

Globalisation and the Impacts of Austerity Measures in Turkey: The Narratives of Women in the Tunnel

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Abstract

In today's globalised world, there is no avoiding the negative impacts of economic crises. The butterfly effect, the most commonly used metaphor to describe globalisation, explains the interconnectivity of world systems. The worst, but possibly not the last, example of globalisation was the mortgage crises in the USA that occurred in 2007 and extended all over Europe, including Turkey. Many European governments applied austerity measures to their struggling economies, but these budget cuts mostly affected vulnerable groups, such as women, children and migrants. Previous inequalities were deepened, and gendered austerity became evident compared with other groups who faced risks. By focusing on gendered austerity as a research problem, this study seeks to answer the following questions: How do poor women describe their living experiences? Are there any differences between recent years and longer? What are the most important socio-demographic characteristics of these women? How do they cope with their conditions, and what are their survival strategies? The extent to which the feminisation of poverty is observed and why women are more sensitive to budget cuts are discussed based on interviews using oral history. The researcher attempted to write the women's own stories without reconstructing them by reflecting on controversies, as well as silences. Findings revealed that the women had hidden injuries, and they blamed the state for making them angry. The women were also using "economy of talk" by remaining silent.

Keywords: austerity, gendered poverty, oral history, Turkey

Introduction

In the beginning of the 1990s, the idea of a global society and globalisation were at first glance perceived as improvements, although there was no any reference to poverty and inequality (Senses, 2001) because it was promising to create new links among people and regions by breaking boundaries. A number of thinkers (Robertson, 1992; Robinson, 2001) attempted to describe this process carefully. For example, Robertson (1992:174) argued against "...the rapidly increasing compression of the entire world in to a single, global field." Robinson (2001:159) was focused more on the economic aspects of the phenomenon when he wrote: "Globalization...is unifying the world in to a single mode of production and a single global system and bringing about the organic integration of different countries and regions into a global economy".

Others such as Beck (1999) conceptualised globalism as spreading modernity across the world. In this context, he extended his famous concept known as the "risk society" to the "world risk society" by implying that the risks have shifted onto a larger geographical stage. Similar ideas can be traced in Giddens' (2002) writings. In his book *Runaway World*, he claimed that in the global world, although traditions will break down and family relations will decline, democracy, civil society and active citizenship will increase.

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It is clear that he assumes that globalism follows the continuum of modernity because he defines it as "modernism in metropolitan society" (Giddens, 2002). There were, of course, thinkers such as Featherstone (1995) who opposed viewing globalism as generalised modernity. Featherstone, as an expert in cultural studies, argued that the process of globalisation resulted in diversities rather than uniformities. According to him, a global culture would be better conceived of not as a common culture but as a field on which differences, power struggles and cultural prestige contests are played out (Featherstone, 1995: 13-14). The postmodern conceptualisation of globalism is very similar to Featherstone's views in that they also assume that globalisation means increased diversities along with multiple social problems. For example, Bauman (1998) claims in his book *Globalization: The Human Consequences* that globalisation is a diversity that creates difficulty in forming social norms, makes rational planning impossible, emphasises the predominance of consumption over production, and transforms politics into spectacle and media manipulations (Bauman, 1998).

In addition to the postmodern criticisms of globalism, Marxist interpretations are also worthy of mention to understand today's socio-economic conditions. Relevant authors use Marxist concepts such as exploitation and accumulation. For example, Brennan (2003) claims that globalisation is driven by capitalism, which needs to occupy more space and expedite production and circulation while exploiting nature in addition to labour. Hardt and Negri (2000), meanwhile, underline that globalisation is capitalism's response to the destructive effects of the proletarian struggle, and Kellner (2002) and Sklair (2002) argued that globalisation is a type of institutional restructuring of capitalism on a greater scale.

Sklair (2001) also argues that globalism can only be understood by examining the relationships between "transnational practices." When we review these practical links, we note two important movements, namely, population movements and women's movements, and one of these links can be traced by the population movements of transnational migrants, as observed by Schuerkens (2003) because large numbers of people move around the world regularly, and many of them are refugees (i.e., 1, 600, 000 Syrian refugees now live in Turkey because of forced migrations since 2012). Women's movements, meanwhile, were defined by Moghadam (2000). It is clear that the most important criticism of globalisation comes from feminists because they see the process from a gender perspective. For example, Chow (2003) and Acker (2004) believe that globalisation is a gendered phenomenon. They are also aware of the limitations of generalising from metropolitan areas to sub-regions, and they focus on collecting empirical data that reflect diversity. Some feminists criticised themselves and developed new alternatives such as standpoint theory to understand variations among women. For example, Harding (1987; 1991) finds that in order for women to become empowered, their positions in societies should be analysed and used politically to strengthen them. Viewing the differences in psychosocial outcomes between men and women with the idea that the gender binary is the most important influence on the outcomes of interest is outdated; mainstream feminism and sociology have moved beyond that perspective to one that focuses on intersectionality, or the conjoint influences of different axes of stratification: gender, social class, race, ethnicity, and age from the perspectives of both standpoint theory and relational theory. This perspective is reflected in many recent studies on women (Swigonski, 1992; Chandler, 1992).

Global crises

In today's globalised world, economic crisis that occur certain places have the potential to spread worldwide easily, as was the case with the most recent financial crises, which first erupted in the USA in the second half of 2007. In other words, globalisation, because of its nature and potentiality, created a highly integrated worldwide economic and financial system, and the sub-prime mortgage (credits with high risk but low interest rate) market crisis in the USA easily resulted in global economic and financial instability by affecting many developed and underdeveloped countries' economies. Initially, the capitalist market system appeared to be functioning well, and reasonable credits with low interest rates and the image that home prices would continue to increase attracted many low-income, so-called subprime American borrowers. However, subsequently, because of the financial market movement's interms of credits and the home price explosion, a type of "building boom" took place, and because of the market's natural responses, the numbers of unsold homes increased. According to a study by Mckibbin and Stockel (2009), from 2000 to 2006, home prices in the USA doubled in some places and later decreased, which became a fully global phenomenon because in the globalisation era that began in 2005, there were severe economic crises.

Thus, in 2006, as the U.S. Federal Reserve (The Fed) was raising interest rates, low-income families began selling their homes, largely in efforts to repay their loans.

However, at the same time, home prices were declining, and many who sold their homes did not receive enough to repay the home loans. Meanwhile, these homes were repossessed by the banks. During the economic and financial crises, a number of famous American banks (first Bear Stearns, which went bankrupt and was sold to J.P. Morgan Chase, and later, in 2008, Lehman Brothers and Merrill Lynch) that had earned money through sub-prime mortgage credits and invested in international markets failed or went bankrupt because they could not meet their financial responsibilities. Although The Fed attempted to buy some of these banks, the plan did not work and the banks failed. The housing market is one of the largest in America and the world, and therefore, the economic crisis that occurred in this market affected the entire US economy, shifting it into a state of stagflation as economic crises became financial crises owing to limited money flow. Thus, in 2013, the American federal government could not pay its employees officers on time.

There are also activists, such as Curry Malott and his colleagues (2013), who assess the global economic crisis using Marxist terminology. He refers the concept of the "immiseration of capitalism", which is one Marx's concepts that is written in Volume 1 of Capital. Accumulation of misery is one part of the alienation noted by Olman (1993). Capitalism, by alienating humanity, seizes its revolutionary potential and creative nature. Marxists oppose the accumulation of dispossession because it entails privatising public assets and freeing financial markets from any type of regulation. As Harvey (2010) noted, unfortunately, violence, crime, fraud and illegal predatory practices were also used during the subprime mortgage crisis in America. According to Malott et al.(2013), the "...recent financial crises, rescuing of banking and financial institutions via the massive transference of wealth to capital is a part of the neo-liberal class project." He is also pessimistic about the future because he shares Blacker's (2011) ideas that neo-liberalism as both an ideology and a class strategy of immiseration is only beginning. There is also discussions regarding the level of today's immiseration. The recent immiseration is "relative," that is, the wealth of the working class is less than that of the capitalist class. However, there is a risk of "absolute immiseration," which appears to progress along with an absolute deterioration of income, wealth and living conditions. These are all extremely prevalent in Greece, but Britain, Ireland and the USA also appear to be at risk for absolute immiseration. Suicides, homelessness, and dying at early ages are increasing, children have fainted from hunger in schools in Britain and Greece, and these cases are spreading across European countries. All are suffering from the post-2008 financial crisis austerity capitalism, that is, immiseration capitalism. According to Malott and colleagues (2013:16), this is not simply class exploitation or class oppression: it is a form of "class genocide."

Global crises can best be understood as deriving from chaos theory and from fantasy films that imply unforeseen effects: "If America catches a cold, peripheral countries get pneumonia and take to bed." That is, in this case, the economic crises that began with mortgage crises in the USA extended to other countries that were more fragile or sensitive to economic crises and by 2009 had spread to Italy and Greece. It should also be noted that the critics immediately began decrying the austerity measures taken by governments to combat their economic crises. For example, Nobel Prize economist Joseph Stiglitz (2012) criticised politics—calling them a disaster—at his website, the Social Europe Journal. He claims in his essay titled "Europe's Austerity Disaster" that the threat of inflation became a phobia and that because of limited and parochial financial politics, all European countries' economies were at risk of recession: "Austerity has been an utter and unmitigated disaster, which has become increasingly apparent as European Union economies once again face stagnation."

According to Stiglitz (2012): "Austerity has failed. However, its defenders are willing to claim victory on the basis of the weakest possible evidence: the economy is no longer collapsing, so austerity must be working!" He also states, however, that: "...every downturn comes to an end. Success should not be measured by the fact that recovery eventually occurs, but by how quickly it takes hold and how extensive the damage caused by the slump." Other studies also show the negative effects of austerity measures. For example, "The Price of Austerity," published by the European Women's Lobby (EWL) in 2012, is worthy of note. This report is especially focused on the impacts of austerity on women's rights and gender equality in Europe.

Findings based on data collected from 13 European countries showed that austerity measures taken in Europe had undermined women's rights, deepening existing inequalities in addition to creating new ones. According to this report, the impacts of austerity measures can be grouped into three categories: work and wages; services and benefits; and rights and gender equality. The report's main argument was that none of the austerity measures had resulted in improvements for women and that in fact, the cutbacks in social services encouraged traditional gender roles. In particular, groups such as single mothers and single pensioners faced the most cumulative losses. Mass public-sector lay-offs pushed women into precarious employment with lower wages and no social security. The number of female public-sector workers decreased dramatically, and therefore it can be claimed that the crisis cannot be defined as a "he-cession".

The case of Turkey

It is clear that Turkey was also affected by the structural crisis of global capitalism and pushed into a neo-liberal period by international financial organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank beginning in the 1980s. However, as noted by Boratav (2012), Turkey could not maintain the import substitution accumulation model and immediately faced a foreign debt crisis. To combat these crises, a military intervention known as the coup d'état of 1980 led to a shift from import substitution to an export-oriented accumulation model. Later, Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs) were implemented to restructure the economy (Saydan and Turkmen, 2013). According to Inal and Ozturk (2013), the military intervention provided a new temporary government to implement the neo-liberal policies, including closing leftist trade unions, political parties, and NGOs, as well as banning strikes and street demonstrations.

According to financial authorities such as the Central Bank of Turkey (www.tcmb.gov.tr), necessary measures taken during the 2001 crisis to combat financial problems were effective and they did not appear to affect Turkey greatly. During the country's 2001 financial crises, the IMF made severe interventions, resulting in many bankruptcies in efforts to discipline the financial sector. Fortunately, during the most recent global economic crisis, Turkey's economic growth was higher (i.e., 4 %) compared with its neighbouring countries, including European countries. However, it should also be noted that the main reason for this situation was certain features of Turkey's economy, which is based on foreign hot money rather than real sector production. Because of high interest rates, many foreign investors came to Turkey, but recently, the country has not been able to maintain this same international money flow because of national and international political and economic problems. For example, two and a half million Syrian refugees came to Turkey, with 750.000 of them living in concentration camps. Some entered the labour market, and, to survive, they accept low wages with no social security. Recently, the government enacted new regulations to absorb the Syrian refugees into the market. Their existence challenged native workers and triggered negative reactions that harmed labour and work peace. Turkey's expenses for refugees reached 5.000.000.000 Euro, whereas its international aid remained at only 200.000.000 Euro (www.tcmb.gov).

Although Turkey's economy is still considered strong in terms of macro economic indicators, the government has still taken austerity measures. The Ministry of Finance and other financial agencies regularly declare new budget cuts, although the majority these cuts are introduced to the public as great transformations in public policies. Recent social policy and health reforms all resulted in budget cuts against women, children, the disabled, the aged and minorities. When we review the literature, certain studies demonstrate the effects of the existing policy changes made by the current conservative government. For example, Bugra (2012) discusses the transformation of welfare regime, which had negative impacts on women. She argues that women's employment rates are lower than those of males in the industrial and service sectors except for agriculture.

In Turkey, a traditional, unequal, family-based social security system is still common, and it makes women dependent on receiving familial support. Because of separatist movements, people are still migrating from rural areas to large cities. However, newcomers who cannot meet the market's demands for skilled labour and who lack their previous social networks have unfortunately led to new forms of poverty in large metropolitan cities such as İstanbul. Bugra also argues that the conservative government developed social policies of hybrid nature; they can be defined as a synthesis of neo-liberal and Islamic principles. In other words, the family as the basic unit of society is supported, along with the traditional solidarity, by new forms of Islamic charity.

Large financial funds have been established, and welfare services are provided through these funds. Because the majority of these funds have been available to women who live in *gecekondu* houses (illegally constructed houses with poor infrastructure) and care for children, the elderly and the disabled, these women's care provider roles have prevented them from entering the labour market as dependent paid workers with social security.

Toksoz (2012) also supports these findings by observing that patriarchy at work and home limits or restricts women from entering labour market. She finds that a number of factors explain the limited supply of women in the labour market.

Because Turkey is attempting to enter the European Union—although it is still waiting as a candidate—a Structural Adaptation Programme had to be implemented, and this program forced Turkey to decrease its public-sector investments in favour of the private sector. However, according to Toksoz, Turkey's private sector is not sufficiently strong to create new job opportunities, especially for women. Toksoz argues that the state should enact public policies and provide sufficient services to free women from care work, which requires a great deal of time and extra costs. Related to the "time use inequality," an important nationwide study (TURKSTAT, 2007) was also conducted in Turkey to highlight the gendered division of labour and women's low participation in the labour market (Memis et al., 2006). Toksoz also believes that we should fight against existing welfare policies that are based on excluding women from the labour market because otherwise these policies will continue to create greater poverty and income gaps between men and women.

Similar to Toksoz(2012), others such as Dayioglu and Baslevent(2012) have observed the income and poverty gaps between women and man. They argue that women are at the bottom, lower income levels because of their unpaid labour and limited education. In addition, men have more control over assets, and this can also be interpreted as an inequality indicator to combat. These authors also believe that comprehensive employment policies for women should be developed, arguing that Turkey's welfare system assumes that women will be the "care providers" while men are the "breadwinners". As a result, women only receive welfare services or benefits through their husbands or fathers as their dependents.

As was mentioned earlier, Turkey's candidacy for the European Union also offered numerous opportunities to upgrade human rights as well as social and economic policies. One of the most important legal changes made in this context was to transfer women's status from that of dependent mothers and wives to that of independent citizens and participants. However, as discussed by Dedeoglu (2012), these legal arrangements have not been sufficient to promote women's employment and have sometimes worked to decrease it; some arrangements resulted in losses of existing rights, working against women. Because the final target of these reforms is to transform the welfare system from a state to a private, market-oriented system, the system integrates three different social insurance subsystems into one main body. However, as Sahin (2012) discussed, all of these policies are still based on the bread winner model, and they discourage women's participation in the formal labour market. This was clear particularly in the transformation of the health care system. According to Agartan (2012), Turkey's Health Transformation Project (HTP), introduced in 2003 with optimistic claims, was later revised many times because of budget cuts, and the most recent version deviates greatly from the original main targets. Health service benefits are conditional on paying premiums and user fees, and because of this condition, women who receive welfare benefits from their fathers or husbands, to avoid to pay paying any premiums, are likely to accept informal-sector work with no social security. It is very complex issue, but it has a "substantive logic" (Weber, 1972) for women. Simply put, the system encourages women to work in for low wages in the informal sector, thereby supporting the breadwinner model, which establishes men as the heads of households.

It would not be incorrect to interpret that by assuming women to be dependent from the beginning, the HTP was gender biased in both spirit and application. In their studies on the pension system, Sahin and Elveren(2012) also share similar thoughts regarding the system's gendered nature. In other words, the pension system also works against women's interests in favour of male workers. Additionally, private pension systems, which are not common today but which are anticipated to expand in the near future, will deepen existing gaps between male and female incomes after retirement.

All of these above-mentioned features reflect that Turkey also faces the pressures of austerity measures but that the government has been clever enough to introduce them for the sake of the public and the country. For example, in his last speech, Turkish President R.T. Erdogan, a former prime minister repeated his request for families to have three children. He also underlined that he does not accept gender equality, claiming that it is against human nature. He continued there is inequality in justice and rights and that we should fight to correct this inequality. It should also be noted that the political party that is currently in power in Turkey is called the Justice and Development Party (AKP). According to Yildizoglu (2009) and Uzgel & Duru (2009), tendencies towards authoritarianism, Islamisation and communitarianism have increased and the AKP is the representative of the new right, supported by all Islamist communities as well as left and right liberals. Unfortunately, the AKP's assumed moral values were limited to Sunni Islam and excluded Alevis, and furthermore, the AKP began to intervene in lifestyles by banning alcohol consumption, cigarette smoking and abortion, maintaining the at-least-three-children discourse, and imposing Islamic ways of dress, and the most important policies have transformed cultural gender segregation into the norm. Through these policies, the public sphere is weakened, and the way has been paved for new gender segregation beginning in the schools (Yildizoglu,2012).

The Research Problem

The feminisation of poverty in general and the gendered austerity that is specific to Turkey are the main concerns of this study. On gender empowerment measures Turkey placed at 101 out of 109 countries, and the Human Development Index (HDI, 2009) also shows that Turkey is near the bottom of the list, 79th out of 83 countries. The Millennium Development Goals (MDG) reported that in 2010, women's participation was still well below desired levels, and only 9.1 % of the Turkish Parliament is women. Women's education is limited, whereas the occurrence and acceptance of violence toward women is very high. Extremely low participation in the labour market and "sheer poverty" (Erdogan,2011; Bora,2011) are also common problems to be mentioned because 62.5 % of working-age women have no income, but this proportion is only 5.4 % among males (TURKSAT;2007;2008). Women's participation in the labour market is also misleading because the majority of them are unpaid family workers in the agricultural sector; recalculating the figures finds that 75 % of women are surviving with no personal income and/or are dependents of the state or of family members. Only 2.8 % of women have any assets; because of their low employment rates, women's pension rate is very low (2.5 %) compared with men's (11.2 %). Finally, 80 % of women are at the bottom of the income distribution. (Dayioğlu and Levent, 2012). All of these statistics indicate the sensitivity and fragility of women in Turkey. The main characteristics of the Turkish welfare system, which requires formal, registered employment and occupational status as a condition, also function against women.

Among women, it is clear that aged women are the most sensitive group and deserve special attention, and the nursing profession is also worth investigating; because of budget cuts, many nurses were fired and forced to work for minimum wages declared by the government. In addition to Turkish citizens, other risk groups are sensitive to Turkey's austerity measures and budget cuts. Among them, the Syrian refugees deserve attention because they have problems of social exclusion along with poverty.

Objectives

Although the main research is more comprehensive and is still ongoing, this essay is part of the larger project; it is, however, limited to answering the following questions: What are these women's most important socio-demographic characteristics? How do poor and elderly women describe their living experiences? Are there any differences between now and the past? To what extent can the feminisation of poverty be observed, and why are women more sensitive to budget cuts? How do they cope with their conditions and what are their survival strategies?

Method

In this study, narratives are used with a "feminist lens" (Chase,2005) to demonstrate women's experiences with regard to their poverty and deprivations. Clearly, there is no single representative narrative, but they are all certainly qualitative in nature. For example, autobiographies, biographies, life histories and oral histories are the most widely known narratives based on interviews with multiple. For this study, we preferred to collect oral histories because, as was observed by Plummer (1983):

“An oral history consists of gathering personal reflections of events and their causes and effects from one individual or several individuals.” Furthermore, the distinction between “narrative analysis” and “analysis of narratives” is considered following Chase (2005) and Polkinghorne (1995). Analysis of narratives is preferred because this is a paradigmatic analysis that creates themes as well as stories during data collection during interactions with participants rather than researchers’ configuring data themselves after, for example, participant interviews. For example, using the analysis of narratives, we attempted to show how women are restricted from numerous resources—including economic ones because of budget cuts and austerity measures—using their lenses and words.

To achieve the study purposes, the following steps were taken based on Clandinin and Connelly (2000):

- a) First, we defined our research problem in accordance with narrative research in general and oral history specifically because we wanted to capture the comprehensive stories of a limited number of women who were struggling with poverty.
- b) After many home visits and interviews, we selected two women for deeper interviews; the interviewing was a time-consuming process, and the women’s voluntary participation was necessary. During home visits, to describe the living conditions in terms of space and place, we took field notes (the “field texts” mentioned by Clandinin and Connelly(2000)). The women’s narratives were connected to a certain place and context, and we wanted to include and reflect this dimension carefully.
- c) To compare the different time and space contexts, we asked questions about their earlier life experiences (e.g., family backgrounds, employment/work histories).
- d) Although participants did not tell their stories chronologically, we organised them along a timeline for reporting purposes. Some authors assume that this process follows that of writing a novel, with a beginning, middle and end (Carter,1993). Some milestones (Denzin,1989) were important, and thus, they were clarified and used to write the narratives. We also took care to interpret silences and disruptions. Sometimes, we attempted to identify conflicting ideas and relationships by neglecting dichotomies as discussed by Czarniawska (2004).
- e) To develop interactive and cooperative relationships in terms of “dialogical performance” (Riessman,2008), we asked each woman to describe her conditions using a metaphor. As was mentioned by De Certeau(1988), in modern Athens, the mass transit vehicles are called metaphors (metaphorai). During their travels from home to work, people take buses, and narratives and stories also provide links for us to get acquainted with the storyteller’s life. According to De Certeau (1988:115), metaphors are also “spatial trajectories,”and writing narratives with metaphors also aided in validating the collected data.
- f) We always assumed that we were missing many things owing to the multilayered nature of reality. We attempted to learn about the things “under the carpet” (Edel, 1984) as well as “hidden injuries”(Sennet and Cobb, 1972), and we also attempted to be the women’s antennae by telling their stories. We were always that we faced to important questions that were posed by Pinnegar and Daynes (2006): “Who owns the story?” and “Whose version is convincing?” Therefore, we focused our energies on reporting their stories rather than ours.However, there is always the possibility that we were given false information because of the women’s personal and ideological viewpoints and strategies, and because of our efforts to encourage them to talk, we might also have introduced “epistemological terror” (Erdogan,2002).
- g) As mentioned by Cahakrabarty (1997), people who live in poverty are radically heterogeneous, and the results for some cannot be generalised to all; this was another of our assumptions during the narrative research.
- h) Finally, in this study, we also assumed that feminist standpoint theory (Swigonski,1992) and relational sociology would be more appropriate and applicable because we wanted to underline the differences among the women. We attempted to avoid both essentialism and the male/female dichotomy; rather than presenting findings based on women vs. men, we compared two women to determine their differences and similarities.

Findings: Stories in the Time Tunnel

In this subsection, two stories are given that aid in understanding the resistance and impacts of poverty in general and austerity measures specifically on poor, elderly women.

Hacer

Family background: Hacer was born in the Golbasi District of Ankara. Ankara has 25 districts, and Golbasi is located at the periphery, in rural Ankara (23 km). Her father was married three times; and her mother was one of his wives, with eight children. As a result, Hacer never received a proper education; she attended only five years of primary education and did not receive a diploma. She was 17 when she married because traditionally, girls who did not go to school had to marry young to make good marriages; marrying later would have meant accepting and complying with an old man with children. Her husband was a rental car taxi driver who was also from her village. It should also be noted that villagers who are not qualified to work in the public sector as officers or in the private sector as workers mostly prefer to enter the job market as taxi drivers; this is a common phenomenon all over Turkey. After their marriage, they moved to Mamak District, and Hacer still lives in this area. Mamak is also located at the periphery of Ankara and has been home to numerous "gecekondu" (overnight houses) since 1950.

However, recent urban transformation projects have changed the socio-economic profile of the district. Compared with earlier days, there are fewer *gecekondu*, and Hacer lives in an apartment with central water and a special heating system called *kombi*. As a housewife, she managed all of the housework, and it never occurred to her to work outside of her home. They had no children, and she had difficulties because of being blamed by others for infertility. She went to a maternity hospital because she needed to learn what was wrong with her. Doctors conducted fertility tests and told her that her egg channels were open because her body reacted to the medicine by feeling pain. Doctors later examined her husband's sperm and found that his sperm was weak and he required treatment. When they returned home, he threw all of the pills into the traditional cuisine. At the time, Hacer felt happy because she was free from blame for being an infertile woman.

More importantly, she was saved from a forced divorce and being returned to her family home, and she also felt relaxed that her mother and father would not look down on her. Meanwhile, her husband requested that she stay with him. She was in love with him, and they lived for 30 years without children. When Hacer was 47 years old, one day she and her husband went to her uncle's house to celebrate a niece's birth. Hacer suddenly felt that without children, they were not a real family, and she wanted to adopt the baby girl by completing all of the paperwork; they were able to hide from the girl the reality that she had been adopted until she was 20 years old. Unfortunately, when the young lady was giving birth at the hospital, her birth mother could no longer tolerate the situation and told the girl that she was her mother. The young lady reacted strongly, rejecting her birth mother by telling her that giving birth did not mean everything and that Hacer was her mother because Hacer took care of her for 20 years. Now, the niece/daughter has two children, her elder daughter graduated from vocational high school and her husband is a technician for a private pharmacy company. According to Hacer, when she and her husband were wealthy, they bought a house for their, and at that time, their son-in-law was more polite and kind. However, he now keeps his distance and does not behave gently.

Turmoil years: In the good days, Hacer and her husband's income was good, and they saved money and paid into the social security system so they would receive his government pension and salary when he retired. They bought two houses in Mamak District and rented the second house for 200 TL (less than 100 Euro). Unfortunately, Hacer lost her husband four years ago; he was sick, and she cared for him four years after he was paralysed and not able to walk. When he was bedridden, she took care of him without asking for assistance, using gloves to clean his toilets. When he was healthy, he drove the rental taxi with the help of another driver. After her husband's death, Hacer trusted this driver because she had known him for 25 years, and she decided to buy a car and share with him the daily earnings, less than 25–30 TL (10 Euros per day). To pay for the car, Hacer took out a bank mortgage on her second house. Unfortunately, because of the economic crisis, they could not make payments on time, her second house was repossessed.

In addition, her government pension payment was reduced to a widow's salary of only 150 TL (50 Euro), and Hacer has recently been attempting to survive on this 50 Euro salary. Fortunately, a female officer at the bank where she collects her widow's salary has been kind enough to give Hacer 150 TL (50 Euro) per month out of pocket to support her. Hacer's neighbours are also very generous, and they give her food; for example, one neighbour invited her for a full Ramadan dinner.

A woman next door who used to take care of her mother and because of this responsibility could not marry has also been very kind and generous to Hacer, and one of her younger sisters makes a weekly shopping trip to the open bazaar to buy Hacer fresh vegetables and fruits as well as needed dresses. To pay for her necessities, especially the heat, Hacer knits small washing pads and sell for 5 TL (less than 2 Euros) each, and on national days, Mamak municipality also distributes macaroni, rice and oils. Hacer sometimes participates in social meetings organised in the neighbourhood, especially on holy Fridays, to read the Quran.

She always goes to these meetings with her neighbour because she feels insecure if she goes out alone, but these meetings are their only socialisation opportunities. Although her single neighbour is young, she prefers to go out with Hacer because women alone can be treated negatively by both men and married women. Hacer in her old age was sensitive and self-conscious about bothering couples worried that they might feel jealous about her presence; although she was not a young woman, she was aware of her charm and attractiveness. Hacer and her younger neighbour were cooperating to manage their loneliness. She reported that her next-door neighbour's orphan's pension was sufficient for her survival, but Hacer was angry with the state because she was receiving less than she deserved. Her widow's pension is approximately 650 TL (200 Euros), which is one-third of the minimum wage for paid workers. However, as was mentioned above, because of her bank loan, Hacer only receives 150 TL. She thinks that the state does not care about old and poor people's welfare and that distributing macaroni and rice is not enough.

She underlined many times that she needed more money. However, she was happy with Ankara Province's Social Support Foundation services. She calls and talks to them whenever she feels lonely. Her private mobile phone was closed and could only be used to receive outside calls because she could not afford to pay the bills, and thus, the foundation's direct telephone connection was her only opportunity to communicate with the outside world. Mamak municipality's social organisations were also observed as socialisation opportunities. When she went to the foundation with her neighbour, they sat and talked with other women, enjoying tea and cakes while listening to religious music, namely, "*ilahis*".

Social exclusion: In addition to needing money, Hacer also suffers the most from loneliness; she thinks that because of her poverty, nobody would want to get together. In the old days, everyone wanted to come together and everyone was so friendly, and Hacer used to give presents such as gold and other valuable remembrance. Now her old friends are disappearing because they also suffer from poverty and do not have sufficient income to share with friends and relatives. This is also the case with Hacer's relations with her son-in-law and sisters. She avoids visiting her daughter's home because she feels uncomfortable, and she always returns home without spending even a night with them. She feels more comfortable at home alone, telling herself, "home sweet home" .

Using metaphors: When Hacer was young and relatively richer, she used to define herself as being similar to a horse because she was physically strong and psychologically motivated to do things and take risks, unlike her husband. According to her, her husband was more similar to a ship, submissive and open to being directed, and he made many mistakes by following bad advice from his social environment. Unfortunately, now Hacer has lost her self-confidence, and, in contrast to the early days, she now feels more similar to a chicken, very frightened and unable to take risks. Her head is full of questions, and her mind sometimes races. She thinks that the era we live in is full of risks, which is why she does not go outside alone. She also does not open her door to most people, and she told us that if the foundation had not given her a reference, she would not have agreed to interview with us. Luckily, Hacer has no serious health problems, and the foundation provides her check-ups. She was very friendly and talkative, and she only wanted us to find her a cleaner because she was not able to clean the windows from outside. Her house was very pretty and quite well furnished. Although she lived under the pressure of poverty and social exclusion, she had many old pieces that reflected her better days, such as crystal glasses and silver plates.

Halime

Family background: Halime was born in 1940 in Yozgat, a small, economically underdeveloped province of Turkey very near Ankara (223 km). The majority of Yozgat's population had migrated to Ankara beginning in the 1950s and settled in Mamak District. As with newly established colonies, first comers from the same towns and villages invited their unemployed friends and relatives. By supporting each other, they built illegal houses on state or private property, and Halime and her husband were among these migrants.

She is illiterate, having been married when she was 13 years old to a man from her village. When their children were very little, possibly more than 50 years ago, they migrated to Ankara. At the time, she was suffering from a stomach illness that was making her vomit up a whitish liquid.

Therefore, some friends who had moved to Ankara earlier arranged for an operation for her at one of the state hospitals. At that time, working in a hospital as a cleaner or a gatekeeper gave these employees power; they could easily obtain free medicine (pills), and in serious cases, they could also arrange for free operations using small manipulations such as changing the patient's name; these migrants used their social networks. For example, if the hospital had a doctor from their town, they sought that doctor to benefit from his or her networks and power. They generally requested medications or operations for themselves and then transferred these to the person who needed the service. According to Halime, after her stomach operation, she had other serious sicknesses such as heavy bleeding. Therefore, her own family decided to migrate to Ankara, and they also built a *gecekondu*, which she still lives in. She was pregnant six times but only four sons survived. Unfortunately, she had two miscarriages that were both girls, and she has always been sorry about her lost daughters. Her husband, who had no qualifications, worked for many years in open bazaars selling lemons. It was not easy work, and he travelled all over Ankara to display his lemons at different places on each day of the week. He worked hard, however, and their economic conditions allowed them to survive and even to save; her husband bought a small piece of land in another district called Sincan.

They paid no rent because they lived in the *gecekondu* and Halime was raising their four sons. Meanwhile, her husband retired and began to receive a very small (300 TL, less than 100 Euro) pension for many years; it recently increased to 750 TL (approximately 250 Euro). Three of her children, who had only primary education, are also retired, but not the youngest one (Cemil). After their father's death 13 years ago, they began to fight with each other over the deed to the *gecekondu*. An older brother (Satılmış) wanted to the title in his name, but the other sons rejected this; they did not trust their brother, calling him ambitious for money. Halime's sons were also struggling with poverty, facing shortages because they were mortgages and raising children. The youngest and the oldest lived in Ankara, and the other two lived in Bursa, a sizable city far from Ankara.

In the meantime, Halime had other health problems. Her right ankle had been broken 15 years ago and was maintained by prosthesis. She also had high blood pressure and cholesterol problems and went to the health centre every week to check her blood pressure and take her medicine. She takes a taxi to the health centre because her *gecekondu* is at the top of a hill that we could not even climb; we took a taxi to her house. In the winter in particular, special boots are necessary for walking because there is no appropriate drainage system in this *gecekondu* area and all waste goes directly outside to the street. Thus, the roads are always dirty, and they freeze easily. Because of an urban transformation project, all of the *gecekondus* will be converted into modern apartments; several towers are already under construction.

Big family with big problems: Halime's personality is not very extraverted. She is a little shy, prefers to stay home and rarely visits her next-door neighbours. She complains about her daughters-in-law, especially the youngest, with whom she lived for four years. At that time, Halime moved downstairs even though there were rats. However, her daughter-in-law was not happy and one day showed her anger towards Halime by beating and shouting at her. Halime's eye was injured, and the two stopped talking. Soon after this physical violence, daughter-in-law and her son moved to another district. According to Halime, the daughter-in-law did not like Mamak, including their neighbours and of course, her mother-in-law. Two years later, when Halime went to visit her grandchildren for a week, her daughter-in-law asked when she was going back home; Halime returned home without spending even a night there.

Halime's husband bought her two golden bracelets and requested that she go to Kaaba to become a haggis; after his death, she sold the gold bracelets and went, and she was so happy she prayed to God for a second opportunity to see sacred places. She always listens to religious music on TV, and one every holy Friday, she takes a bath in her living room. This is because there is only one stove in the house, and it is fixed in the living room for cooking and heating. She uses a large pan for her bath, and when she bathes, her next-door neighbour (Tulin) comes and helps her.

Halime calls her “my daughter” and likes and trusts her very much. Although the neighbour receives aid from the municipality and is officially defined as poor, she is honest enough not to accept any money from Halime. Every day, she buys two breads for Halime, who eats one bread in the morning and one in the evening. Other shopping is done by two of her sons.

The youngest son, who used to live with Halime, visited his mother while we were there and told us that he was so sorry but that there was nothing else he could do. He was blaming himself, but with two small children and a nervous wife, he had no choice; his wife wanted to raise her children herself, believing that their grandmother was spoiling them. Because of their mortgage, they also faced financial pressure and could not help their mother. Halime actually cried several times during our interview, not because of poverty but because of loneliness. She felt acutely that her sons’ wives were excluding her and that her sons were closing their eyes to it and wasting their time fighting each other. Halime also complained their eating habits. At home, whenever she feels hungry, she cooks practical things such as soup or eggs and she eats. However, at her children’s homes, they eat once in the morning and not again until the evening. They also limit their heating expenditures, and Halime feels cold in their homes; it could be interpreted that her daughters-in-law are also struggling with poverty, especially because of mortgages. Halime says that she feels very comfortable in her own home but that loneliness makes her very unhappy.

When she got sick from her belt, she had to stay in hospital, and her oldest son wanted to stay with her. Halime thought that this was inappropriate because there was another woman in the same ward, so she asked her oldest daughter-in-law if she could stay with her for 50 TL (less than 15 Euros); she spent a night with her mother-in-law for money. It could be interpreted that these women are severely suffering from poverty and thus attempting to gain benefit from every occasion. Halime was also not happy with her electricity and telephone costs because 100 TL was very high for her budget. She was, however, very satisfied with the foundation’s call system; one night at three o’clock a.m., she felt pain in her heart and called them, and they came with an ambulance; later, she had angiograms.

When we were talking about her needs, Halime told us that she needs a small mobile table because there is no dining table in the living room and she sits on the floor to eat; if someone came while she was eating, first standing and then going to open the door took time. She also told us that she had lost her golden earrings, which kept her comfortable by preventing itching. Unfortunately, when she asked her oldest son Satılmış to buy both the mobile desk and the earrings, he refused, citing her age; he believed that at her age, she had no need for either mobile table or gold earrings. All of these attitudes made Halime very sad and disappointed. Possibly her son was expressing his anger about the deed to the house; he might have believed that Halime could convince her other sons but chose not to and therefore deserved his brutish behaviour.

Metaphor: When we asked how she would describe herself today compared with her earlier days, she described herself as a formerly able and passionate woman, similar to a sultan; she told us that she used to be called “Sultan Halime”. However, she feels today that she has lost her power and the light in her eyes no longer shines. She wants good relationships with her sons and daughters-in-law, but they exclude her for reasons. One of the main reasons for this could be the deprivations and difficulties they themselves face; their lives are unhappy, and they express their anger to poor old women through brutish behaviours. Halime, with her blue eyes and earrings, is still a charming lady. She is surviving alone, but she believes that if her husband were in her position, he could never survive and would die immediately. Beginning in early ages, women learn to struggle and to manage these types of problems, which strengthens them just as the social feminists claimed. Her story about to kill an animal during Festival of Sacrifice was both interesting and contradictory. Because while suffering poverty she was successful enough to save money to make sacrifice.

Discussion: Tunnel of Violence

As was mentioned by Bugra (2012), *gecekondu* areas are unique settlements that are found in underdeveloped societies. In daily language, the term means “overnight houses”, which were illegally constructed in short periods of time by the migrants who came from rural areas and laid stakes on empty lands that belonged to the state treasury or on private property. Since 1950, these migrants have been settling in *gecekondu* houses at the peripheries of city centres. Initially, there were no infrastructure services. However, electricity and running water were later installed, and roads were constructed. Health centres and schools were also provided following short-term populist policies.

Thirty years after the migrants settled, during the 1980s, they also began to receive their “*tapus*” (title deeds) by paying small amounts of money to the state.

Bugra(2012) claims that governments created extra income by converting these houses to legal residences and allowing the rural migrants to stay in them. She also claims that governments’ policy of supporting *gecekondu* can be interpreted as providing social security. What is important for our research is the migrants’ extraordinary efforts to integrate themselves into urban life by paying high costs. The cost of a new life in a large city were especially higher for women than for men because in rural areas, women actively worked in the field and were thus more powerful; when they moved to the cities, they were imprisoned in small houses with no infrastructure, and they lost many social networks. These women were neither rural nor urban; they had a hybrid character that combined modern and traditional values. Most of them stayed at home and took care of children and thus supported capitalism; because of women’s unpaid work as housewives, governments could pay lower wages to their husbands as male employees.

When the field research findings are reviewed, there are certain similarities between the two women’s stories. For one, both women felt loneliness and suffered from poverty. Halime, with four children and 14 grandchildren, is still lonely because traditional family ties are weaker in the metropolis. Her daughters-in-law are also neither modern nor traditional but again hybrid in nature; they articulate traditional and modern values. For example, her oldest son thinks that as the head of the family, he deserves the title deed, but at the same time, he does not want to fulfil his responsibilities, especially to his old mother, Halime. Moreover, her daughters-in-law also do not want to live with her and do not even have empathy for her. Meanwhile, Hacer has no children and was accustomed caring for her husband when he was sick. Although she has an adopted daughter, she is also lonely; she cannot spend time at her daughter’s house because of her son-in-law’s attitude. Therefore, when the two women are compared, although their family characteristics are different, they have virtually the same current social status. Both women remain in their own homes alone in insecure conditions. When they are frightened, only their neighbours are kind and generous to them, and it is these neighbours who help them in their daily routines rather than their relatives.

Both women have “hidden injuries” (Sennet and Cobb, 1972) and suffer from “injuries of differences” (Erdogan, 2012) in terms of poverty and exclusion based on “distinctions” (Bourdieu, 1984). As a result, they both always express that they need more money to avoid “emotional symbolic violence” (Bourdieu, 1984). If they were wealthier, they believe that their relatives would take care of them and that they would not feel, simultaneously, the “economy of talk” (not being talked to); the “economy of touch” (not being touched); and “economy of looking” (not being looked at or even seen) that Erdogan described (2011). After their husband’s deaths, they each lost their power and authority, and their status grew weaker before it was destroyed. As “subalterns”, they did not like to talk much (Spivak, 1988), and as they talked, they began to cry and “blame” themselves for lacking power and for their physical weaknesses (Sennet and Cobb, 1972).

They were, however, also rebelling against their powerlessness. They were both strong enough to live alone with some help from their neighbours. They were very honest and avoided wrongdoing, in contrast to many subalterns, who act out because of normlessness or anomie. These women could not be described as “escaping while existing” (Sennet and Cobb, 1972) because they were resisting without using illegal water or electricity. Their resistance could be defined as the “art of management”, and their personalities those of the “hidden hero” (De Carteau, 1984); with little money, they did their best, and without observing them in their homes, it is difficult to see how they survive. They both always pray to God and listen to religious music to remain calm but resistant, although they are still angry with the state. Each believes that with larger pension payments, they could manage more easily; there are not enough state social services (except for the recent call service established by the support foundation), and they had to pay for all of their needs, including transportation (e.g., taking a taxi to the health centre), communication (their telephones are turned off), and heating (e.g., living entirely in only one room, including bathing). Although both women’s neighbours were also poor, they were relatively younger and could support their older neighbours and make their lives easier.

Conclusion

Finally, it would not be incorrect to conclude that Hacer and Halime are doubly oppressed— socially and economically—by their “sheer poverty” (Bora, 2011).

Gendered austerity is evident in that, including by their relatives, they are nearly always excluded. They are in severe “implosion” (Erdoğan,2011),but they are still trying to resist. Clearly, once exclusion begins, it is difficult to re-enter one’s same network. After they migrated to Ankara, if these women could entered the job market and earned social security rather than being unpaid housewives, they might now be in better socio-economic positions because they would be receiving two pension payments, both their husbands’ and their own. The state continues to show no real interest in lessening vulnerable groups’ difficulties. Instead, both states and the current conservative government prefer to establish Islamic forms charity to make women, children, the disabled, and ethnic or religious minorities temporarily happy as dependents of the system, which has mostly resulted in “symbolic violence” (Bourdieu,1984).

There are no radical measures for improving the entire population’s quality of life. The current government has also been very successful at presenting budget cuts as promoting and reorganizing social services. Unfortunately, daughters-in-law who are also housewives appear to feel that they are the second-generation losers of the migrant women. They are not aware, however, of the risks they are taking; for now, they may feel that they are the winners by living in nuclear families without their mothers-in-law, but their future realities do not appear that they will be any better than their mothers-in-law’s realities today; mortgage and unemployment risks are also valid for them. However, the difference between the “real self” and “playing self” (Sennet and Cobb,1972) is also important when discussing this study’s findings; “alienation” (Seeman, 1956) in terms of meaninglessness, powerlessness and normlessness is increasing, and women must be empowered through political strength to eliminate the negative impacts of poverty and austerity measures. Certainly, daughters-in-law and their attitudes towards their mothers-in-law can be interpreted as “playing self” to resist poverty because both generations face the pressure of poverty and budget cuts. Their cooperating rather than fighting might be more helpful for the third generation’s survival and security..

With regard to discourse of subaltern’s these women’ resistance can be defined as “folklore of philosophy.” (Gramsci,1984).Because their attitudes and behaviours are not always very consistent and can be interpreted as obscure, blurred, vague or scattered. But it is obvious that that they have reasons to do so similar to Halime’s behaviour during Festival of Sacrifice. Although she is poor but still wants to show others that she is in power and sincere believer by following God’s orders. Although as Chacrabarty (1997) claims, poverty is a “radically heterogeneous phenomenon” and each case is different in terms of history, it would not be incorrect to conclude that there are clear warnings that women urgently need to become empowered to eliminate the exclusions of austerity regimes, which can also be defined as “tunnel[s] of violence” (Collins, 2013), as they resist.

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