

Research Article

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On Being Unable to be A Single Mother by Choice in Turkey

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ABSTRACT

Motherhood, which seems to be a women's issue in principle, has always been a phenomenon that needs to be regulated through various practices by the rulers, in order for the patriarchy to sustain itself. This affects especially the lives of women who are not married but want to have a kid in many ways. In this research, the women in Turkey who want to but cannot have a kid because they are not married were asked semi-structured questions. The research evaluates why these women want to have a kid, what the psychological and social effects of being unable to have a kid are, how they cope with this situation, and whether they prefer to be a mother in a society where gender equality is ensured and single motherhood by choice is possible. In the research, case study, which is a type of qualitative research design, and homogenous sampling, which is a purposive sampling method, was used. Twenty women who were single and over 30 years old were interviewed face-to-face. The women were asked 16 questions. Then content analysis of the responses was done. The findings reveal that the women who cannot have a child have serious psychological and social problems.

Keywords: Single Mother, Single Mother by Choice, Feminism, Motherhood, Turkey

INTRODUCTION

Motherhood, which basically seems to be a women's issue, is a very controversial issue where a series of statements and practices such as education, psychology, healthcare services, labor market, and political interventions come together (Davis 2012). A woman's capacity to be a mother- in other words, the reproductive capacity of her body- is a phenomenon that needs regulating by the government especially in order for patriarchy to sustain itself. This regulation and supervision over the role of motherhood is realized through the culture in which the woman lives, close relationships, medical practices and laws in force (Dixon-Mueller 1993). These practices, on the one hand, underline that motherhood is the biological destiny of the woman, and she will be incomplete unless she has a kid. On the other hand, they tell that only married women can have

kids. A woman has to get married and give birth to a kid in order to achieve status (Gittins 1985). The patriarchal system constructs motherhood socially through this kind of applications (Bartky 1990; O'Brien 1981; Rich 1977). Hence, it maintains itself by imposing strict conditions on living "motherhood as an experience" that gives women tremendous power and happiness and includes creative elements (Rich 1977). As a result of these ongoing practices, many people think being married is equal to having kids. Being unmarried is one of the strongest predictors of being unable to have kids, although there has been an increase in the number of women having kids without marriage (Peters 2010; Utrata 2015).

The women who have kids without being married are defined as single mother in the literature. Single motherhood can occur in various ways. The most common reasons for this are the death of the spouse, divorce, or never getting married. In addition, it may occur as a result of unexpected pregnancies especially among adolescents and young women. Besides, a new model of single motherhood is developing in the Western society day by day. These mothers are the ones who consciously choose to be a single parent and raise their kid(s). They can do this as a result of a heterosexual relationship, by adopting or through artificial insemination by a donor. These mothers are called single mother by choice or solo mother in the literature. This definition does not cover the unmarried couples living together, divorced couples or adolescents who become pregnant without planning and have a baby (Hertz 2006; Mattes 1994; Morrissette 2005; Weinraub, Horvath and Gringlas 2002).

Being a single mother carries insulting and stigmatizing connotations both in cultural terms and in the literature. The studies show that single mothers are perceived as morally problematic, violators of normative values, irresponsible, economically dependent, and having inadequate parenting skills. In addition, children who grow up without a father are problematic children. In order to change this perception and have healthy kids, single mothers need the protection of men (Ajandi 2011; Wiegers and Chunn, 2015; Smith 1997). The mothers who have been judged in every field throughout history are the ones who have kids without being married. These mothers are guilty, dishonorable, weak-willed, and neurotic; therefore, they need to be treated. Their kids are called "illegitimate" or "bastard", and they are seen to be hurting moral values of the society, economically in need of public resources, and psychologically problematic (Baber 2009; Bock

2000; Gustafson 2010; Usdansky 2009). Therefore, this situation should be prevented in the societies by any means.

In Western countries, the gains of women's movement and the little change in the dominant cultural structure have somewhat decreased the stigmatization of women based on the idea that they are seriously wrong in moral and sexual terms because they choose to be a single mother. However, they are still stigmatized in terms of being irresponsible for raising kids without a father, inadequate parenting, and being helpless. This stigmatization changes according to the circumstances such as the micro-culture the woman lives in, family, economic situation, work, and sexual orientation (Wiegers and Chunn, 2015).

The women who have grown up under the pressure that getting married, having a kid, and raising him/her are the most valuable and main task (Macintyre 1976) from the moment they are born are dragged into a serious deadlock when they become adults if they are still not married and have no kids, and if they want to have a kid but there are no roads leading to having a kid (including single motherhood by choice).

In this research, with the women in Turkey who want to but cannot have a kid because they are not married or their husbands do not want to have a kid were conducted semi-structured interviews, and content analysis was carried out based on these interviews. The research evaluates why these women want to have a kid, what the psychological and social effects of being unable to have a kid are, how they cope with this situation, and whether they may be a mother in a society where gender equality is ensured and single motherhood by choice is possible.

Within this study, basically, the psychosocial problems experienced by women who cannot have children due to the obstacles created by the patriarchal system and coping strategies with these problems were examined. Also, the issues of patriarchy and single motherhood by choice are discussed from a feminist perspective based on the findings on the research.

METHOD

Design

Case study design, one of the qualitative research designs, was used in this research. Case study design defines and interprets the cases alone or comparatively (Yıldırım and Şimşek 1999).

Five main categories were determined in the research. The participants were asked open-ended and closed-ended questions representing these categories through a questionnaire. Content analysis was used to analyze the responses to the open-ended questions. Sub-categories were formed accordingly.

Participants

Homogeneous sampling method, one of the purposive sampling methods, was used in this research. The purpose of this method is to collect in-depth information on a sub-group with a distinct feature. In this research, 20 women who wanted to have one kid but could not because they could not get married or their husbands did not want to have a kid were interviewed. Three of these women had low, six middle, seven upper-middle, and four high socioeconomic status.

Data Collection

Eight open-ended and closed-ended questions related to six sociodemographic variables were prepared for the research. Each participant was interviewed face-to-face for 30-40 minutes to get answers to these questions.

Data Analysis

Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the data. In descriptive analysis, the data obtained are summarized and interpreted according to the themes determined beforehand. Direct quotations are frequently included in this kind of analysis in order to reflect the opinions of the individuals interviewed or observed in a striking way (Yıldırım and Şimşek 2016, p. 239). In the descriptive analysis of this research, the data were evaluated based on the five main categories determined during the literature review and interview form preparation process. The categories are as follows: The time and causes of desiring to have a kid, psychological effects of being unable to have a kid, sociological effects of being unable to have a kid, coping strategies, ideas about being a single mother in a society where gender equality is ensured.

FINDINGS

The Time and Causes of Desiring to Have a Kid

All the women participating in the study desired to have a kid in their twenties. This is probably because twenties are offered to women as biologically and socially the best age range to give birth to a baby. When the reasons why women want to have kids are considered, they are in line with the ones mentioned in the literature. The women explain these reasons in several categories. Being a mother is a natural instinct. As a mother, women reach the last developmental stage of a loving heterosexual relationship (crowning the relationship with a kid). They meet social expectations and lead a meaningful life through the child (Burton 2017; Ulrich & Weatherall 2000). These expectations about being a mother lead to the formation of a structure regarding that women have physical, psychological and social integrity and realize themselves in the society only when they are mothers. Following are some statements about why the women want to have kids:

Statements about the biological reason:

"I find it very hard to explain my urge to have a kid apart from my urge to be a mom. I've always wanted this since my childhood. I used to try to be my sibling's mother. Younger kids used to want to be my kid for some reason while playing at families. I knew I was a good "mom", it used to fill me with pride. I used to play with my dolls even at secondary school, and I used to be the mom. Considering that my puberty started early, trying to mother my doll at the age of 14 made me think that this was something beyond a game, indeed. I suppose my body was created to be a mom (38 years old, university graduate, archaeologist, middle income)."

"I want to be a mom, feel the sense of motherhood, and raise a kid. It seems like an instinctive thing. (36 years old, high school graduate, unemployed, Middle Income) "

Statements about reaching the last developmental stage (crowning the relationship with a kid) of a loving heterosexual relationship:

"It's like realizing the life plan given to me. I finished university, found my job. Then the next thing that had to be done was marrying and having a kid. There is a romantic side of my urge to have a kid. I will love a man so much. I will fall in love with him, I will have his child. And I will make this romantic flow real. (44 years old, PhD, academician, upper middle income)"

"I guess it's being married, happy, and having kids. (39 years old, university graduate, nurse, upper middle income)"

Statements about meeting social expectations and leading a meaningful life:

"I'm a kind of person who loves kids a lot, and spending time with kids increases my joy of life. I'm a kind of person who gets excited even when seeing a kitten. (35 years old, university graduate, government employee, middle income) "

"In order to feel the sense of motherhood, have a family and be able to feel that I belong to that family. Maybe in order to meet the expectations of my parents and the people around me a little. (39 years old, university graduate, nurse, upper middle income)"

"Because I'm supposed to start a family, and because I also want to start a family. 38 years old, university graduate, private sector employee, middle income)"

"I'm afraid of getting old alone. I feel like I will get rid of the feeling of loneliness if I have a kid. (36 years old, high school graduate, unemployed, middle income)"

Psychosocial Effects of Being Unable to Have a Kid

The study has revealed several psychological effects of being unable to have a kid on the women interviewed. One of these effects is that this causes a negative perception of identity, and they feel that they have not been able to realize their identity development. Identity, in its most general definition, is the sum of an individual's answers to the question of "who am I". According to Berger and Luckmann (2008), identity is a phenomenon arising from the dialectic between the individual and society. This phenomenon is constituted by changeable social processes. Only when identity is built one forgets that identity is socially produced and changeable. In such a situation, the person feels obliged to act as expected from his identity, without questioning his identity constructed in the socialization process. When a person's life experiences are incompatible with his/her socially constructed identity, he/she feels as if there is a very serious problem at both the individual and social levels (Berger & Kellner 1994). The women interviewed could not behave in accordance with their female identity and therefore experience serious problems. There are some statements related to this below:

“A woman and a kid are as close as two coats of paint. That’s why I feel as if a part of me is missing. It’s like I’m not a woman. (38 years old, primary school graduate, unemployed, lower middle income)”

“I don’t feel like a real and complete woman. Sometimes I feel so jealous. You know the saying goes “a woman without a kid is like a tree without fruit.” It’s something like this. I feel so sorry. (36 years old, high school graduate, unemployed, middle income)”

Many studies show that reproduction is a core element in women’s identity development (McEwan Costello & Taylor 1987; Williams 1997). Being a mother still maintains its importance in women’s identity development and continues giving women status, even though women participate in social life more, the age of having a kid can be postponed, and the number of women who decide not to have a kid consciously is increasing (Ulrich & Weatherall 2000). Being unable to be a mother damages the identity perception of especially the women who build their femininity on being a mother. The women who cannot be a mother consider themselves as incomplete, worthless, and incompetent in relation to negative identity perception. This causes them to be more obsessive and annoyed, feel seriously depressed and intensely guilty during the day, and leads their feeling of inadequacy to spread to other areas of life. Following are some statements exemplifying this:

“Especially the ages 33-35 were a nightmare for me. I fell into a severe depression. My life seemed quite empty, and the future was dark. Sometimes I feel very afraid of dying alone.(39 years old, university graduate, nurse, upper middle income)”

"I feel hollow when I'm alone, It's like the life I've lived is wasted. I had a life with ups and downs. I married and divorced. I lived an abundant life. Drugs, sex, travel, fun, love, passion, earning money. I spent 15 years of my life like this. I've been feeling hollow for the last three years, and I want to have a kid. I want to have a more ordinary life, celebrate my kid's birthdays, go from house to house, and hang out with families with kids. (38 years old, university graduate, pharmaceutical representative, upper middle income)"

"Especially if I see a happy family portrait, I feel very intense negative feelings when I (know that I will) go back to my dark house feeling down in the dumps. I'm going through the times when I sleep unnecessarily too much in the mornings, and the order of my life slips through my fingers. I feel these negative feelings when I realize how old I am, when I realize that I am still single, and when I see that the women with kids are happy with their kids. For instance, when I have problems with my period, or when I have problems like ovarian cysts. (38 years old, university graduate, archaeologist, middle income) "

"Living conditions are so tough that when I think of my future, I suddenly remember being unable to have a kid. It wouldn't be bad to have someone that would at least help me settle into a residential care home, someone that would pay a visit sometimes. I'm chuckling while writing the last sentence. This system has penetrated our lives. I guess that's just the way it is.(38 years old, university graduate, archaeologist, middle income)"

The patriarchal system makes a distinction between the women who are mothers and who are not for some reason, and gives status to women married with children. This causes the women who cannot be a mother to be marginalized and leads them to feel intense negative feelings towards the ones who can be one. This situation damages the solidarity among women, as well (Sandelowski 1990). Following are some statements that exemplify this:

"Sometimes watching the good or bad relationships of the moms and their kids who I know or do not know hurts me much. Especially when I see moms who treat their kids badly, "ruin" them, and complain about them continuously, I think they don't deserve to have a kid. Thinking about "why them and not me" makes me rebel. But like I always do, I ignore, and try to wreak my anger on other people/situations... especially on the women with kids. (38 years old, university graduate, archaeologist, middle income)"

"I feel so incomplete, unhappy, and jealous especially when my sister and her husband or my daughter-in-law come over with their kids, or when I visit them. I've always had hard times. I had an arranged marriage at the age of 15. I was always beaten. I couldn't take it anymore and went back to my family house. Meanwhile I didn't have a kid. Then I couldn't remarry because I was afraid. Now I'm desperately lonely. If only I had a kid. (42 years old, primary school graduate, outfitting worker, lower middle income)"

"It annoys me that people who don't like their kids and take care of them properly have that many kids, I envy enormously. I love kids very much, I want to have one, but I don't have any. It feels unjust. (44 years old, university graduate, biologist, middle income)"

The interviews have revealed that the majority of the women have difficulty handling social and opposite-sex relationships, and the relationships they build get disrupted. The studies suggest that the women are under intense internal and social pressure to find someone to marry, get married, and have a kid when they turn 30 if they are still single (Hertz 2006; Hertz Rivas & Jociles 2016). The first two examples below are about the dead end in romantic relationships which is caused by the pressure of immediately marrying and giving birth, and the third one is about the problems social pressure cause in the relationships of women.

"I've had a relationship for two years. I got pregnant by this boyfriend of me twice, underwent two abortions, and cried a lot during each one. Now I'm pregnant again. My boyfriend never wants to marry or have a kid. He puts a lot of pressure on me continuously to have an abortion. He thinks I played him a trick and got pregnant. He's right indeed. I did not use contraception on purpose when he was



drunk, and I thought I could convince him to get married due to my pregnancy this time. But he just doesn't want to get convinced, and I want to give birth to this baby. Maybe this is my last chance. Maybe I will never get pregnant again. Maybe God says I did not take my chance three times and will punish me. I don't know. I know that my family and the society will ignore me and never get in touch with me if I give birth to this baby. It's so hard to take this risk. (36 years old, high school graduate, unemployed, middle income) "

"I am 38. I'm about to get too old to marry and give birth. What I've wanted the most for the last 5 years is to marry and give birth. That's why I've met a lot of people. But I couldn't have a long term relationship. It's like I couldn't succeed in anything, it's all come to nothing. I don't have a strong belief in God, but most of the time I can't help thinking whether what I'm going through is the punishment of my sinful life or not. (38 years old, university graduate, pharmaceutical representative, upper middle income)"

"Firstly, I want to state that there's a serious split between how people perceive me and how I perceive myself. People think "she couldn't find a partner. She's too selective; she couldn't have a long term relationship. If she could, she would have a baby. But instead of saying like this, she's hiding behind something like she doesn't want a kid." This perception disturbed and upset me a lot for some time. People always said things like "marry and give birth. You love kids very much. If not, you'll have to be with a divorced man." They always reminded me of the things I had to do as a woman. It took me a lot of time to struggle against the expectations of the society and grow mature. At least 5-6 years. I spent my thirties with this. Despite my educational background. I'm a psychological consultant. (42 years old, university graduate, psychologist, middle income)"

"My parents are getting old. My mother has serious health problems. Because I'm single and living with my parents, my siblings think that it's just my duty to take care of them. It's like I can never have a private life. Actually I don't have one. And I can't have one. They don't let me, they kill me. Nobody takes care of my parents. Also, I'm thinking about my old age. Because it's difficult to make a living even now, I feel very concerned about who is going to take care of me in my old age. If I had a kid, at least s/he would take care of me. (40 years old, primary school graduate, unemployed, middle income)"

Coping Strategies

Women try to deal with the problems caused by being unable to have a kid in several ways. The most common ways are trying to compensate deprivation for developing intimacy with the kids of siblings (social support), controlling her viewpoint and herself through reframing and rearranging the life in a meaningful way, getting psychological help, finding solutions in a planned way, and walking away from current problems in various ways. Following are the statements including these coping strategies:

"I believe this is my test. But I find it too difficult. (38 years old, primary school graduate, unemployed, lower middle income)"

"It depends on how and how much I get affected. Sometimes I engage in other things, change the subject, go out to smoke, etc. Sometimes I remind myself of the advantages of being without kids. Sometimes I move away from the places where there are kids. I even cared not to be in places with kids for a long time. I mostly try to forget and ignore. If I had a chance to get psychological support, I would. (38 years old, university graduate, archaeologist, middle income)"

"It's a thing in which I continuously try to answer the questions 'What kind of a life do I want?' and 'How can I cope with internal and external pressures?' When I found out what I wanted for myself, I also wanted to share this with people. I wanted them to know that my reality and view of life weren't like what they thought they were. And I put a lot of effort into this. But now I let it go. I let it go because they also think like this. This is something I've achieved after the age of 40. I was able to establish a personal republic after 40. Also, the changing perception of motherhood relaxes me. Reading the blogs of women like me, following their books and lifestyles make me feel that I'm not alone and relieve me. The society and policies implemented needn't squeeze our lives into only motherhood. I've always known to make way for different things. Sport, music, new life experiences, that is, producing. Motherhood is also producing



something. I compensate for the productivity of motherhood by producing different things. (44 years old, PhD, academician, middle upper income)”

“I get help from a psychologist from time to time. I try to build a special rapport with my nephew. I spend time and travel with my friends. (38 years old, university graduate, private sector employee, middle income)”

“I spend time with my friends and nephew. I work a lot. I took antidepressants for eight months for a while. It requires extra effort to deal with the pressure from the people around. Especially my parents put me under a lot of pressure saying “If we see you get married, we won’t die in disappointment”, and this annoys me. When they say so, I treat it as a joke and change the subject.” (38 years old, university graduate, pharmaceutical representative, upper middle income)”

“Sometimes I think it’s for the best. I believe if I had a kid, s/he might be so problematic that I couldn’t deal with him/her. I’m an anxious person, and the kid’s problems would make me suffer a lot. It’s a way of consoling myself. I have lots of hobbies, and I spend time pursuing them. I spare time for my nephews and family. They’re like my kids. Once I thought about opening a kindergarten, but I didn’t dare. (49 years old, high school graduate, retired, middle income)”

“I’ll try to persuade my boyfriend to get married. If necessary, I’ll make him see a psychologist together. I haven’t lost my hope yet. As you can see, I don’t have a plan B like ‘what if I don’t have a kid’. (36 years old, high school graduate, unemployed, middle income)”

“I spend my energy caring for my nephews and parents. I hold strong religious beliefs. I’ve been performing prayer in recent years. I say to myself that it’s for the best. (55 years old, university graduate, tradeswomen, upper income)”

The Women’s Ideas About Being a Single Mother in A Society Where Having Kids Without Being Married Is Not Judged and The State Offers Social Support Services in Terms of Childcare

14 out of 20 women answered this question saying “Yes, I would have a kid.” Ten of the women who said that they would have a kid without getting married were working and had a high level of education and economic status. Six women said they would not have a kid in such a case.

Following are the statements exemplifying both types of responses and their reasons:

“I definitely would (have a kid). I searched sperm banks for a while. Social pressure made me subdue my desire. (43 years old, university graduate, medical doctor, middle upper income)”

“I gave a lot of thought to having a kid before marriage. Time was going by so fast, and I didn’t even have a kid. I had to do something right away. I could have married someone only to have a kid. That’s why I had lots of disappointing and hurtful relationships with lots of people. And then I wondered why I was sorting out these tinpot people. That time I searched for the ways of going to Europe a lot, but I couldn’t. (39 years old, university graduate, nurse, middle upper income)”

“I would say yes to this at a younger age. Now I’m not sure indeed. For me, having a kid has a close meaning to being a family. Having a kid makes sense only if I have a husband who I love and who loves me. When I love a man, I always think about the time I tell him about my pregnancy happily, and he reacts to this happily. I can even call this a dream. I prefer sharing this feeling instead of feeling it alone. (38 years old, university graduate, archaeologist, middle income)”

“I would (have a kid). And I would do it at a very young age because if I had a kid, my joy in life would increase and I would feel complete. And I could raise a wholesome kid. The father is not absolutely needed. (35 years old, university graduate, government employee, middle income)”

“No, I wouldn’t (have a kid) because raising a kid a lot would be very difficult for me. I also think that fathers should be with their kids when they are growing up. (38 years old, university graduate, private sector employee, middle income)”

“I wouldn’t (have a kid) because it’s important for me to raise the kid with the father. I feel that the kids growing up without the father grow up incompletely. I also care about the concept of family and raising a kid in the family in terms of a healthy society. (55 years old, university graduate, tradeswomen, upper income)”

“It’s not definite, but I wouldn’t (have a kid) because I’d like a kid to be a product of love. I’d like him/her to grow up by being loved by both parents. I wouldn’t like the mother to ignore the kid’s needs (father figure, father love) to realize her desire for a kid. The parents may get divorced, but the kid should grow up with the love of both. (44 years old, university graduate, biologist, middle income)”

“I wouldn’t (have a kid). I’m a religious person. It’s sinful to have a baby before marriage. That’s why I wouldn’t. (38 years old, primary school graduate, unemployed, lowest income)”

DISCUSSION

In this research, the women in Turkey who want to but cannot have a kid because they are not married or their husbands do not want to have one kid were asked semi-structured questions, and content analysis was carried out based on their responses to these questions. The findings of this research reveal that the women who cannot have a kid experience serious problems in both psychological and social terms and try to cope with them in various ways. In addition, it has been revealed that the majority of these women might prefer being a single mother in a society where having kids without being married is not judged, but supported, and the state offers social support services in terms of childcare. These findings are in line with the findings of other studies on single motherhood by choice.

Despite the change the women’s movement caused in gender roles, the studies reveal that the main purpose in life is to get married and have a kid for most women. Also, society expects the same things from women (Greenglass 1982). These expectations about being a mother result in the idea that women can achieve physical, psychological and social completeness and realize themselves only when they become mothers; and therefore, they develop their identity accordingly. The exact opposite situation suggests that if a woman is not a mother, she is faulty, incomplete, guilty, and inadequate. Even if she accomplishes so many things in life, the failure of not getting married and having a kid trivializes her accomplishments in other fields. This is a serious problem especially in developing countries. A woman needs to be a mother, otherwise she is nothing (WHO 2010; Sever 2015). All the women interviewed in this research expressed similar ideas and said that they felt incomplete, faulty, guilty, and depressed. Some of them even stated that they could not cope with this situation and therefore got psychological help.

In the research, at what ages participants desire to be a mother has been examined. All the participants would like to have a kid in their twenties. In the case of not giving birth in their

twenties, when they get to their thirties, they feel intense pressure of having a kid immediately in both social and internal terms. This pressure affects their psychology very negatively and causes serious damage to their social and romantic relationships. As they cannot find someone to marry and have a kid, their desire to become a mother causes an intense feeling of hunger, they panic and start to consider single motherhood by choice. The women who consider single motherhood by choice, look for ways to become a single mother and state that they can be one in different social circumstances are working women with high socioeconomic status. This finding is in line with the findings of the studies conducted in the west. The studies indicate that single mothers by choice are mostly heterosexual, in their thirties/forties, well-educated, and self-supporting. What most of them really want was to marry and have a kid. However, they could not make this real for various reasons. Therefore, they decided to become a single mother by choice and became one (Golombok et al. 2016; Graham and Braverman 2012; Hertz 2006; Hertz, Rivas, and Jociles, 2016; Jadva et al. 2009a).

The studies show that most of the women regard marriage as a prerequisite for being a mother. The belief that there has to be a man to marry in order to have a kid is an unignorable cultural necessity even for self-supporting, successful women (Graham 2012; Hertz 2006). Hence, women want to get married to a man who is the marrying kind and have a kid immediately when their biological clock starts ticking. That is why they find themselves in very complicated relationships, and their perception of previous relationships change. They think there is a conspiracy to prevent them from getting married and having kids. They find themselves in a very harsh war in order to break this conspiracy. This is both an internal war and a war against the outside world (Hertz 2006; Graham and Braverman 2012; Graham 2014), which damages their romantic and social relationships, and prevents them from taking initiative against the situation. The women who are kept from showing initiative on having a kid reach deadlock and consult therapists to get psychological help if their biological clock is ticking and there is no way of having a kid (Chodorow 2003; Welldon 2006). Anxiety- and depression-related problems the women have because of this are mostly evaluated as a structural problem by mental health care personnel. Therefore, they introduce women as a more diseased gender. However, the problem here is because the patriarchal system prevents women from making judgment about their own bodies.

In order to solve this problem, women need to experience motherhood as a matter of choice, not as an inevitable destiny or misfortune, and they have right to experience it in this way (Chodorow 2003). Hence, the legal regulations concerning reproductive health have to be woman-centered. It is necessary to know that a woman's body belongs to herself, reproductive autonomy is an inherent human right, and it should be established in all areas of life (Freedman and Isaacs 1993; Petchesky 1980; Sanger 2004). However, the patriarchal system hinders women's right to make decisions about their own bodies, which is supposed to be a very natural right, through policies (legal regulations, studies in science, and traditional practices) on ideal family form.

Ideal family is the traditional family form consisting of a mother, a father, and a kid, and it is based on the official marriage of a heterosexual couple. Traditional family form is considered normal. All the other forms are problematic. This form is the surest way to dominate women and their bodies. Feminists draw attention to the cultural and historical context of ideal family and criticize this standard family form. They state that an ideal family not only regulates intimate relationships, but also constructs power relations continuously on behalf of the patriarchal system. This form needs to change for the liberation of women (Coontz 2000; Coontz 2005). For this, the perception/interpretation of victim and abnormality related to single motherhood should be disrupted, as Ajandi (2011) suggests. Reekie (1998) stated that feminist thought unintentionally contributes to the situation that single motherhood is evaluated as a product of deprivation, disadvantage, or men's irresponsibility. This means that it is necessary to make an effort to change single motherhood into the desired normality and nuclear family. The question by Reekie (1998) "What should be done to prevent single motherhood from posing a problem?" is not even open for discussion in Turkey yet. There is a need for further effort in order to provide a comprehensive answer to this question and implement the answer.

The situation of the dominant structure that considers single motherhood by choice as a deviation from ideal family is directly related to the material and structural features of our social and work life (Wiegers and Chunn 2015). That is why it is impossible to overcome the obstacles to being a single motherhood by choice and eliminate the stigmatization of single mothers with individual effort. It is necessary to change the attitudes and any kind of power relations in the society in order to find a drastic solution to this situation (Major and O'Brien 2005).

This change started with the wave created by the women's movement in the west when the rights of illegitimate and legitimate children were considered equal before the law and when unmarried women were granted the right to reproduce through artificial insemination and similar practices. Thus, the power of the institution of marriage and ideal family started to weaken even a little, which paved the way for single motherhood by choice (Shanley 2001). Yet, despite these regulations, there are so many things to do especially in the developing countries where the patriarchal system reigns too rigorously. Turkey is one of these countries. Traditional and religious practices are applied predominantly in Turkey where most of the population is Muslim, even though the government adopts secularism. Therefore, the woman's body is thought to belong mainly to her husband and the state. Talking about the woman's right to decide what to do with her body is unimaginable (Kandiyoti 1989; Kazemi 2000; Saadawi 1990). This situation is supported by the laws. To illustrate, in Turkey, the regulation of the Ministry of Health regarding assisted reproductive treatment practices and centers grants only married women the right to reproduce through artificial insemination. In addition, a woman is not permitted to conceive using donor sperm even if she is married and her husband gives approval (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Health 2018).

One of the things that needs to be done in order to experience single motherhood by choice properly is to struggle for the liberation of women in the other areas of life. The studies reveal that middle-class white women with good socioeconomic status suffer less from being a single mother by choice. The freedom of making a decision about being a single mother by choice and raising the kid by suffering less is accompanied by socioeconomic freedom (Solinger 2002). Therefore, it is essential to increase social support, provide for mothers, improve working conditions, and offer educational opportunities in order to end the domination over the bodies of women. Moreover, improving these conditions will eliminate the disadvantages of being a single mother by choice and help develop healthy kids.

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