men refuse to marry a woman who could not give birth to a son before seem to play a role (Heisel, 1987). Nevertheless, the remarriage rates are low in general. The grievance culture, devotion to the ex-husband, and the need for approval from the man's family are again involved.

2.4.2 Culture and widows in Turkey

In the WPO (2009) report Turkey is mentioned as "a large majority in Turkey (70%) perceived discrimination against widows with the largest number (52%) of any of the nations polled saying that they are mistreated a great deal" (p. 4).

Discrimination against widows and their exclusion from the society can be

observed also in everyday life in Turkey.

Even though widows do not wear grievance clothes and have no other special physical characteristics to express their widowhood (such as scraped hair in India), that they are widows is known in the area they live. Since widows have very low literacy rates, and face unemployment and poverty, they have to participate in social networks with their widow identity in order to benefit from their social rights. Before it was changed in 2006, the national identity cards of widows would necessarily reveal their marital status as widow until the time of remarriage. Nevertheless, despite the abolishment of the law, many widows, but not widowers, still have this information on their ID cards. There are two reasons for the continuation of this practice. First, re-marriage and hence a change of the ID card is much more likely in the case of widowers. Second, widows are more likely to not know about or shy away from applying to the local authorities for the change. It has been the state's wish that the widowhood state of the widows is rendered visible with the IDs containing this information. It has ensured that widows always establish relations with official bodies and other environments where they need to use their ID card over their identity as a widow. One consequence of this is that widows have to face all social prejudices about widows very frequently. This is the first indicator that the state does not treat widows as ordinary citizens. Moreover, whether the widow and her children are eligible for widowhood pension depends on the relation of the widow with other men. Thus, if they are living with a man at the same house they lose the pension. This reveals that the consideration of a widow for the pension directly gives to the state the right of peeking into her life in order to see if she has relations with men.

In order to benefit from the pension, it is not enough that the widow shows her poverty; she has to also prove that she is a lonely widowed woman. Therefore, widowhood is not only visible to everyone, but it also becomes a defining factor in all of the social contacts the widow might have including the neighbors, neighborhood officials (*muhtar*), the teachers of the children, and even civil society institutions. Furthermore, the official documents requested for interactions with the authorities and job applications contain this information, too. Thus, while widowhood becomes extremely visible within social life, the widow herself is rendered equally invisible. This is because if the widowhood of a woman becomes public knowledge, the associated social discrimination against the widows triggers the isolation of the woman (“Widows, divorced women”, 2008). Another element of this co-presence of the visibility of widowhood and the isolation of the widow corresponds to the approach to her children. The status of the fatherless orphan in the regard of the society reflects the status of the widow, too. These children are invariably perceived as poor, needy kids. For instance, the politicians, in order to stress that they are trustworthy and righteous, frequently use the phrase *yetim hakkı yedirmem*². While this sentence shows that the whole society has the conviction that fatherless orphans and hence the widows are desperate and in need, there is also the contribution of the faith of Islam to the approach to orphans and widows. In some religious sources one can even find that the widow herself is referred to as “yetim (fatherless orphan) (Akyüz, 2010).

The tradition of Islam in Turkey that also characterizes the government emphasizes the poverty of the widows and their children. In religious texts it is

2 I will not allow the exploitation of the rights of the fatherless

explained that for a woman to have no man is equal to being *sahipsiz* (unclaimed), and hence the society is to take care of the widow and the children. Even though this *taking care of* usually is associated with marriage or remarriage, the widows who do not remarry are appreciated. The desperate widow who devotes herself to her fatherless children is seen at the same level as the prophet (Aydınoğlu, 2014). We find mention of the widows in the book of Kutadgu Bilig written in the 11th century and considered one of the earliest representatives of Islamic Turkish literature. Even though it is not explicitly stated in the work, it is apparent that the word *dul* (widowed) only denotes women. Here we find descriptions of the widow as always tearful, in sorrow, solitary and in need of protection (Anıl, 2004).

Next to the tradition of Islam, we encounter similarities in approaches to widows in Turkey and the so-called Turkic Republics, those ex-Soviet countries with predominantly Turkic populations. In these countries, the widow as cursed is a common conception. In this respect, Kalafat (2011) reports that in Azerbaijan, the widows are not allowed to attend wedding-related ceremonies such as *kız istemek* (traditional visit to the woman's family by the man's family to ask their permission for the marriage), the ring ceremony, and the engagement and they are also not permitted to take part in mixing the traditional bride's henna. He adds that widows are addressed as *baş yiyen* (causes troubles), they are held responsible and punished for the death of the husband, treated as if they carry a contagious ill omen, and that they are considered among the enemy and in need of purification. Similarly, the phrase *dul karı oğlu* ("son of a widowed woman") reflects the uncanniness of the widow since it is used as an expression reserved for the tramps and bums (Kalafat, 2011). In Turkey, this Azerbaijani expression bears direct relation to *dul avrat çocuğu*

(“child of a widowed woman”). In the *Dictionary of the Dialects of Turkey Turkish* published online by the official language institution of Turkey the description for this phrase is given as “a child that is misbehaving and unmannerly since he/she was raised without a father” (Türk Dil Kurumu [TDK], 2014³).

In Turkey, it is very common to encounter examples of discrimination against widows in the printed and visual media. While there are very few studies on this topic, Kesebir (2011), who investigated 10 novels written between 1872 and 1908 during the Tanzimat era (a period of reform in the Ottoman Empire that characterizes its last phase before the collapse), draws attention to the depiction of the widow in these works. In these novels the women who are depicted as weak mothers tend to be widowed, uneducated and unemployed. Their children are being degenerated since they are not under the auspices of a father. If the widow in the novel does not remarry, their sons will become degenerates, their daughters will end up as prostitutes, and they themselves might find the escape in death.

Kurbağalar (1985), *Dul Bir Kadın* (1985), and *Berlin in Berlin* (1993) are representations of the depiction of the widow on the big screen. In all of these films, it is the female sexuality that is at the center. This situation bears relation to the social perception of uncontrolled female sexuality that is at the heart of cultural discrimination against women. These films depict with a critical stance the treatment of the widow as a sexual threat to the society, the gossips spread behind them, how men see widows as easy women, and the several forms of abuse they experience. Nevertheless, these films themselves draw the interest of the viewer using the sexuality of the widow. In *Dul Bir Kadın*, the only upper-middle class widow

³ At the time this thesis was submitted, this description was removed from the TDK dictionary. Nevertheless, this description can still be found in many Internet dictionaries that cite the TDK dictionary.

character Suna (whose husband, Hulki, died two years ago) among the three films, destroys all sorts of sexual taboos (Dönmez-Colin, 2008). In *Berlin in Berlin* the widow of a migrant worker becomes the point of tension within the family due to her sexuality and love for a stranger. Finally, *Kurbağalar* bears witness to the exclusion of a widow who continues the profession of her husband. In her analysis of the film, Atakav (2013) draws attention to the fact that the film's treatment of the widow correctly displays how the widow is a subject that is talked about, rather than a subject that speaks. She argues that the tensions in the story are a result of repressed sexuality, faith, patriarchy and the sexist ideology.

Similarly an artist, Gamze Taşdan, in her exhibition named *Widow Exercises* emphasizes those sayings within the public discourse and depicted in the movie *Kurbağalar* such as *bacağımı kaldıran kadın bir daha indirmez*⁴ or *dul avrat eti tatlı olur*⁵ and presents her works labeled *Widow Leg in The Pot* as shown in Figure 4 (“Independently Blue”, 2011).



Fig. 4 Widow leg in the pot (Taşdan, 2011)

4 A woman who lifts up her leg will not put it down again

5 Widow's flesh tend to be sweet

Another important locus of discrimination against widows in Turkey is the Internet. Between the years 2010 and 2016, the top five auto-completion results for keyword entry *dul bayan* (widow lady) are widow lady friend, widowed lady phone numbers, looking for widowed lady, facebook of widowed lady and widow chat. Thus, it is these five topics that drew the most interest online. Moreover, within these six years, there was a %1100 increase in searches for widow lady phone numbers. If the key phrase widowed lady is replaced with *dul kadın* (widowed woman), the top suggestions become “watch widowed woman, widowed woman sex, widowed woman chat.” In this case too, one can observe a %1500 increase in six years for searches on “phone numbers of widowed women”. Thus, the online presence of the widow in Turkey corresponds to the sectors of porn and sex trafficking (Google Trends, 2016).

2.5 The demographic situation of widows in Turkey

In this part of the study population, economy and support systems that related with widows in Turkey will be held.

2.5.1 Population

According to the 2015 population survey, in Turkey widows over the age of 15 make up 9.31% of the women population. These more than two and a half million women (2771509) correspond to the %86 of the population of the widowed, with widowers at a low 14% (TUIK, 2015).

If we consider the age distribution of widows, we find that 117287 widows are younger than 45 year old, which is 4.2% of the whole widow population. In the

case of men, there are 11157 widowers under this age, making up 2.4% of the widower population. Thus, within the population of the widowed under 45, 91.3% are women, and 8.7% are men (TUIK, 2015).

The distribution of widows according to the geographical regions of Turkey reveals further interesting trends as shown in Figure 5. In the ratio of widows to the whole women, the Black Sea region comes first with 12.17%, and the Aegean region second with 10.98%. Southeast Anatolia has the lowest rank with 6.4% (TUIK, 2014).

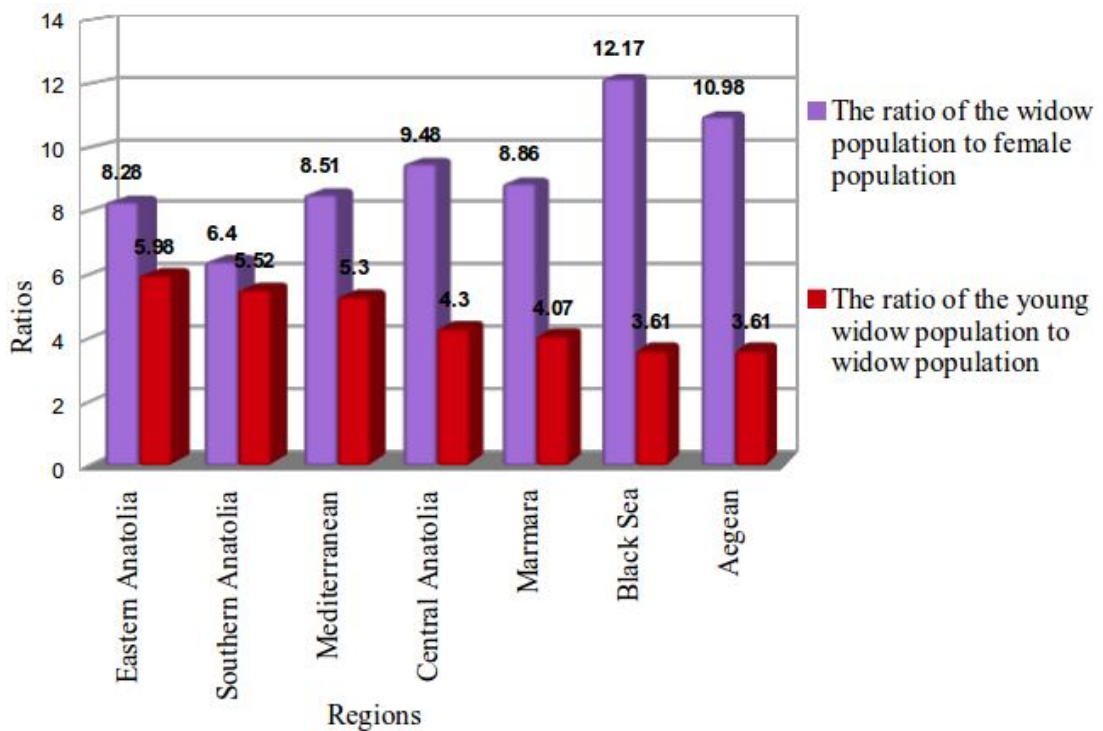


Fig. 5 The distribution of the ratio of the widow population to the female population & young widow population to widow population by regions (TUIK, 2014)

However, the picture changes completely as shown in Figure 6, when the statistics are calculated for the ratio of widows under the age of 45 to the total widow

population. In this case, East Anatolia and Southeast Anatolia occupy the first two ranks with 5.98% and 5.52%, respectively. Aegean region comes last with 3.61%. The two cities with the highest young widow ratios are Şırnak in Southeast Anatolia and Hakkari in East Anatolia (TUIK, 2014).

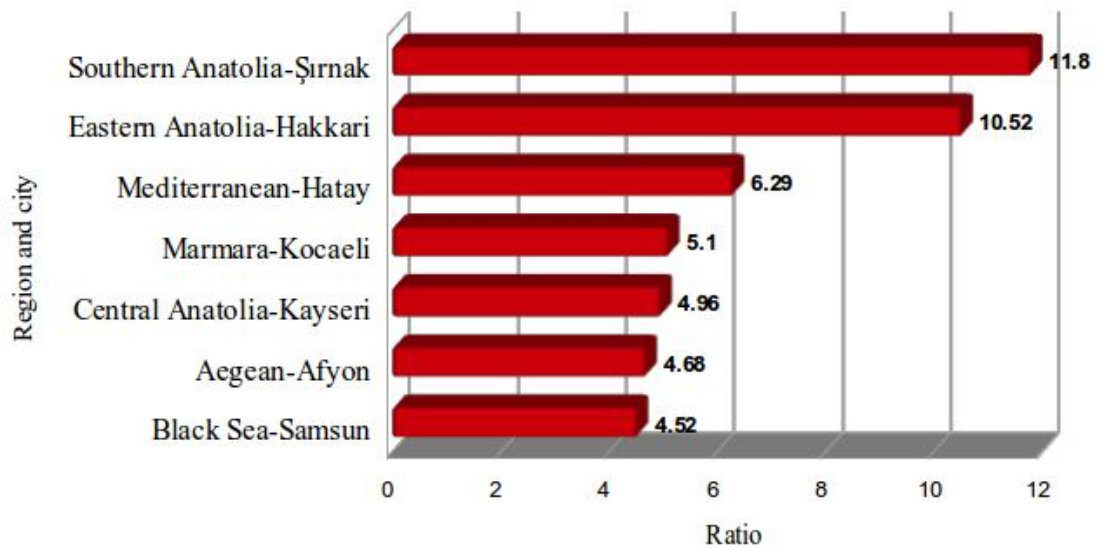


Fig. 6 The cities with the highest young widow to whole widow population ratio by regions (TUIK, 2014)

The young widow ratio correlates positively with poverty. One of the reasons is the fact that high older widow ratios are parallel to the size of the overall older adult population which is an indicator of prosperity (Gavrilov & Heuveline, 2003; Shrestha, 2000). On the other hand, the increase in the young widow group can be linked to the sectors such as mining, which are characterized by frequent worker deaths and hence labeled *widow making industries* (Kleinberg, 2005). In such cases where the work security is low and worker death probability is high, the young widow ratios go up and problems such as lack of education and unemployment of widows become obvious. Together with widow making industries, plagues and war

are other indicators of high younger widow ratios. Worldwide, the young widow ratios are higher in poorer countries. The distribution of the young widows within Turkey depicts the same association.

The southeastern Anatolia, Turkey's poorest region, has high seasonal worker emigration rates. If we add the high death risk for the Kurdish population who are employed as seasonal agriculture workers and in other precarious sectors to the continuing civil war, the high young widow rate of the region becomes even more conspicuous. (Emirhan, 2015; MİGA, 2012)

In regions of Turkey with higher prosperity, the older adults increase the size of the total widow population; nevertheless we find that they have the lowest younger widow percentages. Poorer regions also have low remarriage rates. To sum up, higher young widows ratios indicate poverty, high worker death probability, civil war, and low remarriage rates.

Whereas rural regions with higher younger widow rates are characterized by the extended family model, the nuclear family model becomes more prevalent with urbanization and social change density (Heisel, 1987, p 84-85). Olson describes the family structure in Turkey as *duofocal family structure*, in which the wife and husband separately establish unisex social networks. She claims that this structure enables the woman to create a small but independent zone, to where she may escape from male dominance. It is believed that is this zone is supportive of the widow (as cited in Heisel, 1987, p. 96). Nevertheless discrimination against women and economic barriers limit this zone, and hence it does not provide the woman with an advantage. Thus, this family structure, where the woman is dependent on the man, puts the widow in a very risky position upon the death of the husband and

necessitates the construction of novel social networks. Within this process, the woman is need of social support systems (Heisel, 1987).

2.5.2 Economy and support systems

That the women can not use their educational rights properly is followed by a lack of participation in labor market, and then accordingly, poverty. The intense poverty of women in Turkey does not only apply to those not participating in the labor market, but also to those with a job. The segment experiencing the most intense level of female poverty is the single mothers (Topçuoğlu, Aksan, & Alptekin, 2014). Besides that, there is also the social disapproval of widow employment and by implication, their participation in social life.

As shown in Figure 7, 91.01% of widows are not employed. Among the employed widow population of 8.5%, only 19.56% correspond to the widows younger than 45 (TUIK, 2013).

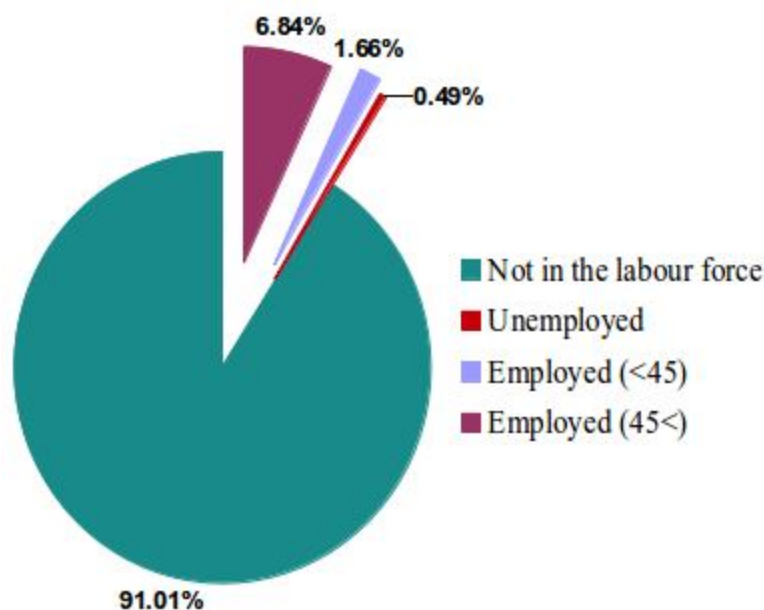


Fig. 7 The employment status of widows (TUIK, 2013)

The distribution of the employment status of the widows within the workforce is shown in Figure 8. The self-employed widows are the most frequent with 49.1%. They are followed by salaried or wage-earners who make up 33.5% of this population. The most striking segment is the unpaid family workers constituting 16.1% of the widows in the workforce. Women with this status are officially considered as employed even though they do not receive an income. Furthermore, no information is provided regarding whether they are the unpaid workers of their own family or their deceased husband's family (TUIK, 2013).



Fig. 8 Employment status of widow labor (TUIK, 2013)

Employment sectors of widows, on the other hand, comprise agriculture with 62%, the service sector with 27.6%, and the industry with 10.2% as shown in Figure 9.

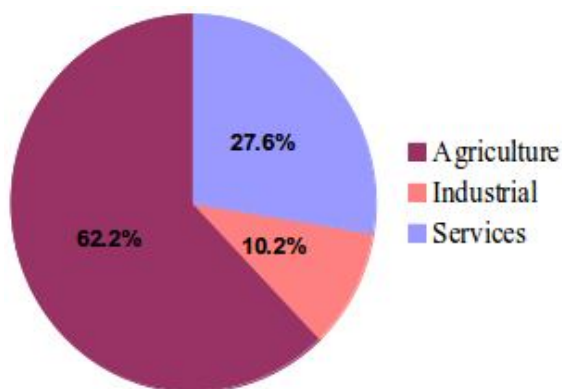


Fig. 9 Employment sectors of widow labor (TUIK, 2013)

Despite the lack of comprehensive data in regard to the income levels and employment sectors of the working widows, in the study consisting of interview with 90 employed widows, it was observed that they are employed mostly as workers, farmers, babysitters and domestic worker, and that they find their income insufficient (SYDGM, 2010, p. 96).

The first of the income possibilities of the widows, who, as we have seen, are nearly completely unemployed, is the pension they receive after the death of the husband. If, at the time of death, the man was employed with social security, the widow and the children will start to receive widows' and orphans' pension from the social security institution. The pension varies between 190 TL (widow's pension following minimum wage) and 1260 TL according to the man's salary and the total length of time he was employed ("2014 yılında örneklerle", 2014).

Due to the growing poverty of widows in recent years, the state has introduced a monetary support system apart from the martyr's wife pension and the social security pension. In 2012, it was ensured that poor women with no income were eligible to receive a widow's salary, even if the husband was not employed with social security. The widows have to prepare an application for the consideration for this salary, though. During the application process, the widow is to prove her poverty, that she is not subject to social security institutions, and that she receives no income from these institutions. Moreover, the total income of those residing with her cannot be so high as to alleviate her neediness (T.C. Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı Sosyal Yardımlar Genel Müdürlüğü [ASPB], 2012). In case the salary is granted, it can nevertheless be cut if the widow is to remarry, if there is a change in her status as in need, and if "it is discovered that she starts to live with a person in the absence of

an official marriage bond” (ASPB, 2012, p. 3).

Due to these limitations, during the first phase of this regulation, whereas 337294 widows applied to receive this pension only 244108 were granted the salary. As of 26.12.2012m 93186 applications were declined. The salary that is paid every second month is only 500TL and as such corresponds to a rather low monthly income of 250TL (T.C. Aile ve Sosyal Politikalar Bakanlığı Strateji Geliştirme Başkanlığı, 2013). Municipalities and charities grant aid for the poor to widows, who do not have other sources of income. However, this type of income does not provide financial security since neither the amount of the aid nor its continuation is clearly regulated.

Certain aspects of the state’s income policies deserve further attention. First, the state defines the economic needs of the widows over the social security institution. The consideration is not the needs of the woman, but whether her husband used to have social security or not. Thus, the purpose of the law is the regulation of social security, rather than overseeing the conditions of women. This type of pension system for the widow appears as a protection for the woman only because the work force consists mostly of men and since the women end up in a desperate situation after the husband’s death. The law, nevertheless, does not make any reference to the sex of the insurant, and it is also possible that the man receives the pension for the widowed, in case he was unemployed and the woman used to work before her death. Thus, the law is blind to gender and the disadvantaged position of the woman and it does not offer any privileges for women. Hence, it can not be argued that these legal regulations aim to support specifically the widows.

The second aspect concerns state’s indifference about whether the pension is enough for the widow or not. The widow and the children of a worker who was the

recipient of the minimum wage have to content themselves with an extremely low pension.

Third, the salary for the widows who do not receive the benefits of the social security pension creates a state control mechanism over the widows. In case the woman is shown to be living with a man, which might happen as a result of neighbors and acquaintances informing against the woman or after a routine check by the state, the salary is immediately cut (“Sevgilisi olan dul”, 2012). With this rule, the state obtains the right to peak into and control the widow’s private life, which is already the object of curiosity and inspection of the society. Furthermore, such an approach ignores the economic independence of the woman. That is, if there is a man in the widow’s life, the responsibility of the state for the widow in need ends since it is transferred to that man (Gross, 2001). On the other side, the most important condition for a woman to receive the state pension after the death of the husband is that her marriage to him was an official marriage. However, *imam nikahı* (the unofficial marriage, religious ceremony only) marriage rate in Turkey is considerably high. According to the 2004 data, the unofficial marriages made up 7.7% of marriages in Turkey (Çakmak, 2009). That the state determines the borders of widowhood according to official marriage, and still cuts a widow’s pension if she starts to live with a man without making that bond, reveal a grave contradiction.

Another source of income for the widow is the economic support of her relatives and acquaintances. Nevertheless in SYDGM report published in 2010, among the 670 widows interviewed, 60.5% declared that despite the presence of need, they did not receive any such support.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The aim of the study is to analyze the urban young widows' educational experiences and to explore whether education is a part of the widows' life parallel to the necessity of overcoming the novel problems caused by patriarchal society. The study is based on data that come from young widows who describe their own life experiences with their own words. Thus, the method of the study corresponds to the qualitative field research to explore and describe the case of young widowhood. This type of approach is based on deeper understanding of a given phenomenon (Babbie, 2014).

3.1 Sample

The sample comprised 10 young widows (45 years and under). Three were from Sariyer, three from Uskudar, two from Kadikoy, one from Maslak, and one from Pendik. The sample was found using snowball sampling.

Reaching the sample was by far the most difficult phase of the study. This is because the widows with the above listed characteristics tend to be isolated from the society (Derman, 1999) and can be considered a hard-to-reach population.

In order to elaborate on this isolation, the experiences gained during the search for the sample are summarized below.

In the process of finding the sample, 20 local officials from different districts of Istanbul were contacted via phone calls and visits to their offices. The aim of this practice was not directly reaching the women of interest, but rather the collection of general information on widows in terms of the districts they prefer to live in and the

organizations they benefit from. Yet, it was observed that these local officials did not have knowledge about the numbers of widows in their districts. These officials, who were men, explained that they were afraid that the widows, their relatives and the neighborhood would get a wrong idea had they tried to reach these women without a specific agenda. Even the few female local officials admitted that they did not have any study on the widows of their districts apart from personal contact.

It is worthwhile to mention that Pendik is a significant district regarding widows. Pendik used to have the so-called *Güleyenüz Evleri* (Smilingface Houses) that served specifically widows (“Pendik belediyesi dul kadınlara”, 2012). These houses were supposed to provide free accommodation for young widows, who have children at the age of primary school. But two years after their opening, the project was called off and the widows had to leave the flats. Even though these houses were recently closed, the researcher nevertheless thought that it could be possible to reach the widows who used to live in those houses. The researcher has communicated with the head of *Pendik Kent Konseyi* (Pendik City Council) via mail and phone. During the meeting subsequently held, the researcher listened from them the services they had offered to widows. Here it was learned that these houses serving as a residence for widows were closed since the widows were receiving visitors and that this was considered inappropriate.

The researcher has contacted the Human Rights Association (*İnsan Hakları Derneği*, IHD) and the Peace Mothers (*Baris Anneleri*), however their widow members in Istanbul were older than 45. The Association of Families of Martyrs (*Şehit Aileleri Derneği*) was contacted but they did not return the calls. Even though *Umut-Der* acted willingly in order to bring me into contact with widows who had

lost their husbands due to work accidents, the result was again negative.

Consequently, the sample was reached through the relatives, friends, and neighbors of the researcher, and by snowball sampling.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

Data are collected through semi-structured interviews. While preparing the interview questions two factors were considered. First, the interview questions were tailored to the data required for the research questions of the study. The research question posed by Guckin (2001) as “What are the thoughts, feelings, problems, and experiences of young women rearing dependent children while going through the grief process of losing their significant others?” (p. 6), and the sample of that study bear similarities to the present work. In this regard the following questions were adapted with slight modifications from the questions used by Guckin (2001) in her study addressing young widows:

How has the death of your significant other affected your financial situation?
... Since the death of your significant other, have you been able to develop new relationships? ... How has the death of your significant other influenced your outlook on life? ... What do you feel you have learned about yourself as the result of the death of your significant other? (p. 195)

The second factor was the strongest determinant and considered directly the educational experiences of widows. The questions were grouped according to whether they considered formal, nonformal or informal learning experiences. In this regard, and including the 14 demographic questions, two questions on formal, one question on nonformal, and twelve questions on informal learning experiences were

posed. Five questions were prepared to address both nonformal and informal experiences, and five others were prepared such that they reflected all three types of educational experiences.

The researcher conducted pilot interviews with two participants and after the pilot interviews and it was decided that the questions were able to cover all aspects of the widow's experiences and only the order of some questions was changed.

The demographical statistics on Turkey that are provided in this study are brought together by going through and filtering a large amount of statistical databases (TUIK) that contain general information on diverse subjects.

Before the interview, the participant was informed about the study. The researcher met the participant at the place and time which was most suitable for her. 3 participants were visited at their homes, one in the garden of her child's school. The researcher met one participant at the participants' workplace and the other interviews took place at the cafes around the participants' homes. All interviews were conducted one-to-one in the absence of any other person. This was necessary in order to ensure privacy. This is why only three interviews took place at homes, since in other cases the relatives would have been home too.

The shortest interview lasted 45 minutes. The longest interview, on the other hand, lasted for three and a half hours. The others were around one hour and a half.

During all interviews but one the tape recorder was on, for which participant consent was obtained before the start. One widow agreed to be interviewed but objected to the sound recording. In that case notes were kept during the whole interview. The researcher kept notes during the rest of the interviews as well.

The study exercised uttermost care for ethical issues. During interviews

ethical concerns such as privacy, informed consent, anonymity, secrecy, being truthful and the desirability of the research (Blaxter, Hughes, & Tight, 2006, p. 158) were of uttermost importance. For young widows it is extremely important that no information about them such as their names and addresses will be shared with others because of their relatives' and the society's pressure on them. Accordingly, in this manuscript, the names of the interviewees and the names of the people and the places mentioned in the interviews have been changed to arbitrary names.

During data analysis, first the tape recorded interviews were fully transcribed. Afterwards, those parts of the interviews which are deemed to be related to each question were edited and brought together, even if that part of the interview was not directly from the answer provided by the widow for that question. Under each answer edited this way, the concepts and the words that were used frequently were listed as codes. As such, related concepts were grouped according to their context. The groups with high concentration were selected as the themes. The groups that differed from others with their low levels of concentration were considered within the themes that were seen relevant.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

In this section, first the participants will be introduced and then the themes that emerge from the interviews will be presented. Whereas the demographic questions of the interview will serve as the main resource for describing the participants, other aspects of the interview will provide the more detailed characteristics of the participants. The themes that are identified using the interviews are Change in Life, Survival, Children, and New Identity. The order of the themes is parallel to the chronology from the husband's loss to the time of the interview. As such, at the beginning there are the experiences of the women right after their husbands' deaths, and at the end the discussion is on how the women define themselves after the years since then.

4.1 Participants

As the demographic details of the widows are summarized in Table 1, ten widows between the ages of 32 and 45 were interviewed. The interviewees had lost their husbands between 2 and 12 years ago. The duration of their marriages vary between 4 and 25 years. The women had a total of 17 children, with 11 girls and 6 boys. Three of the women were illiterate. Two of them had primary school degrees, another two had secondary school degrees, another two had high school degrees, and one had a pre-diploma degree (2 years of tertiary education). Half of the interviewed women are working as cleaning woman. Two are currently unemployed and are looking for a job. Two others work at cafes in the kitchen or in service. One woman was working

as a secretary and thus had a regular job with social security. This only widow with a regular job had free accommodation arranged by her company. Of the illiterate or primary school graduate women all but one are living in rented flats. The widows with higher education levels either owned their flats or lived with their families. There is a remarkable similarity across the reason of deaths of their husbands. Five had died due to lung cancer. This will be treated in detail in later sections.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Sample

	Bilge	Zarife	Narin	Derya	Asiye	Esra	Duygu	Güler	Hayat	Seher
Age	38	45	32	41	45	41	42	34	41	45
Educational Level	Illiterate	Illiterate	Illiterate	Primary School	Primary School	Secondary School*	Secondary School	2-year Collage	High School	High School
Working Status	Cleaning Woman	Cleaning Woman	Cleaning Woman	Cleaning Woman	Cleaning Woman	Service	Service	Unemployed	Unemployed	Office Worker
Pension trough	-	Father	-	Husband	Husband	Husband	Husband	Husband	Husband	-
House	Owner (Mortgaged)	Rent	Rent	Rent	Rent	Owner	Owner	Owner	Owner	Rent Paid by Employer
Living with (except her children)	-	-	Brother-in-law	Parents-in-law	-	-	-**	Her parents	-	Sister-in-law
Marriage Age	15 (2nd Marriage)	17	20	23	21 (2nd Marriage)	20.5	26	26	21.5	28
Duration of the Marriage	20	25	4	12	21	8.5	6	5.5	16	15
Years Past After Death	3	3	8	6	3	12	10	2.5	3.5	2
Own Orphanage Age	5	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Husband Orphanage Age	-	-	-	-	17	-	-	24	11	17
Husband's Age at Death	43	40	31	40	56	33	36	40	35	45
Husband's Job	Unemployed	Worker	Worker	Worker	Tradesman	Worker		Tradesman	Worker	Worker
Cause of Death	Lung Cancer	Lung Cancer	Heart Attack	Lung Cancer	Lung Cancer	Work Accident	Lung Cancer	Suicide	Work Accident	Suicide
Children Age/Gender	9/F; 16/F; 17/F	18/F	12/M	10/F; 15/F	13/M; 18/F; 23/M***	16/M	15/M	7/F	14/F	2.5/M; 13/M; 17/F

Notes:

* Before her husband died she had primary school diploma later she entered the exams and completed secondary school

** Husband's family lives in the same building

*** He is older than 18 but he is a student and he does not have any income

4.1.1 Bilge

Bilge, 38, stands at the intersection of the widow and orphan identity. When she is asked her age, she begins to answer by first underlining her orphanhood. Bilge is actually 38 years old, but her official age in her ID states she is older. This is because she was forced to marry when she was 14, “before even reaching puberty” in her own words, after her official age was manipulated. She attributes her early marriage to the lack of a father and financial difficulties. She had divorced her first husband after escaping to her family’s home due to his physical abuse. When she was 18, she was let to marry again a man 8 years older than her, who is now deceased. After explaining her age, she continues as follows:

I’ve never went to school. It’s because we lost our father when I was a little girl. We had to work, that is. I was around five when he died. My mother was the same age as I lost my husband [38]. The eldest of my brothers was only 15. He was not even circumcised yet. I have never experienced the love of a father. I used to say that I wished my children would not go through the same. (see Appendix B, 1)

Bilge's husband was diagnosed with schizophrenia before they had met. His condition deteriorated over time and he furthermore contracted lung cancer. Before their marriage, the family of the husband had not told Bilge about his schizophrenia. After the marriage, the couple lived together with the parents and three siblings of the husband. Upon the birth of their three daughters, they were 10 people in the house. Few years before the death of the husband, due to domestic problems they had decided to move away from there, and the husband’s father had bought a flat for his son. Nevertheless, the debts for the flat are still being paid and Bilge is taking care of the situation. During their marriage, her husband had never worked and was on disability pension. They had experienced severe poverty. Six years before the

husband's death, Bilge had started to work as a casual cleaning woman, her profession since nine years. Her husband's mental health had got very poor two years before his death, and he used to physically abuse both Bilge and the children severely. Nevertheless, he still was taking care of the children while Bilge was at work. After his death, this had become an additional issue for Bilge. Bilge, who has been through very tough times due to problems caused by the husband's family and neighbors among others, answers the question of what she would like to do most with "reading one single book".

4.1.2 Zarife

Zarife was married for 25 years, the longest lasting marriage in the sample. She got married at the age of 19, and at the time her husband died she was 42. She is now 45 and the mother of a girl who was 15 when her father died. Zarife's husband used to work as a construction worker and had no social security. Zarife tells that her husband's working conditions were very tough. She adds that she had a very hard time during the illness process of her husband who she lost due to lung cancer. The illness had caused a serious poverty due to the medical costs, and Zarife has been working as a cleaning woman since her husband's death. Zarife, who is illiterate, says that while her husband was alive, she could not leave the house. Her extremely jealous husband would never let her to go out. Zarife says that since she can not read and write, and since she did not know the life outside, she had a very difficult period following the husband's death. Nevertheless despite her poor health, Zarife, who displays admirable tenacity to make a living for her family, did not leave her flat to move in with her family and continued to work. Zarife is proud of this decision and

states that she will continue to work as long as she can. Furthermore, she adds that being employed changed her and that she now has higher self-confidence.

4.1.3 Narin

Narin, who is illiterate, is 32 years old and has a son who is 12. She married before she was 20 and moved from her birthplace to Istanbul to live with the family of her husband. None of her relatives are in Istanbul. Since the day of her wedding she is staying in the same flat as the parent of her husband. Right after the death of her husband, her father-in-law had passed away too. Up until a year ago, she was still staying with her mother-in-law. After her death, she was alone with her son. Since some time she was hosting the brother of her husband. He was ill and Narin was in charge of taking care of him.

Narin's husband had lost his life after a heart attack at work. Before that he had no known heart condition. Since the garment workshop where he used to work had not provided any social security, Narin did not receive any salary after his death. Narin, who explains that she was in love with her husband and could not get herself together for 3-4 years after his death, had started to take daily cleaning jobs one year after the husband's death. Currently, on two days in the week, she works as a daily cleaning woman and apart from that receives some support from acquaintances and neighbors to survive.

According to what she explains, she does not receive any regular support or salary from a state institution.

She lives in a rented flat and is looking for a new flat to rent since she will have to move. She says she can afford a rent of 300 to 400 TL, nevertheless the ones

she had seen so far were higher than 700 TL.

4.1.4 Derya

Derya has primary school degree and she is 41. She lost her husband 6 years ago. At the time he died, their younger daughters were 4 and 11. She had come to here after her marriage 18 years ago to live with the family of her husband. Since then she lives in the same apartment with the parents of her husband who are 74 and 78 years old. Derya, who lives with two older adults and two children in the same apartment, has a health condition and as such is not able to take up daily housekeeping and cleaning jobs even though she would like to. Two years after the death of the husband, she had tried to earn some money by escorting the children of her neighbors to the school and back. She is now doing some little things to make a living, but there is nothing regular. She is receiving the pension for widows and orphans. Her father-in-law is receiving retirement pension. They live in a rented flat. Derya describes that it is difficult to live in a city far away from her relatives.

Her husband died due to lung cancer. She explains that her husband had started to work after primary school to support his family, and that this had consequences for his health. His husband, who was self-employed, had found a new job far away from home 3-4 years before his death. Accordingly, the responsibilities at and outside of home were shouldered by Derya. Derya thinks that this is why she did not find it too difficult to manage everything on her own after her husband.

4.1.5 Asiye

Asiye who is 45 years old has primary school degree. She was 15 years younger than

her deceased husband. She had a previous marriage, which she describes as decided by her father. Nevertheless, after her first husband physically abused her three months into the marriage, her father brought her back and let her divorce. One year after the divorce she got married to her second husband. Her husband had a grown-up son from his previous marriage. After the death of his father he had moved to his mother's place. Asiye lives in a rented flat with her three children. She is concerned that the rent will increase and she will not be able to pay it. She occasionally finds daily housekeeping and cleaning jobs and nearly all the money she makes that way is spent on the rent. After the death of her husband, they had found themselves in large amounts of debt and were close to the point of exhaustion. Her elder child is in the second year of university education and receives a scholarship and he is not able to bring in any income.

Her husband had received treatment for lung cancer for a year. After he fell ill, Asiye had started to work. One year after the death of the husband, she was diagnosed with diabetes and she argues that it is because of sorrow and stress. Asiye, who does not receive much support from her own family, explains that she was very shaken after losing first her mother-in-law, then her husband, and finally her own mother all within a year.

Asiye tells that she did not receive support from her husband's family. She adds that her husband had lost his father when he was 17. Similar to Bilge, she reports that her neighbors have caused a lot of trouble for her.

4.1.6 Esra

Esra, 41, is the daughter of a well-educated father. However, he would not let her

continue her education after five years of high school since she is a girl. She says that “with 20, I’ve opened my eyes and got married”. After about 9 years, while their boy was only years old, her husband dies in a work accident. Even though it was a fatal accident at work, there had been no legal action. While her husband was still alive, she had made some experience with babysitting and cleaning jobs. After the death, she had first started to work again as a cleaning woman. Afterwards she had worked in the kitchen of some restaurants and she wants to retire.

Esra, who has been widowed or longest among the sample (12 years) has a lot of experiences regarding the difficulty and possibility of moving on and staying alive on her own. She says that when are standing on your own “you become the master of it”. Now she lives in a flat bought by her father in an apartment building that belongs to her family. After the death of her husband, she returns to school, something that she wanted to do a lot, and while still working she finishes secondary school through a distance education system. She describes that rightly as a step that made her proud.

4.1.7 Duygu

Duygu, who has secondary school degree, lost her husband 10 years ago when she was 32 and her child 4 years old. She explains that she had serious emotional problems and adds that she had started to pull herself to get her only recently. Since the beginning of her marriage she lives in the same apartment building as the husband’s family. She tells that she was so torn out since she was not able to work with such a small child, and moreover the family of her husband had created serious difficulties for her with their pressure. She refers to that period as “my years have passed within four walls”. She only starts to work in a restaurant kitchen two years

ago. She says that her husband, who died because of lung cancer, used to work very hard, that they could not spend time with each other while he was alive, and accordingly she now recalls her husband, with whom she was in love, with intense longing. Her emotional exhaustion was made worse due to social pressures and financial difficulties.

4.1.8 Güler

Güler, 34, has the highest level of education among the interviewees. She had a brief job experience before her marriage. After she got married, she quitted her job, only to return back to employment after her husband's death. Yet, she had to quit due to the pressure from her husband's family. Now she looks for a job again. Güler's husband was a relative and she thinks that this was a bad decision taken by her family and herself right from the start. All her marriage she had lived in the same building as the relatives of her husband, and after his death, due to the intense problems she had with them she and her daughter had to move in with her family. She has no claim on the flat and other potential sources of income she may have inherited from her husband. She does not find it appropriate to sue her husband's family. She nevertheless adds that she will fight for her daughter's rights. That the reason of her husband's death was suicide functions as a catalyzer for the condemnation she receives from her husband's family. Güler explains that what drove her husband, 9 years older than her, to suicide may have been the serious accident he had as he was working as a tradesman. After the accident, his business went bankrupt and he suffered depression as a result. A remarkable detail in the story is that her husband was only 24 years old at the time he lost his father. Güler says that this loss had put him in charge of his

family at a relatively early age and this had introduced many difficulties into his life. She adds that this may have been the reason why he put her family before their marriage while he was alive. Güler's case exemplifies how serious the problems between a widow and her late husband's family may become. Moreover, Güler has to deal with the health problems of her daughter, who was 4 at the time of his father's death. Güler's most remarkable characteristic is her detached, critical and even sarcastic style in telling her story, which is related to her level of education and strong character.

4.1.9 Hayat

Hayat's interview was the longest with three and a half hours. Hayat, 41, answered all the questions in a very detailed manner. She had got married at the age of 21 and lost her husband at 37 due to a fatal work accident. Back then, her daughter was 10 years old. Hayat, a high school graduate, used to work before and had quit her work only after her marriage. After her husband's death she started to look for a job but could not find. She is still searching. One reason for the need for a job was the increase in the educational costs for her daughter. Nevertheless, a full-day job was not an option since her daughter was still small, and since both of them were psychologically exhausted after the death of the husband. She is still looking for a half-day job that she thinks would suit her better.

Hayat, who had to follow the court proceedings concerning the accident that took her husband's life, says that this process took its toll on her. Hayat who sunk in poverty after the passing of her husband tells that it is a great advantage that she owns the house she lives in so that she does not have to pay rent. She adds that since

her husband was a primary school graduate, she is used to managing paper work outside. This experience helped her after husband's death since she already was knowledgeable in that respect.

4.1.10 Seher

Seher, 45, who has high school degree, has the most distinct profile among the interviewees in terms of her occupational life. She had started to work before she got married, has been working ever since and now she is waiting for her retirement. That she was constantly employed, and the accompanying increase in her social capital, had a significant contribution to her coping with the situation. It looks as if her environment did not only provide a social advantage, but also increased her self-esteem and control over the situation. Nevertheless, despite her social security, there are also problems which make her worry. Seher says that at the beginning she blamed herself for the death of the husband due to the way he died. Similar to Güler, Seher's husband who has committed suicide had lost his father while still young. Nevertheless, he was 10 years old when his father died. She says that this had a very disturbing influence on him and is afraid that her children will feel the same kind of pressure in their lives.

Seher's youngest child was not even 40 days old when her husband died. She argues that she could get over those times since she was employed. They used to live in rented flat, but her company arranged free accommodation in a 50 square meter flat, where she stays with her three children and the sister of her late husband. The sister used to live with them before the death of the husband, and remained with them afterwards. Seher explains that she is hearing impaired and is staying with them

due to financial difficulties. She adds that it is still not easy. Seher, who shoulders the whole responsibilities of a family of five, has as income only her salary. Her sister-in-law is employed too; nevertheless her income is barely sufficient for herself.

4.2 Change in life

Five of the interviewed widows had lost their husbands after a disease process. But even then, that had not provided any opportunity for women to prepare for the loss of the husband. On the contrary, the disease process had made women more vulnerable both financially and psychologically. Bilge, Zarife and Asiye who lost their husbands to lung cancer, experienced a long period of illness. Bilge lost her husband two years after the diagnosis. His schizophrenic situation had escalated with the lung cancer and he had become more violent towards his daughters and wife. On the other hand, Bilge says that she had to go to work and look after her husband and she did not even have the time to properly sleep during that period. Her husband's family also continued to make steady pressure on Bilge, accusing her that she did not look after her husband well enough.

Bilge:

The process got more difficult for me. As his disease progressed, his stress also increased. He could not stand anyone and would start arguing over small things. Believe me; he was making me wake up at 6 o'clock in the morning... You know, if I do not wake up; he brought a jug of water and poured it on me, early in the morning... 'You have to get up and look after me. You have to do so, you are my wife!'

After he told that to my mother-in-law, she came and spoke to me. 'Hey, you do not look after your husband!'. Imagine that... I said that if I do not look after him, why do not you? You are his mother! Consequently my father-in-law got involved and told me to 'Get out of the house. Do whatever you want, I do not care'. In that situation I seriously considered whether I should go and throw myself into the sea, you know? So bad was my stress. (see Appendix B, 2)

As an illiterate, for Bilge, one of the issues that created the most trouble was to take her husband to the hospital and to provide the money for medical expenses. Despite all the hardship, Bilge, says that they “were shocked” by the death of her husband.

Bilge:

For me, life was not over after that. It was very hard on the children. We were in deep shock. Life had become very difficult. While he was in the intensive care unit I became both a man and a woman. I came home last Saturday before the death. At that condition I went to clean the stairs. Back then, I was also struggling with poverty. After the first week [after the death] everyone went back home. We started sleeping together with my children on a sofa bed together, because there is no one, we are alone, we are afraid. The four of us hugged each other. 'Mom what will we do, how are we to live on?' The kids said, the elder one... She was like 'mom, how are we to make ends meet?' How do we pay our bills...?' I told my daughter 'we will live on the same way we always lived on. Again I will pay, I'll work, and I'll pay. (see Appendix B, 3)

Zarife, whose husband too died because of lung cancer, explains how the disease process made things worse for them with the following sentences:

We suffered from poverty too much. While his father was alive, it was difficult too. Because of the hospital expenses. His medication was very expensive. I sold my earrings. I have no other gold anyway. I would pawn my wedding ring at the pharmacy and get it back at the beginning of the following month after receiving my salary. I did not want others know or talk about me borrowing from the pharmacy. So nobody knew about the deal with the pharmacist. (see Appendix B, 4)

Zarife, similar to Bilge, explains that they were in great fear right after the death of her husband:

When my husband died, both I and my daughter were in great fear. I could not sleep until morning. Two women alone at night, even if someone would knock on the door there would be word around. You could not go out because of shame. I was staying awake until morning, I would only feel at ease upon hearing the Morning Prayer. I would say, thank God we have spent the night without an instance. When it would get dark, I would pray to God to keep the

drunks, the filthy, and the tramps away from our door. And this happens you know, every bad thing happens to you. (see Appendix B, 5)

Asiye tells that the year-long disease process of her husband did not prepare them for the potential future:

While he was ill it was very difficult too. For example, people would say, 'Fortunately you prepared yourself because your husband was sick.' However, the reality is not like that. First of all, you are not able to calculate with his death, it just does not occur to you that it may happen. Well, we all know that everyone will die eventually. Yes, but it is not possible to prepare yourself for death. Everyone is dying but it is impossible to prepare yourself. We were not prepared. We never thought that he would actually die. We never thought he would die. Even though we knew that it was a very difficult disease, we were like if we take good care of him, if we treat him well, he would live on. But it did not work that way. (see Appendix B, 6)

Derya, whose husband died two-three months after the diagnosis, tell that they were shattered with the news of his disease and were hoping that he would get well again. After his death, she says “we were constantly uneasy, worried; we were wondering what are we going to do; what can we do?” Duygu, on the other hand, argues that initially her husband’s illness was not taken seriously, which was followed by deep perturbation upon his loss.

Duygu:

It took five years of my life. I’ve spent five very hard years. Nothing but doctors, hospitals, needles, medication... I'm still on medication. It was very difficult to overcome that period. Only for my daughter, I could. Nothing in life would make me happy, nothing gave me any pleasure. Everything was meaningless, empty. At that moment I was afraid of everything. I fell into a void. It was something we never expected. I felt like trapped under everything, you know, it was like fear of not knowing how to get out. I startled. I am all alone. Even if you have your family beside you, there is the constant fear about what I am going to do now. (see Appendix B, 7)

Narin, who lost her husband after a sudden heart attack, says she was totally shattered, that she did not want to live on for 2-3 years, and that she was detached

from life. Esra, on the other hand, explains that upon the advice of the psychologist of her child, she took a brief holiday with her family, which she identifies as the most important contribution to her for being able to stand on their feet. Güler and Hayat state that right after the death of the husband, both they and their children started taking medication. Güler adds that she could not eat for a long while and her weight dropped to 40 kg. Hayat says that she was left with only 100 TL in her pocket at the time of her husband's death. She was very perturbed because she had to deal with the lack of money and yet make decisions about the burial site. She explains that for months she just wanted to die, would go to the cemetery every day, and would constantly remember and mention her husband's name. Seher, who was left with a 45 day old baby at the time of the death, says that for the first three months she had sleeping and eating problems. Since she was breastfeeding the baby, she had refused to take medication. She returned to her job 40 days following her husband's death so that she could shift her attention to something else, and this had a positive influence on her situation. Furthermore, this way the baby was in the workplace nursery while she was at work.

The most common elements of the moment of impact comprise fear, detachment from life, and the loss of the will to live. In all of the cases studied here, the women were advised by doctors or acquaintances to take tranquilizers right after the news of death. Three women had accepted this offer and continued to take the medication. At the time of the interviews all three of them and their children were still taking medication.

4.2.1 Relations with her own family

Only two of the ten interviewed women declared that they had received significant support from their own families that would make a difference in their lives after the death of their husband. After the loss, Esra moved to a flat in the apartment building owned by her family. She adds that her family provides financial as well as emotional support. She emphasized especially the help she receives from her brother. Her family is involved in taking care of her son too.

Furthermore, Esra, whose father had not let her continue her education after primary school since she is a girl, received after the death of her husband a secondary school degree via a distance education program. Esra, who says “Even I myself am wondering at what I have achieved”, adds that after the death of husband, her father’s confidence in her started to change. Even if he says for something in particular “Esra can not manage that”, her mother corrects him saying “Esra can manage anything anymore”, something which is perceived by Esra as a proof of confidence. She says that her family is not questioning her about what she does outside or when she comes home. She nevertheless mentions that “I did not do anything which would make them question that”, revealing the kind of the responsibility she carries towards her family.

Duygu, who explains that she had initially received financial support from her family, emphasizes the help from her brother too. She says that even though her family lives in a different city, her brother and his wife live nearby. She adds that the family of her husband is not happy with the support given to her. They had tried to convince Duygu’s family and particularly his brother to stop helping her. Nevertheless, Duygu explains that the support she receives from her family has its

limits:

My brother, my sister-in-law, particularly. They live here [in İstanbul]. They really supported me. But of course it only lasted for a while. After a while you absolutely see that you're alone again, in every sense. Everybody has a spouse, children, their own home. Then you realize that you are face the naked truth of life. You come face to face with life, living, and difficulties. This makes you reach the real truth. So you realize that after some time. (see Appendix B, 8)

Derya lost her parents nine years ago and she says that since she got married, she always wanted to go back to her birthplace village, to her family, and adds that her siblings are still there. She considered moving back there after the death of her husband, but changed her mind since she cared for the quite old parents of her husband and since her children were used to life in Istanbul. However, she mentions that even with her family there, her situation in the village would be more difficult. She explains that here in Istanbul there are at least people who make donations to her and thinks that nobody would help her in the village. Seher, on the other hand, tells that her family moved away from Istanbul right after the death of her husband. After their pre-planned move, Seher says that she was on her own for the care of her 40 days old baby. She explains her difficulty as “I was taking care of my baby without my family and without the family of my husband”. Except revealing that their families live in a different city, neither Seher nor Derya provide information on whether the stance of their families was negative or positive after the death of their husbands. Bilge tough, whose family resides in Istanbul, reports a similar isolation and lack of connection to her family: “There was no one. Only me. All alone. Even if I had no money, even I was in poverty, there was no one I could talk to”. Moreover, she adds that she had not seen any support from her family during the heavy, two-year-long disease process of her husband. Bilge, who has reported increased physical

abuse by her husband and his family during the disease process, states that whereas she had stayed at her sister's for a little while, there was not much her brother could do. Nevertheless, she adds that her brother would be the first person to call in case of need.

Zarife, whose family lives in a different Istanbul district, tells that they tried to help her in line with their possibilities. She had refused their offer to let her live with them:

Before I lost my husband they were not visiting us often. Now, they visit us more frequently. They live in a rented flat. They look after their children. They still try to help us though. Whenever I call them, whenever I need something, my brothers are come, even at night. They wanted [me to move to their place to live with them]. They said, 'everything there must be alien to you. Sister, what's your business with strangers there? Come and live with us. If we are hungry, so you are hungry, if we have something to eat, you do too. If we are living in a rented flat, you will be living in a rented flat too. You will be living like we are living.' No I cannot, I said, I do not want to be a burden at your back. I said I'm going to work here. They were disappointed, they said 'Why will not you come? It is as if we can not take care of you. If you behave like this other people will start to tell that we could not manage to take care of our only sister.' They even rented a flat for us. For 400 TL. I did not go. We would have become neighbors, it was right across their house. But that neighborhood is bad. God bless, she would go out with tramps, and something bad would happen, I am afraid for my daughter. We do not have acquaintances there, perhaps we would be left hungry without any help, may be something bad will happen, who knows We are very pleased with our own decision. If I would go there I would not be as pleased. I would cry every day. Here I have a clear mind. I have work here, I survive with what God gives. (see Appendix B, 9)

Similarly, Narin too tells that her family living in a different city insisted on she moving to where they live. However, they also wanted Narin to marry someone related to them. Narin explains that after she refused, "they got distant and cold". With years passing, her family dropped that demand; nevertheless Narin says that she stays with them only as a *misafir* (guest) every year for a month.

Güler, whose husband was a relative, evaluated the family problems that

arose after the death of her husband and added that concluded that her family was the cause for her wrong marriage. Güler had very serious problems with her husband's family after his death, and both she and her family had become the target of quarrels. Güler explains that consequently she ended up moving to her mother's place. She says that she was able to leave her child at her mother's place also before, nevertheless adds that her mother was complaining that she was tired. Güler, in response to attempts by the husband's family to obtain the inheritance rights for her husband's properties, wants to take radical decisions but is stopped by her mother. Her mother suggests that Güler waits for the death of her mother-in-law before taking legal action for the inheritance rights. Güler wants to find a job, and even move away to a different city, but her mother says that she must stay and take care of her child. In this sense, it can be claimed that Güler is not able to find the support she needs in her family.

Hayat says that she did not receive any support from her family at all and explain her situation as follows:

Do not end up on the ground for once. I did not receive anything from my family. I still am disappointed. One needs others at times of financial difficulties. I am all alone with an orphan and have no income at all. I did not receive pension for the first 5-6 months. And yet my family did not help me. Every now and then they give 50 TL to my daughter, but that's something other people can do too. I am feeling sore at them. They could at least provide some support for my daughter during Ramadan or for *bayrams* [religious holidays]. This still holds, you know. They did not even once call me to ask whether I could buy, or need some new clothes for my daughter before bayram. (see Appendix B, 10)

Asiye, who starts to talk by saying "there is no one beside us", lost her mother right after her husband, and says that the family was shaken by that too. She explains her father's carelessness with her being a daughter rather than a son. She adds that whereas her brother provides some support for her, her sister, since she is

wealthy, stays away from her.

My brother helped me a lot. He is fond of me. He kept calling, asked whether I need something. Both emotionally and financially. And I have an elder sister living in our village. It was my brother and sister who cared for me. They were concerned about me. Especially my brother. My other sister's husband died too. However I do not talk to her often, she is well-off. Her children turned doctors. She raised them well. She is cold, did not support me. My dad is alive. He wants to remarry. He could help me if he wanted, he has money. But I heard that he says about me 'she should have made her husband buy a house before he died. She is none of my business'. He went to pilgrimage (*Hajj*). Rather than going to Hajj, he could've cared for my children with the money. He excludes me. I was his favorite child, nevertheless I married and went away, I did not stay there with him. He was very sad back then but would still say that he loves me most among his children. Nevertheless, I am completely sure that if that what happened to me would happen to his sons, he would have accepted their children, he would have taken care of them. But he does not embrace me, because I am a woman. He does not care for my children. (see Appendix B, 11)

Asiye adds that her daughter prays, in regard to her grandfather, like “God, do not let my grandfather marry. We have the right to his money. Do not let her marry so that he can help us”

Only two women interviewed stated that they received any real support from their family. The other eight stated that their families did not really have an interest in them, but that their brothers reached out to them the most. The responsibility that society places on the brother is that, after the father, they are the ones responsible for their sister's honor and the honor of the family. It is this situation, that of “not leaving my sister alone against the public, that is displayed here. Yet however much there is the concern of not having anyone talk badly about the family, on the other hand, when a daughter gets married and moves out of the house, she is not really seen as the daughter of the household anymore. Expressed more clearly, the family name the woman now carries (her husband's name) is the one that represents her. The family of the husband is supposed to take care of the man's descendants (his children).

4.2.2 Relations with husband's family

Three of the interviewed women live with at least one relative of their late husband.

Two women live in the same apartment building as the husband's family. One woman had moved away from that situation shortly before the death of the husband.

The families of three women's husbands live in a different city.

Güler had serious problems with her husband's family after his death and as a result moved to her mother's house. At the time of the interview this was a very recent development, and she was desperate regarding her legal rights about her own flat. Güler explains that in their apartment building, all flats are owned by the relatives of her husband. She adds that due to the demands of the men of the family, the women in the house see only each other and remain isolated from the outside. Moreover, she tells that the whole family is uneasy and there are quarrels all the time. Güler, has the highest level of education among the interviewees (a 2-year college graduate), had lived in this environment since the beginning of her marriage. After the suicide of his husband, the family declared Güler "the killer of their son". Furthermore, they were convinced that since Güler could remarry and go away; it should be them keeping her child. She could not obtain the inheritance of her husband. They would not let her work either. Her child, who was four at the time of his father's death, was influenced by that atmosphere of feud and had developed serious psychological problems and speaking difficulties. Together with her child, Güler was on medication. The psychologist seeing the child had informed her that if that situation would continue, she would inform the authorities from the social services. Güler, who found the solution in escaping from her own home, explains her last days there like this:

It was 9PM and there was no water at home. So we decided to go and get some. My younger brother-in-law apparently sees us leaving. He informs his mother Güler and Füsün (her daughter) are gone. We barely spent any time outside, because we were running since it was raining.

My phone rung, it was the mother-in-law. After some time, brother-in-law has called. He asked why I would not answer his mother's call. I said we are home and hung up. Then I called him again and asked what they want from me, why they appear on my doorstep again and again. 'What is your problem? Do I have to go the attorney; do I have to go to the police to take action against you, to get protection from you, what is your problem?' He started cursing. 'You w..., you b..., I will come and choke you to death!' And he shouts like you would not know. It is like there is an army of men in front of him and he tries to deal with them. He says 'I will come, I will come and squeeze your throat.'

[Quarrel becoming intense] I called my mother. I left like that and came here. I went back there after 2-3 months. I went there secretly, since it is the apartment building of the family and left again secretly. I went there to pick our winter clothes. We were using the light of our phones inside the flat, like we are thieves. Then there was that woman [her elder sister-in-law], she appeared in front of her door. She was on watch. We called the wife of my husband's brother who lives downstairs. She said we can not go out while my sister-in-law is there. Impossible, she said. She said maybe we could stay there that night, to leave at dawn. I did not want to see her face [sister-in-law] anymore. And that's that. My mother was like, 'you can go out, what is she going to do, eat you?' Even seeing her would such a big deal, you know. I had never hated anyone in my life, I learned to hate because of them. (see Appendix B, 12)

Duygu who made nearly identical experiences as Güler, still lives in the same flat after ten years since the death of her husband. Duygu says that her child used to fear her husband's family when she was small and summarizes their hardships:

My husband's family is different. They are like 'he died, and he did not do anything for himself, he owned a house'. As if he owned so much and as if I've inherited so much property from him. They could not come to terms with this. They also could not come to terms with the fact that my family was supportive of me. They wish I would become a slave to them, like a servant. They wish I would do whatever they demand and never go out. They directly wanted to use me in that sense. Things got difficult when I reacted to them. Moreover, they did not want anyone to come to our place, to visit us. No friend, no neighbor, no relative; they did not want them to come. This was very tough for me. I barely got over such things. Their relation to my daughter, Bahar, is like... they try to pull her to their side. They say bad things about my family to her. Actually my family has got nothing to do with them. My visitors were also disturbed by all that. My mother-in-law would

call and ask, 'who is there with you?'. My brother's wife would come and they would call, 'who is there, is she there?' etc. A friend would come, and they would call, 'who is there, when will she go?'. Or I would go out and they were like, 'where are you going?'. How does my hair look? What do I wear? How do I talk? Where do I go to? When do I come home? They wanted to control everything. They were on the watch. (see Appendix B, 13)

Bilge lived in the same flat as her husband's family (his 5 siblings and parents) for 16 years. After her husband's, who had both schizophrenia and lung cancer, condition worsened and one year before his death, they moved to a new flat. Right from the beginning, her husband's family had put her in a difficult situation by not informing her about his mental condition. Her husband used to display physical violence against his family, and by not informing her about that, Bilge says that "they knowingly destroyed a person's life". Bilge explains that she has suffered a lot because of her husband's parents and adds that she does not want to see them frequently anymore. Bilge summarizes how their approach to her children changed after the husband's death:

They used to be Bilge's children. Now they call them Hamit's children. My father-in-law would talk to me like, 'your children did this and that, your children are like this and that'. Now they refer to them as Hamit's children. The children have become worthy now. They changed their minds. (see Appendix B, 14)

Narin lived with her husband's parents since the time they married. This went on for a long time after the death of the husband as well. She says that this is because the husband's younger relatives had decided that the parents stay with her. After the death of her mother-in-law last year, Narin's ill elder brother-in-law came to stay with them so that Narin can care for him. "He will leave once he gets better again" says Narin. Narin who continues to serve as a bride to her husband's family by caring for them even after his death, explains how their attitudes towards her changed:

Of course there is a difference. You are one thing while your husband is there, and a different thing after his death. They become more distant. Even if they are by my side, they do not see you with the same eyes any more, thinking I may go. Thinking I may remarry and leave. They were not very close, but they were not mean to me either. But they are different before and after his death. They did not change towards the child. They are very close to him. They used to show me their sour face whenever I would to visit the neighbors. I've told the sister-in-laws once or twice about some matters to be taken care of outside and then they told me that I must learn about the matters myself and take care of them. They told me they will not be with me forever, and that I have to learn myself. This was hard on me, I was sad, I was disappointed. They were not like that while my husband was alive but now they are talking to me like this. (see Appendix B, 15)

Derya, like Bilge and Narin, had started to live with her husband's family after their marriage. She continued to do so after his death. Derya says "They have already lost their son; I did not want to change their lives even more by taking their grandchildren away from them". However, she has complaints about the negligence of her husband's siblings.

Derya:

They change quite a bit, that's for sure. They used to call me more often while my husband was alive. They do not care anymore. I do not mind for myself, but there are the children. His siblings are very negligent. I would expect, you know, they have two nephews here. For instance, one and a half years ago, my father-in-law had a sudden stroke. Our flat is small. They did not even come. We could not even get him up, had to take a taxi to take him to the hospital. They did not care at all. They are very concerned about their own comfort. They are very lax. I would not let them [husband's parents] do everything anyway. They are able to take care of their own business in every respect. If it would not be for them, I would take care of myself. I would go to my birthplace and stay there. But it would not be good for me to disrupt their lives here. (see Appendix B, 16)

Seher's husband had lost his father while he was 10. She explains that for him and his siblings this was the reason for their detachment from each other. Seher lives with his brother's hearing-impaired sister. She used to do so also before the death of the husband. Seher adds that it was not the idea of their other siblings that she lives

with Seher.

Seher:

One of them [his siblings] stays with us anyway. She is hearing impaired. It is difficult for me. But it is an exigency too. It is my humaneness that creates the difficulty, you know. I may have lost my husband, but my door must be open to her. She has three years to her retirement, she has no place to stay, so we live together. Nevertheless, it is difficult to live with her. Our flat is 50 square meters. Three kids, her, and me, five people. However, I understand her, and she understands me. Every now then we have some quarrels. Even though she is a relative, it gets tough at times. (see Appendix B, 17)

Asiye's husband too lost her father when he was 17 years old. Asiye argues that this is why her husband's family did not provide support for her. However she adds that she had problems with her husband's younger brother and cousin due to the inheritance rights, and she does not talk to them anymore because of that. She explains that she had to pay a lot of money because of some debts resulting from that disagreement, and believes she was wronged. Hayat's husband too had lost his father when he was 11. She states that he did not have a close relationship with his family, which continued for her after his death.

Esra tells how her husband's family distanced themselves from her after his death. She adds that they did not display any affection for her son who was 4 at the time of his father's death.

Esra:

We were disconnected. I told his uncle, his aunt, whole family. I told them that my son may find what I do not have in you. He can find that what he cannot find in his father in you. Do not let him become isolated from you. But no, they did not have it. I do not understand and know why. It was not like that before. It was like the end of partnership. My husband died and the partnership was over, I was over, we were over for them. To them, we just happen to carry the same surname. (see Appendix B, 18)

Zarife, very similar to Esra, explains how the attitudes of her husband's

family became more distant and cold after his death. “They can forget me, but they should know my daughter” she says and adds she expects the family to show some affection and interest for her. For both Esra and Zarife, the negligence of the husband’s family had become the source of sadness and sorrow.

None of the women wanted to cut off the relationship with their husband’s family. Out of respect for their husband’s family, because they felt that the loss of the father could be lessened for their children by spending time with the father’s family, and because they still felt like they were the brides that married into the family are all reasons why the women sought to continue the relationship with the husband’s family. But they stated that despite all their efforts, the husband’s family no longer saw the women in the same way, and even started to torment them. Beyond financial needs, the people they had adopted as their family were no longer treating them as such, resulting in a kind of moral destruction.

4.3 Learning to survive and educational experiences

In this part of the study widows' educational experiences will be held with the topics such as attending courses, working life, new responsibilities which lead them increase the educational/learning experiences and support systems.

4.3.1 Attending courses

The women felt the need for various kinds of educational practices as a result of the changes in their lives following the death of their husband. They tried to fulfill these needs sometimes at nonformal education institutions; nevertheless most often they intensified informal mechanisms of reaching basic knowledge and skills. For those of

them who were illiterate, learning to read and write had become the priority. Even though some of them attended courses at People Education Centers, they could not complete the courses and did not learn to read and write. Those not attending a course had attempts to learn from their children and acquaintances but without success. Bilge and Narin are the women who tried to attend literacy courses.

However, Bilge did not find enough time for that endeavor due to house work, kids, and her job, and quitted the course. Bilge describes that period as follows:

I've never been to school. It was because we lost our father when we were small. We had to work, that is. When he died, I was five, and my mother was my age [38]. I've attended a literacy course. I wanted to give it a go. I thought I could go there instead of work. During the weekend, it was from morning until noon. I went there for a couple of weeks on Saturdays. I failed my grade, because I could not go there on regularly. I had learnt some things pretty well. I am quite good at calculations. However, I tried to learn to read but it did not work. I failed that year, and thought go there again the next year. The year after I was working on Saturday mornings, so that did not work either. I was very tired. Sundays I am busy all day anyways. Thus, I had to give up.

While my husband was still alive, we would always be together outside. He was ill. We would go to the hospital together. We would go everywhere together. I did not want to learn to read and write as much back then. However, I am alone now, I need it. I wish I would be able to take care of certain things on my own, private things I mean, things about which I can not talk to anyone. Being able to go to some place without having to ask others how.

I would love to be able to read and write. If only I could read one single book. Reading a book is what I want most in my life. I would love it. I wish I could go to school. That's why I want my children to study. They should go to school and do so without having to rely on others. I can give them everything I got. I do not want them to be dependent on a husband. I am so exhausted. I suffered so much because of my husband. I suffered so much. (see Appendix B, 19)

Narin started to attend the literacy course with similar reasons. Nevertheless, after her mother-in-law, with whom she lives together, got ill, she had to quit. The people who tried to help her to read and write were a relative's son and later her own son.

I tried to learn to read, but I could not. I tried to learn on my own, my sister-in-law tried to help too. Her son was going to school; he tried to help as well. He was 12. He really tried but then he said 'aunt you can not learn now, you should first pull yourself together and then try again later'. It was two years after my husband's death, but it did not work. I wanted to be able to manage my own stuff. Like being able to recognize the bus I will get on, to read the price tags in the store etc. I wanted to be able to those things on my own. Yet I could not figure it out. Now my son is trying to teach me, I do not know, time will tell. He tries to teach it to me every now and then. He says, mom, I will make you learn it. I did not consider it until now but I am willing to learn now. Since my son grew up now. A friend told me that the literacy course opens in summer and that I should go there. My sister-in-law's daughter was illiterate too. Once we attended the course at the People's Education Center together. But then my mother-in-law got ill. I could not leave her like that so I quitted the course. She quitted too. She said she would not go without me. So we both quitted. One can do it alone, yet it is better to do it together with someone. She quitted after she started to work. If we move our house and if nothing else comes I hope to learn some day. (see Appendix B, 20)

On the other hand, Zarife, also illiterate, already lost her hope in that regard.

She says that due to grief, fatigue, and stuff to do "it does not get into my head".

However, she never had the chance to attend a literacy course to see if she can actually learn it. Just like Bilge and Narin, she works so intensively that she can not make the time to attend a course. Esra, a primary school graduate, considered to continue her education after the loss of her husband. Following his death, she realized that not continuing her education after marriage was a mistake.

Esra:

Actually I wanted to study so much but my father would not let me. After my husband, I got registered at the school. It was one year or so after his death, and I got registered at the secondary school and completed it. Actually it was quite recent, I even had a breakdown, laughing and crying at the same time. When I was married, the whole summer was full house work. Canning food, preparing *tarhana*, washing the wools, laundry cleaning... That's how I invested my time. I did not invest anything in my future. I did not know what lies ahead. And then at 29, I was suddenly all alone with a child to care for. I do not know about life, I know nothing, no job, no work, no income. There is only the flat with mortgage on it, and the social security, but no job experience. You have nothing, you'd stand no chance if it would not be for your family. Yes you did the laundry, you canned the food; you were ready for the summer and the winter. You had the supplies for the winter but not for

life. This gets to you emotionally and financially. You suffer the grief, you suffer the lack, it's very difficult. Very tough. My shoulders can not hold it anymore, my feet will not move. 13 years and I am exhausted anymore. (see Appendix B, 21)

Esra, who wanted to try also other courses after her husband, had attended a computer course at ISMEK (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality Lifelong Learning Center), yet she thinks it was a waste of time. Also Güler, the graduate of a two-year higher education program, considered attending a course in order to improve herself and find a job. She wanted to learn a profession that would help her to convince her husband's family who were against her employment. Thus she attended a *KPSS* (Public Personnel Selection Exam) course yet did not receive the score she needed.

I attended the *KPSS* course. Yes I did, but, how to put it, it was too difficult for me. I could not devote myself to studying. During high school, I was in the social science class. I was good in history, I would listen, analyze. I have a good knowledge of it. But I could not, I could not focus, it was too difficult for me. My *KPSS* score was 62. There was also the pressure from my husband's family. I was actually considering depending on the score I get we could move to another city. We did not do that either. My mother told me, you have a flat, if the money is short, we can give you some. The mentality was that I should focus on raising my kid. Well, it's like, if you have a certain level of education, if you're a doctor, or a nurse, no one can keep you from working. (see Appendix B, 22)

Seher, who has a long employment history before the death of her husband, attended courses in order to answer the needs of her children. In this sense Seher was able to become more enterprising than all other women in the sample. It was the social sphere in her work life that made this possible. Seher spent considerable time during the interview to explain why she felt the need for a course and the results she got from that experience. She had entered a more intensive educational process compared to other women after her husband's death, and as such her words on this process deserve the space below:

When you have a husband, you make plans together, plans for your children,

plans for the future. But after he is gone you lose one wing. You feel his absence. Thus you wonder, how can I improve myself? What should I do in order to serve both as a mother and father to my children? Therefore, I've attended some courses. I joined a 16-week long paternal support program [offered by an institution]. The program is offered to fathers but I was allowed in with a special permission since I am considered both a mother and a father. I was working during day time and going to the course in the evening. It was very useful for me. Right after each weekly session, I would head home to put what I have learned into practice with my children. My daughter is attending the university preparation course and she will take the university entrance exam soon.. The preparation course organized a series of seminars and educational events. I've attended those events. The target audience was the parents and it was held at a university. I thought even if my daughter is ready for this process, maybe I am not, as such I did not want to miss anything. One must attend such programs; one can create the time and conditions for it. Well, when I say condition I do not mean paid courses or so, I looked for free programs, received invitations etc. But if I had the chance, I would even consider those. When I join these kinds of educational programs, even if I learn a tiny little bit that's an asset for me. It's an asset for my children too. I had never considered this before his death. But afterwards I was in charge. All decisions, big and small, have to be taken by you and only you. And I should ever regret a decision. It's very important to know how to consider every option before making a decision. For instance, we have to make decisions about my daughter's education. I may be biased, I can influence her, and this could lead to a wrong decision. It's also possible that one would need a second opinion. If I feel the need, I could look for support. I could consult someone who knows about these matters. Perhaps an education expert. Or a consulting teacher or so. (see Appendix B, 23)

Seher describes those educational programs that she thought would be useful could not attend as "they are about how to approach life, like psychological education". Other women, when asked about the courses they would like to attend if they had the time, listed handicraft, child care, saz lessons, English, and Quran reading.

All the widows stated that they felt they needed an education so that they could better understand their children, raise them better, and follow their educational agendas better. But they were either unaware that they could receive such an education, could not find the time, or could not find the money to pay for it, and so are not able to manage this need. Of the women interviewed, the only one who could

receive such an education was Seher. Seher stated that the only reason she was able to receive this kind of education was because she worked for many years in a reliable institution. Her workplace is an important example of what needs to be done, in that they arranged the course for her and also provided her child daycare while she was there. Güler, despite being a graduate of a 2-year college, did not have a regular job, and so did not benefit as much from nonformal education institutions as high school graduate Seher. So it is not just the education level of the widow, but also the availability of conditions permitting the widow to work that is an important factor in her receiving the education she needs.

Four of the interviewed women said that after the death of their husband they started to attend religious talks. Whereas two women added that they organize such religious talks among the women in the neighborhood, one woman was attending the talks organized by the municipality. They argued that they view these talks as learning opportunities. Zarife told that she consults the women she meets at such religious talks about her problems:

I attend Quran readings during Ramadan. You do not know what to do. It's good, they give you suggestions. I consider their suggestions. The municipality invites us by texting us. They have our phone numbers since they inform us when a donation or support for us arrives. They let us know where and when to meet for the talk. Only for women. The municipality of ...[the district she lives in]. They hold the talks every third month. We also receive support once in three months. So I attended many talks like that. When I am at a meeting, I ask a lot of questions. How to pay the bills? Where am I supposed to go? What are the others saying? During Ramadan there is Quran readings, the *hoca* gives a speech. Sometimes there are *Mevluds*, they invite us to those and we go. I did not use to do that before. But since my husband's death, I do go. I go to many such events. Take suggestions from the attendants. (see Appendix B, 24)

Asiye's motivation to attend these meetings is slightly different. Asiye, who receives monthly 100 TL for cleaning the meeting room once a week, says that she

attends the meeting before the cleaning:

I clean that place once a week, on Fridays, on the day of the meeting. They give me 100 TL each month for that. I attend the talk, I clean the place, and then I leave. The meeting is open to anyone. I get to know new people there. It is not only the women of our neighborhood. There are women from other districts too. It is like a new social environment for me. (see Appendix B, 25)

Moreover, all the interviewed women said that they consulted and received information on matters such as stuff to do outside from the muhtar, the neighbors, colleagues and other people in their vicinity. They mentioned that most relations they establish with their social environment are informational and educational in nature.

4.3.2 Working life

During the time of the interviews, one of the women was working as a secretary and had regular working hours and social security. Two of them were employed in the service or cooking departments of restaurants. Five women were cleaning women and hence had irregular working hours and very difficult working conditions.

All of the interviewed women claimed that after the death of their husband they experienced financial difficulties and became poorer. Two of the four women with regular jobs before or during their marriage had quitted the workforce before the death of the husband. The remaining six entered job search after the death of the husband and for the first time in their lives.

Bilge had started to six years before her husband's death, and she is the personnel of the same cleaning company since nine years. Through the company, she is sent to clean flats or the stairwells of apartment buildings. Bilge, whose husband was ill and unemployed, had started to work due to financial difficulties. Even though she was working part time and receiving social insurance for only half of the

month, she is still considered socially insured and hence is not able to receive widow's pension. Together with the donations from her acquaintances, her monthly income is 800 TL. She is not able to take up a more regular job since she has a small daughter. Upon the death of her husband, Bilge had increased her working hours in order to make their ends meet. She describes her work conditions as follows:

I do not even have the time to care for myself. I am not able to pay attention to myself. On Sundays I work until 13.00. I have stairwell cleaning after that. After stairwell cleaning I come home and cook. After dinner I either get some rest or take a shower and sleep. In the morning I wake up and send the kids to school one after another. Then I go to stairwell cleaning. After that I come home and cook even without first tidying up. After lunch I go to shopping. Bring the stuff home and go to work. I come back home at 20.30. Think of it, the kids did not have dinner yet. I prepare dinner and we eat. After that I do the dishes, some cleaning, tidying up etc. Or I have to do laundry or so. Since two years I did not even find the time to visit a doctor. (see Appendix B, 26)

Zarife started to clean the stairwells of the buildings in her neighborhood after the death of her husband. She does that three-four times a week. She is not insured. Since her husband was not insured either, and since he had *Yeşil Kart*⁶ they were not eligible for widow's or orphan's pension. She only receives some pension over her deceased father. Zarife's pays 600 TL rent a month and is able to make ends meet with irregular donations. She adds that she occasionally goes to flat cleaning. When she cleans flats, she performs physically intense work for nine hours without a break and finds it very difficult to her poor health. Zarife, who is illiterate and has no work experience from before, explains that the first time she went to cleaning she found it very hard:

It was very difficult, I cried a lot. It was very hard on me. While I was going to work, it felt like everybody was laughing behind my back. While I was young I never worked, my father would not let it. Then I got married. I had to work after the death of my husband. I do it only for my daughter. I only need her to smile. I do not want anything else. (see Appendix B, 27)

6 Green Card is given to the poorest ones to benefit from free health care

Narin, also illiterate, had to find a job after the death of her husband. She too goes to stairwell cleaning and is not insured. Since her husband was not insured either, she does not receive widow's pension. Her sole income is the cleaning money. Narin, similar to Zarife, says that it was tough at the beginning:

After his death, I was feeling I had no reason to live on. I felt that way for three-four years. I did not expect anything from life. Afterwards I've started cleaning work and my life started to change slowly. It was like I have to do this, I have to work for the good of my son. I started to think like I have to change my life, this can not go on like this. And I changed my life little by little. I am working half-a-day. My husband left nothing behind. No insurance. No pension. Since my son was very small I could not work at first. I started to work one year after my husband. My neighbor was doing cleaning work. She told me she can arrange the same job for me so that I could focus on something else. The first time I went to cleaning with her. Friends helped me to find similar cleaning jobs. I've learnt the trade with time. When you work the first time, it is hard whatever you do. After doing it once or twice I got used to it. Now I clean two flats. On two days of the week. I find the work very tiring, but I have to do it and as such I do it. Now I can not find the time to take care of my own home. (see Appendix B, 28)

Asiye started to work one year before her husband died since he was ill. While her children are at school, she works half-day. She cleans flats and what she earns is barely enough for her rent. Her only additional source of income is the widow's and orphan's pension. Asiye says that the only good thing about working is that it prevents you from listening to yourself. She adds that work helps to forget:

When I listen to myself I feel myself in a void. I am able to forget while at work. I work, yet I am ill, I have three kids, we do not own a flat and pay rent, my burdens are heavy. We have to stand on our own feet. I visited our neighbors one by one. I guess they also hear from each other. Very rarely do I have to work in faraway districts, usually I was able to find something nearby. I have also informed the *muhtar* about it. He helped too. Usually I was working half-day while the children were at school. Actually while my husband was alive it was also very difficult. I had to care for him too, I was not getting any sleep at night, he was very ill. Now it is even more difficult because I am worn out. The work is very hard. I sometimes have problems at work. Some people are grumpy and mean. They do not like what you do and then you have to do it all over again. I remain quiet, and they use that. If they

tell me to do it again, I comply. This is hard on me. [Additionally] I sell what I knit. This is good for me because while at home I used to scratch myself unconsciously, I was getting bruises on my face, on my fingers without being aware. Then I learned to keep my fingers busy with knitting tools and wool. Moreover, I started to make money by selling what I knit. The buyers are my neighbors. Some buy them because of need, others to support me. I am good at it, they like what I do. (see Appendix B, 29)

Derya, who lives with her two children and her parents-in-law, receives widow's pension. She says that with the retirement pension of her father-in-law and the donations from around, they barely make their ends meet. Derya is looking for a regular job but is not able to work as a cleaning woman since she has a serious back condition, which prevents her from doing hard work. She adds: "Since I am not educated I can not find any other job". Nevertheless, after the death of her husband, she had done things like babysitting to earn some income for one and a half years.

Duygu, who explains she had severe financial difficulties, started to go to cleaning and housekeeping jobs one year after her husband. She adds that at the beginning she was doing so only occasionally, because she did not know how it really works, and since she had no prior experience. Moreover, she had to keep it at that since her child was still small and the husband's family had refused to care for her. Duygu, who had continued going to cleaning jobs occasionally for six years, has now a more regular job in a restaurant kitchen that she found 2-3 years ago. However, her employment drew criticism from her husband's family and she encountered difficulties as of a working widow:

Now, some people come to where I work, of course they do not know me, they do not know about me. They ask questions like, do not your husband work, is it only you who works etc. Sometimes I say he does work, sometimes I say he is unemployed. These are some of my answers, at other times I do not answer them at all, I pretend not to have heard. I do not want them to know. I do not know whether what they think about me would change if they'd know about me. And sometimes I do not feel like letting

them learn about me. (see Appendix B, 30)

Güler, as in the case of Duygu, received criticism from her husband's family after finding a job. Nevertheless, unlike Duygu, Güler had to quit her job since the reaction of the family was much more severe. Güler, highly-educated and holding a profession, ended up nearly worse than the other women in the sample. And actually it was because she could not claim the inheritance of her husband that she had to find a job so that she could care for her mentally challenged child.

Güler:

In the marketing and sales department they were looking for an office worker to welcome clients and guests They hired me and I started to work. For me, the work was not difficult, but his parents were putting pressure on me. "You can not go! You can not do it! You will not", they would not let me work. So they prevented me from working. My mother-in-law would call me again and again. She kept calling me, annoying me. "Did we leave you hungry in under our roof? Do you work because you we left you to starve?" A friend from the office told me that I can not work under that stress. They did not want others say that they had let their bride work. They do not give their bride her right to the inheritance of her husband, yet they do not want her to progress. They want their bride to sit when they say sit, and stand up when they say stand up. 'If we have a demand, we demand it from you. Otherwise you will sit there and wait. What can we do, your husband died, you have lost everything'

It was after my third week at work. She called me at 1.30AM. Wanted to talk to my mother. She called my mother nasty things. My mother said, you are what you say. Ugly words. [The eldersister of her husband calles and starts to argue with Guler's mother over her employment] My mother said "you first raise your kid. If you are in need, we can help you. Why do you work? Let your kid grow first. You have a home, go there and take care of it. I called my boss, the manager. I've explained the situation. I think they've waited for some days to see whether I change my mind. I was undecided too. I think my family acted passively. My father could have called her husband to say 'who is your wife to talk to my wife like that!'. He did not. (see Appendix B, 31)

Güler tried to find a new job after she moved in with her mother but this time she came across sexual harassment:

There is also another aspect. You go to an interview, and in our sector you need reference letters from the people you know. Once I have been to an

office for a job interview. The man there quitted talking about the application process, and moved on to a different topic. I think if I would say anything he would say that I misunderstood him and continue the job interview. I realized his intentions and said that I have to leave to pick my kid from school. I grabbed my bag and immediately left. By chance, on the way back I came across my friend who had written the reference letter. She said we should issue a complaint and that he has no right to do that. I refused that. I thought the man would say that it was me who made the advance and spread bad rumors about me. I did not want to pursue it, I thought maybe someone else would do if he repeats it. So we closed the matter. I mean you are in no position to defend yourself. They can say things about you. (see Appendix B, 32)

Hayat, educated and having a profession as in the case of Güler, explains she too had difficulties finding a job.

I have been through financial problems. I was trying to make ends meet with what I received from relatives and friends. But now I have to consider working because under current circumstances it is not possible to let my kids receive education on my own I am looking for a job, I can not have a full-day job, because I have a teen girl. I am looking for part-time job with the according salary. I started to work while I was at high-school. Five years into our marriage my child was born and I quitted my job. Considering the internship period too I was employed for total of nine years. They would not employ me according to my profession anymore due to my age. (see Appendix B, 33)

Hayat did not encounter any reaction from her or her husband's family, nevertheless the main reason she is reluctant to find a job is her fear of sexual harassment.

Hayat:

Look, this is one of reasons why I do not find a job. This is why I am afraid of being employed. Now if I find work, I want it to be a desk job again. Wherever you go, there is someone who'd hit on me. They'd, even while my husband was alive. If it is not your boss, then it is a colleague. If it is not a colleague than it is a shopkeeper... Believe me I am scared. This is what they do to widows. I've never worked after my husband's death, I am really scared. They ask what my husband is doing, I say he is dead, and it is game on for them. (see Appendix B, 34)

Esra had occasional cleaning and housekeeping jobs after the death of her husband and is now working in the kitchen of a restaurant since four years. However she too, as in the case of Güler and Hayat, explains that social pressure and harassment are some of her most significant worries.

You can not be at the front. It is difficult to be young too. It's like a crime I cannot comprehend. To be a working woman with dignity is difficult, especially if you do not have a husband. People want to use you, they may mess up with you, annoy you just for their own joy and pleasure It is very difficult for a widowed woman to work, you know. In a place like Turkey, in a place like Istanbul, the way you dress, the way you sit, the way you smile, everything can be a source of gossip about you. (see Appendix B, 35)

Seher, who has been working at the same company in the last twenty years, is probably in the most advantageous position in terms of employment if we consider the rest of the sample. In this respect, she sets an example for the importance of a regular and reliable job for a woman who lost her husband. Seher explains that she too had financial difficulties and had to pay a lot of debts after her husband, nevertheless adds that her workplace has always provided security to her. Seher, who had given birth to her child only forty days before the loss of her husband, started to work again one month after the death. She underlines the importance of her workplace as "I have always been grateful for working at such an institution, they were always there for me, I am not alone".

The relationship between the type of employment and women's educational status is explained by the statements of the women themselves. The three illiterate and two primary school graduate women have the most difficult and unsecure jobs. On the other hand, the women at the highest level of education suffer from unemployment. While high levels of education directs the women toward more public and open zones of employment, the increase in the oppression from the family

and prospects of abuse keep the women away from work life.

4.3.3 New responsibilities

The interviewed women report that after the death of their husband new practices, problems and responsibilities entered their lives. These novelties that we gather under the title new responsibilities can be listed as livelihood-financial management, home (moving and rent), things to be carried out outside, doctors/counselors, work-child dilemma, pension and official support, paper-work such paying the bills, making decisions on your own, attending to children's education, following legal proceedings related to husband, and finally the struggle for inheritance rights.

The topic of livelihood-financial management was on the agenda of all the interviewed women. Asiye describes her financial difficulties with the following words: "I had not experienced lack of livelihood before, it was very hard on me. Initially I struggled a lot. She adds that it is not an easy task and continues: "My rent is 900 TL and I have no income but my widow pension. What am I going to do? Of course I cry and cry. Duygu says: "At the beginning I had a lot of financial difficulties. All the burden was on my shoulders" and explains that she learned to manage her finances with time. Bilge describes similar financial difficulties and describes how she learned to manage with the money she had: "There was no one I could talk to. Only me. Always on my own. I could tell no one if I had nothing. I could tell no one if I had no money. No I can not. Even if I am hungry and have nothing but bread and onions, I can not". Esra describes how she learned not to share her difficulties with others as follows: "Because if you do not know better and go to others to ask them lend you some money, they misinterpret that. They develop

expectations about what you will do in return”. Hayat mentions that when her husband died, there was only 100 TL and a pack of cigarettes in his pockets and adds that they are not able to purchase what they need and want as before. She describes how she learned to handle the money as follows: “I figured that you can not spend today what you earn today. You always have to put some money aside. You will know how to hold the money that you have”. Similarly, Güler states that there were days when they would only eat plain pasta and soup, but had learned do deal with financial difficulties on her own without asking the assistance of others. Zarife says that after her husband’s death they faced severe poverty and hunger. She adds that there were times when she did not have bread to feed her child, and that even under these conditions they would receive some support from neighbors only if they come and offer it, but she would never go to them to ask for help herself. Narin, who tells that upon her husband’s death she was dependent on the resources of her husband’s family, had started to work so that she could but manage things on her own and adds that she does not want herself or her children to be dependent on others. Derya explains that she learned to make do with what she had, but adds that their expenses increased as the children grew and hence she started to work despite her poor health. Seher, who has been in the workforce for 24 years, describes the financial difficulties they faced since she had to pay the debts of her husband after his death. She says: “I continue my struggle and I have to feel strong”.

All of the interviewed women declare that after the husband’s death new difficulties regarding their home started to emerge and they had to deal with these problems.

Asiye explains that the landlord wants them to move from their current place,

where they had lived since many years, but the children do not want to leave the neighborhood. Asiye, who can not afford to live anywhere else, is trying to convince the landlord. Derya states that whereas it is not easy to pay her rent, she does not have a place to stay in her birthplace either. Zarife, on the other hand, tells that she had to move because her place was within the scope of an urban transformation project, and adds that it was very hard to find a new place. She was not able to find a new flat for a long time and explains how she struggled with those difficulties:

We knew in advance when it was going to be demolished due to urban transformation. I looked for a flat until the summer. There were available flats but they were too expensive. I only needed a roof on our top. One of my neighbors said, you can not find flat, what are you gonna do? She said, she asked all around for me. Then she told me that there was a penthouse that was empty for two years right across her apartment. I said to her that they would not give that flat to me. She said I should still ask and let them know that she had sent me.

I asked the owners of the house, first they said no and then while I was departing they asked for my phone number. I gave it. They did not even let me to see the inside. I was crying a lot. My daughter was telling me not to be upset. I was crying so much because I could not find a flat, I thought we would end up on the street. I told my daughter that we could rent that place if it is not too expensive. I told her we will manage even if the flat is not nice, all we needed was four walls and a roof. She was still asking what we would do if the roof leaks during winter.

Then the landlord called me. He asked how we make our ends meet. I explained my situation again. I told him that I will not disappoint him. I said I will always pay my rent and bills on time. I would give the money to him even if my daughter would go hungry. (see Appendix B, 36)

Narin, the building in which she stayed was subject to urban transformation too, had to look for a new flat and says that there is reluctance to take widows as tenant:

Now the rents are going up. I can only afford 400 or 500 TL. But the rent are around 700-800TL. They ask how many people will stay in the flat. I say it's only me and my son. Do not you have a husband? I say he is dead and that I stay with my son. I have been to visit some flats but they would not give it to me. They do not give an explanation, they just say they will not give it to me. I think that [that I am a widow] is the reason. They do not give a reason, just

no. Sometimes I'd take my brother-in-law with me. If you are compelled to, you do whatever it takes. (see Appendix B, 37)

For Güler, who had to move to her parent's due to the pressure from her husband's family even though she had inherited a flat from him, the situation got very difficult. The husband's family had never accepted Güler and her children. They were coming to Güler's place without letting her know in advance. Their disturbing behavior towards her had become more frequent over time. Therefore, Güler had to move out of that flat and could not even rent that flat to provide some income for her family. She explains that she considered taking legal action against her husband's family over the inheritance rights for the house, but adds that since her and his families are related, her family did not want that to happen. Thus, Güler is obliged to live with her mother. Duygu, whose hardships are reminiscent of Güler's, tells that she would like to move but she could not do it:

I considered moving. A lot. I shared my thoughts with my family. They said, if that is what you want, do it; nevertheless do not strengthen their hand with that [because if she moves out of the flat, she may lose the property rights to the flat]. I thought about it, it is true that his family did not have financial contribution to him in that sense. He worked, earned the money, and bought the flat, the car, all the stuff in the house himself. But they do not belong to me either. He has a child [their daughter]. I endured for her sake. Back then I considered moving out a lot. I wanted to go away from there. Away from them, away from everybody. They resented Bahar [thinking that she remained distant to them]. She was just a child, only 6 or 7, how would she know? I stayed there because my daughter, Bahar, did not want to move. She was a little child. I talked to her about it. I asked her 'How would you like it if we go away from here? To somewhere else? We could rent a flat and live together.' She said she did not want it and that she likes it here a lot. (see Appendix B, 38)

Bilge tells that her father-in-law bought a flat while his son was ill, nevertheless only after the son's death they found out about the mortgage on the flat.

There is a mortgage on the flat. We do not know the exact amount, but there is a mortgage. It is because of the previous owner. My parents-in-law knew about it and yet bought it like that. They should not have done it. They should

have first made sure the mortgage is lifted and then sign the papers. They did not know about these matters and accepted it like that. So there is this mortgage. It is a source of stress for use. My daughters are scared, they say 'Mom, how are we to live without a place, who is going to take care of us?' (see Appendix B, 39)

Upon losing her husband, Esra was left with the debts for the flat they had bought just before his death. Her family did not want her to live on her own in that district, and accordingly she moved to a rented flat in the same neighborhood as her family. One year after the move, her family buys a flat for her. Esra argues that without her family everything would be much more difficult and adds that she is grateful to them. Hayat lives in the flat they had bought while her husband was still alive, but she feels insecure about her situation. She explains 'Yes, we own it, but there is no title deed. I wish I would not be living here and own a flat with a title deed. I have anxiety now. If the urban transformation reaches here, they could destroy the building and I am afraid I would end up with nothing'. Seher, who used to live in a rented flat before her husband's death, was provided free accommodation by the firm she worked at. Seher, who otherwise would not be able to afford a rented flat, describes the difficulties of living in a 50 square meter as a family of five.

Another issue that is high up in the women's new agenda concerns the matters they have to take care of outside. This topic, which covers from shopping to bill payments together with other paperwork, had become part of the daily life of all women after the death of their husbands. In order to deal with these matters, the women had pushed their opportunities for access to information in their vicinity and entered an intense process of learning.

Zarife describes how difficult she finds that kind of outside stuff.

Previously, I would not go out even if the hell breaks loose. And if I did, I would be unable to find the way back home. I swear I could not. Even going

to the store was a big deal. After the death of my husband, I was like, what am I going to do? I will have to go to pay the bills, I will have to go the municipality for social support, and I will do that all alone! He used to take of that kind of stuff. I had never been in a situation like that before. Will I be able to do it? I never believed I could. I forced myself though. I had to, so I tried. Before my husband's death, I was not seeing the neighbors, he would not let me. He was jealous; he did not want me to go out. I had never used the public transport. I would ask the neighbors, how to take the bus, how to go to a place etc. I was afraid to take the bus, I am illiterate you know, what would happen if I'd take the wrong bus, where would I end up? I had to ask all the time. It is very bad you see. While I was trying to pay a single bill, I would have to ask five or six people for directions. Where do I have to go to pay a given bill, how much is it anyway? My daughter would tell me in the evening, mom this bill is 20 TL but I would wake up the next day and would be confused, not knowing whether it was 20 or 15 TL. Then I would ask on the way two or three people to read the bill and tell me how much I have to pay. (see Appendix B, 40)

Narin too says she had to take care of outside stuff after the death of her husband and that she found it very difficult. She explains that she had to ask her acquaintances and neighbors to find out how to do that, and adds that for a couple of times she ended up in the wrong place. Narin, similar to Zarife, believes that the reason she find these matters so hard is her illiteracy. Asiye, a primary school graduate, describes similar problems:

For me the most difficult part was shopping and paying the bills. I did not know how to pay bills. I had to pay each separately and it was difficult. I had a neighbor whose husband would not take care of this kind of outside stuff. So she knew about these things. She told me how to do it. So I would go and take care of those matters on my own. However, it was very difficult. It was my husband who used to do the shopping too. He knew what is needed at home much better than I did. And the store is downhill from our place. It is difficult to walk back carrying all the shopping bags. Nevertheless, I do all that now. Yes, I walk uphill and carry the bags. It is me who has to do that. Take care of that. So I try managing it all on my own. (see Appendix B, 41)

Duygu too says that the outside stuff is hard for her:

He [the husband] used to take care of all the paperwork and other outside stuff. Those were on him mostly. We would only go shopping together. And we did not have the time to go to the weekly market anyway. After he was gone, everything was on me. All the outside stuff, the paper-work, the bills, the matters of the child, housekeeping, all on me. One way or another this is

quite a lot and affects me negatively and gets on me. It is hard on me both financially and emotionally. Sometimes I feel like I have hit bottom. Feels like I can not take it anymore. (see Appendix B, 42)

Esra, on the other hand, describes how that at the end of all the difficulties she had in these matters, she has finally become an expert and uses the expression “I have become an old hand”.

I would never pay a bill. I never had to, and I did not know how to do it. My husband would tell me to let him do it. I would never go to the bank. It was only children and home... Nevertheless, one gets used to the new life, to everything. Now I can handle all that myself. [What she found difficult at the beginning] Bills. However, now that too got easy with automatic payments from your account. That did not exist before. I went to the bank and asked the bank teller, whom I asked how to pay the bills, explained it to me but I would not understand, it would not go into my head. I was like ‘Oh Lord, where am I, where will I go to, how will I go there, how to do all this’. But after some time it was OK. Once a friend was going to pay bills and asked me how I could handle all that. I said, I did not know anything at the beginning, but with time and obligation, you become an old hand at that. (see Appendix B, 43)

Seven of the interviewed women had been involved in lawsuits. The cases display similarities regarding the inheritance right issues and the investigations that were opened according to the reason of death of the husband. Duygu, who has been through the shortest legal process in the sample, describes the difficulty of having to deal with such legal matters immediately after her loss

[The legal actions required for obtaining the property rights for the flat inherited from her husband] Of course, I did it all myself. It was very hard, my husband had died only very recently. You could not even understand what is going on properly. I went there, there were also some other coming with me. I had to do it, but I do not even exactly remember how it was. I was feeling bad. It was very hard on me, all those legal affairs. I would go there feeling OK, but would come back rock bottom. (see Appendix B, 44)

Güler who legally earned the right to the inheritance of her husband is nevertheless not able to use those rights due to the pressure of the husband’s family. Moreover, their severe harassment of her had become unbearable. Even she had

considered filing a legal complaint against them, she had not started the process.

Furthermore, Güler had to follow the lawsuit regarding the suicide of her husband.

That too had led to the problems with the husband's family.

When the district attorney came to investigate the scene, he had recorded me and my husband's brother as the complainants. I did not know that. It was a chaotic time for us, all topsy-turvy. Later, I went to see the district attorney and told him that I wanted the letter my husband had left behind. I wanted to know what he had written. Actually it was me who had seen the letter first. I had read it. His nephew was there, she read it too. After the police officer saw it, it was taken from us. Thus I knew more or less what was written, but I may have not completely understood it with the initial shock. So I went to the district attorney and asked for the letter. He said that my husband's younger brother who was a complainant took it. I asked whether the brother entitled to take it at all. The district attorney asked me whether there was an animosity between us. Even though I had never liked his brother, I said no. He said that he will get me a copy. (see Appendix B, 45)

In spite of the three years that have past, the lawsuit regarding the reason of the death of Seher's husband is still continuing. Seher, who follows the case, is worried that her children may hear about the possibility of suicide. Even though Seher thinks it was a suicide, since the case is not closed the reason of death is still not clear. Asiye, on the other hand, was sued because of the heavy tax debt of her husband about which she had found out only after his death. Her husband was running a business with some his relatives. After his death, his relatives did not fulfill their responsibilities about tax payments and the whole burden was on Asiye's shoulders. As a result of that Asiye had to give the flat, which was the only asset inherited from her husband, to the state, and a lawsuit about that was still going on. She says that her husband's family had wronged her, and adds that she is both emotionally and financially depressed due to the lawsuit. She was not able to find legal support except from one her lawyer relatives. She is not talking to her husband's brother and other involved relatives due to this reason.

Hayat had experienced a very intense legal process since her husband was killed in work accident. She explains in detail the problems that may be faces by a woman who lost her husband in this way:

In the hospital I was asking where his bosses are. This is a work accident, where are they. Then the bosses came. The state attorney asked me whether I would like to make a complaint against them. I did not do it on that day. I told them that I want the responsible person to be charged. I wanted that there will be an investigation to find out who has responsible for his death and I wanted that person to be punished. However, the incident was heard around and lawyers came to talk to me. They told me to sue the company and explained that I could receive 200.000 TL in compensation. I said no. The lawyers said that we would receive the money even if the company owners were not at fault. I told them I would not want that, I wanted only that the person responsible for the death will be sued. They did not want to sue that person because that would not bring much money. The lawyers were in for money. I did not sue the company owners. Soon there will be another trial. I see the state attorney quite often since there documents to be picked up, they are needed for the trial. I see him when I have to pick up the forensic health reports. Then I have to give those documents to a lawyer. Anyway I am in sorrow, I hold my grief. The state attorney was like “Girl, you always come here all alone, do not you have anybody to help you? I said there is no one. He said ‘But I have seen you in the hospital, you were surrounded by many people’. I told him, they were there on that day, but are not there anymore. I said I needed a very good lawyer for the lawsuit. He said no, you need a very honest lawyer. I said, how I can find an honest lawyer? Later he told me that at the end of the lawsuit, no one would receive a sentence. We are orphaned, we are widowed, that’s that. I was humane and did not sue the bosses, it was a mistake. I wish it would appear in the media, they could have been punished then. I do not go to the trials because it damages my psychology. (see Appendix B, 46)

It is remarkable Hayat was sued because of her little child. This had happened to Bilge too.

Hayat:

I could not retire because of my debts to the social security institution [*BAGKUR*]. I do not have the money to pay. We had a car. It was officially my husband’s, I could not obtain the right to it, since Elif is the official heir. Only one week after my husband’s death, I received a letter from the court. It was about children’s rights and stuff, as if I was stealing that what belongs to my child. I went to testify. No notary would give me procuration because my child is still little. So I can not obtain the right to the car and sell it. (see Appendix B, 47)

Bilge:

I received a letter about Berfin. It was because she was a child [Berfin was 6 at the time of his father's death]. The state seizes the assets inherited by a child temporarily until the child reaches 18. Thus, a letter came from the court. First we were afraid thinking they will take Berfin away from us. But fear does not help anything. We went there with my daughters. The judge said that it was not about that. They were only trying to determine whether she had any assets. Thank God we were through that too. (see Appendix B, 48)

Moreover, together with the lawsuit regarding the mortgage of the house inherited from her husband, Bilge was involved in another legal affair with her neighbors. One of the neighbors of Bilge, whose attitudes toward Bilge had changed after her widowhood, had made a complaint about Bilge's elder daughter who was 17. At the end of the trial it was revealed that the accusations were false. Bilge describes that process which was very hard for her as follows:

One day Hazal called me and said that she was called to the police station to testify. I was shocked. Police? Testimony? I had never been to a police station, I was so staggered. I got angry. So we went there and asked what is going on. They said Simge [the neighbor's daughter] had made a complaint. They said we have to wait for the lawyers to arrive. I was staggered, I felt there is no place for us. I was furious. I had never been in a police station before. I had never been to court. Then some lawyer came, from the bar I guess. Then we came home. I was so mad at Hazal. I went to bed very early with the whole anger that evening.

On the trial day, we went to the police station, they put us in a car and took us to the courthouse. When I saw the other kids in the car, I felt like I was losing it. Very young boys, all charged with drug related offences, they were also on their way to the court. There was a cop there. He saw us. He said that Hazal and I can go to the court in different vehicles, so that Hazal will not have to be in the same car as those boys. So we were at the court, the lawyer came, we were told that Hazal was accused with threatening Simge. I was feeling there is no world for us, no place for us. I felt like it was me who is guilty. I felt like a nasty criminal. I was like 'oh God how is this day going to end?' With all that anger I started having pains in the stomach. I went to the toilette and realized I had bleeding. Due to anger.

Two months later there was the trial. She [the neighbor's daughter who had made the complaint] had said that "I was jealous because my boyfriend told me that he finds Hazal pretty so I lied about her and made a

false statement. The case was closed. (see Appendix B, 49)

All these legal proceedings have on Bilge both financial and emotional burdens on Bilge.

My colleagues from work had collected among themselves some money for me. In hard times, they supported me. I used that money for instance for the inheritance right lawsuit. For the bank, for the documents, for the insurance, for the flat; I used that money. That's life. I had to go to places I've never been to, I've done things I had never done before. But that also showed me that life goes on. So there is death yes, but there is also a life beyond, a life that is different. I was on my own. (see Appendix B, 50)

Another new aspect of the interviewed women's lives corresponds to dealing with health problems. Of the 10 women, 8 had received psychiatric support; the remaining two had felt the need too, nevertheless they were not able to afford it. Also four of the interviewees' children are receiving psychological help. It is quite remarkable that the women needed this kind of mental health support after they have lost their husbands. Duygu reports one of the most intense experiences in this regard. She starts seeing a psychiatrist right immediately after the death of her husband. Despite the ten years since her loss, she is still taking psychiatric medication.

I went to the psychiatrist after my husband's death. I took medication. I had very severe episodes. Sometimes it was very hard. I even needed someone to stay with me. I was taking a lot of sleeping pills. It was like if I was able to sleep properly for six months, then I could not sleep at all for another six months. I guess the body adapts after a while, like if I can not sleep, so be it. I used to be concerned about my inability to sleep. I am taking sleeping pills anymore. But I used to take a lot of them before; I could not sleep without them. (see Appendix B, 51)

Güler who started seeing a psychiatrist one month after her husband's death, describes the pills she has been taking for the last two and a half years as "my best friends. Güler remembers that the psychiatrist had found it remarkable that she was seeking psychiatric support on her own.

Güler:

I decided to go to a psychiatrist and went there. The doctor asked who was with me. I said I came alone. And I explained the situation. I said I have to get over this. I said that my daughter is having speech problems. She was four back then. The doctor said, there is nothing wrong with you, you will overcome this. The doctor asked how my husband died. I said it was suicide. He asked “Could not you see it coming at all? I said, yes but this is where we are now. Me and my daughter are seeing the psychologist and the psychiatrist of the municipality. We do not have much money. So we are using the social services provided by the municipality and the state. I get informed about those, I ask people about such services. (see Appendix B, 52)

Hayat was suffering from insomnia like Duygu. Nevertheless, even though

Hayat has been to a psychiatrist, she had refused to take medication whenever possible.

Hayat:

For six months I had no sleep. I could only sleep two hours a day. When my husband died, for some days I did not sleep at all. My body was very tired. I was begging to God for making the days past. I was counting the days. It was the only thing I wished for, you know. I wanted the days to pass, the time to pass. Since I knew one thing, with time, my pain would ease. I got sick because of sorrow. I was in depression. I developed a strange condition. I would have the hiccoughs the whole day. I could not even go out. This lasted for quite some time, I knew I had to see a doctor. However, I knew the doctor would give me antidepressants. I hate antidepressants, they have strange effects on me. They make sleep a lot. Even at the time of his death, I only received a single injection. The doctor back then gave me also a bag-full of antidepressants but I did not take any of them. I was patient. Nevertheless those hiccoughs were bad. Some friends were making fun of that. I could not go out at all, luckily it was winter time. The first thing the doctor asked was whether there was something making me sad. I thought to myself, if I say yes, the doctor will prescribe antidepressants. I said, no there is nothing making me sad. He actually knew about the death of my husband. The doctor said I have to take the medication, there is no other way around. I took them for three weeks. Actually, I was supposed to finish the whole package but I took them for 15 days only [15 days and 3 weeks discrepancy]. The hiccoughs were gone. (see Appendix B, 53)

Hayat, who finds taking medication wrong, explains that she sought other types of counseling, but in the case of one counselor she met through an

acquaintance, she became victim of sexual harassment:

He told me to that I have to bid farewell to my husband. I told him that I do not want to do that and stopped seeing him. That's because I noticed he had different thoughts about me. I realized that he was trying to profit from my pain and establish a different kind of friendship with me. I stopped seeing him then. I threw him out of my life. (see Appendix B, 54)

Widows, who are completely foreign to this new responsibilities, must learn about this new life, in order to cope with it. The area where women's relationships with their neighbors has expanded is in asking them for information on how to find work, paying bills, and other things they have not done before. This relationships create a network which is the source of the knowledge and skills that women need to deal with the new responsibilities.

4.3.4 Support systems

Five of the interviewed women are receiving widow's pension and orphan's pension since their deceased husband used to have social security. Three women, who are employed with social security, do not receive such a pension. One woman receives orphan's pension for herself over her deceased father. Her child, on the other hand, does not receive any pension. One woman neither receives widow's or orphan's pension, nor is employed with social security. She lives on the money she receives for daily cleaning jobs. Apart from those, the main source of monetary support comprises the donations from local governmental institutions, municipalities and neighbors, whereby the *muhtar* plays an intermediary role.

Five of the interviewed women declared that they had applied for donations and benefits at the muhtar or state/municipality institutions and added that these were indispensable for their livelihood. Three of these women can not read and write and

the two others have primary school degrees.

Derya, who receives widow and orphan's pension over her husband, is not able to work due to her health. Another source of income for Derya and her children, who live together with Derya's parents-in-law, corresponds to the retirement pension of her father-in-law. Nevertheless, for a family of five living in a rented flat, these are not enough, and accordingly Derya is in need of financial support:

The municipality used to provide financial support, but after they came to our home and checked on us they discontinued it since there are two pensions. They used to send food packages and stuff. Then they said they do not provide that for homes with two pensions. There are some very charitable people though. They go to the muhtar and say they want to provide cloths aid for orphans in the district. Usually it's cloths aid. They buy cloths for the girls. In the last couple of years I did not need to buy those things myself. They provide shoes, other cloths etc. In Ramadan, they send some money, nice cloths. We did not have anything to do with the muhtar before. But you receive the poverty document from the muhtar, and you explain your situation. Then she calls you if there is some donation or so. Sometimes for the support you are going to receive there is a lot of paperwork and you have to go to different offices. I was never used to doing that kind of work before. I would not even go to the bank before. (see Appendix B, 55)

Zarife receives orphan's pension over her late father. She too, similar to Derya, underlines the difficulties associated with applying for aid:

I do not have insurance, I receive pension over my father. There is nothing that I receive over my husband. I receive the pension inherited from my father but that is only 400 TL. My mother is alive, we share it. I go to the municipality, to the social aid office, on my own. It is quite hard on me; I force myself to do it. I wait in the cue for hours. I have asked the neighbors. I did not know how to go there, how to use the public transport. The municipality is giving us 100 TL a month. I was told that since I have social security [from my father], I can not receive the widow's pension. I did not want to terminate my father's social insurance. I have to go to the doctor all the time. How could I afford that if there would be no insurance? My husband used to receive medical services with his "green card". He did not have any social insurance. The municipality sends an SMS in case there is aid suitable for use, they have our numbers. They tell us where and when to meet and I go there with other women. This happens every three months. I also receive benefaction and other aid from the neighbors. (see Appendix B, 56)

Bilge says that the main source of aid for her is her colleagues and acquaintances. Moreover, for every single monetary aid she has received since the death of her husband, she remembers the quantity and the donor. For her, this is very serious and such things can not be forgotten.

Bilge:

At work, they helped me a lot especially right after the death of my husband. They have collected money among themselves and gave it to me. You know what; non-relatives helped me more than my relatives. When I go to stairwell cleaning, there is always someone to open the door and give me money. They give the money even if I try to refuse. If I go to clean a flat, I clean it as if it were my own home. But if the deal is 50 TL and they try to offer 60TL, I never accept it. Even if they insist saying that I have done more than enough. (see Appendix B, 57)

Bilge explains that at the institutions she has been to for aid applications, she was not treated well. Later she started to receive support from the district governorship:

When I first went there, the guys there were not hospitable to me. They told me that I already have social insurance and hence can not receive pension. He gave me my papers and told me to go away. Once I was returning those papers and received a phone call from the local governorship. It was a woman, she told me that the local governor wanted to pay me a visit. The local governor came. Asked me what I want. I said I do not want anything but a pension to ensure the education of my children. And to make my home warm during winter. Because we, me and my children, are afraid to turn on the heating, I told him. We can not pay the bill. He said they can provide some aid and but no pension since I had social insurance. He said that if I terminate my insurance, then they I could receive pension. I told him that I can not do that. He added though that I can always ask for their help in case of need. Well, they give 600 TL every 3 or 4 months. They used to give the aid every three months but months have passed since the last time. That is, they give it when I need it, it is not like a pension or so. The municipality gave us a card to withdraw the 250 TL that they send every three months. (see Appendix B, 58)

Narin, the youngest of the interviewees at 32, is illiterate and does not receive any pension. When she applied for aid she was refused and was told “you are young,

go find a job:

I inherited nothing from my husband. He was not insured. So, no pension. I did not have anything to do with the muhtar before my husband's death. After that, she would call me in case there is some aid or donation. I would go there to pick it up. I have been to some institutions. I was told that I am young and able to work. I was told to look for a job. They said I can not live on aid. They kept repeating it "You are young, you can work. I was told that they could send arrange preschool education for my child and find me a job. My child di not want to go there. And I did not accept their offer. (see Appendix B, 59)

Hayat describes the difficulty of obtaining the pension. Since her husband had insurance debts, Hayat could not receive the pension for months, and had to deal with a lot of bureaucratic matters in order to pay his debts and obtain the pension. What is even worse, while doing so, she became victim of abuse.

You would think it's simple, but I've struggled so hard to get the pension. Now I will retire for that purpose have to find my documents and pay the remaining debts for it. This is serious trouble. You do not have any income. Your psychological state does not let you work. How long can you live on aid from others? They may give it one day, but not on the next day.

In one single day I have been to 7 different governmental offices. I was so hungry since I could not even find the time to eat anything. I had waked up very early and directly went there. Then I have been to one office and there was this guy. I was so tired and depressed, my face was completely pale. And then I started to cry. He asked me to explain what is wrong. I told him that my husband had died, and that some documents that I needed for the pension could not be found. And that guy, he hit on me, can you believe it? He told me he will help me. And I had no other choice. He was supposed to go to the archive and simply get my file and give it to me. But rather than doing that, he was making advances to me! He said that we can go to a pub after work, that we can drink a beer. He was hitting on me like that and I was not saying anything. Why? Because I was under his thumb. He could go to the archive, destroy my file and I could not retire in a thousand years. So I had to endure all that. I needed him to get my file. So I did not say a word. I could not say no, I could not say I will not meet you. I was just silent. I was already in sorrow, I was crying. He went to the archive and came back after half an hour. He gave me the file. The office was about to close. He asked me to go out with him, to drink tea or so. I said that my daughter's school was over and there was no one to pick her up and I had to go there immediately. And I had my hands on the file, but I needed to return the file back to him after I used it. The next time I was there, he saw me and started to approach. He must have thought I would be a piece of cake. However I did not go to

him, but to the clerk on the other desk. And I explained to him everything and submitted a complaint about the other guy. My application was complete.

You have to remain silent first, but then you have to show them what you are made of. You have to file a complaint too. Because they have the power to ruin your life. He can destroy your documents, lose them on purpose, make an intentional error in your application. They would do that. (see Appendix B, 60)

Esra was able to receive the widow's pension, nevertheless she describes that she was exhausted due to the behaviors of other people waiting in the cue and adds that being a young widow attracts attention.

The first time our pension was deposited in our account, I went to the bank to withdraw it. In the cue, there were only elderly people, and they were like "Oh you poor girl to me. They were all past middle age and were there to get their retirement pension. I was like shining among them. It gets to me when people are like "oh you unlucky poor girl, you know, I try to avoid that, all that pity, you know. It's always the same. "Do you have insurance? Is your flat rented? Do you consider remarriage?, the same questions again and again. I am used to these questions I could say. I am used to these standard questions. I nevertheless want to encounter these questions anymore. (see Appendix B, 61)

Moreover, for some time Esra tried to receive educational aid for her child:

I only received some money as the educational aid of the municipality. And once a year the metropolitan municipality gives school subsidy, I am receiving that. Once the municipality gave me a food package but I did not accept this kind of help. Nevertheless, the muhtar helped me to find a job. (see Appendix B, 62)

Policies such as low rates for widow and orphan pensions, creation of no jobs for widows, not serving educational opportunities for widows, the irregular payments by local governmental bodies and municipalities that are seen as aid reveal that the self-assumed responsibility of the state is reduced to doing a favor, which makes the problem even more severe. The policies disclosed in the narratives of the widows are at the service of the state mentality that expect the benefactors make

donations for widows and orphans out of pity, and advises the widows to go from door to door to collect aid.

4.4 Coping with the new identity

The women who have lost their husbands at least two and a half years ago go through an identity change, which is also related to the altered attitudes of their social environment toward them. Even though this change can be viewed in many different aspects, the statements of the women themselves provide direct clues regarding the changes in marital status, social status, and self-esteem. As a consequence of these, there is also a change in how they view other widows.

4.4.1 Marital status

The women, following the time since the death of their husbands, define themselves with a peculiar marital status. The way they are viewed by their social environment is also altered accordingly. Even though at present this new marital status is legally defined as single, the women define themselves as neither single nor married.

Inevitably, this condition is expressed at best with the concept of a widow. Although all the women were against the usage of the word widow, considering their treatment by their social sphere, the women are not able to project their marital status beyond the notion of widowhood. Whether their legal marital status is given as single, widow, or married in their ID card; whether they still wear the wedding ring; and their views on remarriage are the three domains that reveal the woman's approach to widowhood as a marital status.

Three of the eight of the women who provided their ID marital status info

during the interview are recorded as single. All three had demanded that themselves. In the IDs of three women, the status is given as widow. Whereas two of them had asked for that status themselves, in the case of the other woman the status was labeled as such against her wish to be recorded as single. The remaining two women had not wanted to change their ID cards, and the marital status in their ID is still married, even though it has been at least two and a half years since the death of their husbands. They nevertheless add that they would opt for single in case of a renewal of their ID card. However, despite the three different marital statuses recorded in their IDs, there are commonalities in the reasons behind their preferences for one of the three statuses. Esra, recorded as single, describes her preference as follows:

What I despised most... Well what you despise most always finds you, do not it? What I despised most was the word 'widow'. I went to the register office with my elder brother. I told him, brother, please do not tell them that I am widow, let's not let them record it as a widow. He laughed and said he will not tell them. Then he brought the ID to me, and it read I am single. We later found that a woman if taken off her husband's register after his death automatically anyways. The ID says I am single but I still have his surname. I do not like the word widow. The phrase 'just like a widow' is used very pejoratively. (see Appendix B, 63)

Duygu, also recorded single, tells that she did not demand that specifically. She had asked the register officer to record her status according to the legislations, and it was recorded as single. However, even though she was pleased with the single status, she had received some criticism, including from her sister-in-law.

Considering a potential negative reaction from the husband's family – exemplified by Duygu's sister-in-law - Güler had preferred the widow as her status label. She provides an illustration of what the reaction of the husband's family could look like by saying that "I preferred widow out of respect for his family, if it would be single, they could think that I am in search of a new man. Nevertheless, Güler

adds that the family shows her no respect how hard she tries, and adds that soon she will change the status to single.

Narin, recorded as widow, explains her intention to change it to single by saying that “It is better if the ID says single. The label widow in the ID may be scary for some. There would be no issue if it would be single.

Hayat, who dealt with an enormous amount of paper-work and experienced difficulties in state offices, describes why she preferred the widow status as follows:

One week later we went to the register office. They told me that I may use my maiden name. In that case my surname and my daughter’s surname would differ. Moreover, my marital status in the ID would be single. Well, in future, if I have an official matter to take care of, in a bank, in the tax office etc., and if I have the child with me, would they get a wrong idea about us because of that? So I told them to record it as widow and that I wanted to continue to use my husband’s name. Now my ID depicts the status as widow and my husband’s surname is there. (see Appendix B, 64)

Derya, who did not find it necessary to change her ID card after her husband’s death, argues that she did not experience any problem at any institution because of that. Similarly Asiye had not changed her ID which still depicts her as married. She says that if she ever has to change the ID card “I would not let them record it as widow, I do not like that word, it is a derogatory term.

Another theme mentioned by the women is their wedding ring. Four of the nine interviewed women who had mentioned this topic were still wearing their rings. Three others had done so during the first years after their loss. Bilge, who still wears the ring, says that “I keep the ring against people” and adds “I have it on my finger so that they will not treat me as a widow, because the Turks scorn widows”. The expression ‘scorn’ also entails sexual harassment; she says that the ring is a protection against that too and adds that she hates flattery. Bilge describes that she does not speak more than a few words even at the store to avoid any gossip, and even

refrains from saying good morning. Asiye, who still wears her ring, tells that she accepts herself as still married and wears the ring both for the social environment and her kids. She says “My husband’s name is still inscribed on that ring. I did not want to leave that behind. Moreover, I did not want my children say oh, now she does not even wear the ring. I want to be known as a married woman, I feel better that way. I prefer that”. Derya, who never took her ring off, asks “why would do that?” She adds, “There is no one but the neighbors who know that my husband died. I did not feel the necessity to tell others”. Zarife wears the ring and says “because he is my life companion, the life is the same, still my life companion”. She tells that she feels at ease with the ring while outside. Duygu, who decided not to wear the ring anymore six years after the death of her husband, says that this has angered her sister-in-law. Güler, who wear her engagement ring since the wedding ring is too large for her finger, was told by a friend’s mother that she should get a wedding ring. Hayat, who did not wear the ring even during her marriage since her husband could not do so either due to his job, states that she kept the ring for many years, only to donate it later to a center where she listens to religious talks.

Even though according to the law the women whose husbands die are considered single, the remarriage is significant point of tension for these women within the social sphere. Although there are similarities with the situation faced by divorcees, Asiye and Hayat add that their situation as widow is in some ways distinct. Asiye, whose first marriage had ended with a divorce, says that “The divorce is not as though as ours, because in that case the separation comes with anger. In our case it comes with grief. You break up and you are sad. So divorce is different, death is harder”. Hayat too tells “I wish I was divorced from my husband and that I would

endure the feeling of divorce rather than the grief for my husband. Since that is an indescribable pain”. Zarife describes remarriage as ‘suffering’ and adds that she does not want it. Nevertheless, she adds that there were some exceptions from the people in her vicinity. Zarife, while talking about why she still wears the ring, states that “I will not remarry. I do not want it. I did not want it during the first three years, which was the most difficult phase, and I still do not want it. I can not suffer. They asked my brother a couple of times, he told them that I do not want it”. Narin describes how her husband’s family distanced themselves from her because they thought she is young, she will remarry and go away. She adds that her family had put some pressure on her for remarriage. They wanted her to marry a relative who was divorced with children. She describes her reasons for refusal:

They are in my home town. They tried to take me there with them after the death of my husband. They said I am young and that they will let me remarry someone. They said my child was young and would not even realize it. They said I would have no chance after my son grows up, since he would be jealous. I did not want to have the chance in the first place. I would go to my home town as a guest and never for more than a month. Since I did not move there, they were sour. They became cold. They did not call me, and that was like a message ‘what are you doing there, why are you staying there’. I wanted to stand on my own feet. I did not want to be dependent on anyone. I wanted that both for myself and my boy. We get along better now. They started to accept I will not remarry. They know, it is for my child. They do not talk about that nowadays.

[Was there a specific candidate?]

Yes. A relative. He was divorced with two sons. He wanted to marry me. Had asked my phone number. I did not accept his proposal. He had two sons. Since my son’s psychology is a little disturbed, I could not do that to him. I was afraid he would be mistreated or so. That’s why I said no. (see Appendix B, 65)

Güler tells that her relatives and friends had talked to her about remarriage, and adds that, even though she considered it with an open mind, she thinks it would not be possible for her and that she is pleased with her current conditions:

According to our faith, I do not know whether you belong to a different

religion, the marriage bond disappears after four months and ten days following the death of the spouse. My priority is my daughter. I was devastated by the loss my husband. Recently, it was the mother of one of my husband's friends. She said, Füsün is growing up quick, do not remain alone, you could marry again. I said, I was married for five and a half years. Now, I am used to the absence of a husband. No dominance. I do not believe in soul mates. May be it is very rare, like lottery, it will not find us. Some say they would never marry. The next day you hear about their wedding. Some say, yes, I could marry, and then they do not. One day I went to see my friends and I was wearing high heels. They were like 'wow, you are six feet tall'. I joked that I am looking for a tall handsome guy. But not even a midget would fancy me [since she is a widow]. (see Appendix B, 66)

Esra reveals that, independent of how well they know her, all the people she comes across ask her whether she considers remarriage, and that they have preconceptions about her which she finds very disturbing. She adds that her husband's family is no different:

They kept asking me whether I would ever consider remarriage. To me it was like my husband was still alive and that would account to infidelity. Once I called them. I said Halil was not giving me a break that day and asked them whether he could stay there that night. They said they could not and explained that they all had something to do... Actually they were making things up. My brother called me, they had called him and asked 'Is there someone, is she getting married, is there something like that? They were like, if we have to take the child we will. This is tough for me. If I am to marry, do I have to ask them? Did you stand by me when I needed it? Am I the kind of the person who would tell them to come and get my child, I am going to marry?

[Would they take the child in that case?]

No way, they would not. (see Appendix B, 67)

Duygu says 'my daughter is 15 now, it is impossible' to remarry. She says that, there is no person 'who would value my kid higher than me, who would let her feel that everything is alright'. Hayat, though, provides the most detailed description of how the society treats the remarriage of a widow who has children. She especially underlines the difference between the approaches of society to the remarriage of widows who have daughters or sons. She says that she finds that utterly disturbing

and thinks that this must change. She talks about this issue at great length and probably says everything there is to say:

They asked me whether I would remarry when it was barely a week after his death. I was angry. Let me grieve first. 'Do you plan to get married again? You are still young'. But you know what I hate most? There are those ignorant people, but there are those elder women among these ignorant. They are like "Do not marry, dear girl, you have a daughter. Do they think that I will marry a rapist? Am I that stupid, that naive? I found it awkward that there were people saying things like that. I am not still here to marry someone. I say I will not marry, or maybe I will. But that approach irritated me so much. They'd do it, just like that. I would stumble upon them on the street and they would be immediately like 'Hello my girl, how are you, are you receiving the pension yet, oh my girl, do not remarry, you are the mother of a daughter.' It's none of your beeswax! Mind your own business! Yes, I have a daughter, so what... If it would be a widow with a son, or if the widow would be their own daughter, they would do anything to find her a new partner. This approach of the society towards widows with daughters is wrong. Because if you come across a bad person, it would be bad for anyone, bad for you, bad for your daughter, bad for your finances, bad for your relatives etc. But if you come across a nice person... I used to get very angry with after that question. Give me a break, right? Let me first ease my sorrow.

Among my friend's circle some think differently though. My closest friends tell me 'Hayat, you are young, if, God willing, you come across a nice person, you could consider it.' But the old harridans! I did not devote myself to find a new husband. That's not my problem. It is as if, I am on way to find a husband, and they see me and tell me 'no, you can not'. They do not have the slightest concern about what you need and yet they tell you 'you have a daughter, do not get married'. I think this is very disturbing. You can not treat a human being like that. First of all, marriage is *sunnah*. God tells the people who lost their spouse to remarry after four months. The woman has to wait for four months since she may be expecting a baby from the deceased husband. The men are to remarry after 40 days. I think those people must keep their mouth shut about. Nevertheless, you know what my family said? My mother told me four or five months after Yılmaz' death, and she is now 76, she told me 'my daughter, this is my will, do not forget my words, you should marry again. Of course, only if you find the right man. She said 'even I would marry at this age if I would not have diabetes'. I was like, mom, would you marry even though you are a mother of eight? She said, my girl, your father is dead, all my daughters are married, I am all alone, on my own. And she lost her flat because of urban transformation. She is staying at her children's taking turns. No one stands for others, if I would have a spouse, we would take care of each other.

Before I was thinking like, my daughter will go to the university soon. She will find a husband. And she will never look back. She will not say 'I have lonely mother, I should live with her'. I thought I do not want to die alone. This is how I thought at the beginning. But then, time has passed.

Three and a half years. Now I am like ‘why do you look for trouble? I am taking it easy like this. No one to tell me what to do, what not to do. No one to tell me how to dress. No one to control my skirt, my scarf etc. No one to decide where I can go, what I can eat and drink. No one to meddle in my life! How can I get that comfort otherwise? I have a flat, I have a salary, and if I can retire, it would be a king’s life! However, for old age it may be necessary.

Some people who lose their spouses, they are let to remarry again as soon as possible. They become part of a life to which they do not belong especially when they come across the wrong person. I know have strength, I do what I can. God willing, I may even find a job someday. (see Appendix B, 68)

Hayat's statement sums up the situation of widows and their daughters in a patriarchal society. Maybe this is why out of participants’ total number of children of 17, most of them (11) were girls. Other than two of the women, all the others had at least one daughter.

4.4.2 Social status

All of the interviewed women have, one way or another, expressed that they are against the usage of the word *widow* and that they do not want to be called as such. This preference, which is exemplified in previous sections, stems from society’s perception of the *dul kadın* (widowed woman). The women did not provide information on whether they held the same view about the word “widow before the death of their husbands. Nevertheless, it can be argued that they did not contemplate this issue before that event. In this regard, Seher explains how she would feel upon meeting widows previously with the following words:

One does not think that it may happen to oneself too. You do not think it could be possible. Some lose their husbands, they have children, some lose their husband while pregnant, others during postpartum period. That’s the cruelty of life. No one should think that it would not happen to them. No one knows what may happen. (see Appendix B, 69)

Zarife says that another disturbing element of the common perception of

widowed woman is pity, and adds that she gets upset when others say poor you.

Duygu explains that the approach to the widow characterized by pity causes her to hide from others that her husband has died:

I will not be able to talk about it much. However, back then, it was like everybody was pitying me. They had it in their eyes. So I did not want anyone to show me to others and say ‘her husband has died’. I did not want anyone to know and say ‘she does not have a husband anymore’. When I am in a new social environment, when I meet new people, we talk about kids, we talk about marriage, and they ask for instance ‘why do you only have one child, why did not have a second child’. You do not know what to say. Shall I reveal it or not.... Or if you are at a job interview, you will be asked ‘are you married or single, what does your husband do?’ etc. I can not decide whether I should tell them or not, because I do not know what they would think about it, how that would change the way they look at me. This kind of stuff still happens. (see Appendix B, 70)

The society’s perception of the widow is usually coupled with the perception of the orphan. The women, who, as we have seen, invariably rejected being called widows, had mixed approaches when it comes to the word *yetim* (fatherless orphan). Narin, Asiye, and Seher did not provide an opinion on this issue, but during the conversation they never used that word. On the other hand, Seher refers to the death of her husband’s father when he was only 10. She explains that due to his father’s death, her husband had a difficult life, and adds that she is concerned that her children, like their father, will have to live on with a great burden on their back. Güler, whose husband, then in his twenties, had lost his father, describes the hardships endured by her mother-in-law. She believes that her mother-in-law wants her to experience the same difficulties as herself. Güler very clearly says that she is against the notion of *orphan*:

I do not want my kids to be oppressed. I do not want them to grow up with emotional difficulties. I do not let people call my child orphan. No one can dare to talk to my child like oh poor you, you do not have a father, you are an orphan; I would stop them, I would not let them. I do not want people to feel

sad about my child and express that to them, because that may emotionally disturb the children. I have seen people who grew up with that mentality. Even when they grow old, they would be still complaining ‘I grew up as an orphan’ as if it were an excuse for anything. Every person has some disadvantage, that’s how I see it. Yes the lack of a father is difficult but I think a person becomes an orphan only if the mother dies, the mother is more important. (see Appendix B, 71)

Duygu does not want under any circumstance that she is referred to as a widow and her child as an orphan. She observes that this practice is like pointing, an act of stigmatization:

I heard that at her school some children are talking about Bahar’s lack of a father. At first these had a serious impact on her, and on me too. At the beginning of primary school, that is. But now we are both doing better. I do not want that to be said or even thought, I mean *orphan*. That means you have no one. When someone calls you that, it has an impact. I do not want people to talk like ‘oh that girl, she is an orphan’. Or ‘she is a widow, you know’. I always disliked hearing these things, also at the beginning. I did not let other feel my anger, but I was angry. I did not want to hear those words. (see Appendix B, 72)

Bilge is saddened by the fact that their children’s fate resembled hers. She says that “when my father died, my mother was at my age, I was 5. Hayat, while talking about her husband who was 11 when he lost his father, says ‘what makes it sad is that my husband was an orphan himself’. It may be argued that the other widows accept the word ‘orphan’ through the religious approach to orphan’s, exemplified by the prophet Mohammed’s words “make orphans happy”, and also through the supportive attitudes of the society towards orphans.

It is observed that another important element that determines the women’s and their children’s position in the society as widows and orphans corresponds to the practices such as mourning rituals that begin immediately after their loss. These practices, which include not washing, limiting the color of clothing, grief, and avoiding make-up, are initiated sometimes with social guidance, and at other times

with the decision of the widow herself. In the case of Narin though, it becomes visible that even in the decision taken by herself, there is the influence of her social sphere. Narin says that she started to wear a headscarf as well after her husband's death.

No one had told me not to, but I did not take a shower for a week after his death. I would only wear black. It was my decision. I felt like it. I did not wear anything colorful for three years. Then my sisters-in-law said it's enough. They said 'you have to take care of yourself; you can not wear the same things all the time. 'He is gone now; if he was your husband, he was our brother. You see how we dress, you can do it too'. The child grew too, she is right.

If I would dress normally, if I would put on make-up, the neighbors would say look how she looks, she just lost her husband. So you can not do these things partly because of other people. I do not abstain from those things anymore, I also wear colorful dresses. (see Appendix B, 73)

Asiye says that she was not advised to do anything particular, but adds that she is aware of such practices in her home village:

No, I was not subjected to anything like that, but there are such practices in our village, for instance you can not wear red anymore. They would not let a widow wear red. Also henna is very common in our village. All women in the village stain their skin with henna. But if your husband has died and yet use henna you will be condemned. Widows can not use henna. (see Appendix B, 74)

Duygu says that her husband's family imposed a very intense grief on her and the children:

The grief we've been through was very intense. No laughs, no talks. They, I mean my husband's family, were behaving like we should commit suicide or something. And we had started to feel like that actually. That period was very though. We had no right for joy, not even in eating. They did not want anybody to talk to us, laugh with us, do anything with us. Like we were supposed to cry the whole time. We could not dress nicely, or put on make-up. We could not attend weddings, nor celebrate the new-year or the *bayram* [holiday]. I was not the kind of the person who would go to each wedding or so. But I can not imagine what they would have done if had gone to a wedding back then (see Appendix B, 75)

Hayat says that she grieved, but did not let her child do so. Moreover, she

reveals that her family wanted to cover her head for 40 days after the death, and adds that she refused to do it. Esra covered her head, nevertheless it had become an issue that she wanted to use a white headscarf. She recalls: ‘My husband used to have a Quran, and after he was gone I was wearing a white headscarf. My uncle told to me to wear a different headscarf. I asked him why. He replied, you’re husband is dead’.

Hayat describes the same phase accordingly:

The people were telling me to cover my head. For them, it was like, my husband is dead, and there are people coming to our place for condolences, so I should cover my head. I am not a person who wears headscarf. I was told that it is traditional that the widow covers her head for 40 days after the funeral, but I did not do it. I held my own grief; I did not turn the TV on. Nevertheless, my child was allowed to watch TV. I did not watch it. One year after my husband’s death, my cousin got married. I went to her wedding but did not dance. I was grieving. Those who could not come to the funeral came and told their condolences during the wedding. How could I dance under those circumstances Always with composure. (see Appendix B, 76)

Bilge explains that she and the kids did not attend ceremonies such as weddings for 6 months. And at weddings they had been to, she would not dance. Moreover, she says that there was a wedding at their home village one year after the death of her husband, but they nevertheless did not attend it:

We did not go to weddings for six months, because we as a family had a recent funeral. The children did not go either. I still did not dance at a wedding since then. My children join the dances though. At my home village they will not let widows attend weddings. But here in the big city it is not like that, so we attend weddings. We used not to turn on the TV due to grieving. We would not turn on the volume of the music. This still continues in our village.

My mother-in-law said that they wanted to perform his first-year remembrance. I told them orphans can not organize a ceremony of that kind. So they did it themselves [and Bilge and her children could not attend it]. They also sacrifice sheep for the remembrance ceremony. It is our tradition, one year after someone’s death, we sacrifice two sheep. And we cook food and give it away. It includes a Quran reading too. (see Appendix B, 77)

Güler describes a grieving period similar to other women. However, the

warnings and remarks she received from her mother-in-law did not come to an end, and established a constant control mechanism for Güler's appearance.

I used to get my hair highlighted blond. My mother-in-law told me not to get my hair done for some time. I found it awkward. I did not get my hair dyed for three and a half years now.

I used to wear sunglasses. She first found that odd. She had no problems when her grandchildren's wives would wear sunglasses. When others do it, it is normal. Once I was wearing a knee-length skirt and she was around. She was irritated. She asked where I'm going. I said I will meet a friend. Some time passes and she asks again, where are you going. I repeat, I will meet a friend...

Then one day, we went to ask a girl's hand for my uncle's son. I was wearing again a knee-high skirt. Later she came to me and said they've seen you wearing a mini skirt. Do not ever wear anything like that. And then, some other time, there was the henna ceremony of a friend of mine. I've put on nice cloths, and dressed up my child too. She was getting hot under the collar. She asked where we are going, I told her about the hennah ceremony. Later, she must have called me. My cell phone is quite old, the battery does not last long. She had called me so many times. She wants to know, where I am. She goes furious if she does not know. (see Appendix B, 78)

These warnings and deterrent actions aiming at the control of the women's appearance so that she will not draw attention influence the social lives of the women. Both the social relations the women have in their environment, and the attitudes of the people in their social environment towards them change after the death of the husband. Hayat describes how her family scared her by telling that she had to exercise uttermost caution in her relations with other people anymore. Even though with time she concluded that the situation is not that bad, she had nevertheless altered her manners and demeanors outside.

Hayat:

My family scared me initially. They were like "You are a widow now, men will make a pass at you, they will try to take advantage of you. They told me that I would experience all kinds of troubles. I know the people here. Everybody knows each other. When my husband died, everybody came to our house, even those that I do not know personally. They were at the funeral. It was not like what my family told me, I did not experience that kind of problem. I am still the same Hayat as before. Nevertheless I also exert

caution in some respects. There are some places I do not go. I do not go out late. I mind how I walk. These kinds of cautions. I used to take walks before. After I got myself together following the death of my husband, I again started to go out to walk. You have to watch your manners and demeanors. You have to dress such that you will not draw attention. Nevertheless, I am still the same Hayat, I dress like I used to dress. But I am cautious. I do not go to inappropriate places late at night. And when I go out for a walk, I go to the park with a female friend. I have some discipline about these things; I am always home before 8.30 PM, latest at 9 PM. I could say that I do not have an outside life. (see Appendix B, 79)

Esra was not pressured by her family in this respect. Nevertheless, she limited herself in many ways since she was wary of the reactions of the society. She says that the most important reason for that is jealousy and accusations.

You can not go visit a friend if her husband is home. He could give you a strange look, or the woman could get jealous. There would be some trouble. People may misunderstand things and entertain wrong thoughts about you. I never went out much anyway. Around here everybody knows each other. I did not have problems of this kind. But of course I do not go out late at night or so. So there is always some suppression. (see Appendix B, 80)

Narin, Duygu, and Güler limited their social relations since these were condemned by their husbands' families. Narin, who continued to live together with her mother-in-law after the death of her husband, describes this as follows "My mother-in-law and my sisters-in-law misunderstand it. I used to live with my mother-in-law till she passed away. She used to misunderstand me when I visit my neighbors and get angry with me. It is why I've quit seeing my friends and lost touch with them". Duygu too, who lives in the same building as her husband's family, says that they do not want her friends and neighbors to visit her. She says that whenever she has a guest, her mother-in-law keeps calling and asks again and again who is there, when will they go, are they still there etc. She adds that this behavior disturbs her guests and they leave. Güler, who has a wider social sphere due to her higher education level, still experiences similar problems since she too lives in the same

building as her husband's family. Furthermore, they had even complained about her to her family, which led to limitations in her social relations.

I have a friend. There is an association for women entrepreneurs, the engineers go there too. So there was a night event for women engineers, and my friend invited me to go with her. She said I can bring Füsün along and that there is play room for children. I am not an engineer or so, but still... I told my co-sister-in-law to come with us, she is my neighbor. I told her so that they would know where I am going, in order to prevent gossip. Then my mother-in-law was like "Where have you been, what did you do? Once my uncle visited my husband's family in to tell them not to treat me like this. Yet, my mother-in-law told him, there is this friend, she is here every single day. And this is the same friend who lives one block away. She is a newlywed. And she helps Füsün with her school tutoring her 2-3 times every week! My friend she was one of the best in school, she is very well-educated. I do not know her husband well but he says that even though he does not like his wife go out much, he has nothing against her visits to me. And yet, my mother-in-law complained to my uncle like that. She can not even accept my friends. They do not want us to visit each other. They do not want me to see anyone. (see Appendix B, 81)

Zarife, Bilge and Asiye say that as a result of the changes in the attitudes towards them they have observed in their social sphere, there were people they have stopped seeing or they at least distanced themselves from certain people. A neighbor of Bilge, with whom she was very close friends before the husband's death, had brought false accusations against her daughter sometime after her loss, and they have ended up in court. This neighbor's daughter later admitted that she made these false accusations because she was jealous of her boyfriend regarding Bilge's elder daughter, even though Bilge's daughter and the guy did not even know each other. Her mother, even after all was understood, was still on her daughter's side and got distant from Bilge. Asiye says that some of her poorer neighbors start to treat her as a competitor since she was receiving donations and aid.

Some are jealous. I do not know why. We have realized there are these bad people out there. Some made me suffer, I was so sad. I do not have a husband, I do not own a flat, I have three children to care for, and yet they

pick on me. Some say, Asiye is pretending to cry, she is pretending to look poor, Asiye is piling on the agony. Yeah right, my rent is 900TL, and I have only my pension. That's the only income I got. Of course I have the right to cry! Yet they say, why does she cry, she has everything. They say it's actually me who has to financially help them. They say I am better-off than them. They are jealous. We do not see each other. (see Appendix B, 82)

According to the widows' statements, it seems women are not widows because their husbands die, but rather because they are within the boundaries defined by society for a widow. From the moment they lose their husbands, society begins teaching these women their new identity. Mourning rituals, wearing a ring, whether their ID card says married, single, or widow, the perception as widowed by society and changes in their connection to close community are all illustrations of the mechanisms of learning/being taught to be a widow.

4.4.3 Self-confidence and awareness

After years of struggle against the problems that arose after the death of their husbands, the women say they learned so much and themselves have changed. Their attempts at staying on their own feet have not only increased their self-confidence but also altered their attitudes towards other women in the same situation. They have stated that they would like to know about the experiences of other widows, that they need to feel to communicate with them, and to display solidarity with as much as they can. Thus, the more the women learn to live on their own, the higher their self-confidence becomes, and together these lead to the strengthening of their will to help others. At the base of this increase in self-confidence we find the switch to employment after being a 'house-wife', ability to make her decisions, and learning to manage finances. The one sentence that was uttered by nearly all of the interviewed

women, that summarizes this change and their new identity is ‘I am both a woman and a man, both a mother and a father’. Bilge’s words express very clearly this increase in self-confidence.

I have struggled in my life for a long time. I have become stronger for the sake of my children. That is one change. My self-confidence is higher now. I can live freely now, I can struggle more. This is not to say that I use this freedom for myself. But I can struggle. I can live without someone beside me. I can struggle just like a man. I am freer to myself. For instance, I am now able to go to a different district! I can go there and come back and not be afraid of it! I can even break apart a man's easy manners towards me. I did not let myself go. Back then, I could have let myself go. I could have told others when I was in need. I did not have enough money, I could've asked others. But no, that what I tell you, I would never tell anybody else. Even if I would be starving. When I am out there, I do not tell that I do not have anything. (see Appendix B, 83)

Zarife mentions multiple times during the interview that she changed a lot. In this part, she explains that she realized after her husband’s death that actually he was restricting her life. In order to express the difference between what she was like before and after his death, she employs the phrase “the Zarife before”:

I have changed a lot, I have opened my eyes to the world. My husband would not let happen that while he was alive. When we were out together, he would get angry with me. He would tell me not to look around and keep my head lowered all the time. He was very jealous. When he died, I was afraid that people would try to take advantage of me. Especially since I am going to stairwell cleaning. Now it’s different, I have my eyes open. I can go to anywhere when needed. I am free, thank God, I am above board. I have struggled and pulled ourselves out up to here, and with God’s help I can still do it. The Zarife before would not even be able to come back home after shopping. On the way to the store I would pick landmarks and hope they stay there till I come back. I did not know anything, my eyes were shut. (see Appendix B, 84)

Among the interviewees, Esra is the one who lost her husband the longest time ago with 12 years. She says that whereas at the time he died she could not even figure out how to pay the bills, she had now bought a car only ten months ago.

When it comes to that, when it’s up to you, you do it. You turn into the jack

of all trades. I used to be silent, I used to be passive. But if all is up to you, then you manage. Even I am surprised at what I am able to do now. The difference between what I used to be and what I am now surprises me. I can clearly see the huge difference between the Esra before and the Esra now. My self-esteem is higher, my self-confidence is higher. I have courage. Sure, since I started to work, my self-confidence improved. I work now, and since I work I can be still outside at 9 PM. Thus, I can go out since I work. For example, I thought I would never drive a car, since my husband died in a car accident. Yet, now I bought a car and I am driving it. This gives a me a lot of courage too. I had received the driving license before he passed away but I did not have a car. I now bought one last year. Thinking I could not do anything, I was killing my emotions. Yet, I am able to do it! Now I feel I have been restricting my emotions for nothing. I could have done all that years ago. Why did not do it before? This is how my approach to life has changed. Now I have left all “I wish that, “I wish this behind”. (see Appendix B, 85)

Duygu too describes that she now has higher self-confidence and adds that she does not care too much anymore about what others say or think about her. She says that employment and being able to earn her own money have contributed to her a lot.

Duygu:

Sure, compared to before, it is different. For certain things I am now able to say ‘who cares?’ Or maybe it’s because I am tired anymore. Or the consequence of having been through so much. I am now able to say who cares what the others think. I could not do that before. At least I am able to earn money on my own, I am not dependent on anyone. My late husband – may he rest in peace – was a selfish person. Since it was him who had a job, who was earning money, I could not ask anything from him, I could not tell him to buy anything. He would react badly when I would ask him to buy something for our home. He would get angry and say “Do I have to do it just because you tell me to do so? I buy what I want!. That was quite though on me back then. But when it comes to what he wants, he would buy it whatever its price. So while he was around, I was feeling financially deficient. I could not ask him for money. May it was because I was not employed. I could not dare. Perhaps it was because of his reactions. But now, does this cost 10TL? I buy it myself. No one can say anything. (see Appendix B, 86)

Hayat and Derya explained that after their husbands they learned how to manage finances and save money, and that this contributed to their self-confidence. Narin, the youngest among the interviewees, describes how she learned to take her

decisions as follows:

I was telling myself that I have to change my life since I can not go on like this. And I did change my life little by little. They used to take all decisions. I was the last one to ask. My mother-in-law wanted to determine everything herself. What she decides, what she wants, what she likes. Of course it did not work out that way. Her daughters were aware of that too. They would tell her, mom, you can not do it, let Narin take care of it. She thought she had the right to determine everything since she was old. It was the same before my husband's death. It was even worse. My husband would say that her mother's decision is his decision. I could not object to it. [Since the mother-in-law passed away] Now I make my own decisions. Of course you are afraid to some degree but when you have to do it, you do it. If there is no one to watch over you, it must be like that. I feel afraid before making a decision, but I make the decision nevertheless. I spend less time for house work. It is better for me now. My mother-in-law always wanted to know where I'm gone, what I do. Now, it's me and my child. We make our own decisions. We have our freedom in our hands. (see Appendix B, 87)

Next to the self-confidence that they've won in their struggle for life, the women had started to assign other women, who also lost their husbands, an important role in their life. There was support they had both received and provided in their interactions with other widows. Nearly all of them expressed interest in other women I have interviewed and stated they'd like to know their stories. They asked me to share those stories with them and even introduce them to the other women upon the finalization of the study. Duygu, who was very enthusiastic about that prospect, said 'I am very curious about the other women, I would very much like to know what they have told' and wondered 'What did they think? What did they go through?' When I said 'this seems to be quite important for you' she responded 'indeed, very much so. What were their experiences? How did they go over it? What did they feel? Was it similar to me, and what were the differences?' Narin, while describing a friend who had lost her husband too, stated that she'd like to meet others.

Narin:

I know someone ten years older than me. I used to meet her and chat with

her. Only we would understand each other. No one else can understand us. She moved, we can only talk on phone anymore. I would love to meet others too. I wish we could come together, talk, and pour our grief onto each other. She is the only one I know [who lost her husband too], there is no other. (see Appendix B, 88)

Asiye too says 'only we can understand each other':

There used to be a woman. Her husband had died before mine. She too has three children. They are younger than my children. She now moved to Manisa. That saddened me. We were getting along very well. She used to support me. It was very important for me to talk to her. She had problems with her elder son. Only we understand each other. Those with a husband can not understand us. Not as much as we can. Apart from the friend who moved to Manisa, I have another friend in the same condition. They are very precious to me. I wish there others. (see Appendix B, 89)

Derya explains that she feels more at ease when she meets her friends who have lost their husbands too. She adds that, in this regard, it is an advantage that there is no man at home.

Deya:

There is one. There used to be a second one but she moved away. We used to get along very well with her. We used to see visit other frequently. I was able to go to her place even if it was late. Since there was no man. We would chat until 10 or 11 PM. I would not otherwise go out at all. Our daughters were the same age too. You can not visit a friend living with a husband like that, that late. She used to visit me too, even more than me. (see Appendix B, 90)

Esra says "there were some women around me. I was trying to help them as much as I can. I told them how they could find support. I really would like to help them". Hayat tells that she had received support from her friends who had lost their husbands before and that she is now trying to support other women in the same situation:

We were not close with her before my husband's death. We got closer after that. She supported me a lot. Since she had suffered the same pain in the past, her emotional support was very important. She was always by my side. Eight months ago the father of one of my daughter's friends lost his life. I cried a lot when her husband died. She [the friend whose husband had died before Hayat's] had cried after my husband a lot too. She understands what I've been

through. She [the widow] is a little different than me. She has no education. She does not have many social connections to outside. She has three orphans to take care of. They are in a more difficult situation compared to us. We receive the same salary but still... I try to emotionally support her, as much as I can. We started to see each other recently. I tried to inform her about different matters. I also talk to her children and inform them. She took that very well. I try to do what I can. To help her. I want to support her but the salary I receive is the same as hers. (see Appendix B, 91)

Widows on the one hand learn not to break the mold of widow imposed on them, but on the other hand question and reject them as they struggle to live. The widows learn a reflective stance only through their own experience of surviving and struggling.

4.5 Children

All interviewed women without an exception expressed that they “go on for the sake of children. The conversations with their mothers give clues about the turning point in the children’s life after losing their father and witnessing their mother’s fight for survival. First it will be useful to summarize certain situations that arise from the expressions of 17 children’s mothers, 11 girls and 6 boys.

Five of the interviewees state that their children (2 girls, 3 boys) required psychological support after the death of their father. Three of those (2 girls, 1 boy) started to take medication too. In the case of five other women, it is quite striking that their eight children never talk about their dad. When we talk about the changes in mother-child relationship, three mothers say that they got closer. All four children of these women were girls. Four mothers with adolescent children (4 girls, 1 boy), on the other hand, describe that they had conflicts with their children. Another common theme mentioned by each of the mothers is that their working conditions are determined by their children’s needs. The working hours of the women, the location

of work, and the amount they have to earn are all determined by conditions such that the children cannot stay at home alone, that the work place has to be not so far so that they will be able to deal with housework and their children during the day, and that their earnings are enough for the coverage of the educational expenses of their children. Another source of worry for the mothers of children under the age of five concerns how the child perceives the figure of dad, that is, their thoughts about how their children are influenced by the lack of their father while they are with other children. In this regard, two mothers said that they have asked their children's friends not to use the word "father/dad while their child is around. One of the most salient topics corresponds to the relationship children's and mother's relationship towards school and changes therein.

In this section, we will try to detail the situations summarized above using mothers' expressions according to the influence of the death of the father on the children's emotional, social, and economic lives and the changes in the children's school life.

4.5.1 Relation with school

Eleven of the children were school age at the time of their father's death. According to what is claimed by their mothers, whereas there was no change in some children's attitude towards school, six of them (5 girls, 1 boy) became more interested in school. Bilge describes this as "they were more enthusiastic, it let them hold on to life. Seher, on the other hand, argues that the grades of her two children improved because the loss of their father led to an increase in their responsibilities.

Seher:

How should I put it... [they think like] 'we have to be very successful, we have to study, we have to support ourselves and each other, we should not upset you mom and be good at school because very difficult days lay ahead of us'. My daughter, for instance, she is now preparing for the upcoming university entrance exams and she is studying very well, has ambitious goals, she already thinks how she can support her siblings after graduating from the university. I tell her one needs to think first of herself. I want that my daughter is able to do what she does first for herself. Since she is still young, if she now shoulders that responsibility, it will always go on like that. Because my husband had been through the same first while taking care of his four siblings and then during our marriage. Actually, too much responsibility on the person makes everything more confusing, it makes looking at life more difficult. My husband was trying to support both us and his siblings. He had lost his father at the age of 10. I do not yet talk to my daughter like 'If anything happens to me, it will be your responsibility to support the family.' I mean, yes, it is possible, there is no guarantee, we do not know what tomorrow will bring, but if she thinks like that this will make her feel under pressure, she will be concerned whether she is up for the task if it is needed. We do not talk about these things. I tell her first you need to live for yourself, to struggle for yourself. Only after that we can support our siblings or others. (see Appendix B, 92)

Hayat's daughter, who was relatively good at school before her father's death, had received the support of her teachers after the loss, but nevertheless she started to have emotional problems and her school performance degraded.

Hayat:

When my husband died, the guidance counselor from her school, she was with us in the hospital. On Monday, she brought all of Elif's friends to our place. This was such an emotional boost for her; her previous teacher was there too. He was her teacher for the first four years of primary school. She was so successful at school. She was the first in her class and fifth in the school. Nevertheless, after the loss of her father, at the 6th grade, she started to have concentration problems. She can not focus, she gets bored. I got in touch with her teachers secretly from Elif. They said that whereas she used to be a very active person at school before, she was now very quiet. With the start of secondary school, she had new teachers and she did not reveal her concentration problem to them, some of them did not notice it anyway. She was on medication for a year. Now she can focus on studying again. But she became indifferent. (see Appendix B, 93)

Six of the children were younger than school age when they lost their father.

Güler, whose daughter started school after the death of her father, tells that her

daughter's problems that have emerged were not adequately addressed and adds that:

We were undecided whether Füsün should go to school or not. She was six. She went to school but she could not learn to draw letters without seeing them. We heard about a very famous doctor. We got an appointment although it was difficult. He prescribed medication for focusing attention and reducing anxiety. I again took her to see an expert pedagogue, so that they could make an assessment. We were told that she has to repeat one year at school. Meanwhile while she was in the first grade I told her aunt that given that they are sharing the income that comes from the assets co-owned by my late husband without giving me my share, they could at least afford a private tutor for Füsün. The tutor could be her own school teacher. She was not communicating with her teacher back then, she was shy. Her classmates are a little energetic for school, when the teacher shouts at them in the class, Füsün was withdrawing herself with fear. When she would go to the teacher's desk, she would twist her neck down and would not look at the teacher. She, her aunt, prevented us from finding a tutor. They would not let me work so that I can afford a private tutor, and they prevented it. I am not too insistent on Füsün these days but my mother is. Here the parents of pupils are pretty much in control. They put pressure on their children to ensure their success. There came a temporary teacher with the same ambitious attitude. That is, she had just changed school only to find a new teacher to put pressure on her for success. She started to throw up. She had to take psychiatric medication. (see Appendix B, 94)

Another potential change for both the mothers and the children concerns school parenting. The mother with school age children at the time of their husband's death usually state that they used to take care of their children's school matters even before. Three of the six mothers (with 4 children) in that situation say that there was no significant change in their attendance at parent-teacher conferences. The other three mothers (with 7 children), on the other hand, report changes. Bilge and Asiye explain that they were troubled because they did not have enough time for such meetings, they did not have self-confidence for school matters, and they found it difficult to make decisions about their children's education on their own. In Bilge's case the new relations with the teachers of her children are also remarkable. Bilge had established relations with her children's teachers, who were also involved in donations and other means of solidarity for them, through her work too.

Before, my husband would go to the parent-teacher conference if it was held on Sunday, and I would go if it were on a weekday. Now I am not able to attend them on Sundays. I could go on weekdays, but I do not do it often. I usually call them and get informed, or very rarely I go there in person. Nevertheless in case there is a problem or so, I do not hesitate to go. The children always tell me what happens at school regardless of whether it is good or bad. On a second thought, Heja never tells me about school. But she receives very good grades, but does not tell me about them. She tells me only about her friends in case I do not know them. This year I went to her school once. The teacher told me that I do not need to come again. I told the teacher that Heja wanted me come and meet them. She, the teacher, told me that I do not need to come again because I can consider her Heja's mother too. I will soon go again, they now have additional extra courses, I want to talk about that. I already know Berfin's teacher. I also clean the house of the assistant director of Berfin's school. I know Hazal's teachers too. They all came when her father died. I know the school principal, the deputies, all of them. They all came to our house. When I was in hardship, the principals would give me 100TL, sometimes each month sometimes every three months. Now Hazal is doing her internship, and hence they do not give it anymore, she is paid during the internship. Her teachers always said that she has the priority if there is a scholarship or donation. I am very pleased with their schools. Even the teachers give some money. For instance Heja's teacher told me she knows that Heja does not have a father. Even parents do not give their own children money when they pass their grade successfully, but her teachers gave her 100TL as pocket money. Once there was a three-day long school trip, Heja could join for free. They are very kind to Heja. (see Appendix B, 95)

Asiye though, had serious difficulties in communicating with the teachers.

She adds that she found each and every aspect of school parenting with hard. She says that since she did not receive much of an education, she is not able to understand the educational agenda of her children.

I was involved for the needs of the children at the school to some degree, but when it comes to which school is appropriate, or what to do when one school is finished, it was my husband making all decision. I could not do that.

First, I am not able to meet the teachers of my little boy since I can not find the time. When I find the chance I go to school to talk to them, but usually only one or two are there and I can not talk to the others. Also, his teachers keep changing, but I want to meet them. Second, I found it very difficult to my daughter's school while she was in high school. That's because my husband used to go her parent-teacher conferences. He would listen and take notes, because he had more education than I, he could understand. I feel very uneasy during those meetings, I do not know what to do, I get anxious. I told her brother to go there since I would not understand what they were talking about. It was very hard. (see Appendix B, 96)

For Narin and Duygu, whose children reached school age after the death of their husbands, the school had created a new social sphere for them. Narin describes that the primary school teacher of her child served as a guide both for her and her child, that she would counsel by talking, that this had a very positive effect on both her and her child and declares “I received so much support from the teacher”. Duygu, who was unemployed at the time her child started school, explains that when she felt lonely at home, she would go to the school to drink tea and converse with the teachers, which was very uplifting for her. The school environment thus provided Duygu with a social sphere for quite some time.

For those children who started school after their father’s death, there is an interesting preference for a male primary school teacher over female teachers. Güler explains that they were told by the pedagogue to pick a male primary school teacher so that the child can have a father model. Similarly, Duygu says that it her child’s primary school was a man by chance and admits that she wanted it to be like that a lot. Nevertheless this preference for a male teacher, even advised by a pedagogue, may turn out to be problematic, as revealed by Esra’s story. Esra had made the same choice, nevertheless, as a single mother she was left off-guard in the face of the teacher’s sexual harassment, which had a very damaging effect on her and on the school life of her child.

When he started school, I thought he has me as her mother at home, and a male teacher might serve as a father model at school. We arranged it but it turned out to be a wrong choice. He did not treat my child fairly. He had some thoughts about me and due to that he did not treat my child well. This happens to you as a woman. It is difficult, so difficult.

His first teacher was a man, but he was appointed to a different city later. The new teacher was a woman. So we changed his class after a month, so that he can be with a male teacher again. The female teacher was so upset about it. There I made a grave mistake. Since he does not have a father, we

thought the male teacher would serve as a father figure. But that male teacher was a wrong person. My child had to endure 5 years of mean behavior. And that was due to the wrong ideas the teacher entertained about me. When I did not respond to his advances, he started treating my child badly. He gave him bad grades; my child even did not want to go to school anymore. My child was supposed to receive an honors certificate at the end of the term, he even did not give it.

[Could you share what happened with others?]

No I could not. No, because in that case the things would make a different turn. That would produce rumors about me. Then I would have to change his school. On the contrary, I became the class mom. So that I could keep an eye on my child. At the very end of the school, he had been again unfair to my child. I talked to him on the last day of primary school. I asked him what is it that you are trying to do. You know very well what you have been doing, and so I am. Do not get me started now, I said. Nothing changes. You can not be on the front. Being young is difficult too. It is like a crime that I can not comprehend. (see Appendix B, 97)

4.5.2 Economic and social impact

The mothers state that their children were affected by the poverty that followed their husband's death. Bige and Derya say that they could only answer their daughters' clothing needs through donations of clothes by others. Bilge reveals that she did not buy any clothes for herself since the death of her husband, and adds that everything her daughters wear are second-hand clothes, donated by people. Asiye tells that her daughter used to take the school bus before and adds that she now has to walk to school since she can not afford the school bus fee. Furthermore, the children witness the quite hard work life of their mothers and their struggle for earning money, which may have a detrimental on the children. Zarife tells that her daughter works in grocery stores during the school break and worries a lot about her mother.

We suffered a lot from poverty. It was difficult already while her father was alive. Due to the hospital expenses. His medication was very expensive. But I did not let her go hungry after his father. I did not eat, but I did not let her go hungry. During the school break she is like 'Mom, you work, you pay for everything, you go to work, and I am here doing nothing. How am I to stand this? No, I can not do it'. She says 'If I finish school, if I earn some money, I

will never let you clean stairwells again. You go clean stairwells and I am so worried'. I tell her nothing bad will happen, that it is OK. I tell her that everybody does it. I just do not want her to go hungry, I do not want her to depend on others for that. I say 'Thank God, my girl, when you go out in the morning, streets are full of people like me. Why do you talk like that my dear? You must be pleased that your mother has work, without losing her pride, your mother earns a living.' She listens and does not say anything. She looked for a job a lot. She asked around, all on her own. She kept saying that she will work. Now it is summer break, she works at a grocery store. In the morning she walks to work, but in the evening, after dark, she takes the shuttle back home. (see Appendix B, 98)

Together with poverty, another factor that has an impact on the daughters comprises the gaze of the society directed at orphaned girls that puts the girls under pressure and sets limits for their behaviors. The mothers with daughters, when asked whether they had any problems regarding their children, begin their answer with my girl/girls is/are very clever and very well-behaved. In this context, being clever and well-behaved corresponds to acting according to the social pressure, and avoiding attention grabbing close contact with males that may cause rumors in the neighborhood. The mothers, who feel the same kind of pressure upon themselves, express that they are trying to protect their daughters. This is described by Bilge and Hayat very clearly

Bilge:

If I do not absolutely have to, I do not even go out to buy bread. My children are the same. Two of them would never do that [the daughters aged 16 and 17]. Berfin [the 9-year-old daughter], she does that kind of shopping and immediately comes back. They used to have a father, back then they would spend time in front of the building, sitting and chatting. Her father would join them too. But they do not have a father anymore and they can not do it. This was a major change for them. I am raising my children without a husband. But none of them [neighbors] can say a bad word about my daughters. My children never go out. They never spend time outside. If somebody would show up and say I saw her children [hanging out with boys] nobody would believe that. A source of honor, that is. (see Appendix B, 99)

Hayat states that when she talks to her daughter about these matters, she tries to be very clear and even hard, because this is one of her most important expectations from her daughter:

I tell her, 'look my girl, we do not have a father. Everyone knows we do not have a father. You are young girl. Also the children your age know that you do not have a father. First, you have to mind your manners. When you go to the park, never do things that would annoy me or draw the attention of others. Everyone knows us around here. No one should come to me with thing to tell about you. You can not do that to your father's name.' I try to use hard words. 'No one should say behind us that Yılmaz' wife is coquetting with men, or Yılmaz' daughter is coquetting with men.' I told her all that. 'If you want to go to the park, go, but do not hang with inappropriate people. I know that their [the friends of her daughter and the neighbors] social sphere contains both men and women, but when someone sees you they should not get the wrong idea.' I tell her to be careful about these matters. Thank God, I never heard anything of that kind about her, she never upset me. (see Appendix B, 100)

Another factor that influences the children corresponds to the changes in their relations with relatives. In general, whereas their relations with their mother's family tend to improve, the reverse holds for relations with the father's family. Only Bilge and Narin tell that the attitude of their husband's family toward their children got more positive. For the rest, the relations either came to close to break completely, or the children became the means for the husband's family to put pressure on their mother. That latter case had very serious consequences for Güler and Duygu's children. Güler describes that her husband's family keeps tampering with her daughter and that her daughter had to witness Güler and the father's family in severe quarrels. Consequently, her daughter, who already had problems after the loss of the father, was worn down by stress. Güler says that her husband's family takes away and brings back her daughter whenever they feel like it and that this disturbs both her and her daughter's psychology. She states 'Actually their aim is to turn my child against me, take her away from me and send me back to my father's home'.

I take my child to the psychologist every month. Once in three months we go to the psychiatrist. She receives speech therapy. I let her attend different activities. She goes to the school. I tell them, I am trying hard to let her socialize, but you want her to dependent on you. She is, as expected, already dependent on her mother, since she was baby she was like that, very dependent on me. She did not display that to her father. Füsün, my daughter, is becoming aware of the role of the father only now. She is troubled by that. One day they showed up at her school and told her that she is going with them. She says that she does not want it and that she will come home to me. Upon hearing that, her aunt becomes furious and asks her what I tell her to turn her against them. She was so scared. Eventually they take her to our place and ring the bell, but I was not home, I was at my mother's. And she is like my father's is dead, now my mother is gone too, I have no one anymore. She begins to cry. When I found about that, I was so angry, I told them they have done that to her. Such a lack of conscience. Füsün was like I have no one anymore, no one to open the door to me. (see Appendix B, 101)

Esra's case is an example of the husband's family distancing themselves away and she describes how her child was negatively influenced by their lack of intimacy when needed.

He did not receive the affection of father's family. He did not see their love. He did not have father and could not reach out to his family either. My conscience is clear; it is them who have to feel sad about it. Once he stayed there over night during Ramadan. He told his aunt to wake him up for *sahur*. She was surprised and told him you do not need to fast yet, you do not have to wake up. He told her that it is so nice since they are a big family and they wake up for *sahur* altogether. In contrast, it was only me and him at home. Actually, this breaks my heart so deeply. His aunt could invite us for *iftar* once, or he could stay there every now and then. He wants to go and see them. He has one aunt on the father side and he loves her so much. But she always says she is busy, has no time, there is always something. Recently I argued with my sister-in-law over that. My son said I want to stay with my aunt. I know her, so I told him to call her. He asked, if it is ok, can I stay there tonight. She said no. Then he said, if that's not possible, I can come and leave before night. Then I talked to her, I asked whether they have no place for a child to sleep. He wants it, he calls them, and asks them whether he can stay there, and when they say no, he asks whether he can drop by only for some hours, and they are still like. She said they do not have the place, after that I said so be it then, fine. (see Appendix B, 102)

That Asiye is distinct from others in the sense that she has a step-son this deserves some mention. Asiye's husband had a previous marriage, and his son from

that marriage continued to live with his father and Asiye after their marriage. The boy, who was in his twenties at the time of the death of his father, had complied with the wish of his mother and moved to her place. Probably, the boy's mother had empathized with Asiye, she had considered her situation, and her decision was supportive of Asiye. Nevertheless, the influence of that on the other children, especially Asiye's elder son, was negative. Even though there is no information on how the step-son took it, for Asiye's elder son, who was separated from his father and elder brother, it was difficult. Still, he remained in touch with his brother through phone.

Bilge's narration, whose children were 6, 13, and 14 at the time of her husband's death, provides examples for how other children at various ages emotionally reacted to their fathers' deaths at the beginning. A point of divergence in Bilge's story though concerns the domestic abuse suffered her daughters in the hands of their father:

For the children, the beatings ended. Nevertheless the lack of a father was even worse for them. His loss is especially difficult for the children. Berfin [9] took it harder. But all three had tough times. Two of the children, Berfin and Heja [16], they never cried. Not even during the burial ceremony. About 20 days later, they've started putting his pictures on the computer. They had loaded photographs together with songs on the computer. Their father's photos. Up until then they must have kept their sorrow. They realized what we have been through with that music. He was a very difficult person but he loved his children very much. He loved them very much. He could never get angry with Berfin, he would always kiss her. He once said "she will marry one day and I will be there. For instance, none of the three of them mention him at home. I never heard it. Sometimes I tell them your father was like this and like that, but they do not want to talk about these things. I also notice that especially Berfin, when she sees a child hugging her father, she becomes... sad. Hazal [17] turned introverted but Heja became more fond of me. (see Appendix B, 103)

Duygu tells that her daughter who was four at the time of the father's death is

well aware of the situation. Narin's son and Güler's daughter were also 4 when they lost their father. Each of them had a male relative they called "dad soon after the loss. Even though this did not last long, the women say this had a lasting effect on them.

Duygu describes how her daughter confronted her father's death:

Bahar was so little, only 4. She directly asked me to come to another room. She said she wanted to ask me something and I said OK. I was not crying though. She said my father is dead is not he mom. I said we should talk about that some other time. No, she said, I know it, he is dead. Then for a long time she did not talk. Later, within the same week, she said mom I want to sing for you. I told her to go ahead. "My dad, my beautiful dad, your voice is in my ears, take me into your arms. I started to cry. She said mom I will never sing for you again. Never, she said. She did not talk about his father ever after that. Since it would make me cry. For instance she would want to go to the cemetery, but not with me. (see Appendix B, 104)

Derya too argues that the reason her daughters do not mention her late husband may be that they are concerned that this would make Derya and her mother-in-law, with whom they live together, cry. Hayat, on the other hand, is sure that she is accountable for why her child does not want to talk about her father. Nevertheless, she also thinks that this later influenced her daughter's health:

The way she was affected was very peculiar. I used to bring up his name [her husband] a lot. But this had a very distinct influence on Elif. She did not even use the word "father ever. She never mentioned him. She used to not answer any question about her dad. She was indifferent. When he happened [died] she was ten and a half years old. She had not even reached puberty, she was just a child. She kept it within for a year. She used to be very fond of me before. She could cry when I cry, and laugh when I laugh. But she could not stand me cry anymore. I was constantly crying. My crying would make her suffer. At times she would revolt like 'enough, mom enough, I have a heart too, I am a human being too!'. However, she herself never talks of her father, does not even use the word 'father', and she behaves as if she never had a father. This was hard on me. Then she started to destroy things. She would break earphones, other electronic devices, she would cut cloths. She damaged 70% of her cloths. She was not aware of it. She would just do it. And she would deny it. I would buy new things for her and let her wear them and later notice that there cuts on them. As if I was buying from the faulty cloths shop. I was angry at first. Then I realized she needed help. I took her to see a psychiatrist, a private one. I could not wait for the state hospital [due to the long waiting lists at state hospitals], they would give us a late date. I found

someone with a reasonable price. [The psychiatrist prescribe some medication] due to the medication she developed a lack of appetite and lost even more weight. In order to make her eat more, I started to buy the food she likes. She does not eat, loses weight and I can not stop thinking about that. I myself got sick due to sorrow. (see Appendix B, 105)

All the mothers expressed that after the death of the husband, that they worry about “What will become of my children when anything happens to me?”. For some of the children, this triggered an overindulgence for the mother and the fear of losing the mother. Hayat, mentions her daughter’s difficulties in that regard:

She developed fear and worries after the loss of her father. She would always think that she is going to lose me too. For instance, I would go to the market to shop, and she would call me ten times to ask me where I am. I would send her to stay with her aunt for a night, and she would immediately call me to ask me whether I love her. She could not do without me but that was suffocating for me. I would go visit a neighbor and after 10 minutes she calls me to ask when I will come home. I would tell her why do not you come too, but no, she wanted me to be at home with her. She was on medication for a year. (see Appendix B, 106)

Zarfie, who explains that her daughter was fonder of her father before his death, argues that she got much closer to her after the loss and adds that she is pleased with this friendship-like intimacy. Asiye recalls how her daughter told her “you are my life force. Similarly, Bilge describes that her younger daughter got closer to her. Nevertheless she adds that her relation with the elder daughters got more complicated. Bilge says that her daughters accuse her for taking sides during their own quarrels. She explains that partly with a lack of father and declares that she feels the need for male relatives to show up and give some advice to her daughters.

Bilge:

It was very difficult on me. Sometimes the two of them get very angry. If you support one of them, if you appear on one’s side, the other two get furious. I did not find myself in the middle when it comes to Berfin, but I found myself in the middle in the case my elder daughters often. If you support what one says [when she says that one of them is right], the other one is like ‘you are

always on her side'. Very difficult. Sure I would want that they come and talk some sense into them, tell them what is right what is wrong. I mean the husbands of my sisters-in-law, they could come and ask me whether I need them to talk to the daughters. (see Appendix B, 107)

Duygu and Hayat too state that they had conflicts with their daughters who are adolescents, and add that there are differences in understanding and attitude.

They explain that the situation is rendered even more difficult by their single motherhood. Esra, on the other hand, believes that it is her own over protectiveness that is behind the problems she is currently having with her son who was 4 at the time of his father's death and is now 16 years old:

I do not know whether this is the reason behind the lack of communication with my child. As I said, I should have let my child feel both emotionally and economically the lack of a father. I could not do that. Hence he is a little cruel. He has no compassion or mercy for me. This makes me very sad. Actually I did the wrong thing. I struggled so hard so that my son would feel the lack of a father neither emotionally nor economically. That was wrong. I realized my mistake after years. He should have realized the lack both emotionally and economically. Now he turned irritable and cruel towards me. I am not sure why. I do not know. I thought I was doing him a favor, but I was wrong. He should have grasped the economical lack, and the emotional lack. Nevertheless I have tried to change it. We had even seen a psychiatrist back then to ask what we should do. (see Appendix B, 108)

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In this chapter we are going to focus on the educational status of the widows, its influence on the widows' relations within the patriarchal society structure, and the mechanisms that appear as a response to the novel learning needs of the widows due to their new responsibilities and identities following the death of the husband.

Three of the 10 women interviewed in this study are illiterate. Two are primary school graduates, and two graduated from secondary school. One of the women who graduated from secondary school was a primary school graduate at the time of her husband's death, and completed secondary school education through distance learning afterward. Two of the remaining three women graduated from high school, and one completed a 2-year college. There were no university graduates among the women interviewed.

Even though the sample only includes ten widows under the age of 45, it maintains consistency with the education level of widows in Istanbul over the age of 15 (includes older widows). The representativeness of the sample suggests that the low literacy rates in the widow population (in Turkey) is not solely due to the older widow population assumed to be less educated than younger widows (Lopata, 1996) but may hold for most or all age groups.

In both Turkey and around the world, the education level of widows is seen to be much lower than other segments of society (The Loomba Foundation, 2015). Several studies indicate that the educational background of the woman is decisive for her living conditions after the death of the husband (Bahr & Harvey, 1980; Guckin,

2001; Heinemann, 1980; Lee, 2003; Winn, 1981). Nevertheless, there is no clear-cut answer to the question of “why is the education level of widows lower than other segments of the population?” Indirect explanations for this phenomenon mention the poverty of widows and the inequalities in social access to educational rights. Lopata (1996), while describing the conditions of widows, argues that in Turkey it is the men’s education that is prioritized, which also holds for other “patriarchally-based developing countries”.

Another approach to the explanation of the low educational status of widows posits that the risk of young widowhood is higher in working class families (Kleinberg, 2005). These segments of the society happen to be characterized by the lowest levels of education. The working class family profile is prominent in the current sample. Two of the husbands were victims of work accidents, and another had died following a heart attack at workplace. Five women, living in different districts, had lost their husbands to lung cancer. The impact of this most common type of cancer in Turkey on the poor segments of the society which lack effective health insurance deserves dedicated studies. The suicides of two women’s husbands, who themselves had lost their father at an early age questions, calls into question the alleged randomness of widowhood. Another salient aspect of data is the age of marriage. There is a positive correlation between age of marriage and educational status in Turkey (Jensen & Thornton, 2003; cf. Table 1).

Next to educational status, another factor that determines who in the population will carry the young widow identity is the prospect of remarriage. Rimert (2001) argues that widows with advantageous economic conditions are not in need of remarriage. It would not be wrong to state that there is a myth in Turkey that suggests

that the young widows who are so poor that they can not make their ends meet will be likely to remarry. However, if we inspect the present sample, we realize that despite the severe poverty that is parallel to their low levels of education, they refrain from remarriage and they are under pressure for keeping it this way. In societies characterized by the patriarchal family structure, it is widely accepted that the widow belongs to the deceased husband's family, that she must be kept exempt from inheritance rights in the case of remarriage, that she has to refrain from remarriage in order to honor her husband, that a new husband would maltreat especially the female children, and that the widow must leave her children behind with the dead husband's family after remarriage (Agnew, 1976; Kung, 2009; Liczek 2007; Owen, 1996). These beliefs are visible in the present sample and we see that especially the widows with daughters are kept away from remarriage (of the 17 children in the sample 11 are girls). Thus, one reason for the low levels of education recorded for widows can be the fact that the poorer women, who have lower levels of education, receive more pressure against remarriage and remain widows.

The widows with relatively lower levels of education encounter more intense hardships, a relation that is consistently corroborated by previous studies (Bahr & Harvey, 1980; Guckin, 2001; Lee, 2003). Korang-Okrah (2012) emphasizes that especially the illiterate women find it hard to gain access to their inheritance rights. In general, the low education level of the interviewed widows had intensified the difficulties in their lives. Illiterate widows expressed that their lack of education was especially painful after the death of their husbands. They have difficulty finding a secure and well-paid work and understanding their legal rights (i.e. all bureaucratic paperwork). They describe their inability to cope with health problems and

insufficiency in meeting the needs of their children and hence have to rely on their own relatives. They develop social fears and feelings of insecurity. Of the ten women interviewed, seven stated that they engaged in house-cleaning, cleaning apartments or stairs, nannying, service work, or any other domestic labor or service work that, in a patriarchal society, are viewed as women's work. The work that these women found was still within the home; they left their own homes and continued working in someone else's. In this way, these women were not visible in the street and were rendered more isolated. The houses that they worked in were not even outside their own neighborhood or district.

Women's lack of education also adversely affects the relationship their children have with education (Korang-Okrah, 2012). As declared by the sample, they are unable to follow their children's school agenda and understand what's being discussed at parent-teacher meetings. On the other hand, women have sometimes tried to find material and moral support from their children's teachers. Remarkably, Guckin (2001) underlines that the school performance of children who lost their father tends to improve rather than deteriorate. In the present sample, too, with the exception of a single child who is dealing with emotional problems, the children had an increase in their school performance. However, it seems that for children the increase in school performance is related to an increase in responsibilities and worries regarding the future. Additionally, in some instances traditional approaches to widows and orphans, if displayed in the educational institution, may give rise to negative experiences and consequences. These negativities include the preference for a male teacher for the orphaned child so that he can function as a father figure. Teacher being seen as a parent is already a serious problem in the education system.

In the case of sample, though, having a male teacher suggested to the widow in order to provide a father figure in her children's lives created dire consequences, such as her experiencing sexual harassment from that teacher. The lack of awareness of how to deal with widows and their children in the education system puts them in a much more vulnerable situation.

Furthermore, one of the determinants of the success of the women in the sample in dealing with their new responsibilities after their husband's death was his level of education, an observation that we did not encounter in the literature. As much as the education level of the widows determines the difficulties they face, so does the education level of their husbands. Two remarkable characteristics of the women who were able to deal with outside stuff better than others are their high level of education and the fact their husband used to work far away from their home. For these women (Güler, Hayat, Seher, and Derya), even when their husbands were alive, they had to take care of a lot of things on their own, and because of this, even with lower education levels than other widows, faltered less. At this point, it is important to draw attention to the point that, if the husbands were more educated than the wives, they prevented their wives from engaging with the outside world.

As described above, many previous studies obtained the finding that high levels of education have a positive impact on the living conditions of widows. Within the present sample, on the other hand, the women with higher levels of education reported more conflicts with the patriarchal social structure and more oppression in certain areas. One of these conflicts concerns the inheritance rights. In the case of the women with relatively higher educational status, the husband's family becomes an obstacle in the struggle to access the inheritance rights. The husbands of the women

with lower educational status usually do not leave any assets behind. In the case of these women, the novel difficulty in their lives appears as their attempts at securing aid and dealing with bureaucratic matters. Widows with higher education levels are in a situation where they can search for work beyond cleaning woman (or house labor), and yet are more often met with harassment when they search for work, seeming to pay the price for the sin of being both educated and a widow. One woman, whose educational level is high school, stated that her fear of harassment was the reason she was afraid to work.

Another important theme that emerges from the interviews corresponds to the phenomenon of the husband's family. In this context, what is meant with the family is the urban nuclear family consisting of parents and siblings. Five of the interviewees declared that following the death of their husband, his family distanced themselves away from the widow, displayed no interest or worry for them, or ended up in a lawsuit over inheritance rights and ceased to contact them completely. The women added that this situation was a source of despair for both themselves and their children. Of the remaining five women, three had to take care of at least one member of the husband's family, who were ill, old or disabled. The other two women were facing severe psychological violence and pressure from the husband's family. It is especially striking that the woman with the highest level of education in the sample is also the one who suffers the most violence and pressure practices by the husband's family. She even had to give up and leave the flat her husband had left behind in order to get away from his family. Whereas these examples are in line with findings suggesting that the widow continues to have problems with the husband's family after his death (Gross, 2001; Ngariya, 2008; Heinemann, 1990), they contradict the

suggestion that the level of education would alleviate the pressure on the woman (Ali, 2006; Korang-Okrah, 2012), since in the current example the highly educated women conflict with the patriarchal system even more.

All the interviewees declared that after their loss, their new life required them to acquire many novel knowledge and skills. These needs are reminiscent of the goals of the nonformal educational institutions appearing in various developing countries and serving widows. Commonly, these goals are education, awareness about rights, training for a job, and emotional support (Devi, 1995; Gardner & Mohamed, 2002; Geekie, 2011; Hirst, 1979). Nevertheless, there is no such dedicated educational institution for widows in Turkey. Accordingly, the illiterate women of the sample had first gone to Public Education Centers, which are open to everyone. Of the three illiterate participants, two had enrolled in the Public Education Center in their district in order to learn how to read and write. However, as the women work long hours in difficult conditions, and at the same time have to deal with the house and children, they were unable to continue the course. Although these may seem like subjective conditions, they are actually related to the Public Education Center not taking into consideration the situation of widows. They did not follow up on why these women left the course, they did not even consider a way for the widows to learn to read and write at home, or offer a possible way for children or the elderly to be cared for while the widows attended the course. One of the groups that needs the most support for education is widows, and yet it is a matter of debate how much visibility they even have at these institutions.

The participant with the highest educational level, during her search for a job that her husband's family would not object against, had signed up for a KPSS course.

Even though she completed the course program, her exam score was not enough to become a civil servant. Unfortunately, the municipalities do not even consider whether it would be worth to offer such courses for free or giving some form of priority to widows, a practice that is actually essential to adult education and widow's employment.

Nonformal education is important not just for the training needs of these women, but also for the emotional support and awareness of women rights as well. However, since the nonformal education institutions are not geared up to answer the needs of widows both in terms of infrastructure and awareness, even establishing regular contact with the nonformal education institution becomes a zone of struggle for widows.

The present interviews suggest that gender inequality experienced by young widows extends into the educational domain and the nonformal education institutions fail to reach a level of awareness in which the needs of the widows, one of the most educationally disadvantaged groups, can be fulfilled in a desired manner. As such, their informational needs crucial for their survival still need to be addressed. The things either their spouse took care of or that they would do together, things that for some might seem like everyday tasks, such as paying the bills, all kinds of bureaucratic matters, shopping, finding a flat, looking for a job, and taking care of the school of their children, are very difficult problems for widows. To state it even more widely, things that for many people and especially men seem commonplace become quite different when a widow is doing them with the *widowed woman identity*.

The widow, in order to deal with these matters, must receive information

from and consult others, find people who have the relevant knowledge, and for that purpose be able to strengthen their social capital by using all means available. The social capital of young widows can be summarized with the following definition of a network provided by Lopata (1996) : “Social integration of all woman, including widows, consist of a local and informal female network of relatives and neighbors. Turkey ... does not contain a network of more or less organized social groups” (p. 39). The mechanisms of widow’s knowledge seeking utilize precisely this network.

Regarding the mechanisms of knowledge seeking of the young widows, who have in general been outside of formal education, are unable to profit from nonformal education institutions, and remain socially marginalized, there are two main characteristics. First, the whole process develops over a network consisting of nearly exclusively of women, and second, the knowledge sought is indispensable in order to cope with the new identity and status of the woman. As a consequence of the special struggle, the widows gain empowerment and agency. Along with the fact that all of the above experiences are extremely difficult and corrosive for the widows, it should be stated that they are also quite liberating. Impressively, without a single exception all the interviewed women stated that, within two years they felt freer and more secure, and felt very proud of themselves and their children.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The current study showed that the young widows' lives are impacted by the patriarchal society structure in both predictable and unpredictable ways. These influences determine even how the young widows organize their daily lives.

Our findings indicate that the nonformal education institutions do not become an educational option for the young widows who try to deal with their new responsibilities and social status. This is partly because of the lack of education of the widows itself, and partly because these institutions are either unreachable for the widow, or if they are reachable, discrimination based on gender pushes the widows away. When the young widows attempt to reach these educational institutions, they encounter obstacles such as poverty, social pressure from their family, and lack of time due to their children and working conditions. On the other hand, even though the widowhood experiences of women should be a topic of study for educational sciences, on the contrary, these experiences are perceived as irrelevant for the field of education, and the widows thus become invisible within the whole field.

In the light of these observations, what kinds of educational alternatives could be prepared and presented for widows who go through the hardships we have covered? What type of transformation would fill this gap? In order to strengthen the relationship the young widows establish with the field of education, we believe two points are rather important. First, the prejudices, generalizations, and myths regarding the women who have lost their husbands must be left behind. On the one end of these generalizations we find the belief that widows are extremely fragile, and

on the other end there is the discriminatory stereotype of widow as an educated and wealthy woman who is happy to have got rid of her husband and enjoys a life free of problems. An elimination of these two extremes and a comprehensive coverage of widow related themes in the academia are important needs in Turkey, a country with increasing young widow rates. Secondly, the key to associate the widows with the educational field is the network the young widows create while they cope with their new status and obtain the knowledge and skills they require. Rather than ignoring this network and creating an educational institution from scratch, making the existing network more organized is going to become more educative and transformative. The comments made by the women also suggest that they would indeed adopt such an organization. The presence of such schemes elsewhere in the world, such as the widow-to-widow programs, were mentioned before. A similar program that both profits from the existing experiences abroad and yet considers the local conditions can be developed. We expect that such a project would create significant positive changes in the lives of the widows and their children.

6.1 Limitations of the study

This study was achieved through snowball sampling through acquaintances.

Reaching out to widowed women is fraught with serious difficulties. In this respect, both the formal institutions and local networks need policies that make widowed women more visible. As a result of the difficulty of reaching the widows, this sample does not sufficiently represent different ethnic, social, and class groups. It does not encompass war widows, rural widows, widows who have migrated after the death of their husbands, remarried widows, or widows who do not have formal (civil)

marriages.

As state data are extremely inadequate, more precise demographic data on widowed women in Turkey could not be provided. For example, there are no statistics for women's illiteracy rates based on age, the number of girls and boys they have, remarriage rates, and ages, and therefore there is no such data in this study. Similarly there is no data on the widowed women in nonformal education institutions.

6.2 Recommendations for further research

There is a serious gap in the literature on widowed women in Turkey and around the world. Most research is in the field of psychology, focusing on the mourning periods of widowed women; there are very few studies in other fields that deal with gender. It is therefore necessary that research be conducted on widows in Turkey. The present study addressed exclusively younger widows, future studies investigating the same issues for older widows will enable the comparison of findings.

In this direction, older women who were widowed at a young age could be interviewed to learn about their experiences in the long term. This way, we can examine how much of what we attribute to the situations of young widows is also true for older widows.

On the other hand, research on groups such as war widows, widows from different ethnic identities, women who become widows due to political murders, women without formal (civil) marriages who become widows, widows who have remarried, or women who become widows due to workplace murders in jobs such as mining could be conducted in order to make stereotypes and problems more visible.

It is also not possible to find much data or research on orphans in Turkey. In the light of the current findings, that the normative figures of authoritarian father and the serving mother are replaced in the case of orphans by relations of solidarity and co-learning between the mother and the child could be treated as an interesting research topic. Changes in the relationships that children make at school and the case of children who lost their fathers before school age are other subjects that can be studied in detail.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Demographic questions:

1. Birth date (Current Age)
2. Woman's age at the time of husband's death
3. Man's age at the time of death
4. The duration of their marriage
5. Husband's occupation
6. Reason of husband's death [in order to understand the economic situation of the family and to check whether the woman had time to prepare for the loss]
7. The educational status of the woman
8. Habitation/Housing status [belongs to her / husband's family / her family, rented, donation]
9. Other household residents
10. The occupational status of the woman and/or her sources of income
11. How does she describe her economic status before the husband's death [poor, medium, good]
12. How does she describe her economic status after the husband's death [poor, medium, good]
13. Number of children
14. Age(s) of child(ren)
15. The educational status of the child(ren)

Interview Questions:

1. How did the death of your husband affect you? What has changed?
2. How did it affect your children? What has changed?
3. What are the most significant hardships that you have endured at the beginning that you can recall?
4. Did you receive any support from your social sphere back then?
5. Who did support you back then? What was the nature of their support?
6. Did your relationship with your husband's family change? If so, in what respect?
7. Did your relationship with your own family change? If so, in what respect?
8. How did your social sphere change? Did you acquire new acquaintances or a new social environment after your husband's death?
9. Are there any people who you see less frequently or with whom you lost contact completely following your husband's death?
10. What are the things that are handled by you anymore but used to be taken care of by your husband before?
11. How did you take care of those things? What were your experiences?
12. How did your husband's death affect your financial status?
13. Did you look for a job? Are you employed?
14. (In case she is employed) Did you use to work before? How did you find your job? What are the factors that played a role in finding a job?
15. (In case she is not employed) Did you use to work before? Would you like to work? What do you think about why you could not find a job?
16. Did you attend any course after your husband's death? Did you consider

doing so?

17. Before husband's death, who was responsible for the school affairs of your child(ren)?
18. Did your relations with your child(ren)'s school change?
19. After your husband's death, what were the areas concerning your children in which you have experienced the most amount of difficulty?
20. Would you say that if this and that were different, it would be less difficult for me after my husband's death? If yes, what are these things?
21. Did your approach to yourself and to your life change after your husband's death?
22. After your husband's death, you were in a way on your own. How did this make you feel regarding yourself? [positive or negative; self-esteem or the lack of it]
23. What are the most difficult or different experiences that you can recall that you have encountered as a woman whose husband has died? [the perspective of the society, her social status, the way she sees other women who have lost their husbands]
24. At the time of your husband's death, were there any ritualistic practices addressing you or your child(ren)?

APPENDIX B

ORIGINAL TURKISH QUOTATIONS FROM THE INTERVIEWS

1. Bilge: Hiç okula gitmedim. Niye okula gitmedim çünkü küçük yaşımızda babamızı kaybettik. Çalışmak zorunda kaldık yani. Babamı kaybettiğimde 5 yaşında vardım. Annem de aynı benim yaşımıdaydı [38]. Evin en büyüğü de 15 yaşında bile değildi. Sünnet bile olmamıştı. Ben hiç bir zaman baba sevgisini görmedim. Hani benim çocuklar da benimkini çekmesin diye ben hep söylerdim.

2. Bilge: Süreç daha zorlaştı benim için. Daha çok hasta, daha çok strese girdi. Daha çok hiç kimseye tahammül etmiyor, küçük bir şeyden de kavga ediyor. İnan bana saat 6'da kaldırıyordu beni. Kalkmazsan; sürahi suyu getirdi benim üstüme biliyor musun döktü, sabahın köründe... 'Kalkacaksın bana bakacaksın. Mecbursun eşimsin.'

Böyle deyince kaynanam geldi burada oturdu. İşte sen bakmıyorsun eşine. Yani düşün. Dedim ki ben bakmıyorsam sen de annesinin sen bak dedim. Kayınbabam başladı kavga etmeye. 'Çık git dedi evden. Naparsan yap dedi.' O halimle gidecektim denize kendimi atacaktım biliyor musun? O kadar strese girdim.

3. Bilge: Benim için hayat ondan sonra bitmedi. Çocuklarım için çok zor geçti, çocuklarımla süreci. Şok olduk hani. Hayat tabii ki zor geçti. Yoğun bakımdayken de hem erkek oldum hem kadın oldum. Geldim eve son Cumartesi günü. O halimle gittim merdiven sildim. O hafta bir de mücadele ediyordum, parasızlıktan. 1 hafta geçti zaten, 2. hafta herkes kendi evine gitti. Çocuklarımla beraber bir çekyatın üzerinde birlikte yatmaya başladık, hiç kimse yok çünkü, korkuyoruz. Dördümüz de birbirimize sarıldık. Anne nasıl yapacağız, nasıl geçineceğiz? Çocuklar söyledi, büyüğü... Başladı, anne, nasıl geçineceğiz? Nasıl faturamızı... Kızım dedim biz nasıl geçiniyorsak aynısını yapacağız. Yine ben ödeyeceğim, çalışacağım, ödeyeceğim.

4. Zarife: Yokluk çok çektik. Babası varken de zordu. Hastane masrafları yüzünden. Onun ilaçları çok pahalıydı. Küpelerimi bozdurdum. Zaten daha altınım yoktur. Ben alyansı eczaneye bırakıyordum. Ay başına para alınca geri alıyordum. Diyordum ki kimse demesin borç yapmıştır eczaneye. Diyordum kimse duymasın, adamla anlaşmıştık kimse bilmiyordu.

5. Zarife: Eşim vefat ettiği zaman ben de kızım da çok korkuyorduk. Ben sabaha kadar yatmıyordum. İkimiz de kadındır biri elini kapıya vursa insan rezil oluyor. İnsan milletin içine çıkamaz. Ben sabaha kadar oturuyordum Ezan okunuyordu sabah diyordum çok şükür bu geceyi de atlattık bu geceyi de böyle geçirdik. Akşam olunca Allahım diyordum sen yardım et; kazasız belasız, herkes kapıdan uzak dursun pislikler, sarhoşlar, berduşlar herşey de var, insanın başına herşey de geliyor.

6. Asiye: Hastalığı da çok zordu. Mesela insanlar diyor, 'neyse ki senin kocan hastaymış kendini

hazırlamışsın' diyorlar ama halbuki hiç de öyle değil. Bir kere insan zaten öleceğini hiç konduramıyor. Ona bakarsan herkesin öleceğini biliyoruz. Herkes ölüyor ama buna kendini hazırlamak mümkün değil. Biz hazırlanmadık. Biz öleceğini hiç düşünmedik. Çok zor hastalık olduğunu bilsek de iyi bakarız iyi davranırız yaşar diye ümit ettik. Olmadı.

7. Duygu: Bu süreçte hayatımdan beş sene gitti. Beş seneyi çok ağır geçirdim. Hep doktor, hastane, iğneler, ilaç. Hala ilaç kullanıyorum. Çok zor atlattım o dönemleri. Sadece kızım için. Yaşamak, hiç birşey beni mutlu etmiyordu, zevk vermiyordu. Her şey anlamsız, boştu. O an her şeyden korktum. Bir boşluğa düştüm. Tamamen hiç beklemediğimiz birşey. Herşeyin altında kalmışsın, hani nasıl çıkacağımı bilemediğin öyle bir korku. Ürküyorsun. Tek kaldım. Ne kadar ailen de olsa hep ben ne yapacağım korkusu oldu.

8. Duygu: Abim, yengem özellikle. Onlar burada. Onların desteği çok oldu. Tabii ki belli bir süre sürdü bu. Bir zaman sonra bakıyorsunuz mutlaka yine yalnızsınız, her anlamda. Herkesin eşi var, çocukları var, evi var bu sefer bakıyorsunuz ki hayatın tam gerçeği ile yüzleşiyorsunuz. Hayatla, yaşamla, zorluklarla karşı karşıya geliyorsunuz. Bu sefer varıyorsunuz asıl gerçeklere. Yani belli bir süreçten sonra anlıyorsunuz.

9. Zariye: Eşim sağken çok gelip gitmiyorlardı. Eşim vefat ettiği zaman daha sık geliyorlar. Kiradalar kendi çoluk çocuğuna bakıyorlar. Gerçi el uzatıyorlar. Arasam kardeşim birşey lazım olsa gece de bile geliyorlar. [Yanlarına taşınayım] istediler. Dediler 'orası heryer yabancıdır. Senin yabancılar içinde ne işin var abla gel bizim yanımızda dur. Biz aç sen de aç biz tok sen de tok. Biz de sen de kirada biz nasıl geçinirsek sen de öyle.' Yok ben gelemem size yük olamam dedim. Burada çalışacağım dedim. Kırıldılar, 'niye gelmiyorsun. Sanki biz sana bakamıyoruz. Sen öyle yapıyorsun millet herkes diyecek sizin bir ablanız vardı siz bakamadınız.' Hatta ev de kiraladılar 400TL'ye. Ben gitmedim. Komşuydu onların evinin karşısıydı. Orası kötü Allah korusun serserilerle çıkacak birşey olur kız çocuğudur insan korkar. Biz orada belki çevre yok aç kaldık belki bir şey oldu ben en iyisi dedim gel yük olmayayım. Biz kendi kararımızdan çok memnunuz. Oraya gitsem böyle memnun olmazdım. Hergün ağlar sızıldım. Burada kafam daha rahat. İşe gidip geliyorum Allah ne verdiyse.

10. Hayat: Bir kere düşmeye görün. Hiç bir şey görmedim kendi ailemden. Hala kırgınlıklarım var. İnsanın maddi olarak insana ihtiyacı var. Ben bir yetim çocukla kaldım ve benim hiçbir gelirim yok. Bana 5-6 ay maaş bağlanmadı. Ailemden hiç destek görmedim. Çıkarıp elli lira kızımın cebine koyuyorlar, onu dışarıdaki de veriyor. Kırgınım onlara. En azından Ramazanlarda bayramlarda kızıma destek olabilirlerdi. Hala da geçerli yani bu. İnsan bir kere arayıp sorar çocuğuna bayramlık aldın mı diye. İhtiyacın var mı...

11. Asiye: Erkek kardeşim bana çok destek oldu. Bana düşkün. Aradı sordu, maddi manevi. Bir de ablam var köyde. Bir kardeşim bir de ablam bana çok sahip çıktı. Beni aradılar, sordular. Özellikle erkek kardeşim. Benim diğer ablamın da kocası öldü. Ama o bize soğuk ben onunla pek konuşmuyorum, onun maddi durumu da iyi. Çocukları doktor oldu. Büyüttü çocukları. O soğuk, bana pek destek olmadı Babam hayatta. Evlenicem diyor. İstese yardımcı olur parası var. Ama duydum ki demiş, 'o sağlığında ev aldırıydı kocasına. Ben uğraşamam.' Kalkmış Hacca gitmiş. Hacca gideceğine burada benim çocuklarıma baksa daha iyi olurdu. Beni dışlıyor. Ben evde en çok sevdiğim

çocuğuydum ama ben evlendim uzağa gittim [memlekette] kalmadım. O zaman bir üzüldü ama yine de en sevdiğim sensin diyordu. Fakat şunu biliyorum, benim başıma gelen aynı durum oğullarının başına gelirse oğullarının çocuklarını sahiplenirdi, onlara bakardı. Ama ben kızım diye beni benimsemiyor. Benim çocuklarıma bakmıyor.

12. Güler: Evde su yok. hadi gidelim dedik. O sırada benim küçük kaynım bizi görüyor, bizim gittiğimizi. Annesine demiş ki Güler, Füsün gittiler. Saat 21.00. Biz de gitmemiz gelmemiz bir oldu çünkü koşa koşa gittik koşa koşa geldik, yağmur yağıyordu. Telefon çaldı baktım babannesi. Aradan zaman baktım amcası aradı. Dedi ki annem arıyor sen niye açmıyorsun, 'evdeyiz noldu ki' dedim, kapattım. Sonra bir daha geriye döndüm aradım. Dedim 'benden ne istiyorsunuz dakikada biriniz kapıma dayanıyorsunuz? Sizin derdiniz ne? Ben illa savcıya gidip, savcılığa polise gidip sizin hakkınızda birşey mi bildirmem gerekiyor, kendimi koruma altına mı almam lazım, sizin derdiniz ne?' Dedi 'vay o...u, k...k, senin gelicem gırtlığını sıkacam'. Ama nasıl bağılıyor biliyor musun? Hani erkek, sanki karşısında bir ordu var sanki onunla hesaplaşıyor. Gelcem gelcem diyor başka birşey demiyor. 'Gelcem senin gırtlığını sıkacağım.' [Kavga şiddetleniyor] Annemi aradım. öyle çektim geldim yani. 2-3 ay sonra gittim eve. Gizli gizli gittim, hani aile apartmanı ya, gizli gizli çıktım. En sonunda gittim işte kışlık kıyafetlerimizi almak için [bir akrabamla]. Telefonlarla evin içinde doluyoruz hırsız gibi. Kim çıkıyorsa kadın [büyük görümcəsi] kapıya fırlıyor. Nöbette. Alttaki eltimi aradık. Siz oradan çıkamazsınız diyor. Hayatta çıkamazsınız diyor, kadın varken. Çaresi yok. Diyor ki hani burada mı kalsak? Gece sabaha karşı mı çıksak evden? Ben artık onun suratını görmek istemiyorum. Artık o kadar. Annem de diyor ki çık, seni mi yiyecek? Onu görmem bile sanki büyük bir şeymiş gibi. Ben hayatımda hiç kimseden nefret etmiyordum ama hani nefret duygusunu onlarda tattım.

13. Duygu: Eşimin ailesi farklı. İşte "o öldü, yemedi içmedi bir evi vardı". Hani çok büyük yatlar katlar bırakmış gibi bana, onu hazmedemediler. Onu hiç hazmedemediler. Benim ailemin bana sahip çıkmasını hiç hazmedemediler. Hani ilgilenmesinler benimle. Ben onların kulu, kölesi, hizmetçisi olayım. Onların işini gücünü yapayım, onların evinin dışına çıkmayayım. Beni böyle resmen kullanmak istediler bu anlamda. Ben de biraz tepki verince bu sefer zıtlaştık. Bir de kabul etmediler hiç kimse gelmesin bize, benim evime. Ne arkadaşım, ne komşum, ne benim ailem, istemediler. O da çok yıprattı beni. Yani ben açıkçası çok zor atlattım. Çocukla ilişkileri şöyle, hep Bahar'ı, kızımı, hep kendi taraflarına kendilerine... İşte benim ailemi kötölemek gibi. Aslında benim ailemin hiç ilgisi yok onlarla. Bana gelen de ben de sürekli rahatsız oluyordu. Telefon açıyordu kayınvalidem 'sende kim var?'. İşte kardeşimin eşi geliyordu. 'O sende mi?' 'Evet bende'. Ya da bir arkadaşım gelse, 'o sende mi?' 'Evet bende anne'. 'Ne zaman gidecek?'. Veya ben kardeşimin evine gidiyordum, 'acaba sen nereye gidiyorsun?' Saçıma, başıma, giyinmeme, konuşmama, gezmeme, hangi saatte girdiğime çıktığıma... Hepsi takipte.

14. Bilge: Eskiden Bilge'nin çocuklarıydı, şimdi Hamit'in çocukları oldular. Kayınbabam söylerken senin çocukların şöyle yaptı, senin çocukların böyle yaptı söylerlerdi. Şimdi ki Hamit'in çocukları. Kıymete bindiler. Döndüler.

15. Narin: Tabii fark oluyor. Eşin varken başka oluyorsun eşin vefat ettiğinden sonra başka. Daha

uzaklaşıyorlar. Tabii ne kadar yanımda olsalar da böyle tabii ki o gözle daha bakmıyorlar sana, bu gidecek diye. Bırakıp gider evlenir belki diye. Pek yakınlık göstermediler ama kötülüklerini de görmedim. Ama eşin varken ayrılır eşin vefat ettiği zaman farklılar. Çocuğa fark etmediler. Ona çok yakınlar. [Komşulara] Gidip geldiğim zaman surat asıyorlardı bana. Görümcelerime bir iki kere söyledim [dışarı işlerini] onlar artık öğren dediler. Biz sürekli senin yanında olamayız sen öğren dediler. Zor geldi, üzüldüm, kendime konduramadım. Eşim varken öyle değillerdi eşim vefat ettikten sonra o kelimeleri kullandılar bana.

16. Derya: Tabii onlar biraz değişiyorlar. Eşim varken daha çok arayıp sorarlardı. Şimdi umursamıyorlar. Ben değilim de çocuklar var. Çok umursamazlar. Halbuki ben beklerdim ki ailede iki tane yeğenleri var. Mesela kayınpederim 1.5 yıl önce felç geçirdi bir anda. Bizim evimiz de çok küçük. Hani hiç gelip de... Kaldıramıyoruz bile hastaneye taksiyle getiriyoruz. İlgilenmediler hiç. Onlar rahatına çok düşkün çok rahat insanlar çok. E zaten çok da alıp baksınlar demem. Her işlerini görüyorlar. Onlar olmasa da ben kendime bakardım. Memleketime giderdim orada otururdum da onların düzenini bozmak da bana iyi gelmezdi.

17. Seher: [Kardeşlerinden] Biri zaten bizimle birlikte, işitme engelli, zorluk yaşadığım anlardan biri de odur. Ama mecburiyetten devam ettiriyorum. Gene insanlığımdan dolayı huzursuz oluyorum. Eşimi kaybetmiş olabilirim ama ben ona kapımı açmalıyım. Emekliliğine üç sene kaldı, kalacak yeri yok, beraber yaşıyoruz. Ama onunla yaşamak da zor. Kaldığım ev 50 metrekare, üç çocuk bir de o dört, bir de ben beş. Ama ben onu anlıyorum, o beni anlıyor, kah atışıyoruz kah öyle geçiyor, yani oluyor sürtüşmeler, ne kadar akrabamız da olsa zor.

18. Esra: Çok kopukluklar yaşadık. Amcasına, halasına, ailesine dedim ki belki benden göremediğini sizde göreceksiniz veya belki babasında göremediğini sizde göreceksiniz. Kopmasın. Hep bunlarda bir eksiklik oldu. Niye oldu, çözemedim. Öncesinde bu kadar değildi, sonradan öküz öldü ortaklık bozuldu hesabı. Eşim öldü ortaklık bitti, ben bittim, biz bittik aslında onlar için. Sadece onların soyadını taşıyoruz.

19. Bilge: Hiç okula gitmedim. Niye okula gitmedim çünkü benim küçük yaşımızda babamızı kaybettik. Çalışmak zorunda kaldık yani. Babamı kaybettiğimde 5 yaşında vardım. Annem de aynı benim yaşımıdaydı (38). Okuma kursuna katıldım. Dedim ki bir yazılayım kursu. Hani işe gitmeyeyim, kursaa gideyim. Cumartesi, Pazar öğlene kadar gideyim, geleyim. Cumartesi, birkaç hafta gittim. Sınıfta kaldım, çünkü gidemiyordum. Güzel ezberlemiştim ama. Hesap konusunda ben çok bilgiliyim. Ama işte okumayı biraz sökmeye çalıştım, dedim neyse bu sene kaldım, gelecek sene giderim. Gelecek sene de Cumartesi öğlene kadar işe gidiyorum. O da olmadı. Geliyorum yorgun.. Pazar günü zaten hiç boş anım yok. Onu da bırakmak zorunda kaldım yani. Okuyup yazmayı çok isterdim. Kitap okumayı çok isterdim. Hiç kimseye anlatamadığım şeyleri kendim gitmek isterdim.

Eşim varken eşimle giderdik. Hastaydı. Hastaneye her yere beraber giderdik. O kadar istemedim o zaman öğrenmeyi. Ama şimdi yalnızım, daha çok lazım bana. En azından 1 kitap okusam çok sevinirim. En çok istediğim şey 1 tane kitap okumak. Çok severdim. Bir okula gideyim çok isterdim. Onun için çocuklarımın okumasını çok istiyorum. Hiç kimseye muhtaç olmadan okusunlar. Elimden ne gelirse onlara vermeye çalışırım. Hiç bir zaman bir kocaya mecbur olmasınlar. Ben çok yıprandım.

Bir kocanın yapamadığı şey kalmadı. Ben çok çektim.

20. Narin: Okumayı öğrenmeye çalıştım, kafam hiç almadı. Eşimden sonra kendim uğraştım, görüncem uğraştı biraz. Görüncemin oğlu okul okuyordu o uğraştı. 12 yaşında vardı oğlan. Uğraştı anlattı yenge aklın almıyor dedi. Biraz kendini toparla ondan sonra dedi. Eşimden 2 sene sonraydı. Ben dedim öğreneceğim ama olmadı. İstedim bir yere gitsem hiç kimseye birşey sormadan kendim işimi halledeyim. Arabaya binsem mesela, bir yere markete gitsem bunun fiyatı şunun fiyatı ne kadar kendim göreyim. Kendim çözeyim dedim. Ama aklım hiç almadı. Şu an oğlum uğraştırıyor beni bilmiyorum bakıyoruz. Öğretiyor bazen bana. Anne diyor ben öğreteceğim sana. Ben şu ana kadar düşünmedim ama şu andan sonra düşünüyorum. Çocuğum büyüdüğü için. Benim arkadaşım söyledi bana dedi kurs açılıyor yazın öğrensene dedi. Görüncemin kızı da okuma yazma bilmiyordu. Onunla beraber gittik kendimizi yazdırdık halk eğitim merkezine. Bu sefer kayınvalidem rahatsızlandı. Bıraktım gidemedim ben. Kız da gidemedi. Dedi sen gelmiyorsan ben de gitmem. Öyle bıraktık biz. Tek gitmek istesek gideriz de beraber gidip gelmek daha güzel oluyor. O da çalıştı bıraktı gidemedi ben de gidemedim. Evi taşırsak bir engel çıkmazsa gider öğrenirim inşallah.

21. Esra: Ben aslında okumayı çok istiyordum, beni babam okutmadı. eşimden sonra gittim kayıt oldum. Eşimden çok değil 1 sene sonra belki, gittim, ortaokulu bitirdim. Hatta bitirdim geçtiğim gün hem gülüyorum hem ağlıyorum, sinirlerim boşaldı, krize girdim. Evliyken yazın konserve, tarhana, yün yıka, çamaşır yıka temizlik yap, onu yap bunu yap hep onları. Yani biz hep onları depolamışız. Biz geleceğimize birşey depo yapmamışız. Geleceğimizin ne olacağını bilememişiz. Damdazlak 29 yaşında kaldım çocukla ortada. Hayatı bilmiyorum, hiçbir şeyi bilmiyorum, çalışma yok, iş yok, bir gelir yok. Bir ev var borç, bir SSK var, iş tecrüben yok. Hiç bir şeyin yok, ailen de olmadı mı kalıyorsun ortada, hadi buyur. Sen ne çamaşır yıkamışsın, konserve yapmışsın, yaza hazırlık yapmışsın, kışa hazırlık yapmışsın, kış stokları yapmışsın; hayatımızla ilgili stok yapamamışız ki. Maddi manevi yaşıyorsun, üzüntüsünü yaşıyorsun, eksikliğini yaşıyorsun, zor. Çok zor. Ben artık omuzlarım kalkmıyor, ayaklarım yürümüyor. 13 senedir yoruldum artık.

22. Güler: KPSS kursuna gittim. Gittim kursa ama şey oldum böyle, nasıl söyleyeyim, çok ağır geldi bana. Yani kendimi kursa veremedim. Ben sözel bölümcüyüm, Tarih, çok güzel dinleyip, çok güzel analiz ederim, temelim de sağlam. Ama yapamadım, odaklanamadım, ağır geldi bana. KPSS'den de 62 puan aldım. Bunlar da sürekli üstüme baskı. Dedim ki İstanbul dışı bir yer olursa da gideyim gibisinden. Onu da yapmadık. Annem dedi ki evin var, az gelirse üstüne biz de koyarız. Otur çocuğuna bak, çocuğunu büyüt mantığı vardı. Yani şöyle, belli bir eğitim seviyeniz olsa mesela bir doktor olsanız, bir öğretmen olsanız, bir hemşire olsanız kimse size gitme işe di-ye-mez!

23. Seher: Eşim varken plan program yapıyorsunuz, çocuklarınızın geleceği için, ileriki yaşam için. Ama şu anda bir kanadınız kırık. Onun eksikliğini hissediyorsunuz. O yüzden nasıl geliştirebilirim, ne yapabilirim çocuklarıma hem annelik hem babalık yapacağım ama nasıl yetebilirim? O yüzden bazı eğitimlere filan katıldım. [Bir kurumun] düzenlediği baba destek programına katıldım ki baba destek programına sadece babalar katılıyor, eğitim alıyor ama ben özel bir talep üzerine, hem anneyim hem babayım diye 16 haftalık bir eğitime katıldım. Gündüz çalıştığım halde akşamları eğitime gittim. Çok faydasını gördüm. Mesela o hafta eğitimi alıyordum, koşarak eve

gidiyordum ki çocuklarıma nasıl uygulayabilirim. Kızım üniversite imtihanına hazırlandığı için dershaneye gidiyor. Dershanenin düzenlediği seminerler ve eğitimler oldu. Onlara katıldım, velilere yönelik, *bir* üniversitede. Kızım hazırır da belki ben hazır değilimdir, birşeyler kaçırmayayım diye. Mümkün olduğunca gidilmesi gereken, imkan zorlanıp gidilmeli yani. Ama kendi imkanımı zorlayayım derken bazı eğitimler ücretli mesela hiç ücretli eğitime katılmadım. Araştırarak, davet edilerek bu şekilde. Ama imkanım olsa tabii ki katılmak isterim. Bu eğitimleri alarak, eğitimlerden ufak birşey bile yakalasan benim için artı. Çocuklarım için de artı. Onu kaybetmeden önce böyle birşey hiç düşünmedim. Tek başınıza kalıyorsunuz. Ufak bir kararı bile verirken tüm sorumluluk size ait oluyor. Pişmanlık duymamalısınız o kararı verirken. Nasıl karar vermeliyim, nasıl bakmalıyım bu çok önemli. Mesela kızımın eğitimi için bir karar verilecek, ben önyargılı davranarak karar verebilirim yalnız yapabilirim, onu da etkileyebilirim. Yani doğru kararı vermeliyim onun geleceği için. Eşimin de yorumuna ihtiyacım olacağı vakitler olur. Belki gerekirse o zaman destek almak isterim. Bir bilene danışmak. Bazen düşünüyorum da nasıl yapabiliriz, bir eğitimci olabilir, bir rehber uzman olabilir.

24. Zariye: Ramazan'da Kuran'a gidildi mi ben katılıyorum. İnsan akı almıyor. Ama iyi oluyor başka akıl veriyorlar. Diyorum acaba ben de öyle yapayım. Bunları belediye bize mesaj gönderiyor. Yardım bir şey olursa diye telefonumuz orada ya, mesela bu saatte burada hazır oluyoruz diye gidiyoruz. Sadece kadınlar. ... belediyesi. 3 ayda bir oluyor. 3 ayda bir bize yardım felan da ediyorlar. Çok öyle yapmışım. Ben bir toplantıya katıldığım zaman çok soru sorarım. Bu fatura bu şöyle mi olacak. Ben nereye gideceğim. Bu ne dedi. Ramazan'da Kuran okuyorlar hoca konuşuyor. Dini sohbetler. Bazen mevlitler oluyor mevlitlere gidiyoruz bizi çağırıyorlar. Önce katılmıyordum. Ama eşim vefat ettiği zaman ben her yere de katılıyorum. Çok gidiyorum. Her yerden bir akıl aldım zaten.

25. Asiye: Ben orayı sohbetlerin olacağı gün haftada bir kere Cuma günü temizliyorum. Aylık 100 TL veriyorlar bana temizleyince. Sohbeta katılıyorum önce. Dinliyorum sonra da temizleyip çıkıyorum. Orası herkese açık. Orada da yeni insanlar tanıyorum. Sadece bizim mahalledeki kadınlar gelmiyor. Başka yerlerden de geliyorlar, burası bana yeni bir çevre oluyor.

26. Bilge: Hiç zamanım olmuyor kendimle bile ilgilenemiyim. Yani kendimle hiç ilgilenmiyorum bile. Pazar günü 13'e kadar işe gidiyorum. 13'ten sonra bir merdiven siliyorum. Merdivenden sonra gelip yemek yapıyorum. Yemekten sonra ya yiyip dinleniyorum ya da banyo yapıp uyuyorum. Sabah kalkıyorum. Birisini uyandırıp okula gönderiyorum. Diğerini, sonra öbürünü gönderiyorum. Merdivene gidiyorum. Merdivenden geldikten sonra evi daha toplamadan yemek yapıyorum. Yemek yaptıktan sonra pazara gidiyorum. Gelip eve pazarı indiriyorum, işe gidiyorum. Geliyorum akşam saat 20.30. Geliyorum daha yemek yememişler. Yemek hazırlıyorum, yiyoruz. Sonra o bulaşıkları kaldır, onu kaldır vs. Ya da arada ev işi çıkıyor bir daha kalkıyorum ... İki senedir vaktim yok ki doktora gideyim.

27. Zariye: Çok zordu çok ağladım. Çok zoruma gidiyordu. Gidiyor geliyordum diyordum ki sanki herkes bana gülüyordu. Ben hayatta gitmemiştim çok bana zor geliyor. Ben kızken de hiç çalışmıyordum babam bırakmıyordu. Evlendim. Eşim vefat ettiği zaman mecbur kaldım. Sadece kızım için. O gülsün yeter bana. Başka istemem.

28. Narin: Dedim o öldükten sonra ben niye yaşayacağım. 3-4 sene öyle yaşadım ben. Hiç

hayattan birşey beklemiyordum. Ondan sonra ev işine başladım çalıştım hayatım yavaş yavaş değişti. Bu sefer mecbur oğlum için ayakta durmam lazım çalışmam lazım. Hayatımı değiştirmem lazım hep böyle gidecek değil diyordum. Yavaş yavaş değiştirdim hayatımı. Yarım günleri gidiyorum işe. Eşimden hiçbir şey kalmadı. Sigortasını yaptırmadılar. Maaş yok. Çocukla beraber kaldım küçüktü çalışamıyordum. Eşimden 1 yıl sonra başladım. Komşum çalışıyordu ev içinde. O dedi sana da bulayım, çalış kafanı dağıtırsın. Onunla beraber bir kere gittim. Arkadaşlar buldu hep gittiğim yerler. Yapa yapa açıldık. İlk gittiğin zaman nereye gidersen iş konusunda ilk işin zor gelir insana. Bir iki kere gittim ondan sonra alıştım. Şu an iki eve gidiyorum. Haftada iki gün. Çalışmak benim için çok yorucu ben yoruluyorum ama mecbur kalınca da yapıyorum. Şu an evimin işini yetiştiremiyorum.

29. Asiye: Kendimi dinlersem kendimi boşlukta hissediyorum. çalışınca unutuyorum. Hem çalışıyorum, hem hastayım, hem üç çocuk, hem evimiz yok kiradayız, yüküm çok ağır. Ayakta olmak zorundayım Tek tek komşulara gittim, birine gidince diğeri de duyuyor. Bin de bir de olsa uzak semtlerde de iş çıkıyor ama buralarda hep iş buldum. Muhtara not bıraktım. O da ilgilendi. Normalde yarım günlük gidiyordum çocuk okula gittiği için, onlar okuldayken ben işe temizliğe gidiyordum. Hatta eşim hayattayken çok zordu yani hem eşime baktım, geceleri de uyumuyordum, çok hastaydı. Şimdi tabii daha da zor çünkü yıprattı, çok ağır geldi. İşyerinde çektiğim sıkıntılar ise bazısı çok huysuz. Beğenmiyor, tekrar yaptırıyor. Tabii ben sessizim. Benim sessiz olmamı fırsat biliyorlar. Yap diyorlar yapıyorum. Bunlar çok zorluyor beni. (Bir de) Örgü yapıyorum, satıyorum. Yoksa hep kendimi otururken evde parmaklarımı yüzümü hep çiziyordum, fark etmiyordum, yara yapıyordum. Ama elime ipimi aldım, örgü örmeye başladım. Sattım, ondan da para kazanmaya başladım. Komşular alıyor. Bazısı ihtiyacı var alıyor, bazısı bana destek olmak için alıyor. Güzel yapıyorum, beğeniyorlar.

30. Duygu: Dediğim gibi bazı insanlar geliyor işyerine şimdi, çalıştığımız ortamda. Tabii ki beni tanımıyorlar, bilmiyorlar. Eşiniz çalışmıyor mu diyorlar mesela, siz mi tek çalışıyorsunuz. Bazen, yok çalışmıyor veya çalışıyor diyorum kişilerine göre. Böyle cevap veriyorum bazen de hiç cevap vermek istemiyorum, duymuyorum. Bilsin istemiyorum. Yani benim hakkımda düşünceleri değişir mi anlamında mı bilmiyorum. Bazen de sadece bilsin istemiyorum.

31. Güler: Pazarlama satış bölümüne ofis çalışanı alınacak, karşılama. Tamam dediler başladım. İşe gitmem problem değildi ama onlar kısıtlıyordu. Gitmeyeceksin, etmeyeceksin, gelmeyeceksin. Benim çalışmama da izin vermiyorlardı. Ona da engel oldular. Kayınvalidem sürekli arıyor işte. Bu sürekli beni arıyor, rahatsız ediyor. Sen bizim kapımızda aç mı kaldın? Sen aç mısın kalkıyorsun işe gidiyorsun? Oradaki arkadaşım da sen bu stresle çalışamazsın dedi. Gelin gitti çalıştı dedirtmek istemiyorlar. Hem gelinin gelirini, eşinden kalanını vermiyorlar, hem de gelinin önünü kesmek istiyorlar. Gelin otur otur kalk kalk. Biz bir şey buyurursak sana buyururuz buyurmasak da sen oradasın napalım senin kocan öldü, sen baştan kaybettin her şeyi.

3 hafta çalıştım işte. Üçüncü hafta başladım. Gece 1.30, hala arıyor. Annemi istedi telefona. Annem dedi ki sensin o. Çirkin kelimeler. [Güler çalıştığı için Güler'in annesiyle eşinin ablası telefonda tartışıyor] Annem dedi, "sen bu çocuğu al büyüt. Senin birşeyin eksikse biz yaparız. Niye çalışıyorsun dedi? Bu çocuk biraz büyüsün dedi. "Git evinde otur hani evin de var, düzenin de var. İş yerini aradım, genel müdürümüzü. Dedim böyle böyle. Onlar da 3-4 gün beklemişler belki fikrinden cayar

gelir diye. Ben de gitsem mi gitmesem mi böyle kararsız kaldım. Ailem de o konuda biraz pasif kaldı. Babam arayıp da diyebilirdi ki, kocasına senin karının ne hakkın var benim karımı arayıp da böyle hakaret etmesine. Yapmadı.

32. Güler: Bir de işin şöyle bir tarafı var. İşe gidiyorsunuz, benim hep girdiğim işler referanslı, tanıdıklarımın. Bir yere de gittim. İş görüşmesine. Adam iş konusundan çıkıp başka bir konuya girdi. Birşey desem siz yanlış anladınız pardon diyecek mevzuya girecek. Baktım niyeti farklı dedim gitmem lazım. Çocuğum okuldan çıkacak dedim, çantamı aldım fırladım hemen. Yolda şansıma da o [referans olan] arkadaşımınla karşılaştım. Dedi hemen söyleyelim, sana böyle bir tarzda. Yok dedim, diyecek ki bana asıldı, benim hakkımda bişey çıkaracak dedim. Boş ver dedim, benden bulmasın başkasından bulsun. Öyle o konuyu orada kapattık. Yani kendinizi savunamıyorsunuz. O diyecek ki o bana...

33. Hayat: Maddi sıkıntı yaşadım. Çevreden eşten dosttan gelenlerle hayatımı idame ettirmeye çalışıyordum. Şu saatten sonra düşünmek zorundayım çünkü bu çocuğu bu şartlar altında tek başıma okutmam mümkün değil. İş bakıyorum tam gün çalışmam mümkün değil, ergen kızım var. Saatleri biraz az ona göre geliri olan bir iş bakıyorum. Lise 2 de iş hayatına başladım 5 sene sonra çocuk oldu evlenince o zaman bıraktım çocukla. Stajla beraber 9 senelik iş geçmişim var. Şu an beni [mesleğimde] işe almazlar çünkü yaşım geçti.

34. Hayat: Bak şimdi ben neden işe girmiyorum onun da etkisi var işte. Ben çalışmaya ondan da korkuyorum. Ben şimdi bir işe girsem masa başı elemanı olmak istiyorum yine. Ya nereye gidersen git ben çalışırken bile asılan oluyordu. Kocam varken bile. Bugün sana patronun asılmasa eleman asılır, eleman asılmasa çevredeki esnaf. İnanın ben çok korkuyorum. İlla ki dul kalmış insana. Ben şimdi hiç çalışmadım eşim öldükten sonra gerçekten korkuyorum. Eşin ne iş yapıyor, eşim vefat etti, oh tamam....

35. Esra: Öne çıkamıyorsun. Genç olmak ayrı bir zor. Bu da bir suç anlayamadığım. Veya namusunla çalışıp bir kadın olarak, hele de eşin yoksa çok zor. Ayakta kalmak çok zor. İnsanlar kendilerine malzeme ediyor, kendi hevesleri zevkleri için seninle uğraşabiliyorlar. Dul bir bayanın çalışması çok zor biliyor musunuz? Türkiye gibi İstanbul gibi bir yerde, yani sen giyinsen laf, otursan laf, gülsen laf.

36. Zariye: Bize gün vermişlerdi burası yıkılacak diye. Yaza kadar sokaklarda aradım. Ev vardı ama çok pahalı. Sadece başımı koyayım içine. O abla [komşusu] dedi kız ev yok biz ne yapacağız sana. Her yere soruyoruz yok diyor kadın. Sonra o abla dedi bak benim karşımda ev teras katı 2 senedir boş. Abla bana vermezler dedim. Sen sor benim gönderdiğimi söyle dedi. Ev sahibi önce dedi vermiyoruz ben uzaklaştım. Yanımdaki arkadaşım dedi nolur bak kadın sokakta kalmış. Telefonumu aldılar. Eve baktırmadılar. Ben ağladım kızım üzülme dedi. Çok ağlıyordum ben ev bulamadım sokakta kaldım. Uygun olursa tutarım kızım dedim. Kötü de olsa iyi de olsa idare ederiz kafamızı sokalım. Ana kışın soğuk olur tavan akarsa dedi.

Adam [ev sahibi] aradı abla dedi sen nasıl idare ediyorsun nasıl çalışıyorsun. Yine derdimi söyledim. Seni mahcup etmem elimden ne gelirse yaparım dedim. Faturamdan kiramdan vazgeçmem dedim. Ben de kızım da aç bırakırım onları veririm.

37. Narin: Şu an kiralar çok yükseldi. Ancak 400-500 TL veririm. Ama kiralar 700-800 TL. Soruyorlar kaç kişi yaşıyorsun diyorum bir ben bir oğlum. Eşin yok mu diyor. Diyorum vefat etti oğlumla kalıyorum. Bir iki yere gittim vermediler. Gerekçe bu [dul olmam] herhalde ben öyle düşündüm. Birşey demediler dediler biz kiraya vermiyoruz. Yeri gelince kaynımı götürüyordum kendimle. Napalım mecbur kalınca insan herşeyi yapabiliyor.

38. Duygu: “Taşınmayı düşündüm. Çok düşündüm. Bunu ailemle paylaştım. Tabii ki sen istiyorsan taşın, ama eşinin ailesine o kozu verme dediler [taşınırsan evi senden alırlar]. Sonra ben de düşündüm, evet onların [eşimin ailesinin] maddi anlamda eşime bir katkısı olmamış, tamam. Benim eşim çalışmış kazanmış, tüm evini, eşyasını arabasını o almış ve dediğim gibi benim de değil sonuçta. Onun [eşimin] bir çocuğu var. Onun [kızım] için sabrettim. O dönemler işte çok istedim taşınayım. Uzaklaşayım buradan. Onlardan, herkesten. Bahar'a kızıyorlardı [onlardan uzak durmasın diye]. Çocuktan yani 6-7 yaşındaki çocuk ne bilir. Kızım istemediği için kaldım ve Bahar o zaman küçüktü. Bahar'la paylaştım ben bunu. 'Bahar biz buradan gitsek nasıl olur? Başka bir yere. Ev tutsak seninle' diye sordum ona. 'Hayır anne ben istemiyorum ben burayı çok seviyorum' dedi.

39. Bilge: Ev ipotekli. Eve ipotek koymuşlar da ne kadar koyduklarını bilmiyoruz biz. Eski ev sahibi yapmış. Kayınbabamın bildiği halde kabul etmişler, evi ipotekliken satın almışlar. Aslında yapmayacaklardı. Önce ipoteği kaldıracaklardı sonra üstlerine geçireceklerdi. Bilmemişler, he demişler. O ipotek daha var üstünde. Onu da strese koyduk, biraz daha. Kızlar 'anne biz evsiz nasıl yaşayacağız, kim bize bakacak?' diye korkuyorlar.

40. Zariye: Önceleri kıyamet kopsa, ben bu evden çıksam, dönüp bu evi bulamazdım. Vallahi bilmiyordum. Bakkala zor gidiyordum geliyordum. Eşim vefat etti dedim ben napacam, faturaya da gidecem, belediyeye sosyal yardımcıya gideceğim, tek başıma gideceğim. Hep o ilgileniyordu. Hayatta başıma böyle birşey gelmedi. Acaba ben yapabilir miyim? Hayatta yapamam diyordum. Kendimi zorladım. Ama mecbur oldum katıldım [çabaladım]. Eşimden önce komşularla görüşmüyordum izin vermiyordu. Biraz kıskançtı beni dışarı çıkartmıyordu. Hiç arabaya binmiyordum. Sonra komşulara gidiyordum, soruyordum, ben nasıl bineceğim gideceğim arabaya [otobüse]. Arabaya binmeye ben korkarım, okumam yazmam yoktur, yanlış arabaya binerim, ben nereye giderim... Çok sordum, okumam yazmam yok. O çok kötü işte. Bir fatura yatıracağım zaman 5-6 kişiye soruyordum. Acaba bu faturayı nerede yatıracağım, ne kadar gelmiş. Akşam kızım 20 TL gelmiş diyordu mesela sabah kalkıyordum acaba 20 miydi 15 miydi? 2-3 kişiye soruyordum bu fatura ne kadar gelmiş diye.

41. Asiye: Alışveriş ve faturalar benim en çok zorlandığım kısım oldu. Fatura yatırmayı bilmiyordum. Gidip ayrı ayrı yatırdım onları. Zorlandım. Bir tane komşum vardı onun eşi de ilgisiz. Eşi hiç bu işlerle uğraşmayan bir kadın. O kadın biliyormuş nasıl yatırılacağını. Bana anlattı, ben de kalktım gittim. Kendi başıma yaptım ama çok zorlandım. Alışveriş marketi de hep eşim yapardı. Evin eksikliğini, neyi var neyi yok, benden iyi bilirdi. Bizim evimiz yokuş yukarı. Bunları [alışveriş torbalarını] taşımak da çok zor. Ama artık işte bunları ben yapıyorum. Yokuş da var, ben çıkarıyorum. Herşeyi ben düşünüyorum. Hepsine ben yetişmeye çalışıyorum.

42. Duygu: Bütün evrak işleri, dışarı işleri ona aitti. O hallediyordu genelde. Bir tek market işini

birlikte yapıyorduk. Zaten pazara gitmeye zamanımız yoktu bizim. Ondan sonra hepsi bana kaldı. Dışarı işleri, evrak işleri, faturalarım, çocuğun sorumluluğu, evin sorumluluğu hepsi bana ait. Bu da beni bazen ister istemez çok etkiliyor ve yıpratıyor. Hem maddi hem de manevi olarak acayip geriyor. Bazen dibe vurduğumu hissediyorum. Bünyem kaldırmıyor.

43. Esra: Ben hiç mesela fatura yatıramazdım. Yatırmazdım, yani bilmezdim açıkçası. Hatta eşim bana söylerdi 'hep benden bekle, hep benden bekle, fatura yatırma' felan. Bankaya gitmezdim. Ev, ev, çocuk... Ama sonradan işte hayata alışabiliyorsun, herşeye alışıyorsun. Şimdi herşeyi kendim yürütebiliyorum. [Başta zorlandığım işler] Faturalar. Ama artık onun da kolayı var, otomatik ödeme var. O zamanlar çok yoktu. Bankaya gittim dedim nasıl yapacağım, bankacı [gişe memuru] dedi odur budur, kafam almıyor, düşünüyorum 'Allah'ım ben neredeyim, nerden gideceğim, nereye gideceğim, nasıl yapacağım'. Bir zaman sonra birgün arkadaşımın biri gidiyordu, dedi ki nasıl gidiyorsun, nasıl yapıyorsun, bana sordu. Dedim ki, valla ben de bilmiyordum ama canavar oluyorsun. İş başa düşünce, sen bunu yapacaksın, canavar oluyorsun.

44. Duygu: [Eşimden kalan evi üzerine almak için gerekli olan yasal işlemleri] Tabii ben hallettim. Çok zordu daha yeniydi [eşim yeni vefat etmişti]. Hiçbir şeyin farkında değilsiniz yani. Kendim de gittim, birileriyle de gittim. Gitmek zorundaydım ama ne yaptım hiç hatırlamıyorum. Kötüydim. Onlar çok ağır gelmişti bana, işlemleri yaptırmak. Normal gidip sürüne sürüne dönüyordum.

45. Güler: Savcı olay yerine gelip inceleme yaptığı zaman beni ve eşimin küçük erkek kardeşini davacı olarak yazmış. Benim hiç bundan haberim yok. O süreç kargaşa, karmaşık bir süreç. Sonra ben savcılığa gittim, dedim ki, mektubu istiyorum ben. Ne yazmış mektupta. Gerçi bu mektubu ilk ben almıştım. Baktım. Yeğeni yanımdaydı, o da baktı. Polis görünce mektubu elimizden aldı. Aşağı yukarı ne yazdığını biliyorum ama tabi o kargaşada o ani şokta birşeyi yanlış da okuyabilirsin. Savcıya gittim, mektubu istedim. Savcı, davacı olan küçük kardeşi sizden önce geldi dedi. Onun alma yetkisi var mı ki dedim. Savcı direk aranızda husumet mi var diye sordu. Aslında hiç sevmem de, yok dedim. Çektiririm fotokopisini veririm sana da dedi.

46. Hayat: Hastanede dedim ki bu çocuğun patronları nerede? Bu bir iş kazası, neredeler? Patronu geldi. Savcı bana sordu 'şikayetçi misin patronlardan?'. Şikayetçi olmadım o gün. Ben dedim, 'sebepten şikayetçiyim, araştırılmasını istiyorum bulunsun cezalandırılsın'. Ama bu durum duyuluyor avukatlar benim davamı almak istiyorlar, iş yerine tazminat davası açmak istiyorlar. Bana gelen avukatlar diyorlar 'patronlara dava açsan 200 milyar alırsın', yok diyorum. Onların kusuru olmasa da biz kazanırız diyor avukatlar. Ben diyorum istemiyorum ölümüne sebep olanı dava edelim. O işte de çok para yok diye onu [sebepten kişiyi] dava etmek istemiyorlar. Avukat para kazanmak istiyor. Patronlara dava açmadım. Yakında mahkemem var. Savcının yanına sık sık gidiyorum çünkü evrakları almam lazım mahkemeye vereceğim ya, adli tıptan raporları almam lazım, savcının yanına gidiyorum. Bir avukata vermek için alıyorum dosyaları. Zaten üzerimde acı var, mahsunluk, üzüntü var. Savcı 'kızım dedi sen hep tek geliyorsun, senin kimi kimsen yok mu?' dedi. Dedim kimsem yok. 'Ama hastanede gördüm dedi birsürü kalabalık vardı' dedi. Dedim ki onlar o gün vardı, onlar artık yok. Mahkemeye vereceğimi söyledim. Dedim çok iyi bir avukata ihtiyacım var. Savcı dedi ki 'yok, senin

çok dürüst bir avukata ihtiyacım var'. Dedim nereden bulacağım dürüst avukatı. Daha sonra savcı dedi ki kimse ceza almayacak. Dul, yetim kaldığımızla kaldık. İnsanlık ettim patronlara dava açmadım hata ettim. Keşke basına çıksaydı da cezalandırılısalardı. Mahkemelere çıkmıyorum psikolojim bozulduğu için.

47. Hayat: Gelelim diğerine emekli olamadım BAĞKUR borcumuzdan dolayı. Benim ödeyecek gücüm yok. bir arabamız vardı. Araba eşimin üzerine, üstümüze alamıyoruz. Çünkü Elif mirasçı. Eşim ölmüş bir hafta olmuş, bana mahkemeden kağıt geliyor. Çocuk hakları bilmem ne, sanki ben çocuğumdan mal kaçırıyorum. Gittim ifade verdim. İstanbul'da hiçbir noter vekalet vermiyor çocuk küçük. Satamıyoruz üzerime alıp da arabayı.

48. Bilge: Berfin'den dolayı eve bir kağıt geldi. Berfin'in yaşı küçük olduğu için [Berfin babası vefat ettiğinde 6 yaşında]. Devlet şimdi, çocuğun üstünde mal varlığı varsa el koyuyor, çocuk 18 yaşını buluncaya kadar. Bir kağıt geldi mahkemeden, sandık ki Berfin'i elimizden alacaklar, Berfin küçük diye. Korkmaya başladık bu sefer de. Ama işte o korkunun ecele bir faydası yok. Mahkememiz var. 'Acaba Berfin'i alacaklar mı, almayacaklar mı', o korkuyu yaşıyoruz. Kızlarla birlikte kalktık gittik mahkemeye. Yok dedi hakim, öyle birşey yok dedi. Sadece üzerinde birşey var mı yok mu onu öğrenmeye çalışıyoruz. Çok şükür onu da atlattık.

49. Bilge: Hazal birgün telefon açtı dedi, anne dedi 'beni karakoldan aradılar, ifade vermeye çağırdılar'. Şaşırdım, 'hey Allahım ne ifadesi, ne karakolu!'. Hiç gitmemişim ki karakola, bana bir değişik geldi. Sinirlendim. Neyse gittik karakola. Sorduk neymiş; işte Simge [komşunun kızı] kızımızdan şikayetçi. Bekleyin diye tuttular, avukat gelecek. Ben şaşırdım, sanki yer beni kabul etmiyor. O kadar sinirlenmişim ki. Ömrümde hiç karakol görmemişim. Karakolun kapısından bile girmemişim. Mahkemeye hiç gitmemişim. Onlar avukat gönderdi, baro herhalde, avukat geldi. Sonra geldik eve, Hazal'a nasıl kızıyorum. O erken saatte yatağa girdim biliyor musun üzüntüden.

Mahkeme günü gittik karakola, bizi arabaya koydular mahkemeye götürdüler. Ama arabadaki diğer çocukları görünce içim gitti. Küçük küçük erkek çocuklar, hep uyuşturucu kullanmışlar, mahkemeye gidiyorlar. Bir tane polis vardı. Bize baktı, 'annesiyile Hazal'ı ayrı bir taksiye koyalım götürelim' dedi. Hazal'ı koymayalım bu arabaya [diğer erkek çocukların yanına] dedi. Gittik mahkemeye avukat geldi dedi Hazal Simge'yi tehdit etmiş. Ama ne yer beni kabul ediyor, ne gök biliyor musun? Sanki ben bir suç işlemişim de mahkemeye gitmişim. Kendimle kötü suçluları bir tutuyorum. 'Ama nasıl, nasıl, Allahım diyorum bugün burası nasıl biter?' O sinirle karnıma ağırlar giriyor. Tuvalete gittim ki kanamam var. O kadar ki sinirlenmişim.

Sonradan, 2 ay önceydi, mahkemeye gittik. [Şikayetçi olan komşu kızı] 'Ben kıskandım erkek arkadaşımın Hazal'ı beğenmesini, uydurdum o yüzden, yalan söyleyip şikayetçi oldum' demiş. Dava öyle bitti.

50. Bilge: [İş arkadaşlarım] para toplamışlardı, kendi aralarında. Benim zor zamanımda onlar bana destek oldular. Mesela miras işimi hep o parayla yaptım. Bankaya ödedim, kağıtlara ödedim, sigortaya ödedim, eve ödedim. Yani hayat, ne bileyim hiç gitmediğim bir yerde gittim de bana değişik geldi. Demek hayat böyleymiş yani, devam ediyormuş yani. Ucunda ölüm var da arkasındaki hayat daha başka geliyor. Ama zor zamanımda hiç kimse yanımda olmadı.

51. Duygu: Eşimden sonra her ay gittim psikiyatriye. İlaç kullandım. Bazen çok ağır dönemler atlattım. Bayağı kötü zamanlar geçirdim. Hatta yanımda birileri kalacak kadar. Uyku ilacı da çok kullandım. Mesela 6 ay uyuduysam 6 ay hiç uyuyamadım. Sonrasında herhalde vücut alışıyor, aman uyumazsam uyumayayım dedim. Önceden rahatsız oluyordum, neden uyuyamıyorum diye. Şimdi uyku ilacı kullanmıyorum. Bir ara çok kullandım, onsu uyuyamıyordum.

52. Güler: Psikiyatri doktoruna gitmeye karar verdim. Doktora gittim, “kimle geldin? dedi. “Yalnız geldim dedim. “Kimse yok mu? dedi. Yalnızım dedim. İşte böyle böyle oldu dedim. Benim bu süreci atlatmam gerekiyor dedim. Benim kızım küçük, kızımın konuşma güçlüğü var dedim. 4 yaşındaydı kızım o zaman. Senin hiçbir rahatsızlığın yok, siz bu süreci atlatacaksınız dedi doktor. Sonra eşimin neden vefat ettiğini sordu. İntihar etti dedim. “Peki hiç bir şey anlayamadın mı? dedi. Anladım da dedim, yani sonuçta dedim buralara kadar geldik. Kızım ve ben belediyenin psikoloğuna, psikiyatristine gidiyoruz. Çok öyle paramız yok yani. Sonuçta belediyenin, devletin verdiği sosyal imkanları kullanıyoruz. Araştırıyorum, buluyorum, sorup soruşturuyorum.

53. Hayat: 6 ay ben uyku nedir bilmedim. Günde 2 saatlik bir uykuyla yaşayabildim. Ve eşimi kaybettiğimde bir kaç gün zaten hiç uyumadım. Artık bedenim inanılmaz yorulmuştu. Allah'a hep yalvarıyordum hep böyle gün sayıyordum. İstedğim bir tek neydi biliyor musun, gün geçsin, zaman geçsin. Çünkü şunu biliyorum ki ne kadar zaman geçerse acım biraz daha hafifleyecek. Üzüntüden ben hastalandım. Depresyona girdim. İlginç bir rahatsızlık oluştu bende. Günde belki bin kez hıçkırıyordum. Dışarlara çıkamaz hale geldim. Epey bir sürdü, doktora gitmem lazım. Ama doktor bana depresan verecek ben depresandan nefret ediyorum bana olumsuz etkiler yapıyor. Uyutuyor. Eşimin öldüğünde dahi bir iğne yaptırdım sonra doktor bana bir çanta antidepressan verdi hiçbirini kullanmadım. Sabrettim. Ama bu hıçkırık kötü oldu, 2-3 ay çektim. Bazı arkadaşlarım da dalga geçiyor. Dışarı çıkamıyorum neyse ki kış. Doktor dedi ki kullanmak zorundasın. Sen birşeye mi üzuldün dedi ilk. Desem ki üzuldüm antidepressan verecek. Dedim hiçbirşeye üzülmedim. Eşimin öldüğünü de biliyor. Dedi dişini sık. Üç hafta kullandım. Bitene kadar kullan dedi de ben 15 gün kullandım. Geçti.

54. Hayat: O ilk eşinle vedalaş diyen adama ben istemiyorum dedim bıraktım. Çünkü o bana farklı yönelmeye başladı. Dedim ki bu insan benim acımdan istifade edip benimle farklı bir arkadaşlık kurmak istiyor, bıraktım. Onu hayatımdan uzaklaştırdım.

55. Derya: Belediye de yardım ediyordu ama sonra gelip eve baktılar iki maaş olduğu için onlar kestiler. Böyle kumanya felan veriyorlardı. İki maaş olan evlere vermiyoruz artık dediler. Çok yardım sever insanlar var. Muhtara geliyorlar mesela yetim giydireceğim diye. Daha çok giyim yardımı yapıyorlar. Onlar alıyorlar kızları giydiriyorlar. Birkaç yıldır ben hiç almadım üstler öyle şeyler. Ayyakkabı olsun, kıyafet olsun Ramazanlarda para veriyorlar üstler başlar veriyorlar. Evvelden muhtarla ilişkimiz olmazdı. Ama işte fakirlik kağıdı alıyorsun, durumunu anlatıyorsun sonra o seni çağırıyor, hani şöyle bir durum var diye. Bazen bir yerden yardım alıyorsun ama onun için kaç gün kağıt yapıyorsun oraya buraya, mesela bu işler çıktı. Önceden o evraklara gitmiyordum ben. Önceden ben bankaya bile hiç gitmezdim.

56. Zariye: Sigorta yok babamdan alıyorum. Eşimden bağlanmadı birşey. Babamdan kalan parayı

alıyorum o da 400 TL. Annem sağdır paylaşıyoruz. Belediyeye sosyal yardımcıya gidiyorum, tek başıma gidiyorum. Kendimi zorluyorum çok. Kuyruklarda iki saat sıra bekliyorum sıra bana gelene kadar. Komşulara sordum nereye gidiyorlar, arabaya nasıl biniyorlar, hangi arabaya biniyorlar. Belediye bize yardım veriyor. Ayda 100 TL yatırıyorlar. [Maaş] Sigortan var çıkmıyor dediler. Ben de babamın sigortasını iptal etmedim. Devamlı doktora gidiyorum. Sigorta karşılamazsa ben nasıl karşılarım. Eşim de yeşil kartla tedavi oluyordu. Hiç sigortası yoktu hiçbir şey. Belediye bize mesaj gönderiyor. Yardım birşey olursa diye telefonumuz orada ya, mesela bu saatte burada hazır oluyoruz diye. Gidiyoruz. Sadece kadınlar. 3 ayda bir oluyor. Komşularım fitre zekat gıda yardımı yapıyor bana.

57. Bilge: İşyerinde, ilk zamanlar eşim vefat ettiği zaman, çok destek oldular. Mesela para topladılar kendi aralarında, bana verdiler. Yabancılar bana daha çok destek oldu biliyor musun? Akrabadan daha çok destek oldular. Bugün hiç param yok bir merdivene giderim, birisi kapıyı açar der Bilge geldin mi, şu parayı alsana. Ben naaparsam o verir yani. Bir ev temizliğine giderim kendi evimi nasıl yaparsam öyle Bana verecek para 50TL ise 60 TL verir ben almam. Israrla söylerler, sen fazlasıyla yaptın.

58. Bilge: Ben ilk gittiğim zaman orada adamlar bana hiç iyi davranmadılar. Senin sigortan var, sen hiç birşey yapamazsın git dedi. Adam kağıtları elime verdi. Birgün o kağıtları götürürken kaymakamlıktan bir bayan aradı, size geleceğiz kaymakam beyle birlikte. kaymakam geldi. Dedi ne istiyorsun. Ben hiç birşey istemiyorum dedim, bana bir dulluk maaşı bağlayın çocuklarımı okutayım. Bir de kışın evim ısınsın. Biz çünkü korkuyoruz doğalgazı açmaya dedim, çocuklarımla birlikte. Ödeyemiyoruz faturayı. Yardım olarak verelim dedi ama senin sigortan var dulluk maaşı veremem dedi. Sen sigortandan çıkarsan maaş veririz dedi. Ben sigortamdan çıkmam dedim. Ama ne sıkıntın olursa her zaman kapımızı çalabilirsiniz dedi. O da bir 3-4 ayda 600 TL veriyor. 3 ayda bir veriyordu ama kaç aydır vermemiş. Öyle lazım olunca yardım gibi veriyor maaş değil. Belediye bize bir kart vermiş 3 ayda bir 250 TL bizim karta yüklüyor.

59. Narin: Eşimden hiç birşey kalmadı. Sigortasını yaptırmadılar. Maaş yok. Muhtarla eşimden önce münasebetim yoktu. Eşimden sonra geliyordum bir yardım felan olunca telefon açıyordu bana. Geliyordum yardım alıyordum. Ben öyle kurumlara gittim. Bana söylenen; sen gençsin çalışabilirsin. Kendine iş bak. Böyle yardımlarla geçimini yapamazsın. Hep diyorlardı, gençsin çalışabilirsin. Biz anaokuluna veririz dedi. Sana iş buluruz dediler. Çocuk gitmedi. Ben de kabul etmedim.

60. Hayat: En basit bir şey ben emekli olmak için o kadar uğraştım ki. Şimdi emekli olacağım evrakları bulmam lazım borcu ödeyeceğiz. Çok büyük bir dert. Gelirin yok. Çalışacak psikolojin zaten yok. Elin eline ne kadar bakabilirsin. Zaten elden gelen bugün gelir yarın gelmez.

Bir günde 7 tane devlet dairesi gezdim. Aç susuz, yemek yiyecek zamanım olmamış. Sabah kalkmışım aç aç gitmişim. Bir bölüme gittim orada bir adam beni karşıladı. Yüzümün rengi atmış ağlamaklıyım. Artık ağlamaya başladım. Dedi derdini anlat, anlattım böyle böyle eşim öldü emekli olacağım evrakları bulamıyorlar. İnan ki o adam bana asıldı biliyor musun... Adam tamam ben sana yardım edeceğim dedi. Adamın eline kaldım. Adam inecek aşağıya arşive. Dosyayı bulacak. Adam da bir yandan afedersin ama yavşıyor. Çıkışta dedi çiçek pasajımı ne oraya gidelim. Yok bira içelim falan

filan. Yavşıyor hiç ses çıkarmıyorum. Niye: adamın elindeyim. Aşağıya inse kağıdı yırtta sittin sene emekli olamam. O adama kaldım. Adam evrakımı bulacak elime verecek. Şimdi ben susuyorum. Red etmiyorum, senle görüşmem felan demiyorum, söylemiyorum hiç. Zaten dertliyim kederliyim ağlıyorum. Adam aşağı gitti yarım saate geldi. Evrakı verdi. Artık kapanıyor orası. Bana dedi ki bir yerlere gidelim. Çay içelim dedi. Dedim kızım okuldan çıkıyor kapıda kalır çocuğumu alacak kimse yok, koşarak okula gitmem gerek dedim. Kağıdı da kurtardım. Ama bir daha o adamla işim var. İşleri yapıp kağıdı gene ona teslim edeceğiz. Bir daha gittim tabi adam hemen atladi. Geldi. Kolay lokma zannediyor herhalde. Ona gitmedim hemen yan masadaki adama gittim. Durumu da anlattım. Sonra da ben bu adamdan şikayetçi oldum. İşimi de hallettim. Hem de şikayet ettim.

Onlara başta sessiz kalacaksın ama işin bitince ağızlarının payını vereceksin. Gereken şikayeti de yapacaksın. Çünkü onlar da az değil senin orada hayatını kaydırır. Senin kağıdını yırtar, evrakını kaybeder, yanlış bir işlem yapar, yaparlar.

61. Esra: İlk bankaya maaşımız bağlandı, bankadan alacağız. Ziraat bankasına gittim. 'Ah yavrum vah yavrum' hepsi yaşlı insanlar, eyvah dedim yani. Onların hepsi orta yaş üstü emekli maaşı almaya gelmiş ben içlerinde parlıyorum yani. İnsanların 'ah yavrum vah yavrumları' zaten beni şey yapıyor, onlarla bazen yollarımı çeviriyorum, hep acıma durumları, aynısı. 'Sigortan var mı?', evden kira alıyor musun? evlenmeyi düşünüyor musun?' hep standart sorular. Alıştım artık diyorum. Bu standart sorulara alıştım. Karşılaşmak istemiyordum.

62. Esra: Ben sadece biraz şey aldım, bu eğitime para veriyorlardı belediyeden öyle bir para aldım. Bir de yılda 1 kere Büyükşehir Belediyesi veriyor okul katkı payı o parayı alıyorum. 1 kere belediye bana erzak kutu vermişti ama ben öyle bir yardımlar almadım. Ama muhtar iş bulmamda aracı oluyordu.

63. Esra: En sevmediğim şey de, hani insanın en sevmediği şey başından geçermiş ya, benim en sevmediğim şey dul kelimesiydi. Abimle gittik nüfus dairesine. Abi dedim bunu sakın söylemeyelim, bunu sakın yazmasınlar, dul olduğumu. Söylemem dedi. Güldü. Sonra, kimlik geldi, bekar. Zaten öldüğü zaman kütükten düşüyümüş. Bekar yazıyor ama soyadını taşıyorum. Sevmiyorum dul kelimesini. Dul kadınlar gibi diyorlar mesela, çok çirkin bir kelime.

64. Hayat: 1 hafta sonra nüfusa gittik, kızım soyadını kullanabilirsin dediler. Benim kendi soyadım başka kızımınki başka olur öyle olursa. Kimliğe de bekar yazacaklar. Yarın öbür gün ortamlara gireceksin, bankaya gideceksin, vergi dairesine gidiyorsun yanında bir çocuk, acaba insanların kafasında farklı bir düşünce olabilir mi? Ben de dedim ki dul yazabilirsiniz veya ben eşimin soyadını istiyorum. Şimdi dul ve eşimin soyadı yazıyor.

65. Narin: Memleketteler. Eşimden sonra beni oraya götürmeye çalıştılar. Gel yaşın küçüktür seni evlendirelim. Çocuğun daha küçük anlamaz. Büyüdüğü zaman fırsat bırakmaz seni kıskanır. Ben de o fırsatı vermedim onlara. Gidiyordum misafir olarak bir ay kalıyordum geri geliyordum. Ben gitmeyince tavır yaptılar arada soğukluk oldu. Aramadılar sormadılar beni. Hani napıyorsun niye orada kalıyorsun demek istediler. Ben de kendi ayağımda ayakta durmaya çalıştım. Hiç kimseye kendimi muhtaç etmeyeyim dedim, kendim ve oğlum için. Şimdi biraz daha iyi. Biraz daha farkına vardılar evlenmeyeceğimin. Biliyorlar, çocuğa kıyamadığım için. Şu an bana birşey diyemiyorlar.

[Düşündükleri biri var mıydı?] Vardı. Akrabaydı. O da evliydi boşanmıştı iki tane oğlu vardı. Beni de kendi istedi. Telefon numaramı aldı. Ben de kabul etmedim. İki oğlu vardı. Benimki de biraz da psikolojisi bozuk olduğu için kıyamadım ona. Kimsenin yanında ezdirmek istemedim. O yüzden kabul etmedim.

66. Güler: Dinimize göre, yani sizin inancınız farklı mı bilmiyorum ama, eşi öldükten 4 ay 10 gün sonra nikah düşüyor. Benim önceliğim kızım. Eşim öldü gitti çok sarsıldım. Geçen eşimin bir arkadaşının annesi bana da diyor ki Füsün da büyüyecek, yalnız kalma şudur budur evlenirsin bilmem ne yaparsın. Dedim 5,5 sene evli kaldım. Kocam yok ki ben alıştım. Koca hakimiyeti görmedim. Ben insanın ruh eşi yok diye düşünüyorum. O çok nadir birşey o da piyango çıkmıyor ya nasıl bize, o da yok diyorum yani. Bazısı der ki ay hayatta. Bakarsın ertesi gün evlenmiş. Biri der ki olabilir, bakarsın hiç evlenmemiş. O gün topuklu ayakkabı giydim de. Arkadaş diyor ki, boyun 1.80 olmuş. Şakasına diyorum ki 'selvi boyluyu arıyorum' ama bize cüce bile gelmez

67. Esra: Hep bana sorarlardı evlenir misin? Sanki benim eşim yaşıyor da ben ona ihanet edeceğim gibi geliyordu bana. Birgün böyle ben aradım [eşinin ailesini], Halil durmadı alır mısınız diye, onlar da alamayız, işte şunun işi var bunun işi var... Hatta bunlar kendi kendilerine senaryo yazmışlar. Benim kardeşim aradı. [Erkek kardeşine sormuşlar] Biri mi var, evleniyor mu, birşey mi var?. Çocuğu almamız gerekiyorsa alalım. Çok ağır. Ben evlenecek olsam size mi danışacağım? Siz benim yanımda mıydınız? Veya ben o şekilde çocuğumu gelin alın ben evleniyorum mu diyeceğim? [Çocuğu alırlar mı peki?] Yok canım, almazlar.

68. Hayat: Haftasında sordular ama bu da çok acı bir şey. Ben kızıyordum o zamanlar. Daha yasımı bir tutayım. 'Evlenmeyi düşünüyor musun?. İşte sen gençsin'. En kızdığım şey de neydi biliyor musun insanların şöyle bir yaklaşımı var, cahil kesim ama cahil kesimde büyük teyzeler vardır, 'aman kızım sen evlenme senin kızın var'. Sanki ben gidip tecavüzcü Coşkunla evleneceğim. Ben de o kadar saf salaktım yani. İnsanların böyle demesi benim garibime gitti. Evlenmek için yola çıkmadım. Ben derim ki ne evleneceğim ne de evlenmeyeceğim. Ama insanların o yaklaşımına gıcık oluyordum. Durup dururken. Yolda karşılaşıyorsun eşimin öldüğünü biliyor samimiyetimiz yok merhaba merhabayız. 'Kızım nasılsın iyi misin, maaşın bağlandı mı, aman kızım sakın evlenme senin kızın var.' Ya sana ne?. Yani sana ne. Tamam kızım var da... Şimdi oğlu olan biri olsa ya da kendi kızları olsa hemen var ya alel acele evlendirmeye bakarlar. Ama kızın olunca toplumun bu algısı bence yanlış. Çünkü kötü insana denk gelersen herşeye zararı vardır, sana da kızına da malına da akrabana da. İyi insana denk gelersen... Bu sorunun sorulmasına çok kızıyordum zaman geçsin bir acımı atayım değil mi?. Ama benim arkadaş çevrem mesela bazısı da şöyle yaklaşıyor. En yakın arkadaşlarım diyor ki Hayat sen gençsin Rabbim yazdıysa karşına iyi bir insan çıkarsa düşünebilirsin. Ama kocakarı kesimi nasıl düşünüyor. Ben koca aramaya düşmedim. Böyle bir derdim telaşım yok. Sanki ben çıktım yola koca arıyorum durup dururken bana bunu söylüyorlar. Hiç kimse bir ihtiyacın var mı diye sormaz geliyor 'işte kızım senin kızın var sakın evlenme'. Bence bu rahatsız edici bir şey. İnsanlara bu şekilde yaklaşılmalı. Bir kere evlenmek sünnet. Allah eşi ölen insanlara 4 ay sonra evlenmelerini tavsiye ediyor. Ama kadın 4 ay beklemek zorunda eşinden bir bebek bekliyor olabilir. Erkeklerle 40'ı geçince evlenin diyor. Bence insanlar bu konuda ağızlarını kapatmalılar. Ama ailemin yaklaşımı ne oldu

biliyor musunuz, annem bir kere bana Yılmaz öleli dört beş aydı, annem şu an 76 yaşında. Kızım dedi sana ben vasiyet ediyorum dedi, sakın bu sözümü unutma ben sana derim ki, evlen. Hayırlı bir kısmet olursa ama. Ben dedi şu yaşımda inan şeker hastası olmasam evlenirdim. Anne dedim 8 çocukla mı evlenecektin? Kızım bak baban öldü, bütün kızlarımı evlendirdim kaldım bir başıma yapayalnız. Annemin evi de yıkıldı kentsel dönüşümden şimdi evsiz de kaldı. Kardeşlerde geziyor. Kimseden kimseye fayda yok bir eşim olsaydı birbirimize destek olurduk. Dedim kızım yarın üniversiteye gidecek. Affedersin bir koca da bulacak. Arkasına hiç bakmayacak. 'Benim bir anam var, anam yalnız, ben anamla yaşayayım', yok. Onun bir hayatı olacak, kuş yuvadan uçacak ben kalacağım yalnız. Yalnız ölmek istemiyorum. İlk zamanlar böyle düşünüyordum. Sonra aradan bir zaman geçti. Şimdi 3,5 sene geçti. Ya diyorum başıma bela mı alacağım ben. Ya ben rahatım. Karışım yok, görüşüm yok. Uzun giydin, kısa giydin, kafanı örttün, örtmedin yedin içtin gezdin; hiç karışım yok. Bu rahatlığı daha nerede bulacağım? Evim, maaşım var bir de kendimi emekli yaparsam senden kralı yok. Ama gelecek için yaşlılıkta da gerekli. Bazı eşini kaybetmiş insanlar apar topar evlendirilebiliyor. Olmadık bir hayata maruz kalıyorlar yanlış insana denk geliyorlar. Gücüm var yetiyorum. Rabbim bir kapı açar bir işim de olur.

69. Seher: İnsan kendi başına geleceğini düşünemiyor, hiç bir zaman konduramıyor. Mesela hepsi eşini kaybetmiş, hepsi çocuklarıyla kalmış, kimi anne karnında kalmış, kimi benim gibi lohusayken kalmış. İşte bu hayatın acımasız yönü. Hiç kimse bu benim başıma gelmez diye düşünmesin. Ne olacağımız hiç belli değil.

70. Duygu: Dile getirip anlatamayacağım. Ama o dönem için, herkes bana acıyormuş gibiydi. Öyle bakıyorlarmış gibi. Kimse 'bak onun eşi ölmüş' desin istemedim. Kimse bilsin istemedim. 'İşte bunun da eşi yok'. Yeni tanıdığım bir ortama girdiğimde veya birileriyle tanıştığımda, veya çocuğumdan konuşuluyor, evlilikten konuşuluyor, 'niye bir çocuğunuz var, niye ikincisini düşünmediniz, veya neden yapmıyorsun' gibi. Hani o zaman kalıyorsun böyle. Acaba desem mi demesem mi... Veya bir iş başvurusuna gittiğimiz dönemler. 'Evli misiniz, bekar mısınız veya eşiniz ne iş yapıyor?' Hani söyleyeyim mi, nasıl karşılıyorlar, ne düşünüyorlar, hep bunlar oluyor. Hala ki.

71. Güler: Çocuklar ezilmesin, çocuklar kötü bir psikoloji ile büyümesin. Ben hiçbir zaman çocuğuma kimsenin 'bu çocuk yetimdir' diye hitap etmesini..., yani engel oluyorum gördüğüm zaman, kimse cesaret edemiyor da "a babası ölmüş, yetim çocuktur demesine fırsat vermiyorum. Oturup da kimse benim çocuğuma ağlamasın, herkes 'ah vah' der, benim çocuğumun psikolojisi bozulur. Çünkü biz öyle çocukları gördük toplumda. Bunlar 70 yaşına da gelse "biz yetim büyüdük . İnsanın hayatta hep bir tarafı eksiktir, ben öyle düşünüyorum. Babanın yokluğu zordur da, şöyle düşünüyorum eğer bir çocuğun annesi ölürse çocuk yetim kalır, anne daha önemli.

72. Duygu: Okulda hani işte 'Bahar'ın babası yok', bazı öğrencilerin duydum bunu konuştuğunu. Bir ara bayağı bir Bahar da çok etkilendi, ben de çok etkilendim. İlkokula başladığı zaman işte. Şimdi şimdi o da ben de atlatmaya başladık. Denmesin yahu. Düşüncesi de kötü, "yetim. Yani kimsesiz. Etkiliyor yani. Kızım da hiç kullanmıyor bu lafi. Kimsenin de öyle demesini istemem. 'İşte bak bu kız da yetim'. Ya da 'bak işte bu da dul'. Kimsenin de bu kelimeyi, baştan da demiştim, kimse bana başın sağ olsun, ya da bir ortama girdiğimde 'bak işte bunun eşi vefat etti', ya da ben duyuyorum, ya da eş

yok, hep bunlara tepki. O an kimseyi kırmadım ama hep kızdım, duymak istemedim o kelimeyi ben.

73. Narin: Bana kimse demedi ben eşimden sonra 1 hafta yıkanmadım. Hep siyah giydim. Kendim yaptım. İçimden geldi. 3 sene boyunca renkli birşey giymedim. Görümcelerim 'yeter artık' dedi. 'Biraz düzelt kendini, kıyafetlerini değişik değişik giy' dedi. 'Artık gitti, senin eşin benim kardeşim. Biz giyiniyoruz sen niye giyinmiyorsun?'. Çocuk da büyüdü, haklı. Giyinseydim komşular derdi daha eşi yeni vefat etti giyindiği şeye bak. Makyaj yaptı derler. Biraz da çevrendeki insanlardan çekindiğin için yapamıyorsun. Şu an çekinmiyorum rahatım, renkli giyiyorum.

74. Asiye: Yok uygulanmadı ama bizim köyde vardır mesela bizde bir daha kırmızı giyemezsin. Kırmızı kadına giydirtmezler. Bir de bizim köyde kadınlar hep kına yakar. Kınalı gezerler. Ama eğer senin eşin öldüyse sen kına sürersen seni kınarlar. O yüzden kına yakamazsın.

75. Duygu: Biz öyle bir yas yaşadık ki, ne gülmek, ne konuşmak. Yani hepimiz o an gidelim, eşimin tarafından dolayı anlatıyorum, hep birlikte intihar edelim gibi. Hani o konuma geldik biz. Yani o derecede ağır atlattık biz o dönemi. Hiç yemeyelim, içmeyelim, herkes aynı bizimle gülmesin, konuşmasın, gezmesin, gitmesin, gelmesin. Hep birlikte oturup ağlayalım. Giyilmesin, saç yapılmasın, makyaj yapılmasın, düğün olmasın, bayram olmasın, yılbaşı olmasın. Ben zaten düğüne bayrama giden bir insan değildim. Tabii ki öyle bir dönemde ben gitsem ooo... Yani, artık ne olurdu bilmiyorum.

76. Hayat: Ben mesela kendi yasımı tuttum, televizyon açmadım. Ama çocuğuma açtık. Ben seyretmedim. İnsanlar şunu diyorlardı, kafanı kapat. Adam ölmüş tamam, 'eve gelen giden oluyor kafanı kapat'. Ya ben normalde kapalı değilim. Cenazede adettir evin içinde 40 gün kafan kapalı olur ama ben kapatmadım. Eşimden 1 yıl sonra kuzenimin düğünü vardı gitmek zorunda kaldım ama oynamadım. Ben yasımı tuttum. Cenazeye gelemeyip beni ilk orada görenler ağlıyor başsağlığı diliyor. Nasıl kalkayım oynayayım. Seviyeli hep.

77. Bilge: Biz bir 6 ay kadar hiç katılmadık [düğünlere] çünkü aile olarak bizim cenazemiz vardı diye. Çocuklar da gitmedi. 6 aydan sonra biz gittik. Ben daha hiç oynamamışım, oyun felan girmemişim. Bana yakışmaz. Ama çocuklarım katılıyor. Bizde de köyde mesela katmazlar düğünlere. Ama burada şehirde yaygın olduğundan katılıyorsun. Eskiden yas var diye televizyonu da açmazdık. Teyp sesi açmazdık. Hala sürüyor bu bizim köyde. Kaynanamlar söylediler, biz senesini yapacağız dediler. Ben de söyledim hani yetim insanlara senesi yaptırılmaz. Onlar kendi aralarında yaptılar. Onlar dedi biz istiyoruz yapmayı. Kurbanını da kestiler onlar kendi aralarında. Senesinde biz kurban keseriz iki tane, köyünde. Yemek yaparız, Kuran okuturuz.

78. Güler: Benim saçlarım hep sarıydı, röfleydi. Kayınvalidem 'sen saçını boyama' dedi belli bir süre. Benim tuhafıma gitti zaten. 3,5 senedir de saçımı boyayamıyorum. Güneş gözlüğü takıyordum. Onu yadırgadı önce. Kendi torunlarının eşleri takınca normal diyordu. Herkes takınca hiç bir şey olmuyor ama. Bir kere dizimin altında etek giymiştim. Yine birgün gittim yanına altımda etek var. Dönüyor etrafımda. Nereye gidiyorsun diyor, arkadaşşıma gidiyorum diyorum. Sonra bir daha soruyor nereye gidiyorsun diyor. Arkadaşıma gidiyorum dedim. Sonra kız istemeye gidiyorduk dayımın oğluna. Ben de yine etek giydim o boyda. Dedi ki seni görmüşler laf etmişler sen mini etekle dolaşıyorsun. Bir daha bu boyda etek giyme. Bir akşam kız arkadaşım var burada kınası vardı.

Çocuğu da giydirdim, ben de giyindim renkten renge girdi. Nereye gidiyorsunuz? Kınaya gidiyoruz. Neyse beni aramış bu. Benim telefonum da eski, şarjı çabuk bitiyordu. Aramış aramış, neredesin, neredesin? İşte nereye gidiyor, bize söylemiyor.

79. Hayat: Önce beni korkuttular, ailem. 'Aman sen dul kadınsın da sana asılan olur da, seni kandırmak isteyen olur da şunu yaşarsın da bunu yaşarsın da...' Ben tanırım, burada herkes beni tanır. Cenaze zamanı zaten hepsi tanımadıklarım dahi evime başsağlığına geldiler, cenazeme geldiler. Onların dediği gibi olmadı ben hiç bir sıkıntı yaşamadım. Ben nasıl Hayatsam aynı Hayatım. Ama bazı şeylere dikkat ediyorum. Mesela gittiğim yere. Gittiğim geldiğim saate. Veya yürüyüşüme. Onlara dikkat ediyorum. Eşim ölmeden önce yürüyüşe gidiyordum. Eşim öldükten ve kendime geldikten sonra yine yürüyüşe çıktım. Bir kere oturmana kalkmana dikkat edeceksin. Çok dikkat çekmemen lazım, giyimine dikkat edeceksin. Ama ben aynı Hayatım böyle giyiniyordum yine böyle giyiniyorum. Ama dikkat ediyorum. Mesela çok geç saatlerde olmadık yerlere gitmedim gitmiyorum da. En fazla yürüyüş gerektiği zaman da o arkadaşımınla parkta yürürüz geliriz. Mesela şey konularında disiplinliyim, akşam saat en geç sekiz buçuk dokuzda evdeyim. Yani dışarı hayatım yok diyeyim.

80. Esra: Şimdi, kocası var gidemiyorsun. Dostun ama acaba kocası mı bakacak, acaba kadın mı kıskanacak. E bir huzursuzluk olacak. İnsanlar yanlış mı anlayacak, yanlış mı düşünecek... Ben gitmiyordum zaten. Burada tanıdığım bildiğim insanlar öyle bir sıkıntı yaşamadım ama her yere her saatte girip çıkmıyor insan zaten. Hep bir bastırma hep bir bastırma aslında.

81. Güler: Benim bir arkadaşım var. Kadın girişimcilerinin bir derneği var, mühendisler de oraya bağlı. İşte mühendislerin gecesi oluyor . O da [arkadaşı] "Geceler olduğu zaman Füsun'u da al gel. Çocuk odası da var, rahat edersin diyor. Ben mühendis de değilim, şey de değilim. İşte ben o derneğe gittiğim zaman aşağıda da elim var, sen de gelsene dedim. Şu açıdan, hani benim gittiğim yer bilinsin ki farklı bir dedikoduya sebep olmasın. Kayınvalidem, nereye gittiniz, naptınız, ne ettiniz? O arkadaşım bize geliyor. Amcan birgün gitti onlarla konuştu. Yapmayın ayıptır. Demiş ki bir tane arkadaşım var, sürekli her gün o burada demiş. O arkadaşım da 1 sokak aşağıda oturuyor. Yeni evli. Hatta haftada 2-3 gün de Füsuna ders çalıştırıyor. Hani kendisinin de okul birincilikleri var, eğitim almış birisi. Hatta eşini ben çok iyi tanımıyorum, eşi "Eşimi herkese bırakmam da sana geliyor" diyor. İşte onu alıştırılmış buraya. Hani arkadaşlarıma karışıyor. Hani hiç birbirlerine gidip gelmesinler. Hiç kimseyle bir diyalogu olmasın.

82. Asiye: Bazıları çekemiyor beni. Niye: kıskanıyorlar beni. Onların, kötü insanların farkına vardık. Moralimi çok bozdular. beni çok üzdüler. Eşim yok, evim yok, üç çocuğum var, kalmışım bir başıma beni bir de onlar üzdüler. Diyorlar ki Asiye ağlıyor, kendini acındırıyor, yok bende para diyor. Aslında doğru diyorlar. Normal. ben 900 TL kira ödüyorum bir de emekli maaşım var. Başka gelir yok. ben ne yapacağım, ağlamayacağım da kim ağlayacak?. Ne diyorlar, ağlamayacakmışım ben. Hatta ben onlara yardım edecekmişim. benim param varmış ama yokmuş diyormuşum ben. Benim durumum (onlardan) daha iyi diyorlarmış. Kıskanıyorlar. Görüşmüyoruz.

83. Bilge: Hayatla daha mücadele yaptım. Çocuklarım için daha mücadelecı oldum. O değişti. Kendime daha çok güveniyorum. Daha çok özgürce yaşarım. Mücadele daha çok ederim. Ama kendime karşı şunu yapayım bugün özgürce yaşayım diye birşey yok. Bana karşı yok. Ama daha

mücadele ederim. Karşımdaki olmadan yaşayabiliyorum. Erkek nasıl mücadele ediyorsa ben de onun gibi yapıyorum. Kendime daha özgürüm. Demek ben onlara muhtaç değilim. Onlar bana değil ben de onlara değilim. Demek onlar eşim için gelmişlerdi, ben de şimdi onlara muhtaç değilim. Şimdi daha özgürce yaşıyorum demek. Mesela şimdi başka semte gidip gelebilirim. Hiç korkmadan gidip gelebilirim. Bir erkeğin rahatlığını bile kırabilirim daha özgürüm. Kendimi bırakmadım. O zamanlar kendimi bırakabilirdim mesela. Bir derdim olduğunda gidip birisine söyleyebilirdim. Benim çok param da yoktu, gidebilirdim. Ama yok, sana söylediğimi onlara hiç söylemezdim. Aç kalsam bile gidip söylemezdim. Ben hiç dışarda yok demiyorum. Ben helalimle çalıştığımda her zaman vardı.

84. Zarife: Çok değiştim gözüm çok açıldı. Eşim sağdı bırakmıyordu gözüm açılsın. Bir yere bırakmıyordu. Bir yere gidiyorduk sen diyordu başını kaldırdın birine baktın. Diyordum bakmadım, yok baktın. Çok kıskanıyordu. Eşim vefat ettiği zaman ben de diyordum 'aynı öyle benim peşimden gelirler. Ben korkarım. Ben merdivenlere gidiyorum korkarım'. Ama gözüm açıldı. Şimdi nereye git deseler giderim. Serbestim çok şükür anlım açık. Mücadele ettim buraya kadar çıkarttım bundan sonra da Allah büyüktür. Önceki Zarife baksan Zarife evden gitse geri gelemezdi. Bakkala giderken diyordum 'bu burada dursun ben onu takip edeceğim eve geleceğim'. Ben bilmiyordum gözüm kapalıydı.

85. Esra: İş başa düşünce, sen bunu yapacaksın, canavar oluyorsun. Yani daha bi sessiz sakindim, pasif sakin bir yanım vardı. Ama iş başa düşünce artık, halledebiliyorsun. Ben bile şaşırabiliyorum şu anda yaptıklarına. Ben o halimle bu halime şaşırabiliyorum. Yani işte diyorum ya o zamanla bu zamanın Esra'sı arasında çok fark var. Daha kendime güvenilir, daha özgüvenli. 10 tane erkeğin yapamadığını yapabilecek kapasitede bir kadını şu anda. O kadar cesaretim var. Ama mesela keşkelerim. Canım yapmak istiyor, gezmek istiyor, yapıyordum. Çalıştıktan sonra tabii ki kendime daha çok güvenim geldi. Ben çalışıyorum, çalışıp akşam dokuzda dışarıda olabiliyorsam, çalıştığım için çıkabiliyorum. Mesela ben araba kullanamam diyordum, eşim kazadan vefat ettiği için, ama araba aldım, araba kullanıyorum. Eşim zamanında ehliyetim vardı. Araba yoktu. Arabayı aldım bu yıl, o da bana çok büyük cesaret veriyor. Duygularımı öldürmüşüm yapamam diye. Yapabiliyormuşum, niye duygularıma engel olmuşum boşu boşuna? Ben bunu yıllar önce de yapabiliirdim, niye yapmamışım? İşte hayata karşı fikirlerim o yüzden değişti. Keşkeleri bıraktım artık hayatımda.

86. Duygu: Tabii eskiye göre evet, aman boşver diyebiliyorum bazı şeylere. Ya da çok yıprandığım için. Ya da artık biraz biraz yaşadıkça oluşan birşey mi bilmiyorum. Artık diyorum ki aman kim ne derse desin boşver, önemli değil diyebiliyorum ama önceden diyemiyordum. En azından bak kendim kazanıyorum, kimseye ihtiyacım yok. Şöyle bencildi rahmetli, hani kendi çalışmış, kendi kazanmış, herşeyini kendi yaptığı için başkalarının, benim, ona birşey demem, istemem, 'eve şunu al' demem onu acayip etkiliyordu. Geriyordu mesela. "Sen dedin diye mi ben bunu alacağım? Ben istersem yaparım bunu, alırım" derdi. O dönem bana bu çok ağır geldi. Ama o istediği zaman örnek bunun kilosunu 100 lira ise, o istediye alır. Yine o varken de ben esik hissediyordum kendimi maddi anlamda. Ondan para istemiyordum. Çalışmadığım için belki. O rahatlığı bulamıyordum kendimde. Bana gösterdiği tepkilerden dolayı belki de. Ama şimdi bu 10 liraysa ben bunu alıyorum kendim. Birşey diyenimiz yok, evet.

87. Narin: Hayatımı deęiřtirmem lazım hep böyle gidecek deęil diyordum. Yavař yavař deęiřtirdim hayatımı. [Kararları] onlar veriyordu, ben en son. Kayınvalidem derdi benim kararım, benim dedięim benim beęendięim olsun. Tabii ki olmuyordu onun dedięi. Kızları da diyordu anne sen daha yapamazsın ancak Narin kořturabilir. Kendine büyük gözüyle bakıyordu herřey benim dedięim gibi olsun diyordu. Eřimden önce de onun dedięi olurdu. O zaman daha çok oluyordu eřim benim kararım derdi annesinin kararına. Karşı gelemem. Onun dedięi oluyordu. Ben řimdi kendi başıma karar veriyorum. Tabii ki insan korkuyor ama mecbur kalıyorsun yapıyorsun. Başında kimse olmayınca tek kalınca yapıyorsun. Karar, korkuyorum da veriyorum da. Mecburum. Eskisinden daha az evle uğraşıyorum. řu anki benim için daha güzel. Kayınvalidem de nereye gitti ne etti derdi. řimdi; ben çocuęumla beraber, herřeye biz karar veriyoruz. Özgürlüęümüz elimizde.

88. Narin: Benden 10 yař büyük tanıdığım var. Öyle bazen onunla beraber oturuyorduk konuřuyorduk. Ancak o beni anlıyordu ben onu anlıyordum. Başka kimse bizi anlamaz. Tařındı ancak telefonla görüşebiliyoruz. [Bařkalarıyla da] görüşmeyi çok isterdim. Bir araya gelsek konuřsak dertleşsek. Ama bir bu arkadařım oldu başka da kimse olmadı.

89. Asiye Mesela bir tane kadın vardı. O da benim gibi eři ölmüş, benimkinden önce. Onun da üç tane çocuęu var. benimkilerden daha küçüktüler. O řimdi Manisa'ya gitti, tařındı. Üzüldüm. Onunla çok iyiydim. O bana hep yardım ediyordu. Onunla konuřmak çok önemliydi. Ama onun büyük oęlu onu daha bir üzdü. Zaten senin derdini o anlar. Kocası olan seni anlar mı hiç? Bizim kadar anlamaz olamaz. Manisa'ya giden arkadařım bir de başka bir arkadařım var, tabi onlar benim için çok çok daha iyi oluyor. Çok isterim yani dahası olsun.

90. Derya: Bir tane var. Bir tane daha vardı tařındı. Çok iyiydik. Onla çok görüşürdük, gider gelirdik. řöyle ona akřam da gidebiliyordum. Evinde erkek olmadığı için. Akřam saat 10-11'e kadar oturuyorduk, ben çok sık çıkmadığım için. Kızlar da aynı sınıftaydı. O yüzden. Ama evinde erkek olana o kadar rahat gidemezsin. O da bize geliyordu o daha sık geliyordu bana.

91. Hayat: Onunla eřimden önce çok yakın deęildik ama eřimden sonra yakın olduk. Onun çok desteęini gördüm. Manevi desteęi çok oldu. Benim acımı geçmişte yařamış olduęu için bana manevi anlamda çok destek oldu. Hep yanımda oldu. Kendimden sonra kızımın arkadařının babası vefat etti. Onun eři öldüğünde ben çok ağladım. O arkadařım da benim eřiye çok ağlamıştı çünkü o benim yařadıklarımı anlıyor. 8 ay önce. O benden biraz farklı. Tahsili yok, pek açılmamış. Böyle dışarıda sosyal iliřkileri çok kuvvetli deęil. Bu insanın başında bir de 3 tane yetimi var. Biraz da sıkıntılı benden daha fazla. Aynı maaşı alıyoruz ama daha sıkıntılı. Ben bu insana manevi destek olmaya çalışıyorum, gücüm yettięince. Bu insanla görüşüyorum, yeni başladım görüşmeye de. Gittim mesela yanına, bazı konularda yönlendirdim. Çocuklarıyla konuřuyorum mesela, yönlendiriyorum çünkü onun ki daha farklı. Tabii ki güzel karřıladı. Çünkü kendimce birřeyler yapmaya çalışıyorum. Yardımcı olmak için. Yardımcı olmak istiyorum ama bende aynı maaşı alıyorum.

92. Seher: Nasıl diyeyim size; [řöyle düşünüyorlar]: 'iřte çok bařarılı olmalıyız, okumamız gerekiyor, kardeřlerimize birbirimize destek olmamız gerekiyor, seni bu konuda üzmememiz ve bařarılı olamız çünkü çok zor günler bizi bekliyor.' Mesela kızım řuan üniversite sınavına çok güzel hazırlanıyor ve hedefleri büyük, bir an önce nasıl mezun olup kardeřlerine destek olabilir, onu

düşünüyor. Ben diyorum önce tabii ki kendimizi düşüneceğiz. Önce isterim ki kızım kendi için birşeyler yapsın çünkü yaşı küçük, ona o sorumluluğu verirsek o hep öyle gider. Çünkü aynı şeyleri eşim, dört kardeşine bakmak için ve daha sonrada evliliğinde yaşadı bunları. Aslında bir kişiye fazladan sorumluluk daha fazla kafasını karıştırabilir, hayata bakışı zorlaşabilir. Eşim hem kardeşlerine bakıp hem bizi geçindirmeye çalıştı. O da 10 yaşında babasını kaybetmiş. Ben şimdi kızıma, bana birşey olursa sen kardeşlerine bakacaksın falan filan gibi sohbetlere hiç girmiyorum. Çünkü; olabilir de bana birşey, garantimiz yok, yarına ne çıkacağımız belli değil ama o bunu bilirse hep huzursuz olur yapmazsa edemezse diye. Mümkün olduğunca öyle sohbetlere girmiyoruz. Önce kendimiz için yaşayacağız, önce kendimiz için çabalayacağız ama yardımcı olmak istiyorsak tabii ki kardeşimize, sağımıza solumuza, çevremize yardımımız dokunacak diyorum.

93. Hayat: Eşim öldüğünde rehber hocası kadın, hastaneye geldi yanımda oldu. Pazartesi günü bütün arkadaşlarını toplayıp eve getirmiş. O Elife inanılmaz bir moral oldu ve eski öğretmeni de geldi. İlk dörde kadar okutan erkek öğretmen de geldi. Çok başarılıydı, Sınıf birincisiydi okul beşincisiydi ama babayı kaybettikten sora altıncı sınıfa geldi konsantre sıkıntısı başladı. Odaklanamıyor, sıkılıyor. Öğretmenleriyle de ilişki geliştirdim Eliften gizli. Çok aktif bir çocukken durgunlaşmış okulda. Çocuk bazı hocalarından, orta okula geçince yeni hocalarından, durumunu yani odaklanamamasını gizlemiş, bazısı fark etmemiş. 1 sene ilaç kullandı. Derslere de odaklandı. Ama bu sefer gamsız oldu .

94. Güler: Biz Füsün'un okula başlayıp başlamamasında çok kararsız kaldık. 6 yaşındaydı. Başladı çocuk ama boşlukta yazamıyor. Çok ünlü bir doktor varmış randevu aldık zar zor. Dikkat toplayıcı, kaygı giderici ilaçlar yazdı. Tekrardan ben bir uzman pedagoga götürdüm, değerlendirme yapması için. 1 sene sınıfta kalması gerekiyor dedi. Bu sırada da bu 1. sınıf döneminde de halaya dedim ki madem herkesin geliri var paylaşıyorsunuz dedim, bu çocuk için özel öğretmen tutalım. Hatta kendi öğretmeni gelsin. Öğretmeniyle çünkü diyalog kurmuyordu. Çekiniyordu. Sınıf biraz hareketli bir sınıf. Öğretmen bağırdığı zaman Füsün kendi içine çekiliyordu. Korkuyordu. Öğretmenin yanına gittiği zaman boynunu büküyordu bakmıyordu düz öğretmene. Sınıfa derse felan katılmıyordu. Engel oldu yani kadın, halası, özel öğretmen tutulmasına. Benim çalışmama da izin vermiyorlardı, ben karşılayayım. Ona da engel oldular. Bu aralar Füsün'a fazla üstelemiyorum. Bu sefer annem çok üstüne gidiyor. Burada çocukların velileri sınıfa çok hakim. Yapacaksın, edeceksin, bilmem ne yapacaksın! diyor, çocuk hemen aynısını yapıyor. Buraya da yeni vekil öğretmen geldi. Vekil öğretmen de çocuklara baskı yapmış. Bizim ki de hem okul değiştirdi hem de baskıcı bir öğretmen. Kusmaya başladı. İlaç vermek zorunda kaldık.

95. Bilge: [Veli toplantıları] Pazar günüyse eşim giderdi, hafta içi ise ben giderdim. Şimdi Pazar günü olduğunda ben katılmıyorum. Hafta içi gidebilirim ama çok da gitmem mesela. Ya ararım sorarım, ya da çok zor giderim. Ama bir sorun olursa dinlerim, giderim. Çocuklar, kötü olsa da, iyi olsa da bana olanı anlatırlar. Heja hiç anlatmaz gerçi, Heja çok güzel notlar alır, bana da anlatmaz. Tanımadığım arkadaşı varsa anlatır. Bu sene 1 defa okula gittim, Heja'nın. Öğretmen gerek yok bir daha gelmene dedi. Ama dedim Heja çok istedi geleyim göreyim sizi. Ben de bir anneyim onun için, gerek yok dedi. Gideceğim yine. Ek ders koymuşlar, onu konuşacağım. Berfin'in öğretmenini zaten

tanıyorum. Onun bir de müdür yardımcısının evini temizlemeye gidiyorum. Hazal'ın da, babası öldüğünde herkes geldi, herkesi tanıyorum. Müdüre, müdür yardımcısına kadar tanıyorum. Geldiler evimize kadar. Mesela sıkıntım olsa her ay, 3 ayda bir, 100 TL veriyordu müdürler. Şimdi Hazal staja gidiyor diye vermiyorlar, staj parası alıyor. Para burs konusunda her zaman öncelik onları hakkı diyor hocaları. Okullarından çok memnunuz. Öğretmenleri bile veriyor. Mesela öğretmeni, Heja için babasız olduğunu biliyorum dedi. Millet çocuğuna vermiyor, bunlar Heja karne alınca 100 TL vermişler. Onlar ona harçlık vermişlerdi. Bir kere tatile gidecekler 3 gün. Heja'yı hiç parasız götürüyorlar. Öğretmenler bana karşı çok iyiler. Heja'ya karşı da çok iyiler.

96. Asiye: Ama mesela çocukların okul ihtiyaçlarına gene ben uğraşırdım ama hangi okula gideceğine, çocuğun okulu değişeceği zaman felan, nereye gideceğine tabii gene eşim karar veriyordu, o belirliyordu. Onları ben yapamadım.

Birincisi küçük oğlanın hocalarının hepsiyle birden görüşmekte çok zorlanıyorum. Buluşamıyorum onlarla, çünkü vaktim yok. Okula gittiğimde fırsat bulursam bir ikisi ile görüşebiliyorum diğerleri orada olmuyor. Hocaları çok değişiyor ama çok istiyorum görüşmek. İkincisi kızımın okuluna, lisedeyken gitmekte çok zorlanıyordum. Çünkü kızımın toplantılarına eşim gidiyordu. Güzel dinliyordu not alıyordu çünkü o daha fazla okumuş benden. Bense çok zorlanıyorum toplantıda. Ne yapacağımı bilemiyorum, sıkıntı çekiyorum. Abisine çok rica ettim sen git dedim hep onun toplantılarına çünkü ben anlamıyorum. Orada çok zorlandım.

97. Esra: İlkokula başladığı zaman ben evde anneyim okulda öğretmen erkek olsun ki model olsun dedim. Öğretmen erkek oldu ama çok yanlış bir düşünceymiş aslında. Öğretmen farklı yaklaştı çocuğa. Bana farklı düşünceleri varken ona farklı zıt anlamlı davrandı mesela. Bunların eksikliklerini de yaşadık. Yaşıyorsun kadın olarak. Zor yani açıkçası çok zor.

Başta erkek öğretmen diye düşündük, tesadüfen tayini çıktı, kadın öğretmen geldi, biz 1 ay sonra aldık yine erkek bir öğretmene verdik. Kadın çok üzüldü. İşte orada çok hata, yanlış yaptım aslında. Erkek öğretmen olsun baba da yok model olsun dedik aldık erkek öğretmene ama erkek öğretmen yanlışmış aslında. Böyle bir sevgisizlikle beş senesi geçti çocuğun. O da öğretmenin bana karşı yanlış düşüncelerinden. Ben cevap vermeyince o da çocuğa saldırdı bu sefer. Çocuğumun puanlarını kırdı, çocuğumun okula gitmesi gelmesi hevesini kırdı. Çocuğun teşekkür alması gerekirken teşekkürünü bile vermedi.

Bu durumu kimseyle paylaşabildin mi?

Paylaşamadım. Hiç kimseyle. Çünkü bu sefer farklı olacaktı. Bu sefer adımı çıkaracaktı. Okuldan almam gerekirdi çocuğu. Ben hatta sınıf annesi oldum. Çünkü gidip gelip gözkulak olayım oğluma diye. En sonunda yine çocuğun hakkını yemişti. Okulun en son günü konuştum. Neler yaptın sen dedim. Neler yaptığını sen de biliyorsun, ben de biliyorum. Beni şimdi konuşturma dedim, karnelerini alırken beşinci sınıfta. Birşey değişmiyor. Öne çıkamıyorsun. Genç olmak ayrı bir zor. Bu da bir suç anlayamadığım.

98. Zarife: Yokluk çok çektik. Babası varken de zordu. Hastane masrafları yüzünden. Onun ilaçları çok pahalıydı. Ama babasından sonra aç bırakmadım. Ben aç kaldım onu bırakmadım. Okul tatil olduğu zaman duramıyor 'anne sen çalışıyorsun bunların parasını veriyorsun, ben burada

yatıyorum sen işe gidiyorsun. Nasıl dayanacağım ben. Yok, ben yapamam' diyor. 'Ben okusam ben birşey kazansam ben bırakmam daha merdivene. Merdivenlere gidiyorsun geliyorsun içim gidiyor' diyor. Yok kızım birşey olmaz diyorum. Herkes de çalışıyor diyorum. Sadece aç kalmasın kimsenin kapısına gitmesin istiyorum. 'Çok şükür kızım. Sabah gidiyorsun sokaklarda benim gibi dolu. Sen niye öyle söylüyorsun ana kurban. Memnun olacaksın, annem çalışıyor. Şerefine namusunla helalinle' diyorum. Sesini çıkarmıyor dinliyor. Çok iş aradı. Sordu soruşturdu kendi başına aradı. Çok söyledi çalışacağım, şimdi tatilde, çalışıyor bir markette. Sabah yürüyor işe akşama servisle geliyor karanlık olduğu zaman.

99. Bilge: Çok zor durumda kalmasam ekmek almaya bile gitmem. Benim çocuklarım da gitmez. İki kişi hiç gitmez [yaşı 16-17 olan kızlar]. Berfin [9] gider, ekmek alır gelir. Eskiden babası vardı, sokakta [kapı önünde] oturlardı. Babası da giderdi yanlarına. Ama babası yok şimdi, oturmazlar. Tabii onlara daha değişiklik oldu. Babasız çocuk büyütüyorum. Hiçbirisi [komşular] bir şey demez. Benim çocuklarım hiçbir zaman dışarı çıkmaz. Hiç kapının önüne çıkmaz. Birgün birisi çıkıp dese Bilge'nin gördüm çocuklar [erkeklerle gezmiş] inanmazlar hani. Çok övünerek bahsederler.

100. Hayat: Ona diyorum ki bak bizim babamız yok. Herkes bizim babamız olmadığını biliyor. Sen bir genç kızsın. Senin yaşındaki çocuklar da senin babanın olmadığını biliyor. Birincisi oturmana kalkmana davranışlarına dikkat et. Parka gittiğin zaman benim kızacağım ya da insanların dikkatini çekecek davranışlarda sakın bulunma. Bizi burada herkes tanıyor. Bir kere bana laf getirtme, babanın soyadına laf getirtme. Biraz da ağır konuşuyorum. Kimse demesin ki arkamızdan Yılmaz'ın hanımı fingiriyor, Yılmaz'ın kızı fingiriyor. Bunları, dedim; bana dedirtirme. Parka gidiyorsan git ama aşağıda olmadık insanlarla takılma. Hani onların da [kızın arkadaşlarının veya komşularının] kızlı erkekli çevreleri var, ama insanlar seni gördüğü zaman yanlış bir izlenim edinmesinler. Bunlara dikkat et diye uyarıyorum. Allaha şükür o da bana hiç laf getirtmedi, beni üzmedi.

101. Güler: Sonuçta ayda 1 kere çocuğu psikoloğa götürüyorum. 3 ayda 1 psikiyatriye götürüyorum. Konuşma terapisine götürüyorum. Çocuğu aktivitelere götürüyorum. Okula gidiyor. Onlara diyorum ki, ben istiyorum çocuk sosyalleşsin, siz çocuğu bize bağımlı olsun istiyorsunuz. E çocuk da anneye bağımlı yani bebekliğinden beri, aşırı bağımlı. Babaya o kadar bir bağımlılığı yoktu. Baba farkındalığı şimdi yeni yeni çıkmış Füsün'da. Problem ediyor, sorun ediyor kendine. Birgün okuldan çocuğu alıyorlar, çocuğa seni eve götüreceğiz diyorlar, çocuk hayır ben gelmeyeceğim anneme gideceğim diyor. Öyle deyince de birden hala üzerine saldırıyor çocuğun. Annen seni ne diye tembihliyor, sen niye bize gelmiyorsun? Çocuk da korkuyor. Sonunda çocuğu alıp benim eve götürüyorlar. Zile basıyorlar, ben yokum kendi oturduğumuz evde [annemdeyim]. Çocuk diyor ki benim babam da öldü annem de gitti ben kimsesiz kaldım. Çocuk diyor kapıda. Öğrenince kızdım dedim çocuğu o hale getiren sizsiniz. Hangi vicdan kabul ediyorsa artık bunu. Füsün benim hiç kimsem yok demiş, kapıyı açan bile yok demiş.

102. Esra: Onlardan o baba ocağının sevgisini alamadı aslında. Baba ocağı sevgisini yaşayamadı. Hem babası eksikti, hem de ocağındaki iletişimi kuramadı. Ben vicdanen rahatım onlar üzülünler. Ramazan'da bir kere orada kaldı. Halasına beni oruca kaldırı demiş. Niye oğlum tutma, kalkma demiş. Yok hala biz annemle tek yapıyoruz sahuru bak ne güzel siz kalabalığınız demiş. Yani aslında bunlar

benim içimi çok acıtıyor. Halası Ramazanda bizi bir iftara çağırabilir, veya oğlan orada bir kalabilir. Oğlan onlara gitmek istiyor. Bir tane halası var, onu çok seviyor. Ama halası hep işim var, bilmem ne, hep engel. En son görüncemle tartıştık mesela. Oğlum halamda kalayım dedi. Ara dedim, biliyorum çünkü huyunu, oğlum 'müsaitseniz' dedi. O da müsait değilim dedi. Tamam hala eve geri gelirim kalmam dedi o da. Sonra halaya dedim senin hiç mi yatıracak yerin yok. Çocuk istiyor, size geleyim diyor, peki kalmam hala geri gelirim diyor. Evet yok dedi. Yoksa iyi o zaman dedim ben de.

103. Bilge: Çocuklar için kavga gürültü değişti. Ama babasızlık onları daha çok döktü. Babasızlık onlara daha zor. Daha çok da Berfin'e (9) dokundu. Üçü de zor zamanlar geçirdi. Bayağı zor geçti. Çocukların ikisi, Berfin, Heja hiç ağlamadı. Mezarlıkta da ikisi de ağlamadı. Geldiler, bir 20 gün sonra birgün başladılar fotoğrafları bilgisayara koymaya. Fotoğrafları şarkılarla bilgisayara yüklemişler. Babasının fotoğrafları. Ama saatlerce ağladı ikisi de. Biriktirmişler, o müzikle bizim ne yaşadığımızı hatırladılar. Çok zor bir insandı ama çocuklarını çok seven bir insandı. Çok severdi. Berfin'e hiç kıymazdı ki hep öperdi. Elinden zor alırdık. Birgün; evlenecek, inşallah ben göreceğim demişti. Mesela 3'ü de evin içinde babasından hiç bahsetmezler. Hiç görmedim. Ben derim babanız böyle yaptı, o konuya hiç girmek istemezler. Görüyorum hani, mesela bir çocuk, en çok da Berfin çeker. Birisi babasına sarıldığı zaman Berfin onu çok şey yapar. Üzülür. Hazal (17) içine kapandı ama Heja daha çok bana düşkün oldu.

104. Duygu: Bahar daha çok küçüktü, 4 yaşındaydı. Direk, anne buraya gelir misin dedi, başka bir odaya çağırıldı. Sana birşey soracağım anne dedi, sor dedim. Ama ağlamıyorum. Benim babam öldü di mi anne dedi. Dedim ki sonra konuşalım bunu. Hayır dedi, ben biliyorum dedi, benim babam öldü. Ondan sonra Bahar konuşmadı. İşte yedisi filan çıktı belki çıkmamıştı, anne sana şarkı söyleyeceğim dedi. Söyle Baharcım dedim. "Benim babam güzel babam, kulağında çınlar tatlı sesin, beni al kollarına. Ben ağlamaya başladım. Bir daha sana şarkı söylemeyeceğim anne dedi. Asla dedi. Bahar bir daha hiç konuşmadı babasını. Çünkü ben ağlıyordum. Mesela mezarlığa gitmek istiyordu ama benimle gitmek istemiyordu.

105. Hayat: Çocuğun etkilenmesi çok ilginçti. Ben onun [kocamın] ismini çok sık zikrediyorum. Ama Elif'te çok farklı etki yaptı. Elif hiç baba kelimesini dahi kullanmadı. Hiç ondan bahsetmedi. Babası ile ilgili sorular sorulduğunda hiç cevaplamıyor idi. İlgisiz kalıyordu. Baba olduğunda [öldüğünde] on buçuk yaşındaydı. Daha ergenliğe gelmemişti, çocuktu. O, ilk sene içine attı. Bana aşırı düşküdü. Benimle ağlayıp benimle gülen bir çocuktu öncesinde. Benim ağlamama da dayanamıyordu. Ben sürekli ağlıyordum. Ağladığım zaman o da acı çekiyordu. Benim acı çekmeme dayanamıyordu. Hatta bazen 'yeter, yeter anne benim de bir canım var bende insanım' diye isyan ediyordu. Ama kendisi babasından hiç bahsetmiyor, baba kelimesini hiç kullanmıyor sanki hiç babası olmamış gibi davranıyor. Bu da benim zoruma gidiyordu. Sonra birşeylere zarar vermeye başladı. Herşeye zarar veriyor, kulaklıklara zarar veriyor elektronik eşyalara zarar veriyor, kıyafetleri kesiyor. Kıyafetlerinin yüzde yetmişine zarar verdi. Farkında değil. Zarar veriyor. İnkâr ediyor. Yeni kıyafet almış giydirmişim bakıyorum kesik. Sanki ben bu çocuğu defocudan giydiriyorum. Önce kızıyordum. Sonra baktım bu çocuğun desteğe ihtiyacı var. Psikiyatriye götürdüm, özele. Şimdi sigortayı [devlet hastanesinde sıra gelmesini] bekleyemedim onlar sonraya atıyor. Normal fiyatta birini buldum.

[Doktor ilaç yazdı]. İştahsızlık başladı ilaçlardan daha da zayıfladı. Ben de yesin diye ona özel sevdiği şeyler almaya başladım. Yemiyor zayıflıyor, ben de kafama taktım. Üzüntüden ben de hastalandım.

106. Hayat: Bir de babayı kaybettikten sonra kaygı ve korku başladı. Hep zannediyor ki beni de kaybedecek. Mesela ben bir pazara kadar gidiyorum on kere arıyordu anne neredesin. Mesela bir yere gönderiyorum onu kalmalık, halasına veya teyzesine, hemen beni arıyor anne beni seviyor musun? Bensiz yapamıyordu ama ben de artık daralıyordum. Komşuma çıkıyorum daha on dakika geçmeden arıyor, anne ne zaman geleceksin? Sen de gel diyorum ama o sürekli beni eve yanına çağırıyor. Bir sene ilaç kullandı.

107. Bilge: Çok zorluk çektim. Bazen çok sinirleniyorlar ikisi. Mesela birini seviyorsan, az bir taraf oluyorsan öbür ikisi çok sinirleniyor. Tabii ki çektim. Berfin'le çok ortada kalmadım ama iki büyüğün ortasında çok kaldım. Birisinin lafını tutunca (*o doğru söylüyor deyince*) öbürü diyor ki, onun tarafını daha çok tutuyorsun. Zor geliyor. Tabii isterdim birisi oturup beraber, dese; iyi böyle kötü böyle diyebilirdi. Çok isterdim, görümcelerimin kocaları bir gün yenge bir ihtiyacın var mı deseler.

108. Esra: Ben bilemiyorum, bizim çocuğumuzla iletişimsizliğimiz ondan mıdır, yani. Ben dediğim gibi çocuğuma maddi manevi babasının eksikliğini göstermeliydim. Herhalde gösteremedim. O yüzden de gaddar birazcık. Bana karşı acıması yok, merhameti yok. Bu da beni çok üzüyor. Ben aslında yanlış yapmışım. Ben oğlumun maddi manevi, babasının olmadığını hissetmesin diye çok çaba sarf etmişim. Ama yanlış yapmışım. Yanlış yıllar sonra anladım. Aslında çocuk maddi manevi bilecekti eksikliği. Şimdi bana karşı hırçın ve acımasız. Çözemedim neden acaba? Bilemiyorum. Ben sandım ki çocuğuma iyilik yapıyorum, yapmamışım aslında. Maddi eksikliği de bilecekti çocuk, manevi eksikliği de bilecekti. Fakat kapatmaya çalıştım. Biz o zaman psikoloğa da gitmiştik ne yapmalı diye.

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