The Construction of Motherhood and Maternal Experiences

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An Exploratory Qualitative Study

Edited by

Fatma Zehra Fidan

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This book first published 2025

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

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PREFACE

Every book is a creation, and this creation goes through painful phases. It is worth telling how this book came into being after passing through extraordinary and challenging stages.

The idea of preparing an editorial book on motherhood first emerged in mid-2015. In a relatively short time, we had reached the final stages of the book, which I had the excitement of editing, and we were only waiting for the completion of the last article. One of the best publishers in Turkey had agreed to publish the book and was eagerly awaiting our manuscript. While I was working to complete the manuscript with great enthusiasm, the coup attempt that took place on July 15, 2016, changed everything in our country. I was among the hundreds of thousands of people who were dismissed by the government's emergency decree laws (KHK) following the coup attempt. In this critical period, nine out of the ten authors who had contributed to the book withdrew their articles without even providing any justification. My fellow authors were so frightened by the events in the country that they didn't even respond to my emails regarding the book. I chose to understand them; they had their reasons.

Six years passed. The idea of preparing an editorial book on motherhood had taken root in my intellectual womb, and there was no peace for me until this book was born. I started looking for new contributors again. My one friend who hadn't withdrawn her article six years ago was still by my side. Although, over the six years, Turkish society had somewhat softened toward those dismissed by the KHK's and believed in our innocence, the despotism of Turkish politics continued to grow. However, I was particularly delighted that, despite knowing that I was an academic dismissed by the KHK, some scholars still agreed to contribute to the book. Interestingly, most of these contributors were also academics who had been dismissed by the KHK. This second journey was even more exhausting for us KHK-affected academics, as we had all been worn down by six years of stigmatization, exclusion, unlawful legal processes, and financial hardship. Some of my friends were still involved in ongoing court cases and lived with the fear of imprisonment.

As the project continued through these hardships, one day, four of the contributing authors suddenly informed me that they had decided to withdraw their articles, as they were concerned that their academic careers might be tainted by being part of a book written by KHK-affected academics. Though deeply saddened, I did not get angry; I believe I understood them. Although the project academically excited them, they wanted to feel safe in Turkey's dark political climate. A few other friends had to withdraw for other reasons, and in the end, the book's contributors were solely composed of academics dismissed by the KHK.

For me, who had been carrying the labor pains of such a book for years, this turned out to be a unique blessing. We, six female academics, not only tried to reflect on the historical and cultural phenomenon of motherhood from different perspectives but also gave birth to this book while enduring the pains of societal oppression. Whether we call it motherhood or creation, it was an expression of something different that emerged on its own. Therefore, the magic of this book is unique, and I recommend that you feel its magic.

…

Opening the topic of motherhood to debate within the social sciences was not easy for women because it meant shaking the sacred motherhood metaphor, which had been intricately woven through the threads of history, and considering women beyond their motherhood identity. This new form of womanhood, deconstructed from its historical role, was fiercely rejected by the patriarchal constructors of tradition. The patriarchal rejection of this new female identity was rooted in the belief that the essential characteristic of a woman is motherhood. According to this definition, a woman's primary duty was motherhood, and the home, which is an inseparable domain of motherly action, was the behavioral and spatial framework that shaped a woman's life. Supported by every layer of culture throughout human history, this approach overlooked other attributes and capacities of women, denying them the opportunity to realize themselves.

Despite the persistent pressure of tradition, women's lives could not remain unaffected by modernity. The transformations that seeped into the deepest roots of society following the Industrial Revolution also shook the gendered determination of historical processes, making the reconstruction of women's identity and defined gender roles inevitable. In this reconstruction, women's demand was not to abandon their children entirely but not to

abandon themselves either. In other words, it was an objection to being defined as "the other" alongside the male subject, to having their unique qualities disregarded, and to being seen solely as the helper and servant of men. Shaking the discourse of womanhood and motherhood that had been constructed through history, offering new alternatives for mother-women, and contributing to the new configuration of social life with these suggestions are the fruits of this objection.

Every subject that affects human life naturally falls within the scope of motherhood. The perception, construction, and definitions of motherhood are inseparable from the economy, politics, health, religion, aesthetics, art, media, and culture, which encompass all these concepts. This book aims to contribute to the social sciences by revisiting various topics related to motherhood.

The book's content consists of discussions addressing questions such as: How has motherhood been opened up for discussion in modern society, and how has it become a topic of the social sciences? How did Ottoman society, influenced by Eurocentric approaches to motherhood, reflect this concept? How is motherhood experienced in different cultures? What are the social effects of Islam's approach to sacred motherhood? What does being the mother of a disabled child mean for women, and how does being a mother of a disabled child affect their lives? How do traumatic experiences such as stepmotherhood, poverty, and suicide impact the construction of motherhood? How is motherhood portrayed in social media, an integral part of everyday life, and what are the consequences of these portrayals on women's lives?

We hope that by addressing motherhood from various perspectives, these discussions will contribute to the existing literature. The contributions of our authors, most of whom are mothers and experts in their fields, are invaluable. I extend my heartfelt thanks to my colleagues who contributed to this important work despite the extremely challenging circumstances they were in.

Undoubtedly, much remains unsaid about a topic like motherhood, and many problems remain unspoken. Every contribution to the topic is like a candle lit in the darkness.

—Assoc.Prof. Fatma Zehra Fidan

I.

PERSPECTIVES ON THE HISTORICAL AND CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF MOTHERHOOD

MOTHERHOOD IN HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE: PERIODS AND TRANSFORMATIONS

YASEMIN CEYLAN

Motherhood has been shaped by meanings and responsibilities varying across societies and periods and is one of human history's oldest and most universal roles. As women's social roles developed from hunter-gatherer societies to agricultural societies and modern and post-modern societies, these changes substantially impacted how motherhood is perceived and experienced. With changes in production modes, women's social positions, control over their bodies, and relationship with motherhood have substantially transformed. Beyond the functionalist perspective of Parsons (Layder, 2014: 17-43) and Marx and Engels (2012)'s stress on the foundations of family and property, the exploration of motherhood as a field of study within the social sciences, beyond its demographic dimensions, initiated in the 1970s through various approaches. To that end, studies by Ann Oakley (2018), Adrienne Rich (2000), Kate Millett (2000), and Elizabeth Bortolaia Silva (2003) have brought discussions on motherhood to the forefront and expanded the relevant literature. We aim to explore the concept of motherhood as shaped by different modes of production throughout history, accentuating how motherhood has been redefined as a social, economic, and political process. Motherhood is a biological phenomenon and a multifaceted identity shaped by each period's social structures and power relations.

Our study is a descriptive analysis that critically addresses the transformation of motherhood throughout history, its meaning, and its position. Therefore, it is used to assess the information about motherhood and its transformation in response to economic, social, and political changes.

Hunter-Gatherer Societies and Motherhood

Hunter-gatherer societies have encompassed about 99% of human history, where a gender-based division of labour was predominant. Men usually undertook hunting, while women performed gathering in these societies.

Women were at the centre of the production process because they gave birth, were responsible for childcare and played a pivotal role in food-gathering activities (Engels, 2012: 164). However, motherhood alone cannot be used to define the role of women in hunter-gatherer societies. As the modern nuclear family structure did not exist there, child-rearing was considered a collective responsibility (Sahlins, 1972: 78-79). Even though a gender-based division of labour was evident, the responsibility for raising a child was a shared responsibility for all members of the community, not just for the biological mother. In this context, motherhood during this period primarily comprised efforts to keep a healthy baby alive (Trevino, 2010: 486).

In hunter-gatherer societies, the division of labour was notably flexible. The circumstances suggested that anyone in the community could engage in gathering or participate in hunting. This flexibility vividly indicated that women's social roles were beyond motherhood. In these societies, where the transition to a settled lifestyle was non-existent, where private property did not exist, and power structures lacked sharp boundaries, control over women's bodies was limited.

The impact of modes of production on motherhood is directly associated with the role and importance of women in the production process. Within society, the roles of women and men in the production process and the value attributed to these roles determined their social status. In hunter-gatherer societies, women were involved in gathering, bearing children for the community and caring for the community's children. These activities assigned them social roles transcending that of motherhood. Consequently, in these societies, limited control over women's bodies occurred, rendering women not viewed solely as individuals confined to motherhood status (Trevino, 2010: 488-492).

Agricultural Societies and Motherhood

The transition to a settled lifestyle and the advent of agriculture profoundly influences all areas of social life. These areas include the lives of women and the meaning of motherhood, redefining their social boundaries and responsibilities. As agricultural societies arose, the transferability of private property and the necessity to control it resulted in increased control over women's bodies. Marriage and reproduction have developed into economic and social functions to protect the property acquired by men (Trevino, 2010: 517). With women beginning to bear more children owing to the shift to settled life, their responsibilities associated with childcare

naturally boosted. Moreover, the growing need for labour in agricultural societies and the control of private property meant intensified pressure on women's bodies and sexuality.

Controlling individuals can involve regulating their knowledge and values. To that end, women's sexuality also began to be brought under control. Illustratively, in the mythologies of societies like the Sumerians, women who did not exercise their sexual passion and potential were deemed respectable. Contrarily, women who committed adultery could be sentenced to death (Trevino, 2010: 518-519). In agricultural societies, belief systems impacted knowledge management associated with motherhood and its meaning construction. For instance, under the influence of Catholicism, Judaism, and Islam, women's leadership roles were restricted, with motherhood becoming the primary duty during the Middle Ages (Trevino, 2010: 520). Sanctifying motherhood was through the figure of the Virgin Mary, with the image of women as mothers elevated above their other social roles.

In hunter-gatherer societies, motherhood was one of women's social roles. However, in an agricultural society, it became the most essential duty of women. The social pressure on women increased as their roles were primarily confined to the process of reproduction within the production process. Thus, women were identified as someone's mother or wife rather than being individuals. In some cultures, worldwide, women possessed limited property and education rights, even though some exceptions existed (Trevino, 2010: 519) during this period. In societies where women were known to assume the role of motherhood, women without children confronted challenging issues. Therefore, infertility became a cause of humiliation for women. Nevertheless, women who did not view sexuality as a duty to continue a man's lineage were associated with witchcraft.

This evaluation concerning motherhood and modes of production poses an overall framework. In agricultural societies, the position of women and motherhood was determined by the mode of production, the prevailing culture, social dynamics, and particularly the status of women. Women's social roles in agricultural societies were primarily restricted to the private sphere. Nonetheless, the situations of wealthy and poor women could substantially differ. Poor women worked both in the home and in agricultural labour and were often regarded as commodities that could be purchased and sold as enslaved people (Engels, 2012: 60). Moreover, Foucault (2015: 93) described the absolute power (male, property owner) in agricultural societies such that it included the right to give life or death.

This authority also covered women, children, and all subjects, possessing the power of life and death (Engels, 2012: 63), with motherhood shaped within this power structure. Thus, women were at the mercy of men, and their subjects were also condemned to a life limited by the absolute power of authority. However, until the 19th century, despite sexuality, the sinfulness of abortion, and the glorification of having children, it transcended state control. Motherhood did not provide adequate sovereignty and control in this patriarchal world, posing an opportunity for self-expression. Even though motherhood was the primary source of male dominance over women, it also encompassed the most significant position of power and authority in agricultural societies.

In sum, even though motherhood in hunter-gatherer societies was more communal and flexible, it developed into a more restricted role focused on domestic tasks in agricultural societies. This transformation is closely associated with changes in modes of production, the emergence of the concept of property, the establishment of gender roles, and the belief systems of that time.

Modern Society and Motherhood

Power, economy, patriarchy, and the structural issues of society form the primary sources of oppression against women. This oppression is most effectively exerted in the processes associated with women's fertility and motherhood. Throughout history, power structures have sought to control women. Nonetheless, this control intensified in the 18th century when the population began to be viewed as productive and developed into something to be regulated. As competition in agriculture and industry increased, so did the demand for labour, shaping state population policies and growing pressure on the population (Foucault, 2016: 63). This process also changed the status of motherhood: Motherhood was a holy concept, births and miscarriages were substantially controlled with specific prohibitions imposed (Erkmen, 2021: 72). Consequently, women's sexuality transcended the private sphere and started to be regulated by the public sphere. The onset of the medicalization process meant increased control over the female body. Advances in medical technology have rendered a woman's womb a part of the public domain (Ceylan, 2021: 50). Then, the population's needs suggest that the female body and motherhood have frequently been glorified. However, having many children has been stigmatised. Ultimately, power has reconstructed knowledge associated

with motherhood through regulatory and controlling policies driven by market conditions.

The Industrial Revolution caused the most profound changes in the position and meaning of motherhood. With the Industrial Revolution, substantial changes occurred in social life's economic, social, cultural, and legal aspects. The industrialization process accelerated urbanization and elevated birth rates. This situation boosted women's domestic responsibilities. Yet, women in Western societies became more visible in the public sphere in the first half of the 19th century. Women worked in jobs associated with household tasks during this era. Moreover, they received education in areas that were extensions of domestic labour and published magazines and articles on these topics (Porter, 2010: 504).

The 1900s were a period in which the discourse of power constantly shaped the position and meaning of motherhood. The status of motherhood was occasionally exalted. However, its significance diminished at other times, depending on wars, famines, and economic crises. This situation changed based on the population policies of the ruling powers and the rising labour needs when the male population decreased. Illustratively, women had to work more in the public sphere, particularly in the workforce, between the two world wars than they did before. During and after World War I, in many countries, women participated more actively in working life because of a labour gap created by men going to the frontlines. As the world had survived two world wars, women were tasked with increasing the population and filling the roles in public life left by the diminished male population. Nevertheless, after men returned from the front and reclaimed their places in the public sphere, women were again pushed back into the private sphere (Bahçe, 2008: 81).

This situation was readily reflected in the intellectual sphere. After World War II, motherhood was viewed as an instinctual phenomenon. However, in the 1960s, this idea was questioned within the context of pivotal studies, and by the 1980s, it became popular again (Badinter, 2020: 51-52). With the return of men from the front, motherhood became a full-time job in the post-war period. During this time, what was accentuated was the impact of breastfeeding on the health of the baby, making a new image of the 'ideal mother' emerge. This new model suggested mothers who did not breastfeed or who worked were criticised and made to feel guilty (Porter, 2010: 505-506).

The power of the modern era has attained great success in imposing its knowledge on individuals and modifying their thoughts and behaviours without using oppressive or disciplinary tools. The guilt women feel when not conforming to the ideal mother model or not being mothers at all illustrates this power. For instance, a woman is not expected to explain why she has children, but a woman without children must justify her decision not to have children (Badinter, 2020).

The capitalist system has regulated women's fertility and child-rearing services to secure the continuity of the working class and property ownership (Bahçe, 2008: 75-77), viewing it as the system's backbone. The perspective of the capitalist system suggests that even though a woman's motherhood is a negative factor because it hinders her participation in the labour market, it is required to produce new labour. Simultaneously, women constitute the most critical reserve labour force. Badinter (2020: 34) poses that women are the first group to be eliminated from the workforce during economic crises. Moreover, during this process, they are forced to return to their former roles, namely motherhood, losing their temporarily gained social and financial status.

The elevated racism after the Great Depression[1] is a vivid example that reveals the relationship between the position of motherhood and power after the Great Depression. Nationalist policies surged globally, with racist policies gaining strength, particularly in Germany, resulting in the emergence of the Nazi regime in that period. The Nazi regime stigmatised Jews as the 'other' and assigned German women the national duty of bearing and upbringing a 'pure race'. Thus, this circumstance proves that those in power have consistently reconstructed women's motherhood to implement their policies throughout history. Adrienne Rich's (2000) thesis confirms this fact by addressing that motherhood is not only a biological process but also a social, cultural, and political process modified by the pressures of power.

The 1920s were a period where the efforts of women who, through first-wave feminism, markedly fought for legal rights and began to assert

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[1] The Great Depression, or the 1929 crisis, was an economic downturn marked by the sudden drop in stock prices in the United States between 1925 and 1929, spreading to the international economy. Precisely, on October 24, 1929, the sharp decline in stock values almost ceased international trade. The Great Depression was the first significant blow to capitalism. This situation had different consequences for each country, with its notable effect on the rise of the Nazi regime in Germany (Vial, 1993: 248).

themselves in the public sphere. Then, by the 1960s, this struggle had transformed into a fight to exist in the public domain and challenge the gender roles the male-dominated world defined. The pivotal part of this struggle included emphasising that a woman is not just a mother and that motherhood is not a necessity but a choice. Simone de Beauvoir was one of the first figures to oppose the dominant ideology that promoted motherhood and the idea that motherhood made women superior. Beauvoir (2016), in her work '*The Second Sex*' posed that women were coerced into motherhood by society due to their biological capacity to bear children. Beauvoir was not against motherhood. Yet, she contended that this societal imposition restricted women's potential and freedom in other walks of life.

Adrienne Rich (2000), Ann Oakley (2018), Kate Millett (2000), and Elizabeth Bortolaia Silva (2003) were some of the pioneer researchers who revealed the motherhood models of the period. Studies on motherhood increased from the 1980s onwards, and the arguments of second-wave feminists subsided. The view that bearing and raising children could empower women strengthened as long as no patriarchal intervention existed (Porter, 2010: 506). However, women who sought to exist alongside men in both public and private spheres were prone to double exploitation in the modern era.

In summary, societal structures and those in power have historically shaped and redefined motherhood as a crucial control mechanism. Women's fertility and maternal roles have been alternately exalted or suppressed based on social and economic needs. Power structures have sought to determine women's societal positions through motherhood, spanning the time frame from the Industrial Revolution to the modern era. In due course, motherhood has been employed both as a tool to limit women's potential and as a component serving the capitalist system. Feminist movements and thinkers have rejected this view by suggesting that motherhood is not an obligatory role and that women should not be defined solely by their motherhood capacity. Nowadays, motherhood is viewed to have a dual nature, functioning as a source of power and a control mechanism. Hence, how women experience motherhood and how they respond to gender roles remains a troubled field where the balance between individual freedoms and societal expectations is sought.

Post-modern Society and Motherhood

In hunter-gatherer and agricultural societies, whereas a gender-based division of labour existed, the role of motherhood was not unique or

singular for women. However, even though women entered the public sphere in modern society, their primary role was still motherhood. Nonetheless, in post-modern society, women, entirely equal to men, are neither solely mothers nor individuals. As women's responsibilities in the private sphere have increased in the post-modern world, their presence in the public sphere has become more contentious thanks to the rise of flexible working hours and online jobs.

Badinter (2020: 9) suggests that a revolution occurred in the perception of motherhood between 1980 and 2010, bringing it back to the centre of women's destiny. Notably, these years coincide with the rise of neoliberal economics. During this period, the state began to shrink economically and ceded its place to capital. State support can boost women's participation in the public sphere. To that end, states can support women's place in the labour market by offering free daycare, instituting gender quotas in the workforce, and providing tax breaks or social security support.

Regarding the modern era, women striving to exist alongside men in both public and private spheres have confronted double exploitation. Rather than offering social support and rights favouring women, the state has adopted the neoliberal economic model. Consequently, the responsibilities that should be borne by capital or the state are relayed to women through the lens of motherhood. By establishing a novel model of motherhood, power shifts societal responsibilities directly onto women/mothers. In addition to burdening individuals with personal obligations, capitalism conceals its inadequacies in areas including education, health, and security by placing all child-related responsibilities on women. As subjects, women often internalise this imposed narrative of motherhood, prioritising it over their own thoughts and identities.

Both mothers and fathers responsibilities towards their children are considered obligations. Even though the awareness suggests that having children is a choice in today's world, these duties are regarded not as a privilege but as a necessity (Badinter, 2020: 119).

Neoliberal policies have made upward social mobility almost impossible, with distinct effects on motherhood across different segments of the female workforce. To that end, with privatization and the state's shrinking, areas like education and healthcare, from which the state has withdrawn, have become part of the definition of motherhood for skilled middle-class women. Meanwhile, the motherhood of unskilled women has been reshaped as raising a new, unskilled labour force (Bahçe, 2008: 81). As the

state retreats from specific sectors, these responsibilities have been integrated into the scope of motherhood.

Badinter (2020: 119) notes that the current model of motherhood is more demanding than ever before in this context. Modern motherhood goes beyond the children's physical care and encompasses the responsibility for their psychological, social, and intellectual development.

In traditional motherhood, having children work in the fields, fight, die, and ensure the lineage continuation was adequate. However, contemporary motherhood has produced a new typology of motherhood. I believe the term 'wise slave' could describe this typology. Motherhood is an ever-inadequate task in this model because the work of one mother is always overshadowed by another mother bettering it. Women feel guilty whether they work, cannot find or prepare organic food, or whether they pursue an academic career or do not receive education. The modern mother is a perpetually insufficient and frequently expected-to-do-more enslaved person for her child. She is wise because she must continually read, listen, watch, and work to learn how to do better. However, no matter what she does, she is still labelled as an inadequate mother.

The responsibilities and nature of motherhood in the post-modern world are extensive. Mothers are expected to raise qualified children (a qualified workforce) and bear the costs of all areas from which the state has withdrawn. A recent study by Sadıkoğlu (2023) reports that modern motherhood has become an *'intense motherhood'* because the mother closely monitors and assumes responsibility for every child's developmental stage. Moreover, a new ideal mother type has been specifically constructed among middle-class mothers, with social media pivotal in establishing it.

The rise of single mothers and the emergence of various forms of motherhood, including surrogacy, enabled by advancing technology, has been a pivotal shift in the culture of motherhood. Thus, motherhood has become visible in forms existing outside the traditional framework of male dominance and the continuity of property by assuming roles solely managed by women. For example, surrogacy[2] involves women transferring their biological capabilities to another woman, enabling one woman's womb to be 'rented' as a space. Even though women have gained control over their

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[2] Surrogacy occurs when a third party is hired and compensated to carry and give birth to a child who will typically be raised by someone else (Roth-Johnson, 2010: 353).

bodies through birth control, surrogacy raises entirely new debates about the future of motherhood.

We see a broad spectrum of motherhood forms in a post-modern society, where dominant power structures primarily shape motherhood. These forms range from women devoting themselves to their children, to women who can rent out their wombs, to those describing their entire identity through their child, to single mothers, and to women who are coerced to work in flexible and precarious jobs owing to their motherhood. Ultimately, all these seemingly varied transformations tend to develop in ways favouring capital and work against the interests of women.

To sum up, the concept of motherhood has been shaped within different social structures throughout history. Moreover, it has substantially undergone modifications in post-modern society. Neoliberal policies have impacted motherhood, shifting it from merely a personal responsibility to a factor in increasing women's obligations in both public and private spheres. The state's withdrawal from public services has rendered motherhood even more demanding. Contrarily, new tools like social media have created idealised and normative narratives of motherhood. To that end, motherhood has intensified societal pressures on women, pushing their identities to the background.

In addition, new forms of motherhood, including surrogacy, have led women to employ their bodies and biological capabilities in various ways, causing new debates about the future of motherhood. Consequently, instead of empowering women individually and socially, modern motherhood models have imposed new burdens in ways favouring capital and power. In this context, reassessing the concept of motherhood and addressing it from a gender equality perspective is pivotal to ensuring that women are empowered in both public and private spheres.

Conclusion

Historically, societies' social, economic, and political frameworks have shaped the concept of motherhood, giving it different meanings across various periods. In hunter-gatherer societies, motherhood was regarded as just one of women's roles. However, with the shift to agricultural societies, women's social roles centred mainly around motherhood. Advances in production methods and the emergence of property ownership resulted in greater control over women's bodies, making motherhood a biological and

social obligation. This change substantially impacted women's social standing and identity.

The meaning and status of motherhood were redefined in The Industrial Revolution and the modern era. This redefinition implied that gender roles and women's struggle for presence in the public sphere were questioned. Motherhood was then viewed as a limiting factor on women's social potential and a role that was elevated and controlled based on population policies and economic needs.

However, motherhood has become more complex and multifaceted in the post-modern era, with women asserting their presence in the public sphere and confronting the demands of their role as mothers in the private sphere. Neoliberal policies and flexible working conditions have substantially influenced how women experience motherhood and interact with societal roles. Therefore, motherhood has become both a source of empowerment and a tool of oppression in women's struggle for freedom.

In conclusion, motherhood has been an identity that social structures, power relations, and economic processes are constantly employed to redefine. Additionally, women's experiences of motherhood and the societal perceptions of these experiences have been central to the struggle for gender equality, and the same trend is valid today. This situation depicts motherhood as a social, cultural, and political dimension beyond a biological process.

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THE CONSTRUCTION OF MOTHERHOOD FROM THE OTTOMAN EMPIRE TO THE REPUBLIC IN *İKDAM* NEWSPAPER

HATICE AYBAY

Newspapers are pivotal in understanding society, its changes, and trends. In the 19th and early 20th centuries, newspapers were instrumental in shaping and influencing the masses, guiding them, and forming public opinion as mirrors of society. Modernisation and reform were attained in Ottoman society mainly through newspapers (Tanpınar, 1997: 249). To that end, Tanpınar expresses the role of newspapers in modernisation as follows:

> '*Newspapers have never been pivotal like ours anywhere else. Elsewhere, they are one of the fields of action chosen by thought for spreading more widely into society. Behind them lies a thought world that is always in contact with life, with all societal institutions and an ongoing relationship. In our case, all signs come from there. Crowds gather around it. It spreads literacy. It ignites the heart that schools prepare for a distant future*' (Tanpınar, 1997: 250).

As Ali Budak puts it, newspapers, known as 'the gift of the French Revolution to the Ottoman Empire' (Budak, 2014: 175-177), established close relations with the West, thus serving as a window to the West for society. In other words, they opened the doors of Western civilisation to Turkish readers. They undertook a sort of cultural inoculation (Aybay, 2022: 4). From the Ottoman Empire to the Republic of Turkey, issues related to women and motherhood were also addressed in newspapers, and the construction of the modern woman and modern motherhood was initially attempted through newspapers. Based on this idea, in our study, we address the perception of motherhood in society and its reflection in the newspaper through the instrumentalisation of the *İkdam* newspaper using the method of textual analysis.

İkdam, beginning its publication in the reign of Abdul Hamid II, is one of the most critical newspapers in Turkish press history. The years of its

publication, from 1894 to 1928, were when crucial events occurred in Turkish history. Within these years, which extended from the reign of Abdul Hamid II to the Constitutional Era, the Armistice years, and the Republic, substantial changes that shook society to its core occurred, transitioning from a multi-ethnic empire to a nation-state and then to a Republican regime. During the years when the Committee of Union and Progress held power, the Balkan Wars, World War I, the Armistice years, and the initial years of implementing the Republic and its reforms, *İkdam* newspaper managed to continue its publication. It became an influential media outlet reflecting political and social developments in society throughout this period.[1]

In 19th-century Ottoman society and later, in the newly established Republic of Turkey, women's rights, their contribution to the economy and society, education, and their roles within the family were among the most pondered issues. Ottoman-Turkish intellectuals considered the position of women in societal life to be a significant criterion for development and modernisation. These issues, shaped under the shadow of Western developments and resonating within society, remained on the agenda of *İkdam* as well. Pre-Republic era newspaper articles accentuated women's education, underlining the value and rights accorded to women by Islam compared to their Western counterparts. Discussions were held regarding the reasons for and the 'tragic' consequences of the active role of women in the workforce in Western societies, attempting to portray that the liberties granted to women in the West actually harmed family life and resulted in substantial unhappiness among them (Safvet Nezihi, 1900: 3; Safvet Nezihi, 1901: 3-4)[2]. The perception of women in Eastern societies, living a life 'imprisoned behind the veil', widespread in the Western world, was criticised as being far from reality. Responses were also provided to criticisms directed at

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[1] Ahmet Cevdet was dedicated to his profession, and his dedication to building a new civilisation was also pivotal. When Ahmet Cevdet decided to publish *İkdam*, he was already a well-educated, cultured, and experienced journalist proficient in many foreign languages (Ülkütaşır, 1961). His statement addressed to Hüseyin Rahmi, 'Mon Cher, I will change everything. I will not allow weary-minded old writers into my printing press', which is critical in indicating the mindset with which he founded *İkdam* (Gürpınar, 1924). Being an enlightened newspaper aiming to enlighten society, the movements and construction of women in society would also have a crucial place in Ahmet Cevdet's newspaper.

[2] The Surname Law had yet to come into effect when the newspaper was in publication. Some newspaper writers passed away before adopting surnames, so we used their signatures from the newspaper when providing attribution. We chose to use their surnames in the attribution for writers who did adopt surnames.

Islam in this context (Topuz, 1895: 3)[3]. Numerous articles in *İkdam* also asserted that in Eastern civilisations, including Anatolia, and even among pre-Islamic ancient Turks, women held a more respectable position and had equal rights with men compared to their Western counterparts (Unsigned, 1918: 2; Enver, 1918: 2).

Examining the articles in *İkdam*, one can say that the newspaper closely followed the women's movements in Europe, providing enlightening information to its readers about these movements and offering guiding assessments on how Turkish women should perceive them. Articles providing information about the nature of feminism and the reasons behind it found space in the newspaper pages. Even though some articles in the newspaper defended feminism, others argued that this movement was unsuitable for Turkish women. Likewise, some articles criticised women acquiring professions outside the home and participating in politics (Necmettin Sadık, 1913: 3), others argued that due to changing times and working conditions, women were becoming more active in society and could do any job that men did. Nonetheless, it was still too early for women to play an active role in politics in Turkish society (Oran, 1913: 1; Oran, 1920: 2).

The newspaper has heavily addressed women's education. To that end, some writers opined on the issue of women receiving the same education as men. However, others did not find it appropriate. A letter sent to the newspaper from Thessaloniki by a reader under the pseudonym İsmet is a classic example of this subject. 'Ya Biz Ne Olacağız' was the article where İsmet passionately expressed her desire for women to have equal rights with men in education and livelihood, believing that 'Women are the soul and essence of society'. She asserts that the mentality of men, considering themselves insensitive and devoid of thought, must now become a thing of the past. Underneath the article, the *İkdam* administration has added the following note: 'It is a principle of civilisation that progress cannot be restricted to men alone in a country. (...) Indeed, it is mothers and fathers like these ensuring our future and raising the offspring of the homeland' (İsmet, 1908: 1).

From the 1920s onwards, particularly after the Republic's establishment, writings were penned regarding the nature of women in the context of constructing a new state, seeking answers to how women should be. In some writings, the Ottoman woman was described as a 'poor' individual

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[3] Fatma Aliye later adopted the surname Topuz.

lacking power and playing no role in social life other than being a wife and mother. Conversely, attempts were made to create a new typology of a modern, self-sufficient Republic woman (Karaosmanoğlu, 1921: 2). Nevertheless, even the 'new/modern' woman was not exempt from criticism in some respects. For instance, in Yakup Kadri's writings, two distinct types of women emerge the Istanbul woman, susceptible to moral degradation, confined to her home, exhibiting a passive character, while the Anatolian woman is portrayed as equally active in the struggle of life alongside her husband and as an effective actor in attaining the National Struggle. Thus, in these writings, the Anatolian woman is idealised as the true Turkish woman. Contrarily, the Istanbul woman is highlighted as a symbol of the old Ottoman era. In the newspaper's issues after 1925, popular articles providing information to women about Western women, fashion, and art movements became visible, lacking any intellectual depth.

The only element that stands out and remains unchanged in all these writings concerning women is the aspect of motherhood. Almost all writings about women emphasise the importance of motherhood in the progress of society; being a good mother and a good wife are presented as the only way for a woman to fulfil herself, or in other words, as her reason for existence. All issues related to women are evaluated because she is also a mother. Women's education is valued and deemed necessary because of their role as mothers and their crucial role in shaping future generations. Indeed, the nature of the education a woman should receive depends on the qualities she must possess as a mother.

Based on an article published in 1894, the characteristics a woman should possess include 'chastity, integrity, obedience, contentment'. On top of that, the article lists the following attributes: 'steadfastness within natural compassion, organisation in her activities, wisdom in her thoughts, simplicity'. These qualities are typical of a woman who educates children, which a mother should possess. Thus, it is worth mentioning an interesting suggestion made by the article's author, proposing that every girl should learn the household chores in her family's home, even wealthy families. Fathers should intervene because mothers cannot perform this duty due to their overwhelming compassion. The author bases this idea on a letter written by Francisque Sarcey, a French judge, and even includes a translation of a section of the letter in the article (Unsigned, 'Terbiye-i Nisvan', 1894: 1).

Another article suggests that women should undergo an Islamic education; their 'education' is limited to necessary sciences and areas that may be

beneficial for a mother. Accordingly, a woman does not have to learn sciences like algebra and mechanics; it is sufficient for her to receive education in religious sciences, literature, household chores, and handicrafts. Indeed, the primary duties of women are household management, assisting the husband, and educating children (Unsigned, 'Terbiye-i Usûl', 1894: 1). These recommendations remind us of Rousseau's 'Emile'. Indeed, in this book, one of the first translations into Turkish, Rousseau argued that 'women should learn many things, but they should only learn what is appropriate for them to know', and he limited women's duties to 'pleasing men, being useful to them, making themselves loved by them, gaining their respect, raising them when they are young, taking care of them when they are grown, advising them, consoling them, making life pleasant and sweet for them' (Rousseau, 2021: 522-523). Similar views are expressed in an article published under the name of Remziye Hanım. This article, which we consider more noteworthy because a woman writes it, emphasises that women should be knowledgeable in religious and moral sciences to become 'scholars'. They should know enough about art, commerce, and economics to educate their children. The primary duty of women is to take care of their husbands, comfort them, and encourage them to ensure the management of the household. Another noteworthy suggestion is that women should continue their education until marriage but stop after marriage. Remziye Hanım describes continuing education in today's universities, which are equivalent to the darülfünuns, after marriage as an "unacceptable" practice and does not approve of married women neglecting their families to engage in activities "unsuitable for women's desires and pleasures" (Remziye Hanım, 1897: 3). It is noteworthy that these views, which are frequently repeated in other articles in the newspaper, are expressed concerning Western, especially French, educators (Unsigned, 'Kadınlarımız', 1895: 3; Unsigned, 1917: 1). Even though it is understandable for Western educators' views to be the basis for the Westernising Ottoman society, it is fascinating that almost no Islamic references are provided. This situation could be interpreted as evidence of a secularised life perspective from the Tanzimat to the Republic, influencing perceptions associated with motherhood.

One of the notable articles in the newspaper belongs to Safvet Nezihî's writings. He discusses a conference by Jules Bove[4], whom he identifies as a French feminist. In this conference, it is argued that the freedom granted

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[4] In Ottoman Turkish texts, Western names are typically written as they are pronounced, rendering it challenging to determine the original spelling of the name based on its pronunciation.

to women leaves them unprotected, and men in European societies are destroying the modesty and sanctity required by motherhood. Hence, mothers responsible for raising strong and distinguished generations lack the virtues of compassion and modesty, and consequently, they cannot raise children who possess these qualities. In Eastern societies, men protect women, allowing them to fulfil their maternal duties adequately and preserve their offspring. After congratulating the French thinker for these views, Safvet Nezihî accentuates the rights granted to women by Islam. Nevertheless, Safvet Nezihî also opposes the view of a German philosopher who regards women merely as 'child-making machines' and poses that their most important duty is to establish a family (Safvet Nezihî, 1900: 3; Safvet Nezihî, 1901b: 3-4). Safvet Nezihî also assesses Western societies' views on motherhood through examples from France and Germany. He reports that motherhood is undesirable in the West due to the freedom in social life. Children are regarded as burdens and obstacles to personal pleasures, and motherhood is not desired because it would disrupt the working lives of low-income groups and incur additional expenses. Safvet Nezihî emphasises that Turkish families should not aspire to this strangeness seen in the West (Safvet Nezihî, 1901a: 3).

After 1908, we encounter articles in *İkdam* alleging that women neglect their maternal duties. Following Fatma Aliye's complaint in a 1908 article stating, 'Most mothers nowadays do not care for their children like before. They do not think about their husbands' losses', a similar complaint was voiced by Ali Kemal (Topuz, 1908: 1, Ali Kemal 1909: 1). The lack of education among women is cited as the reason for this, and the insufficiency of schools to educate women, as well as the content of the lessons to be taught in schools, have been accentuated (Balaban, 1920: 3)[5]. It has even been proposed to offer different curricula for girls who plan to become mothers and those who do not (Necmettin Sadık, 1913: 3). An interesting suggestion also concerns institutions that are akin to modern-day nurseries or preschools. Establishing institutions that would rescue children from absolute ignorance, lack of education, and the embrace of nature and coincidences in the street up to the age of seven aligns with the changes women undergo in social life and the sacrifices of working mothers sacrificing their upbringing, health, and 'most sacred duties' of their children to their simplest pleasures and 'frivolous enjoyments' was suggested. The author termed 'children's gardens' for such institutions established in the West (N. Tayyibi, 1913:1).

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[5] Mustafa Rahmi, who began his career as Switzerland correspondent for *Ikdam*, later adopted the surname Balaban.

Yakup Kadri poses that women neglect their maternal duties because the innovations of the modern age bring them about:

> '*To the best of my memory, regarding this field of discussion - namely, motherhood, wifehood, and womanhood - no distinction is made between Turkish and European women. Thus, these three sentiments in womanhood are relatively renewed and hesitant than in the past. I am affirmative that these concepts are renewed and hesitant. This circumstance traces back to the day women were afflicted with certain vague nervous disorders and certain poetic sensations of anaemia. Then, they have been giving birth less and not breastfeeding their offspring. However, the progress of medicine and the intensity of accumulated life have started shaking the last remnants of their natural maternal instincts at their core. 'Sterilised' milk, 'bottles', 'incubators', and many other conveniences invented by science gradually separate the child from the mother's care. The child undoubtedly grows up with comparatively less trouble for the mother, and this growth with less trouble and the emergence of life in the hands of scientific means - an elementary psychological event - is undoubtedly one of the cases that substantially weakens maternal affection* (Karaosmanoğlu, 1921:2)'.

Suat Derviş is one of the pioneers of the women's movement of the time and also complains about a similar regression in one of her serial articles in the newspaper. She poses that women obliged to provide love to their homes, render their husbands happy, and infuse poetry and refinement into life's material and ugly aspects with their delicacy, feelings, sacrifice, devotion, and warm-up life are failing in these duties. She expresses the following interesting observation:

> '*A woman must find her own man to build a good family. A woman who can find her man can establish a family. Nevertheless, our women do not have their men, just like our men do not have their own women. Perhaps, who knows, is it right to desire happiness (.....) without finding our soulmate (...), recognising our everyday needs, feeling with a single soul, and thinking with a single mind (.....)? (Derviş, 1922a:2)'*

Identifying herself and the women of her society as 'We are the women of a fairy-tale, sunny Orient, whose history, climate, life, and sentiment are love, prosperity, happiness, and beauty'. Our beauty, influence, charm, and magnificence lie in this." (Derviş, 1922b: 3) Derviş claims that Turkish mothers are primarily obligated to instil a clean religion in their children. She adds that a woman's most crucial duty is motherhood, and she should not aspire to difficult and strenuous professions like being a doctor. She even poses that before becoming an artist, a woman should create an artist, inspire poetry rather than become a poet, and save for working, make her