MASTER THESIS

Course code: SO345S	Name / Candidate no.:
	Mustafa Senyuva / 8

Islamization in Turkey under AKP as perceived by employed mothers: A qualitative study

Date: 15.05.2019

Total number of pages: 46

NORD University

www.nord.no

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the honorable women who have not stopped fighting against the dark for a bright future. Moreover, I remember with respect Polen Ünlü, who died in the fight against darkness.

'’Kahrolsun istibdat, yaşasın hürriyet!’’

Abstract

This study explores the experiences of employed women in Turkey under the process of Islamization. During the rule of the Justice and Development Party (AKP), religious issues became increasingly important for public policies in this country while Islam and its values are having more effect on the everyday life of Turkish citizens.

Since women in Turkey got equal legal rights as men in the process of democratization and secularization of society under Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, this study had an aim to explore what are the effects of Islamic revivalism on women's status in this country, with particular focus on employed mothers and ways in which they perceive contemporary social changes in Turkish society.

In order to fulfill the aim of this research, we conducted a phenomenological study with five employed mothers who are at the moment living in Istanbul. Semi-structured interviews were used in order to obtain insights on their perception of the phenomena. Data analysis revealed three essential themes: politicization and polarization of Turkish society through religion, meritocracy being replaced by religious ideology and nepotism, and increasing pressure on women.

Keywords: Islamization, Secularization, Working mothers, AKP

Table of Contents

1.0 Introduction

Modern Turkey was to a great extent built on the revolutionary ideas of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk. He was the leader of the Turkish revolution (1918-1927) and self-proclaimed father of the Turkish nation. Ataturk and people who surrounded him modernized what was left from the Ottoman Empire, formed the Turkish republic, and created grounds for the democratization of society by secularizing the state and adopting Western patterns of societal organization. In this process, women in Turkey gained many rights and formally became equal to males in all aspects of social and public life, at least on paper.

For many years, Turkey was the bastion of secularity in the Muslim world, but since the 1990s and especially after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) came to rule (2002); Islam and ideals of life it proclaims once again became a topic of public discussion in this country. Although the state is still formally based on secular principles, there are indications of Islamist revivalism that can have profound effects on socio-political climate and consequentially affect the daily life of Turkish people (Saktanber, 2018; Tuğal, 2009).

Islamization of society that is taking place in Turkey is a complicated phenomenon that needs to be understood from many different aspects. This paper will primarily focus on women's perspective on this process. More specifically, it will be studied how working mothers perceive the process of Islamization, and how it affects their daily life.

Although the Kemalist heritage empowered women in Turkey, they are still coping with many challenges. In contemporary Turkey, there is a huge gap in education and employment rates between men and women, the domestic violence is rising, and Turkey ranks 130th in gender gap index out of 149 countries (Cindoglu, 2003; World Economic Forum, 2018). This shows that, even though women have all legal rights as men, there are certain factors that disrupt their chances for a better socio-economic position.

In this context, I am interested to learn how working women perceive the Islamization of society in the last twenty years. As political Islam often implies that women have to acquire traditional roles and to occupy the private sphere of life (Saktanber, 2018), I start with the presumption that working mothers might be particularly affected by Islamic revivalism.

The primary research questions I wanted to answer by conducting this study are: What are the difficulties employed mothers are facing in contemporary Turkey? How do they perceive the effects of the Islamization process? How is the Islamization of society affecting their daily life? Finally, it would be wrong to start our research by assuming the proposition that women are passive observant of social change, so it is also part of our research to explore the ways in which they cope with this process.

With a phenomenological perspective, this thesis explores the experiences of five employed mothers under the contemporary socio-political climate of Islamic revivalism in Turkey. In the next chapter, I will provide a literature review and historical background: in Chapter 3, I will explain methodology and reasons for choosing particular methods: in Chapter 4, I will provide results of the research, and finally, in Chapter 5 I will discuss the findings.

2.0 (Re)Islamization – A Historical Perspective

This chapter provides a historical background on the religion's (Islam) role in Turkish politics and society. In order to understand the raised research questions, it is needed to address how religion affected women in Turkish society from the beginning of the XX century until today. The first sub-chapter will deal with the process of Turkish modernization under Kemal Ataturk and its effects on women rights. Further, the historical background of Islamic revivalism in Turkey will be provided. Finally, the recent political changes in Turkish society under the Judgement and Development Party (AKP) will be explained.

2.1 Turkish modernization and assertive secularism

The modern Turkish Republic is the successor of one of the most powerful empires in the history of the world. The Ottoman Empire was a multi-ethnic territory that stood between the East and West for many centuries, both geographically and culturally. Until the 19th century, it had territories in Europe, Asia, and Africa, and it was one of the major global powers in the world. Islam was the official religion of the country and religion generally had an effect on all aspects of a person's life (Yetisgin, 2007).

Although it was a powerful country that stood strong for more than six hundred years, at the end of the XIX century the Ottoman Empire started to experience crises. At this time, the Industrial Revolution was spreading around Europe and national movements were reshaping

Western societies. This all made the Empire outdated, weak, and uncompetitive. From the mid-19th century, the term "sick man of Europe" was used to describe socio-economic turbulences the country was experiencing during that time (Cirakman, 2002).

Because of all of these before mentioned social and geopolitical circumstances, the Ottoman Empire needed to go through radical changes in order to persist in the Modern world. In the XIX century, there was a big debate about the ways to modernize the country and to make it competitive to Western industrialized societies. There were many different important persons and intellectuals such as Milasli Ismail Hakki and Munif Pasha, who proposed reforms in the Ottoman Empire in order to make the country more similar to the Western world (Ünsal, 1979).

Mustafa Akyol (2007) states the Ottoman Empire "began its modernization at least a century before the Turkish Republic, and had achieved a lot on that route" (pp. 79). One of the biggest steps towards the modernization of the Empire was The Tanzimat Edict (1839) which "declared equal citizenship rights regardless of religion, ethnic identity and gender" (Durakbaşa & Karapehlivan, 2018: 72). Also, in 1876, the Ottoman Empire accepted a new constitution which had many modernizing parts although it was still based on traditional Islamic law (Akyol, 2007).

At the end of the 19th century, among other topics that came along with a discussion about modernity, women rights also came into the public debate. Ayşe Durakbaşa and Funda Karapehlivan (2018) mention there were 13 different women's journals during the period 1868-1900. At the beginning of the 20th century, feminist societies were flourishing in the Ottoman Empire and representations of woman in Islam have been reconsidered: "advocates of the woman question analysed the flaws in women's status in Ottoman society and called for a more egalitarian family life, the ban of polygamy, equal rights in divorce, most important of all, access to education for girls" (Çakır, 1990; Kurnaz, 1991; Durakbaşa & Karapehlivan, 2018: 72). In 1910, this all made Ottoman feminist Fatma Nesibe to say that the Empire "was in the eve of a feminine revolution" (Akyol, 2007: 79).

Although there were many persons who had ideas for modernizing the Ottoman Empire, as Artun Unsal (1979) observes, only Atatürk "had the genius of realizing them, in contrast to others, who had only made statements in the best intellectual tradition" (pp. 29).

Kemal Ataturk was a soldier and the leader of the Turkish revolution (1919-1923). After the First World War, the Ottoman Empire was defeated and occupied by different countries. Ataturk succeeded to liberate the country (at least some part of it) and started to impose radical reforms which had an aim to modernize the country and to make it resemble Western democracies.

Ataturk's primary mission was to transform a multi-ethnic empire into a secular nation-state and, it can be said that he successfully fulfilled his aims already in the first decade of his reign. Mustafa Kemal abolished the Sultanate in November 1922 and proclaimed the Turkish Republic in October 1923. Finally, the Caliphate was abolished in March 1924, and at the same time, the Ministry of Sheriat was replaced by the Directorate of Religious Affairs (Ünsal, 1979). The major obstacle for modernizing the country was, according to Ataturk, Islamic heritage which he saw as the main thing that moves the Turkish society backward and disallows change and progress. Because of this, Ataturk imposed assertive secularization of society.

Before I continue, it would be useful to explain what does the term *secularization* means. Also, it would be useful to explain the difference between assertive and passive secularism.

A political scientist, Turk Ahmet Kuru, makes a difference between a religious state (Vatican, Iran), state with an established religion (Greece, Denmark, England), secular state (Turkey, USA, France), and antireligious state (China, North Korea, Cuba) (Kuru, 2007: 570). Although he thinks there are differences between secular states such as Turkey, USA, and France, he argues that all three are defined as secular by two main criteria (Kuru, 2007: 569):

(1) their legal and judicial processes are out of institutional religious control, and

(2) they establish neither an official religion nor atheism.

Further, Kuru makes a difference between assertive and passive secularism. While he puts the USA in the category of passive secularism, he categorizes Turkey and France as countries with assertive secularism. The main difference between these two types is that the first one allows religion to be seen in the public sphere, while the other strictly confines religion to the private sphere.

In order to create a Turkish national identity, Mustafa Kemal believed it was necessary to exclude religion from public life. Although he was aware that it would not be possible to forget the Ottoman and Islamic tradition while creating a new, Turkish nation, "the place of religion in Turkish socio-political and economic life was minimized substantially" (Köni, Rosli & Zin, 2015: 340). Because of this, during the Kemalist period practicing religion was strictly confined to the private sphere of life, and any kind of attempt to merge religion with public affairs was strictly banned.

Ataturk's attempt to transform Turkey into a modern, Western, secular state was a "revolution from above". As Rabasa and Larrabee (2008) state, "it was a state-instituted, top-down enterprise in social engineering carried out by a small military-bureaucratic elite that imposed its secularist vision on a reluctant traditional society" (pp. 32).

In the first decades of the Turkish Republic, the minority of secular urban elite ruled over the majority of the religious rural population. With this being said, we can understand why most of the traditional society in Turkey left intact by the process of modernization. While people who lived in urban areas usually developed secular and modern lifestyles, those who lived in rural areas continued living according to tradition.

Despite successful attempts to keep religion out of the public sphere, the Turkish Republic in the Kemalist and Post-Kemalist period still consisted of millions of pious Muslims who mostly lived in rural areas of the country. As Altinkas (2014) writes: "The Kemalists aspiration to westernize Turkey, a Turkey where men and women had equal rights, wore modern dress, danced and dined in the Western way, and were versed in Western philosophy and art, had little meaning in the value structure of the countryside" (pp. 6). Although cities were growing and adapting to secular ways of life, the majority of the rural population continued living according to the tradition which had a source in Islam.

2.2 Kemalist heritage and female employment in Turkey

Overall, the Turkish Revolution implies "political, religious, legal and cultural transformations" (Ünsal, 1979: 34). In this process, a new Turkish nation was formed, based on the national identity instead of religion. During the reign of Mustafa Kemal, the Turkish republic became a successor of the Ottoman Empire and since then, until now – it is a modern and secular state.

The reforms that were initiated by Ataturk were very radical and comprehensive. In the following list, it is presented the chronology of the most profound reforms initiated by him and other important milestones in the modernization of the country:

Table 1.

The reforms during the early years of the Republic (Ünsal, 1979: 31-33)			
1922	Abolition of the Sultanate	1928	Article 2 of the Constitution of 1924 was annulled – Islam is no longer the official religion of the Turkish State
1923	Proclamation of the Turkish Republic	1928	Latin numbers and alphabet were adopted
1924	Abolition of the Caliphate	1930	Turkish women are allowed to vote in the municipal election as well as running as candidates.
1924	Ministry of Sheriat is replaced by the Directorate of Religious Affairs	1931	International measures of length and weight replaced traditional ones
1924	New Turkish Constitution was adopted	1934	Mustafa Kemal names himself Ataturk – The father of Turks.
1925	Western headgear was officially adopted	1934	Women are allowed to vote in national elections and eligible for election
1925	Religious orders and their premises were banned	1935	The first Turkish women deputies entered the GNA
1925	The western calendar was established	1937	The "Six Arrows": republicanism, nationalism, secularism, populism, statism, and reformism became part of the Constitution.
1926	A new civil code, inspired by the Swiss code was enacted along with a new penal code and code of civil obligations	1938	Ataturk dies at the age of 57

As we can see from the table above, during the first decade of the Turkish Republic, there were many reforms that had an aim to westernize the country. In this process, women gained many rights they lacked for centuries. First of all, polygamy was banned, women gained equal rights in divorce, and finally, they were allowed to vote and to be elected as state representatives (Wagner, 2016).

According to Meltem Müftüler-Bac (1991), the process of modernization in Turkey under Kemal Ataturk was perceived as a "process of Europeanization, the adoption of European norms, attitudes, and standards of living" (pp. 303). According to Müftüler-Bac (1991), "it is within this context of modernization and Europeanization that Turkish women were granted certain rights, atypical for an Islamic country" (pp. 303).

Overall, women played an important role in modernizing the Turkish republic. As Ulaş Sunata (2014) writes, Western-oriented Turkish men saw the emancipation of women as "the key of civilization". According to modern Turkish men, "women would be responsible for Turkish men's well-being and future's enlightened generations. In order to raise responsible citizens, women should recover from the past's traditions and superstitions and should be educated and enlightened" (Ulaş Sunata, 2014: 7). Sancar and Bulut (2006) pointed out that national gender equality policies haven't considered economic development and growth. They were only used as a part of a modernization and cultural transformation processes.

Generally, there are different views about the position of woman in Islam. While there are those who claim that Islam puts women as equal to men, there are also those who think women are oppressed by this religion. This topic is highly controversial and rather complicated. For practical reasons, I will not expound this in details. In general, as Müftüler-Bac (1991) argues "equal or not; what is certain in Islam is that women are separated from (i.e., excluded from public sphere) men's realm" (pp. 306). This is because Islam proposes strict, distinct and exclusive social roles for men and women. While the husband is obliged to provide food for the family, the wife has the obligation to care for the household and children (Schirrmacher, 2008).

In Islamic states that practice Shariah law, such as contemporary Iran or Saudi Arabia, women are even visually segregated from men's realm since they are obliged to be veiled whenever they are in public. This is among other things, because of the Islamic concept of *fitna*

– or in other words, woman's „ability to create chaos through her sexual attraction" (Müftüler-Bac, 1991: 306).

A veiled woman has been a topic of discussion for a long time, and it is not less important nowadays. In Kemalist Turkey, the veil was seen as a religious symbol that was not in line with secularism. The dress reforms of 1925 resulted in the unveiling of women, and they shortly became a symbol of ongoing changes in the modern Turkish republic.

During the first decades of the Kemalist Republic, women were allies of the regime in their own liberation. Still, as Akyol (2007) argues, "the early Turkish Republic crushed not only political opposition but also civil society" and in this process "the feminist societies dating from the Ottoman years were closed down" (pp. 80).

Although he had an aim to modernize the country, Kemal Ataturk was an authoritarian and state was not tolerant of any type of social movements that come from the civil society. Because of this, the system of patriarchate left intact and despite many rights Turkish women acquired on paper, even now "a vast majority of Turkish women lack the opportunities to enjoy their rights as granted by the Turkish legal system" (Müftüler-Bac 1991: 303**).**

According to Müftüler-Bac, Turkish women are still oppressed because of Mediterranean culture with its honor and shame codes, the Islamic tradition with its divine judgment on female behavior and the Kemalist ideology with its stereotype of an asexual, self-sacrificing Turkish woman (ibid).

By removing the influence of religion in the public sphere, women in Turkey were finally allowed to attain the same social roles as men, and what is the most important for their independence, they were finally allowed to pursue education and to earn money. Still, as Müftüler-Bac argues, "despite many improvements that the process of modernization and Kemalist reforms brought to women's rights in Turkey, the basics of male domination stayed intact" (ibid). There is a wide group of researchers who agree with Deniz Kandiyoti (1987) who said that the Kemalist revolution emancipated women, but it hasn't liberated them.

Ataturk made huge changes in the public sphere, but he left the family (private) sphere untouched so "Turkey continued employing the family and kin solidarity family model, which expects women to be the full-time care-providers for family members and men to be the full-time breadwinners of the family" (Ferrera 1996; Grutjen 2008; Kazanoglu, 2018: 5).

As White (2003) states "the ideal Republican woman was a 'citizen woman,' urban and urbane, socially progressive, but also uncomplaining and dutiful at home" (pp. 146). While she was emancipated and allowed to get an education or job, she was still expected to fulfill its duties for the nation by becoming a good mother and wife.

The Kemalist reforms that had an aim to improve women's socio-economic position were particularly effective in urban areas. In 1929, seventy-five percent of girls aged seven to eleven attended primary school in Istanbul, in contrast to only 26 percent of girls who attended the primary school nationwide (White, 2003). Also, between 1920 and 1938, ten percent of all university graduates were women, which was a big success even in comparison to developed European countries of that time. Women were becoming teachers, lawyers, soldiers, pilots, and getting all other job positions that were earlier usually reserved for males. However, female employment never reached the level of male employment, and since the 1950s, Turkey witnessed an unusual decline in female employment.

The female employment in Turkey was in decline since the 1950s, and it hasn't reversed until the beginning of the XXI century. This decline in female employment can be attributed to macroeconomic and socio-cultural factors. Since the 1950s, capitalist development resulted in reduced numbers of agricultural workers (White, 2003). Since women were mostly working in agriculture, they were the most affected social group.

Further, the decline of female employment can be explained by the expansion of neoliberal policies in the 1980s which weakened the public sector. In this period, women started working in the informal sector, unregistered, without social security, and for low wages. This trend continued and in 2014, 49% of women working in the informal sector were not registered with the state as employed, and 77% of women who work in the informal sector earn wages below the minimum wage (Das, 2017).

While this was the economic context for female unemployment, the socio-political context includes societal norms and institutions (White, 2003). As White observes, "private patriarchy of the household and public patriarchy propagated by the state put constraint on women and limit their aspirations" (pp. 116). The strong patriarchal family system still exists in Turkey and because of it; women are expected to take care of household and family instead of working for a wage.

"Turkey's modernization period has been characterized as family-centered society that was in some context contrary to women's human's rights and freedom. This was a kind of the designing a 'modern family', based on the women's role as wife and mother. Due to this legacy, participation of women in social and political life without respecting their family responsibilities has been perceived to be destructive for family life". (Cindoglu, 2003: 6)

Over the last 50 years, the labor force participation rates in Turkey have decreased both for men and women, but women were much more affected – "from 95.4 percent in 1955 to 69.1 percent in 2009 among men, likewise from 72.0 percent in 1955 to 23.5 percent in 2009 among women" (Özsoy & Altama. 2010: 810). In the 1980s, Turkey had levels of female labour force participation similar to other developed countries such as Austria and Switzerland, but although these countries experienced further increases in female participation, the opposite thing happened in Turkey (Celikoglu et al, 2009).

In 2005, Turkey had the lowest female employment rate among OECD countries, with a rate of almost half of the second lowest rate in OECD (Genc & Sengul: 2015). Female employment is on the rise since 2005, but the gap between male and female employment is still huge. Besides, males in Turkey get better jobs and earn twice as much than females (White, 2003).

The female socio-economic position in Turkey is also shown to be bad when looking at other indicators. For example, a study (United Nations, 2003) reports that 90% of Turkish women experienced physical and/or psychological violence at the hands of their husbands and boyfriends.

Moreover, women do not receive the same amount of education of men, although there are indications that it is the most significant factor that improves their chances to get employment. For example, an average female employee in Turkey is more educated than the average male employee but "not because female working age population is more educated than male working population but rather female employment is extremely low for low levels of educational attainment" (Cebeci, 2015: 10).

All these statistics are showing that women in Turkey lag behind men in all socio-economic indicators. Although they have legal possibilities to pursue education and carrier given by Kemalist reforms, the lack of economic opportunities and patriarchal system disrupts

their chances to improve their socio-economic position although they have earned their legal rights a long time ago.

2.3 Islamic Revivalism in Turkey

As I briefly touched upon earlier, the Kemalist elite succeeded to exclude Islam from public life in Turkey. However, religion was still present and nurtured in the private sphere of life. Especially in the countryside, families were still living in line with the Quran's teachings. According to Saktanber (2018), the author of the *Living Islam: Women, Religion and the Politicization of Culture in Turkey*, "it is in this same private sphere that the revitalization of Islam as a politicized cultural practice has proliferated in modern Turkish society while also expanding the meaning and the scope of the private sphere" (pp. 22).

In the Kemalist period, religion was only preserved as a part of a culture or, if we use Bourdieu's (1984) terminology – a part of people's *habitus*. However, in the past few decades, religious issues in Turkey are becoming more important for everyday life. Saktanber (2018) argues that "the overall effort which motivates Islamic activism in Turkey is to channel what can be described as the cultural into the core of politics, a process that can be called the politicization of culture" (pp. 19).

The rise of Islamism in Turkey might be observed since the 1950s. In this decade, the rural population of the country started to migrate towards cities. Only in the period between 1950 and 1955, around one million peasants migrated from the countryside to the cities of western Turkey (Jenking, 2008). Most of these immigrants were religious and since they came to secular citadels, they were often treated as underclass (Akyol, 2007). In years to come, they played an important role in bringing Islam into politics since Islamic movements focused on this population in order to gain political support.

Moreover, in the 1950s, Turkey started to practice a multiparty system. As Rabasa and Larrabee (2008) observe, "the establishment of a multiparty system in 1946 was an important turning point in the rise of political Islam in Turkey" (pp. 35). The CHP party, which represented Kemalism and had a monopoly on power, now had to compete with other political parties that used Islamic rhetoric in order to attract votes. Since then, Islam was slowly coming into politics, often as an alternative to the Western conception of the world.

Already the Democratic Party, the next political party to rule Turkey after the CHP, started to impose religious issues into politics. The Democratic Party consisted to be both conservatives and liberals. Some of the conservative policies of this political party were prayer calling return from Turkish to Arabic, remove of the ban on going for Hajj, reopening the Imam and Hatip Schools, forming teaching courses on religion and morality in schools, and broadcasting Qur'an recitation in the radio and the TV (Köni, Rosli & Zin, 2015). However, in 1961, the Turkish Army organized a military coup in order to protect Kemalist principles, arrested, and trialed the leaders of the Democratic Party.

Since then, the Turkish Army became a protector of Kemalist heritage and secularism through the National Security Council (MGK), "a body dominated by the military and entrusted with ensuring that the government's domestic and foreign policies were in line with the basic tenets of the Kemalist revolution, particularly secularism" (Rabasa & Larrabee, 2008: 36). In order to protect secularism and ideals of Kemalist heritage, the Army intervened also in 1971, 1980, and 1997. All these times the military intervention was successful in fulfilling its aims.

The Islamic movements were always present in Turkey, but in the early years of the Turkish republic, they were suppressed by the state. Additionally, in this period the importance of religion was declining also in other predominantly-Muslim countries in the MENA region (the Middle East and North Africa *region*) such as Iran, Syria, and Egypt. It was believed that they are following the modernization pattern which assumes that increased industrialization leads to the decline of religion (Carvalho, 2009). Still, this has not shown to be true since all these countries witnessed Islamic revivalism in the 1970s, although in different forms and with diverse consequences.

According to Ayoob (2008) political Islam is a relatively modern phenomenon with roots in "the nineteenth-century Muslim encounter with European domination and in Muslim reaction to subjugation by infidel powers" (pp. 9). In the 1970s, many in Muslim societies returned to Islamic tradition "and rejected what they saw as the failures of secular and ethnic forms of nationalism, Western capitalism and socialism" (Esposito, 1999: 650). In this decade, the majority of Muslim countries that were influenced or dominated by West and its ideas of democracy and social order saw the proliferation of social movements that were trying to bring Islamic heritage back on the stage. In other words, the ideas of modernity that were once the driving factor in reshaping Muslim societies were now being questioned by an Islamic alternative.

These movements were diverse and based on different grounds, but what they had in common is that they all at some extent wanted to merge Islam and state politics. Islamic modernists argued that Islam and modernity were compatible and "asserted the need to reinterpret and reapply the principles and ideals of Islam to formulate new responses to the political, scientific, and cultural challenges of the West and of modern life" (Esposito, 1999: 569).

Schirrmacher defines Political Islam as "synonymous with a socio-political ideology supported by a religious justification, the goal of which is to perfectly implement the Koran and the sharia and thus to reestablish the archetypal Islamic society" (Schirrmacher. 2016: 15). In Islamic ideologies, it is believed that returning to Islam leads to progress and peace. They are challenging the Western patterns of societal organization and offering more "authentic" social order that is based on historical, cultural and religious grounds that can all be found in Islam. Saktanber writes:

"Islamic ideologies do not only appear on the world stage by challenging the West as such, but also by questioning the premises of the ideals of modernization in structuring the social world, which have mainly originated in Western societies, as well as confronting the various Western ways of constructing and coding social reality". (Saktanber, 2018: 3)

According to Saktanber (2018), it is needed to draw borders between the terms Islamic revivalism, Islamic reformism, and Islamic radicalism. While Islamic radicalism or fundamentalism usually implies returning to the core values of Islam, there are other movements that have grounds in Islamic ideology that are more prone to adjusting to modernity and reinterpretation of Islam. These types of Islamic movements are usually labeled as moderate Islam. Esposito puts under the banner of moderate Islam all types of Islamic activism that are "always prone to change and could accommodate itself to the realities and liberal ideals of modernity" (Saktanber, 2018: 9).

Now, let's see how Islamic ideologies deal with women's question. According to Saktanber (2018), for Islamic movements, the woman's role is construed as being "keeper of Islam" versus "source of *fitna*". While on the one hand woman carries a threat of chaos because of her sexual attraction, on the other hand, the woman has the power to protect Islam from all external threats since she governs the private, most intimate sphere of life.

In the Kemalist republic, women played a big role in social change by adopting ideas of modernization and implementing them both in the public and private sphere of life. For Islamists ideologists, the principle is the same. Once again the woman has the capability to change the society towards 'real' values of Islam both as religion, and as a way for living. The reason for this is that the woman controls the private sphere and has the power to educate new generations in line with desired ideologies. As Saktanber (2018) observes, for Islamic circles the private sphere, that was once an 'inner space' and 'domestic' space of social life becomes the public symbol of Islamic revivalism.

In the decade of Islamic revivalism, Iran went through the most dramatic social transformations. By observing its case, we might see how Islamic ideology directly affects women's rights and its roles in society.

Although Iran adopted ideas of modernity and secularism in the early 1920s, in 1979 the country witnessed an Islamic revolution and Iran once again became an Islamic state ruled by Sharia law. In this process, women in Iran lost many rights they've earned during the phase of secularism. The first thing that happened was compulsory hejab veiling as "the most drastic measure that gave a religious identity to post-revolutionary Iranian women" (Bayat: 1996: 44). Further, many liberal laws that were enacted during the secular phase of the country were revoked: employment and education policies favoring women were revoked; polygamy was tolerated; men got priority in custody of children and automatic right to divorce; women were barred from studying certain colleges and restricted in number in others; additionally, it was all accompanied by "a pervasive Islamization of leisure" which resulted in a change of drinking habits, dress, music (Bayat, 1996: 44).

2.4 The rise of AKP and passive revolution

The first political party with Islamic ideas to appear in modern Turkey was the National Order Party – NOP (1970-1971) with its leader - Necmettin Erbakan. The party was based on a presumption that "the development in material aspects of life must never go without any respect for belief and morality" (Köni, Rosli & Zin, 2015: 341). The political program of the party was anti-Western, anti-Semitic and committed to the Islamization of the state (Cornell et al, 2015).

National Order Party was closed by the state only one year after it was created because it was not in line with secularism principles. However, it was reopened again in 1972 as Milli Salvation Party. After that, the party was closed and reopened again many times because of the same reasons. Its successors are Welfare Party (1983-1998), Virtue Party (1997-2001), Felicity Party (2001), and finally, Justice and Development Party – AKP (2001).

This chain of legal Islamist parties went from radicalization to deradicalization in its various phases (Tuğal, 2009: 237). Since they were not allowed to openly fight against secularism, they usually used softer rhetoric. For example, the National Salvation Party "campaigned for moral progress, postulating a virtuous society, proud of its glorious heritage and ancient traditions" (Altinkas, 2014: 9).

Islamic political parties in Turkey were gaining political support over the years, but they were not very influential on the political scene until the 1990s. For the first time, a political party that has ground in Islamic ideology – the Welfare Party, managed to enter the government in 1995. They won 158 seats in the 550-seat parliament, and Necmettin Erbakan became a prime minister of the country (Sarfati, 2012).

As it was already mentioned in the previous chapter, the Turkish Army defined itself as a protector of Kemalist heritage. Only two years after the Welfare Party started to rule the country, the army organized a military coup in order to disrupt Islamization of society and Erbakan was forced to resign and leave the politics. The party's successor was Virtue Party that existed from 1997 until 2001 when it was banned by the Constitutional Court because of violating the secularist articles of the Constitution.

The Justice and Development Party (AK Party) is the successor of the Virtue Party. After the Court banned the VP, the increasingly neoliberal, pro-democratic, and pro-U.S. youth of the FP (Virtue Party) formed a new organization – the Justice and Development Party, while the other – more radical members of the Virtue Party, formed Felicity Party (Tuğal, 2009).

Since its origins, the AKP was very controversial. The leaders of the party were emphasizing their Muslim identity, but they have strongly dissociated themselves from Islamic fundamentalism and ideas about creating an Islamic state. On the one hand, they "promised the secularist media and the military that they would not use religion for political purposes" (Tuğal,

2009: 51), but on the other hand – they were still the inheritors of Islamic political tradition in Turkey so many feared they will start to impose Islamic agenda over time.

As Aydin and Çakır write (2007), "the AKP elite labeled themselves 'conservative democrats', placed a strong emphasis on democracy and human rights, advocated EU membership, supported globalisation and eschewed 'anti-Western' discourse" (pp. 1). In 2002, AKP achieved a big success on elections and formed a one-party government. In the moment of writing this paper, the party is still the key political player in Turkey.

The AKP succeeded to dispel the long existing dichotomy of Turkish society which was manifested in the existence of secularist Westernizers and Islamic conservatives by merging Islam and secular liberal democracy and becoming a "Muslim democracy" (Alaranta, 2015). In their early years, "under the AKP the emphasis of the legitimizing historical reference has shifted to the Ottoman Empire" instead of Ataturk's heritage (Jenkins, 2008: 215).

Although the Justice and Development Party have its origins in Turkey's Islamic political heritage, in the first few years of their government, the party was not implementing Islamic laws or fighting against secular principles of the Republic. On the contrary, the party's priority was economic stability, EU membership, and overall - emphasis on democracy and human rights (Rabasa & Larrabee, 2008). Because of this, the AKP received support from the West and from the liberal circles in the country.

However, already in the early years of the AKP, many secularists feared that the party has a hidden political agenda that will be revealed as soon as they acquire enough political power. This is why there was a big debate in the country about whether the AKP is secretly Islamist, moderate Islamist, or Islamic-conservative democratic party (Somer, 2007).

In 2008, Rabasa & Larrabee suggested four scenarios to happen in the evolution of the AKP:

- Scenario 1: The AKP Pursues a Moderate, EU-Oriented Path
- Scenario 2: Creeping Islamization
- Scenario 3: Judicial Closing of the AKP
- Scenario 4: Military Intervention

From today's standpoint, most of these scenarios are not likely to happen. It seems that AKP partially abandoned its EU-Oriented path, while there were attempts of judicial closing of AKP and military intervention that only ended in AKP being even stronger.

The Judicial closing of AKP was attempted in 2008. The chief prosecutor of the Court of Appeals asked the Constitutional Court to close the ruling AK Party because it had become a "center of anti-secular activities" (Dağı. 2008). However, the Constitutional Court decided not to close the party, instead only "declaring it a focal point of anti-secular activities and imposing financial measures" (Dağı, 2008).

The Military intervention was attempted in 2016. There are many controversies around this military coup and many theories about its background and context. The AKP blamed its former ally, Islamic Fethullah Gulen movement, for the coup attempt. Although the coup failed, it had a deep impact on Turkish society. After the coup, a lot of things changed. A threat of revolution and declared state of emergency in the aftermath of the coup allowed Erdogan to purge public officials who were alleged to be connected with the Gülen movement.

Although Turkey was a key strategic member of NATO and close ally to the USA for many years, now the relationship with the USA is not as good as before "because of the Turkish demands to extradite the cleric Fethullah Gülen after the failed military coup of July 2016 and US support for Kurdish fighters in Syria" (Perchoc, 2016: 3). Also, EU path is now also not so bright, since Turkey has worsened international relations with important European countries such as Germany.

There are authors who state that the Islamization of Turkey became more overt since 2011. This can be seen, among else, as AKP's leader intents to raise "pious generation" by reforming Turkey's education system. (Edelman et al, 2015: 6)

"By 2008, it was possible to discern a subtle but powerful effort toward Islamization, particularly in smaller towns of Anatolia where the state-supported peer pressure made it wise to fast during Ramadan, close shops during Friday prayers, and abstain from alcohol, if it was even available anymore. As time passed, inhibitions on overt Islamic rhetoric and behavior diminished; after 2011, the ramparts appeared to burst. Since that time, there is an overt Islamization of Turkey, which can be viewed in a number of areas. The most important of these

is the reform of the education sector, which is now heavily infused with Islamic themes. Alongside this is the rise of the Presidency of Religious Affairs, the *Diyanet*, in Turkish politics and society." (Edelman et al, 2015: 59)

In 2010, the Prime Minister – Erdogan stated that he does not believe in "the equality of men and women and considered that they were born with different natures" (Das, 2017: 118). In 2011, Erdoğan abolished the Ministry for Women and Family and replaced it with the Ministry for Family and Social Policies (Edelman et al, 2015). The ban on the headscarf for public officials was lifted in 2013.

Tuğal argues that in many parts of the Muslim world, Islamic politics started with radicalism "but evolved in a market-oriented, at least partially democratic, and sometimes even pro-Western direction" (Tuğal, 2009: 3). While many scholars and policymakers labeled this trend as "moderate Islam", Tugal, on the other hand, treats this process "as the constitution of hegemony and the absorption of radicalism" (Tuğal, 2009: 3). What does he mean by that?

According to Tugal, passive revolution is "one of the convoluted, and sometimes unintended, ways by which the dominant sectors establish willing consent ("hegemony") for their rule. Different from classic revolutions (as in the French, Russian, and Chinese cases) where an emergent dominant class attempts to sweep away the old dominant classes and their institutions through mass mobilization, in a passive revolution popular sectors are mobilized with revolutionary discourses and strategies only to reinforce existing patterns of domination." (Tuğal, 2009: 3-4)

Tuğal believes that AKP allowed Islamic ideology and its supporters to be absorbed into the state. In his opinion, "the regime was Islamized but did not become Islamic" (Tuğal, 2009: 250). Although secular principles are still preserved, Islam as a way of life becomes more important for Turkish society because of the process which he describes as a passive revolution. In another way, Saktanber finds the origins of Islamism in Turkey in "a politically determined social effort to attempt the actualization of a middle-class ethos for an Islamic social order, and

partly as a reflection of new meaning attributed to the social sphere" (Saktanber, 2009: 26). Tugal and Saktanber have an agreement in describing the ways in which Islamic movements establish hegemony. As Saktanber (2018) states:

"…To be able to detach themselves from the cultural hegemony of the state in most areas of social behavior, thereby actualizing a moral transformation, Islamic circles in Turkey are in need of creating their own intelligentsia and middle classes, since these are the social agents who will play a leading role in society for production, dissemination, and consolidation of new models of sociabilities. Only after this has been successfully accomplished does it become possible for the Islamic circles in Turkey to be conceived of as a social force capable of setting an alternative to the existing social order". (pp. 19)

Although AKP never openly attacked secularism and haven't done anything radical that will show their aspirations towards Islamic order, they brought Islamic ideology in the everyday life by, as Saktanber observes, a possibility for creating their own intelligentsia and middle class. In the long run, it might have profound effects on the Islamization of society. As Rabasa & Larrabee (2008) argue, "AKP leaders are not theoreticians of Islam, but they are interested in promoting 'everyday Islam' through spontaneous actions by lower-level officials who believe that it is part of their mission" (pp. 15).

The leader of AKP, Erdogan "believes that power and country will strengthen by increasing population and openly expresses his purpose of "a new generation" underlining "religious generation" (Sunata, 2014: 13). In this process, women are also seen as a crucial actor since they have the power to educate their children in a religious manner. As Sunata argues, "the emergent paradigm to create its new citizens is comparable with the previous one of state feminism. Still, it is obvious that the paradigm is shifted from Westernist to post-Islamist political vision at the turn of the 21st century" (pp. 13).

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Research questions

The aim of this study is to explore how employed mothers perceive and experience the Islamization of Turkish society. I was interested in the effects of Turkey's Islamization on women's lives in this country, with particular focus on employed mothers and issues they are dealing with.

Women in Turkey are facing many problems. As we could see in the previous chapters, although they have all legal rights as men, the female employment in Turkey is in decline, domestic violence is rapidly increasing, and other socio-economic factors are placing women as a vulnerable group in Turkish society. Besides, the rise of Islamic ideology makes the female position even more difficult since it proposes that women need to put all their efforts into taking care of family and household (Schirrmacher, 2008).

In other words, I intented to learn more about the process of Islamization in Turkey by focusing on working mothers and getting insights into their experiences and perceptions of this phenomenon. As introduced, this thesis has the following research questions:

How do employed mothers experience the effects of Islamization? What are the challenges they are facing in this process? How do they deal with these challenges? In what ways Islamic ideology impacts their daily life? How do they manage to fulfill their roles as a worker and mother in this environment? These are all sub-questions I was trying to address by performing this study.

3.2 Research Design

In order to fulfill the aim of this study and to answer all research questions, qualitative research methods were used. More precisely, I conducted a phenomenological study with five employed mothers.

The quantitative research is usually based on positivism and aims to make predictions and generalizations. On the other side, qualitative research "aims to provide an in-depth understanding of people's experiences and the meanings attached to them" (Yilmaz, 2013:

312). A qualitative approach was better suited for this study since I was interested in experiences and perceptions related to the phenomenon of Islamization from the perspective of working mothers.

While quantitative research starts with a hypothesis and often implies deductive reasoning, qualitative research takes the other way (inductive reasoning), and researchers firstly collect the data and later on draw hypothesis (Ritchie et al, 2013).

Qualitative research is usually performed as "a systematic scientific inquiry which seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative, description to inform the researcher's understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon" (Astalin, 2013: 118). This type of research is particularly effective when we are trying to learn more about a phenomenon that we are not yet very familiar with. By studying a phenomenon holistically and without drawing hypothesis, qualitative research allows us to examine the topic of interest from different aspects and to stay open for significant findings to emerge in any phase of research.

There are many types of qualitative research design but four major types are phenomenology, ethnography, grounded theory, and case study (Astalin, 2013). In order to achieve the objectives of this study, I employed a phenomenological research design and methodology.

According to Pelin Yüksel and Soner Yıldırım (2015), the "general purpose of the phenomenological study is to understand and describe a specific phenomenon in-depth and reach at the essence of participants' lived experience of the phenomenon" (pp. 3). The phenomenological approach focuses on the subjective world in order to find the objective truth about the phenomenon.

The main purpose of the phenomenological approach is to identify phenomena through how they are perceived by the actors in a situation (Lester, 1999). Since I was interested to learn about the experience of working mothers under the process of Islamization, the phenomenological study seemed like an appropriate choice. As the ones that might be particularly affected by the process of Islamization, I wanted to focus on the lived experience of employed mothers.

One of the crucial things in phenomenological research is a concept of Epoché and its aim is to "enable the researcher to describe the 'things themselves' and (attempt to) set aside

our natural attitude or all those assumptions we have about the world around us" (Langdridge, 2007: 17). In order to get objective results, the researcher needs to stay away from his own judgments about the phenomenon and to exclusively describe it through the experience of its respondents.

Besides *Epoché*, for phenomenological research it is important to employ imaginative variation which is defined as "procedure used to reveal possible meanings through utilizing imagination, varying the frames of reference, employing polarities and reversals, and approaching the phenomenon from divergent perspectives, different positions, roles, or functions" (Lin, 2013: 472). Also, the eidetic reduction is used to "to rid the phenomenon from its surface appearances to reveal the 'core'" (Lin, 2013, 472).

At the moment, there are not many studies that already examined the impact of Islamization on working women in Turkey. By examining the phenomenon holistically, by focusing on the discovery of ideas and thoughts, and without having narrow research objectives, our aim was to raise an understanding about the phenomenon of interest and to bring insights that will help future researchers to conduct studies in order to examine the phenomenon more deeply.

3.3 Population, participants, and sampling

The participants of this study consisted of five employed mothers who are at the moment living in Turkey (Istanbul). I adopted the purposive sampling technique in order to select participants.

While quantitative studies often choose participants randomly, qualitative studies are widely using non-probability sampling technique which is defined as "a sampling technique where the samples are gathered in a process that does not give all the participants or units in the population equal chances of being included" (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016: 3)[1].

There are different types of non-probability sampling, but for this study, I adopted purposive sampling. According to Etikan and others, purposive sampling is "the deliberate choice of a participant due to the qualities the participant possesses" (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim,

---

[1] Ilker Etikan, Sulaiman Abubakar Musa, Rukayya Sunusi Alkassim. Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling.
American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics. Vol. 5, No. 1, 2016, pp. 1-4. doi: 10.11648/j.ajtas.20160501.11

2016: 2). This type of sampling is used when we are looking for participants who "have had experiences relating to the phenomenon to be researched" (Kruger, 1988: 150). The participants that were selected for this study were considered to have enough knowledge and experience related to the phenomena I was interested in.

The participants of this study were not selected randomly, but according to certain characteristics. Among numerous purposeful sampling designs, I selected criterion sampling which "involves searching for cases or individuals who meet a certain criterion" (Palys. 2008: 697). The criterions for selecting participants for this study were that the participant has the following profile: *an employed mother who is living in a big city (Istanbul) and works for at least ten years*.

As I was interested in the lived experience of employed mothers during the process of Islamization, it should be understandable why I selected respondents who will be both mothers and workers. Moreover, since many authors saw Islamic revivalism as an urban phenomenon, it was believed that the effects will be widely exposed in urban areas; therefore, I selected participants from the biggest city in Turkey – Istanbul.

Finally, since I was examining a social process and social change that can only be observed chronologically, I was seeking for the respondents who could have observed changes in Turkish society and in their workplace in the last twenty years.

All participants in this research were female of age between 35 and 50 years. They all started working in their 20's which means they have a long working history. Also, all respondents are mothers of at least one child. Three out of five participants are married, while the other two are divorced at the moment.

The participants for the study were recruited via personal network and via snowball method. This means that the referrals were "made among people who share or know of others who possess some characteristics that are of research interest" (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981: 141). Although it was not a criterion for choosing the respondents, it is worth mentioning that all of them are highly educated and positioned on a medium to a high-skill job (engineers, medical doctors, teachers…). This can be explained by the fact that working women in Turkey mostly have high level of education (Sancar, S. & Bulut. A. (2006).

According to a simple pre-questionnaire that was employed before the interview, all of the participants rated their economic status between 5 and 7 on a scale where 0 means – very bad economic status, and 10 – very good economic status. In the pre-questionnaire, the participants were also asked for their age, years of working experience, city of residence, number of children, profession, and marital status (Table 2).

Table 2. The demographics of participants in the study

	Participant 1	*Participant 2*	*Participant 3*	*Participant 4*	*Participant 5*
Age range:	35-40	35-40	35-40	45-50	40-45
Years of working experience:	15-20	10-15	10-15	15-20	15-20
City of residence:	Istanbul	Istanbul	Istanbul	Istanbul	Istanbul
Level of education	Bachelor	Bachelor	Master	Doctor	Bachelor
Profession	HR	Education	Engineering	Medicine	Engineering
Marital status	Single/Divorced	Married	Single/Divorced	Married	Married

3.4 Data collection

In order to collect data, I used in-depth semi-structured interviews**.** This interviewing technique is usually adopted when we want to **"**delve deeply into a topic and to understand thoroughly the answers provided" (Harell & Bradley, 2009). Interviewing is often used in phenomenological research because it goes in line with researchers' interest "in the meaning of a phenomenon as it is lived by other subjects" (Englander, 2012: 14).

Semi-structured interviews were adopted in this study. The semi-structured interviews have consisted of open-ended questions. While they provide a structure for the interview, they also give a possibility for a researcher to lead the conversation in a way that will be the most fruitful for answering research questions.

My aim was to cover all aspects of the problem, and although a group of interview questions was prepared, I allowed possibility for new questions to emerge during the conversation with each participant since "a well-designed semistructured interview should ensure data are captured in key areas while still allowing flexibility for participants to bring their own personality and perspective to the discussion" (Barret & Twycross, 2018: 63)

Before the interview, all participants of this study signed the Informed Consent agreement which "involves informing the subject about his or her rights, the purpose of the study, the procedures to be undergone, and the potential risks and benefits of participation" (Shahnazarian, Hagemann, Aburto, and Rose, 2013: 3).

The participants were also informed about their participation in this research being voluntary and anonymous. Moreover, they were informed that they have the right to withdraw from the interview at any time without explaining the reasons for their decision.

As Mandel and Parija (2014) pointed out, informed consent is important for the building of trust between researcher and participants. Still, its primary aim is to protect the participants of the study and not to expose them to any kind of risks because of their decision to take part in this study.

In order to fulfill the ethical principles of social research, personal details of the participants such as name or any other information that can reveal the true identity of the participants will not be used in this paper. The interviews were recorded with the consent of the participants and parts of the conversation will be quoted in the paper, but the researcher will not use any piece of the conversation that can reveal personal information or make someone identify any of the participants in this study.

I was aware that participating in this study carries potential risks, so I particularly paid attention to fulfill all ethical requirements. Since the interview questions were dealing with religion and politics that are highly controversial topics in Turkey nowadays, I did everything to protect the identity of participants and it will stay known only for the researcher.

The interview consisted of three groups of questions. The first group of questions was dealing with work and motherhood issues; the second group of questions was aimed to provide us insights on participants' political attitudes; while the third group of question dealt with religious attitudes (Appendix 1). Each interview lasted for around an hour. It was done face-to-

face in a quite environment. The participants were open to share their stories especially after it was explained to them about participation in this study being voluntary and anonymous. It seems that participants were especially willing to share their stories after they were told about educational purpose of the study and it being performed by a researcher who is not living or working in Turkey.

3.5 Data analysis

Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data which was gathered during the interview phase of the research. The thematic analysis is defined as the process of identifying patterns or themes within qualitative data (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017). A theme is defined as "something important about the data in relation to the research question, and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set" (Braun and Clark, 2006: 82). Since I employed an inductive approach to this research, patterns within data were identified by performing inductive thematic analysis.

Braun and Clark (2006) suggest six steps in conducting thematic analysis:

Phase1: Familiarising yourself with your data
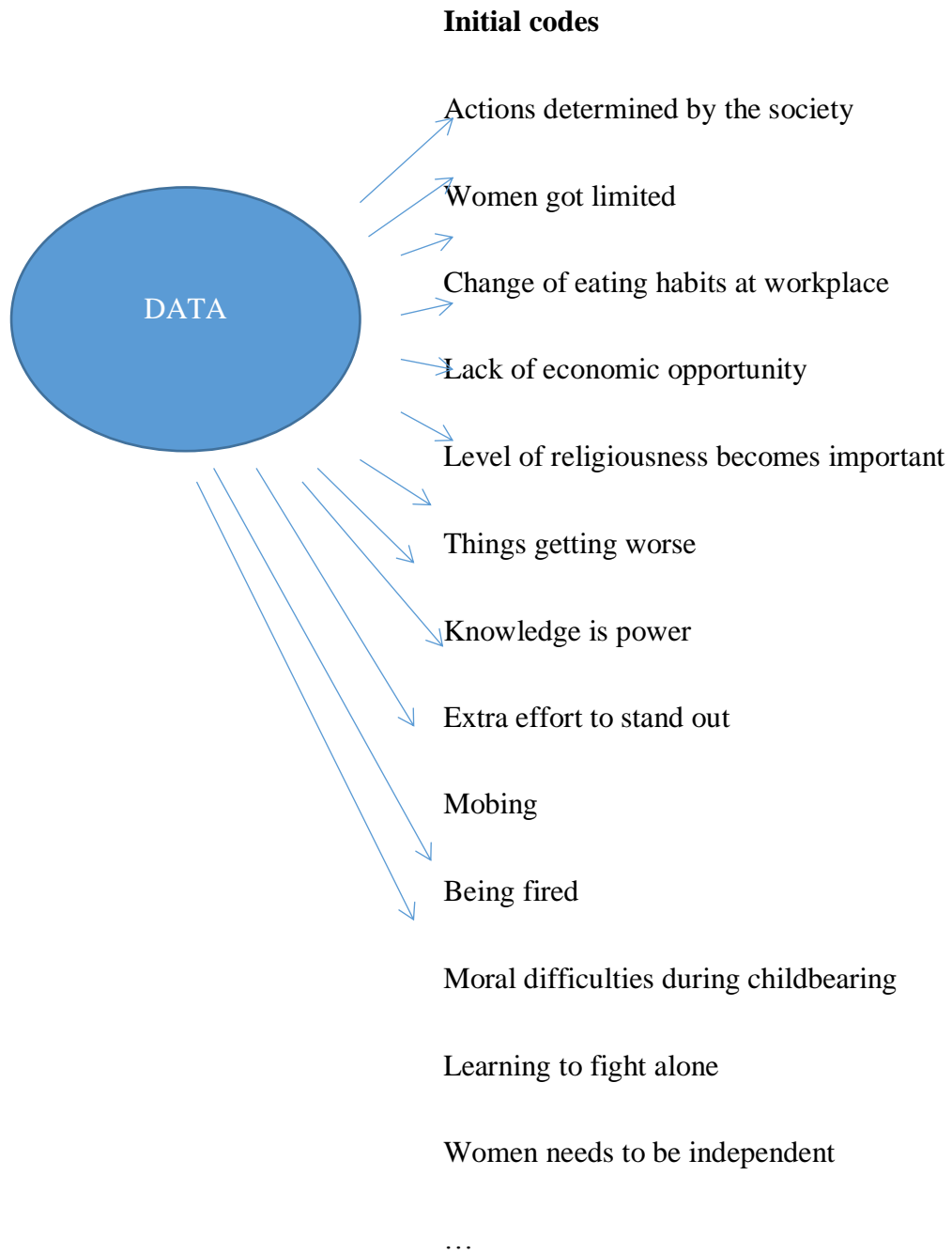
Phase2: Generating initial codes

Phase3: Searching for themes

Phase4: Reviewing themes

Phase 5: Defining and naming themes

The steps Braun and Clark proposed were followed in order to conduct thematic analysis for this study. In the first phase, the researcher transcribed the interviews and familiarized himself with the data. In the second phase, the researcher initiated open coding as the process of breaking the qualitative data down into distinct parts (Theron, 2015). In the third phase, codes were reviewed, regrouped, and I looked for themes in the data. In the fourth phase, the themes were reviewed in order to make sure I haven't missed or misjudged the importance of certain patterns in data. Finally, in the last phase, themes were defined and named.

Graph 1. Generating initial codes

Initial codes

Actions determined by the society

Women got limited

Change of eating habits at workplace

Lack of economic opportunity

Level of religiousness becomes important

Things getting worse

Knowledge is power

Extra effort to stand out

Mobing

Being fired

Moral difficulties during childbearing

Learning to fight alone

Women needs to be independent

…

DATA

4.0 Findings

This study explored how employed women perceive and experience the Islamization of Turkish society. All of the participants in the study have stated they've experienced profound social changes in Turkish society over the last 20 years, and political and religious issues being more important than before. After the thematic analysis was completed on interviews with the participants of the study, three major themes and two sub-themes were identified:

1) Politicization and polarization of society through religion

2) Religious ideology and nepotism have replaced meritocracy

3) Increasing pressure on women

The thematic analysis also revealed two sub-themes related to politicization and polarization of society through religion, and those are:

a) Veiling as a political symbol, and

b) Polarization in the workplace

In the following subchapters, each theme will be explained in more detail.

4.1 Politicization and polarization of society through religion

Four out of five participants of the study directly stated they've observed significant polarization of the Turkish society and increased importance of religion as the effect of AKP's political activities. For example, one of the participants says that AKP *"separated people and widely polarized them"* (Participant 1) while the other states that *"AKP divided the community into camps"* (Participant 5).

The participants who spoke about the polarization of society perceive it as a conflict between secular and religious population, but also as a division of society on those who are supporters of AKP and those who are not. In this atmosphere, the participants experienced that everything became much more political than before: *"It wasn't so political before. The policy did not take up much space in our lives. We were trying to choose who did the job well. But now even children have become politicized after AKP"* (Participant 3).

All of the employed mothers that were interviewed think that religious beliefs became much more important for Turkish society than it was the case before. Religion is an important topic of the discussion in the country and the main thing that divides people into conflicting groups.

All participants of this study are secular-oriented, and they think Ataturk's legacy had only benefits for Turkish society. One of the participants talks about her opinion about Ataturk being changed over time. She says that she was raised to see Ataturk as a "bad guy" and "enemy of religion" and she attributes this to her family that is being conservative (Participant 2). However, she changed her opinion "when she started learning and reading about him" at the University.

A significant finding is that this participant started perceiving Ataturk's legacy even more positively during the past decade: *"After conservatives came to power, I started to think Ataturk's revolution is more important than I thought before"* (Participant 2). This shows that the rise of political Islam politicizes not only those who support the AKP and its emphasis on religion but also those who are more secularly oriented. For this participant, Ataturk's legacy was taken for granted before the AKP came to power, but now when it is questioned by conservative movements; secular heritage left by Ataturk becomes much more significant for her life and political beliefs.

Only one participant talks about the bad effects of Ataturk's legacy, but she sees it only as his incapability to spread the ideas of modernization to all levels of society. She says: *"As the aforementioned revolutions did not spread to the people's base, this bigotry grew like a virus, trying to imprison the country to its former darkness almost a century later. AKP is the representative of this darkness. After coming to power with a cynical liberal attitude, they have put into practice the reactionary policies with all the bigotry"* (Participant 4).

Four out of five participants of the study stated they are not religious, while one of the participants said she started questioning her beliefs after the AKP started to rule the country: *"Religion is still important in my life. But if AKP are representing religion, for sure I am not with them"* (Participant 2). This shows another aspect of polarization through religion. Usually, religious beliefs do not have to be related to a person's political orientation. However, since religion became politicized, it seems that people feel like they need to choose sides. I had an impression that the participant didn't want to identify herself as religious because she might have been associated with the politics of AKP.

The participants of the study observed that putting religious questions at the center of the public discussion made all other social issues of minor importance and less discussed.

"Before, government officials didn't have rights to show their religious perspectives. Now it became fully about religion. No financial issues, no unemployment issues, no education issues, no social problems. Now they are only focused on religious and not religious. Even while I am talking these things, I am worried maybe they can hear me somehow. Or my neighbor can hear and report me. They created that kind of society that enemies and allies - full of polarization in our society" (Participant 2).

The fear of being reported or judged by neighbors because of stating beliefs and thoughts shows that the impact of polarization reaches substantial levels. As we can see from the quoted sample of the interview, the observed polarization has a direct effect on everyday life and goes deep into the psychological well-being of a person.

The polarization is also observed in the division of secular and conservative urban districts. As one of the participants in our study notices, the Islamization hasn't affected the secular part of Istanbul where she lives in. However, she notices that "*other big districts got conservative*" (Participant 1). Also, there is observed polarization between urban and rural population. Most of this polarization is observed in terms urban-rural, religious-secular, pro-AKP and against-AKP.

When it comes to politicization and polarization of society, two sub-themes were identified in the data: *Veiling as a political symbol* and *Pretending in order to fit into the group.* I will now discuss these sub-themes in more detail.

4.1.0 Veiling as a political symbol

When they were talking about veiling, all of the participants emphasized that a veil became a political symbol in contemporary Turkey. All participants stated they are seeing more women wearing a veil in public places than before, and for some participants of the study, this is perceived as the cause of further polarization. Veiling is also seen as a strategy for improving the socio-economic position in contemporary Turkey. Two participants of this study stated they've known women who started wearing a veil in order to get a job.

> *"Nowadays, almost all women have headscarves at my workplace. Five years ago, there was very few. Now even my friends which we used to go out and drink together started using headscarves. It is so complicated actually. Some of them started using it after they've married, some of them just wanted to close political power in public school. Maybe some of them did it because of their husbands or families, and some of them because of social oppression. If I compare it before, when it was neutral for everyone, I could say that it was more comfortable. Now, we can define and recognize and label everyone by looking, because of the polarization in our society."* (Participant 2)

Generally, women that were interviewed had different viewpoints about veiling. Although they mostly emphasized that woman should have the freedom to decide whether she wants to wear a veil or not, all of the participants at some extent agree that veiling became politicized: *"It's not a problem for me to see women being veiled in public places. I think they shouldn't have trouble at the first stage unless people use it politically. However, this became a political issue and was later declared a victory when it was released"* (Participant 3).

The participants of the study share an opinion that AKP benefited from the lift of the ban on the headscarf because they treated it as their political victory. Although the participants do not think veiled women should be forbidden to attend University or to conduct public duties, and besides questioning political use of a veil, the participants sometimes also questioned if veiling is always a decision that woman made independently. They think it is sometimes a matter of education and knowledge about their own position in the society:

`
> *"For women independence, veiled women should be allowed to be everywhere. It should not be a problem. But, AKP used it as a political benefit. Then it became symbolic things*

for everyone. But we should also think, are these women really free to decide themselves to be veiled." (Participant 2)

"If you do not have enough examples around it, you may think you are free even if you are dependent on someone. This is a matter of pure knowledge. If you are ignorant and the concept of freedom is limited to you, you may think it is even freedom to look out the window. In our country, even for women wearing a colorful headscarf can sometimes feel free. Because they don't know what freedom and equality are. They haven't tasted it before. And they have no idea about global examples. There are millions of such people. Deprived of knowledge and closed to the outside. If you ask me, it can't be absolutely free. They need to work harder than men and earn more. To combat injustice." (Participant 5)

Finally, another issue with a veil is its symbolic meaning. Although participants of the study perceive veiling as freedom and individual decision, veiling also has an impact on other women who have not decided to wear it. The reason for this is that a veil represents a symbol of morality. Because of this, women who do not veil themselves sometimes feel labeled as immoral persons: *"At first glance, veiling is freedom. But because this is a freedom which is abused by the current political authority, I am not sure about that. If a woman doesn't use a scarf, she is stamped as an immoral person."* (Participant 1)

While there are participants who see veiling as "politicized freedom", others have a more critical attitude towards increased veiling in public places because they feel pressured. One of the participants says:*"It turned into something that began to repress non-covered day by day. Because according to the philosophy of religion is an icon representing morality. And unfortunately, when this virus grows, it's easy to eat an ungovernable stamp"* (Participant 4).

One of the participants has observed that people sometimes had problems to talk with her because she does not wear a veil: *"As a teacher, I see surprised parents at parent-teacher meetings just because I am a woman and I am not wearing a headscarf. They sometimes can't even talk with me. If they talk, they try not to have eye contact"* (Participant 2). This shows that veiling can't be observed as only a cultural or religious practice. It obviously has a deep impact on social integration of Turkish society.

4.1.1 Polarization in the workplace

The impact of polarization and politicization of Turkish society is also experienced in the workplace since religious and political identities became more important than before.

Three out of five participants of the study mentioned they've had to pretend they are religious on their workplace in order to fit into the group or because of fear that they might be excluded: *"Sometimes I have to look like a religious person to avoid breaking people. And I'm trying to keep up with them because they are in the majority. If I act differently, I'm afraid of being excluded."* (Participant 3).

The norms and rules in Turkish society are changing, and the people who don't follow them might feel excluded or judged from society. Another participant had similar problems as the previous one. She experienced difficulties in her former job because she is not religious. She says that all of the employees on her previous job had to pretend to be religious on their workplace: *"Imagine that, maybe all of the 20 people, even though they don't have a religious philosophy they all have to pretend like they believe"* (Participant 1).

Religious and political impact in the workplace was particularly experienced by two participants of the study who were working in public companies. For example, one of the participants in the study is a teacher. Although she is not religious, she is now obliged to fasten during Ramadan because school canteens are closed during that time. She already felt pressure from the religious colleagues when she was buying food and drink in school canteen during Ramadan, so she sometimes pretended she fasting. However, since norms of majority became the rules, now she doesn't have this possibility:

> *"In Ramadan period, I was not fasting but I was able to drink and eat in the school canteen. But now they are closing canteen officially in Ramadan. It is like forbidden to eat. Even if you bring something to eat, it is impossible to eat in front of them. Before I was feeling pressure, but now it became obvious. Even sometimes, I was pretending to fasten. Just because I did not want to eat in front of them. But now, it became a certain rule."* Participant 2

Finally, one of the participants of this study had problems in her workplace because of her political background and labor union activities. As she says, she had to leave three jobs in

the last ten years because of political issues, and she still suffers consequences of her labor union activity:

"I was a member of a left union. In line with the decision taken by the union, we participated in day-to-day action. And all of the participants were fired without any inquiries. Under the name of the state of emergency laws, they stole my decades of labor. Both my right to retirement and my right to work in public institutions were stripped. I also have a ban on departing from abroad. I still cannot get my passport, although I have decided to apply for a higher court and there is no concrete evidence about me and there is no room for prosecution. But at least I didn't bow" (4).

The experience of this participant shows how polarization along political views effects work culture and labor issues. Those who are fighting for their labor rights might be excluded from the workplace and society in general. In this atmosphere, they are pressured to remain silent although in the long run it can only make things worse for their socio-economic position and human rights in general.

4.2 Religious ideology and nepotism replaced meritocracy

The next theme is closely related and overlapping with the previous one, but it deserves to be examined in more detail because it has shown to be an important topic for the participants of this study. In their opinion, one of the biggest changes in Turkish society has been the increased significance of political Islam in state governance, disruption of democracy, and meritocracy being replaced by nepotism. Once again, they think the AKP is the source of this social change. As one of the respondents says, AKP killed meritocracy:

"Whatever they did, they did only give power to the people who own the same political views. They killed meritocracy. They are giving all the important positions for their relatives. Their main target is just to steal as much as they can. Because they are just nouveau-riche and greedy about money. After them, there is no security, no justice, and no equity. They are nourished by ignorance." (Participant 4)

The participants of the study are having an impression that AKP brings public focus on religious questions in order to make other important topics less relevant. In this process, the

achievements and results of the government's officials are being less important than the level of their religiousness. The informants reflect upon this aspect as such

> *"I think Islam gained a significant role in Turkish political life. Not the labor but the religious belonging determines the politics now. Not the merit of the top government authorities but their level of religiousness is the important thing now. Hence, the country moves backward."* (Participant 1)

> *"A very successful scientist who is groundbreaking can be excluded at once because he is an atheist. Likewise, when a child rapist says he is overly religious, people can start to feel pity. There is religion in this very effective society."* (Participant 5)

As we can see from the answers of these two respondents, they think the level of religiousness becomes more important than the results of their work. This can further detoriarate the social position of working women, especially those who are secularly oriented.

Some of the participants expressed an opinion that by focusing on religion and abstract concepts, the AKP puts away the attention from the bad effects of their own policies: *"They created themselves an opposite side to attack them every day and to cover their failure policies"* (Participant 2). The participant also think that AKP disguised itself as a liberal political party in the beginning, but that they've become more conservative and reactionary in the last few years. In this process, religious questions became more important than the evaluation of policies. She says further,

> *"At the beginning of AKP, I was thinking they are a liberal form of Islam. That's why they got that much support. People thought that they are different. They also said we are different. They were supporting being EU membership and secularism. Until they got all important positions in government. We start seeing their real identity. They were not different. It was a strategy for getting in power. We saw their face after many years. Just because of them, now there is a huge polarization between secular and religious citizens of Turkey. Before them, policies were important to evaluate governments. Now it is totally about ideologies".* (Participant 2)

From this quote we can see that some of the people in Turkey didn't expect the political situation to go in the direction where it is today. They feel deceived by the early period of the

AKP. As the result, the policies are not of the same importance as before, and since there is a huge polarization among population, it is hard to go back to the point where it all started.

Overall, participants share an opinion that AKP uses religion as an ideology in order to stay on power: *"Religion is one of the most effective weapons of lagging uneducated societies. And it's a great tool to keep people occupied and fill their wallet. AKP cadres lived a poor life. And they always wanted a rich life. Then they found something to sell. Religion!"* (Participant 4). They have an impression that AKP supports only their own political allies. Personal achievements and results are not as much important as they were before. Political and religious identity is what makes people climb on social ladders. Since the AKP only cares about its own supporters, nepotism has replaced meritocracy.

4.3 Increasing pressure on women

The participants of this study all agree there are increased gender inequalities in Turkish society and they feel women deal with all kinds of pressure both in their home and on their workplace. More importantly, they see the gender inequalities both as a heritage of Turkish patriarchal society in history, but also as the effect of the AKP's regime. All the participants that were interviewed felt there are pressures towards them being a mother, and they think the pressure is becoming more intense in the past few years.

All employed mothers that were interviewed said that they've experienced difficulties in their first years of motherhood. These difficulties were mostly attributed to economic problems, troubles to find enough time for work and for taking care of kids, negative attitudes from their workmates because they are an employed mother, and other types of pressure from their environment:

> *"I had to work so intensely that I couldn't spend enough time with my children. In fact, I'm stuck in a lot of emotions by making money and giving that money to a babysitter. Especially as a woman, I had to work harder in the first years to prove myself. In my early years, I was treated like I was not supposed to work after being a mother. Especially in our community structure, everything is even harder. Whether in the process of pregnancy or after birth, it was complete retribution"* (Participant 4).

Other women also pointed out they felt there was more pressure on them in the first years of having a child than on their husband: *"It was really hard to work and to be a mother in the same time. Because of Turkish family structure, women should solve all problems about childcare"* (Participant 3).

In the first years of becoming a mother, women are mostly supported by their families, especially by their mothers. They think there is still a patriarchal model in Turkish families that makes women more responsible than men in housework and childcare. For all of them, it was hard to manage everything alone, although they felt like they are needed to:

> *"While working, it was impossible for me to do all things alone. I do not know why, but I think it is the cultural roots of a Turkish family. My husband never felt the same level of pressure as me. I mean, of course, he was worried because he is also working. But he was never responsible on the same level as me."* (Participant 2).

As we can see, working mothers are dealing with types of pressure. On the one hand, they feel like they need to work in order to economically support their family, but on the other hand, they feel like they are the only one responsible for taking care of children. This puts them into conflicting roles and paradoxical situation since it is usually impossible for them to choose one over another.

The participants also talk about learning to become an employed mother. One of the participants observes that her mother couldn't teach her how to be an employed mother because she hasn't experienced it*: "Since they don't have the experience to be a mother and earning money, they couldn't teach me how to be a working mother. I think this is a common problem in our generation"* (Participant 3). Employed mothers mostly learn to fight alone and to experiment along the way, but they think there is a possibility for a woman to successfully balance her working life and family.

> *"My father passed away when I was a kid. We grew up with my mother and sister. I can say that my mother and sister have always been with me. I used to complain more in my first years of working. But over the years, with less support, I have learned to fight alone. I generally solve the problems by myself with experience of many years and independence of economic freedom."* (Participant 1)

All of the participants in the study stated that they've experienced negative attitudes because they are being employed mothers. These negative attitudes mostly came from men in their workplace.

"Negative attitudes came from narrow-minded ignorant people who think you are the patron of life. The misogynist, of course, by fools who are not used to seeing women around. They're not used to seeing women in working life. For a large part of society, women should remain ignorant and need to raise children. Every second, they try to make you feel that you don't belong there. They are all very polite when talking face to face. But no matter how successful you are, they cannot accept you. They ask other people to be persuaded even when they have a vision. But if you can prove yourself for years, if you go beyond all this ruggedness, then everything will change. Later, despite being a woman she is successful, you are exposed to an approach." (Participant 4)

As we can see, employed women are dealing with different kinds of pressure in their home and at their work place, but all of them emphasize that woman needs to learn to fight until she is accepted and recognized as successful. Besides experiencing negative attitudes, employed women have a feeling that they *"need to make an extra effort to stand out in every situation"* (Participant 3) and to *"work harder"* (Participant 4) in order to prove themselves on their workplace. One of the participants experienced mobbing at her workplace; while the other one thinks that she hasn't been promoted just because she became a mother.

The women that were interviewed all agree that things got worse for women since AKP came to power. As one of the participants says:

"Especially in the last 10 years in public places, things are getting harder. It was hard before. But when they became in power without no doubt, pressures became official. There was pressure before on women. But, now they are changing laws and trying to make us follow these laws." (Participant 2)

All participants of the study have an opinion that AKP doesn't care about women's issues. Two participants stated that women are *"treated as second-class creatures"* (Participant 1, 4), while others agree that women are treated unequally in comparison to men. All the women that were interviewed had an impression that the government works only towards building the identity of the woman as a mother: *"They don't work on the identity of women. They prefer to*

focus on the identity of the mother" (Participant 5). However, none of the respondents thinks that the country provides enough economic opportunity for women to bear with economic difficulties during the childbearing:

> *"They (AKP) encourage women to become housewives and to stop working. They want women to stay at home and only be a mother. There have been some statements by them like – women should have at least three kids. Without creating any economic opportunity, they want us to have children and take care of them at home with limited sources."* (Participant 1)

When asked what are the biggest problems Turkish women are facing nowadays, the participants said that women are treated as second-class, women are not seeing as strong as men, women's actions are tried to be determined by society, and women are pressured to be mothers. The women that were interviewed don't think there are any attempts of the government to enforce policies that might improve female socio-economic position. They've experienced pressure from society to become mothers and housewives, but they do not think the country has offered them a possibility to become economically independent and secured.

> *"From the AKP's viewpoint, main issues about women are not issues actually. All the good things about women are an issue for them. They want to change these things. Their minister of the family said once, a woman should have at least 3 kids. And our government will support mothers to have kids. They want a woman to sit at home and grown kids whom they can't give a healthy future for. They just want poor kids who will pay more taxes and become a soldier for them. But, there is no social security for them."* (Participant 2)

The interviewed women do not think they would be satisfied in fulfilling only the social role of being a mother and housewife even if they were financially secured. The reason for this is because they all agree that woman needs to work in order to be independent: *"I want to produce and work for myself. Just because I am women that not mean I should keep an eye only my kid. I have my own life"* (Participant 3). Also, they work because of "sharing responsibilities in the society", "helping people", or because it fulfills them and gives them purpose.

Education is very valuable for the participants of this study. They think it is the greatest weapon that can be used against reactionary ideologies. Overall, the attitudes and emphasis on independence among the participants might be perceived as the result of attaining higher levels of education. In the process of education, they might have learnt about gender issues, feminism, and other important topics that made them see the world in the way they do. In order to improve the social position of women, the participants of the study give the essential role to education and knowledge:

> *"Living in Turkey is nowadays already hard for everybody. But for women, the problem is getting bigger and bigger. In my perspective, the biggest problem is education for women. This problem has its solution also. Still many people in the countryside of Turkey live with the extreme radical approach of Islam. In their opinion, women must stay at home until they're married. Many of them don't have the opportunity to go to school and to know about scientific knowledge. So they are unwittingly keeping themselves under control. Knowledge is power. Without power, a woman can't be free and independent."* (Participant 2)

Finally, the participants also put an emphasis on women resistance. When asked about their opinion about women in countries that have Sharia law, all of the participants emphasized a lack of freedoms and they see women's position in these countries as "second-class creature", or "being a piece of meat". They expressed fear that Turkey is going in this direction, although they think women's resistance and the secular population still plays a big role in the society that prevents this from happening:

> *"I think things are going to get better just because there is the resistance of women in Turkey. But if it wouldn't, can't imagine it. It is so dark for me. Can't see what would happen. Because many years ago, things that I was not giving any chance to happen, worse of them happened already."(Participant 2).*

The accent on women's resistance is particularly important for some of the participants of the study. They are optimistic about the future because they think women will not let reactionary ideologies to change their lives and to make them housewives and mothers only.

5.0 Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that employed women experienced significant effects of Islamization in the last twenty years, and especially after the AKP started to rule the country. According to the participants of this study, Turkish society has been polarized and politicized as a consequence of greatest importance of religion in public affairs. Further, religious ideology and nepotism have replaced meritocracy since political and religious background became more important than personal characteristics and achievements for conducting a public duty.

In the process of Islamic revivalism, gender roles have been reconsidered, and employed women are having a feeling that they are pressured to become mothers, although they do not think the country provides them with enough economic opportunity in order to financially support the family. Also, the employed mothers are feeling like they need to work harder and to prove themselves worthy more than their male colleagues in order to get recognition for their work.

The politicization of life is one of the core themes that was identified in the responds of participants. While in the past politics hasn't played a big role in their lives, in the past decade they have a feeling that everyone is discussing politics. In their opinion, this politicization is not rational, since, as one of the participants in the study says "everyone is discussing abstract concepts". This is closely related to the greatest importance of religion in politics. It seems that Turkey abandoned what Kuru (2007) defines as assertive secularism and that the country became more oriented towards passive secularism. However, it can be argued that this is just a phase in the growing impact of religion in public life. As our participants observed, religious questions have replaced discussion over other important issues that are related to economy, social security, and other topics that are important for the well-being of the society. These findings are supporting Saktanber's (2018) theory that Islamization in Turkey might be interpreted as a "politicization of culture". It is not only that religion became visible in public space. It also has a more profound impact on public policies and everyday life of citizens.

Other authors also examined the politicization of Turkish society and found its source in the AKP's political activities. Palabiyik, for example, examines the politicization of recent Turkish history. According to him, "AKP believes that what has so far been taught as official history in Turkey is problematic for its overemphasis on the Republican period, deliberate

41

underestimation, if not negation, of the Ottoman era, and an intentional overlook towards the faults and the misconduct of the early Republican leaders" (Palabiyik , 2018). After many years of secular doctrine, its implications are now being questioned by dominant political power in Turkey. The consequence of this is not only politicization of those who are emphasizing bad effects of Republican legacy, but also those who think secular principles and Republican legacy needs to be preserved.

The politicization and polarization of Turkish society are closely related. The participants of the study mostly see the source of polarization in Turkish society as the effect of conflict between secular and religious citizens. They mostly agree this conflict was initiated by the Judgement and Development Party and their political legacy during the last 17 years. The polarization is not only observed in the political arena, but also in everyday life, on their workplace, and in public/urban space.

The politicization of culture can particularly be explored when we focus on the political function of a veil. In the atmosphere of politicization of culture, a veil became a political symbol and source of division between Turkish women. Although the participants of this study don't think that women should be forbidden to veil themselves in public (since they see it as a woman's freedom to decide what she wants for herself) all of them think that a veil became a political symbol in contemporary Turkey. Further, they also see it as a political instrument used by the leading party who tries to present the lift of the ban on veiling as its political success. Finally, a veil becomes an important thing for working women since some of them are using it in order to attain political power or other benefits for themselves in a politicized society.

Because of this, veiling can be seen as a visual representation of polarization among women as well as the cause of further polarization in the country. As Arik states, "beyond being the symbol of Islamist politics and lifestyle, the headscarf became the embodiment of the conflict between the competing sexual regimes prescribed by Western forms of secularism and Islamist discourses in Turkey" (Arik, 2012).

Besides being polarized on those who are religious and those who are secular, Turkish society is further seen as polarized on those who are supporters of AKP and those who are not. The participants of the study see AKP as a corrupted party that cares only about its own supporters, while not taking care of the rest of the population. In this atmosphere, there are big tensions between AKP's supporters and those who are against this political party. This

polarization observed by the participants of the study was also identified by other researchers. For example, the results of the study conducted by Istanbul Bilgi University Center for Migration Research (2017) showed there is a significant social distance between political party supporters in Turkey. According to this study, 70% percent of people don't want supporters of the political party they feel most distant as their neighbors, while 68% percent of participants said they don't want to see their kids playing with children whose parents support the political party they feel most distant (Bilgi University Center for Migration Research, 2017). This shows the drastic effects of political polarization in Turkey.

An interesting finding that can be useful for explaining the ways in which Islamization of everyday life works is that women that were interviewed sometimes had to pretend they are religious in order to fit into the group. With the increased visibility of religion, in some cases, they are worried they might be excluded if they don't have the same characteristics as the majority of the population.

However, by adapting to the norms of the majority, there is a possibility for norms to become rules. This is well illustrated on the example of the teacher who said that in the past she sometimes pretended to be fasting on her work-place during Ramadan because she didn't want to be judged by her colleagues. However, over time school canteens were closed during Ramadan, so now she doesn't have any choice to buy food or drink in this period. In future studies, it would be interesting to explore the relation of social mimicry and Islamization since this can explain how social norms and rules are changed in a passive way.

The women that were interviewed observed an interesting change in Turkish society. In their opinion personal achievements and results are not being of the same significance as before. They have an impression that religious beliefs, cultural, and political identity became more important for climbing on the social ladder than other personal traits. This is particularly significant because it can further deteriorate female employment. As we could see throughout the study, employed women often have to work harder and to prove themselves as a good worker in order to build a carrier. It is mostly their achievements that allow them a possibility to improve their carrier and socio-economic position. It is well shown by the fact that women in Turkey without higher education have a lower chance to get employed than men with the same level of education (Sancar & Bulut, 2006). In a situation where cultural factors become more important for getting a job, women might be disadvantaged because of the traditional cultural heritage of Turkish society.

The employed women that were interviewed experienced different moral and economic difficulties in their first years of motherhood. They all needed the support of their wider family, particularly their mothers, in order to find time for work, household, and taking care of kids. This also goes in line with other studies that have found that unavailability of child care in Turkey makes working women rely on the help of others to take care of their children while they are at work (Sunar, 2005).

Although they had to take care of household and children, without the support of the country, all of them said they needed to work in order to have enough financial stability. However, they've experienced negative attitudes from their workmates because they are employed mothers. They needed to work harder than others and to prove themselves on their job so they can be accepted and treated as equal.

In the last years, the participants of the study experienced more pressure towards women than before. Mostly, this is attributed to the AKP's pro-natal policies. They think the leading party promotes the identity of the mother instead of an independent woman. Gender roles are being reconsidered, and in this process, women are not supported as colleagues, professionals, and contributing members of the society, but only as housewives and mothers. However, the participants of the study emphasize there is a lack of economic opportunities in the country. Because of this, it is hardly possible for a woman to become a mother if she is not working, especially if she is a single mother.

This study comes with certain limitations. First of all, qualitative studies have some disadvantages over employing quantitative methods. The findings of qualitative studies can't be extended to the wider population with the same degree of certainty as qualitative studies because the findings can't be statistically tested (Atieno, 2009). Moreover, qualitative studies are performed on small samples and this makes attempts to generalize the findings even more difficult.

However, the aim of this study was to explore the experiences and perceptions of employed mothers in order to help us to understand the process of Islamization and its impact on human lives more deeply. Since there is a lack of previous research studies on this topic, our aim was to explore potential factors that can help us to understand the ways in which employed mothers experience the effects of Islamization. In the future, it could be useful to repeat this

study while focusing on more concise topics that are related to employed mothers and difficulties they are facing in contemporary Turkey under the Islamization process.

6.0 Conclusion

As we could see, at the beginning of the XX century Ataturk's reforms gave rights to women they've lacked for ages. They were finally allowed to get educated, employed, and elected as state representatives. However, since Ataturk's modernization was family-centered, women were still expected to perform their household duties and to be good wives and mothers. Although they got legal rights that can make them equal to men, Turkey's society continued to employ patriarchal ideology because of which many women in Turkey still have a lower level of education, employment, and generally lower socio-economic position as men.

Although there are macroeconomic factors that have an effect on female socio-economic status, one of the most important things that disrupt their socio-economic position are patriarchal societal norms and values in Turkish society. Especially in the countryside where Islam still plays an important role in the societal organization, women take traditional roles and govern the private sphere of life, while men are perceived as breadwinners.

The legal rights women enjoy since the 1920s are mostly related to assertive secularization of the state imposed by Kemal Ataturk. Most researchers would agree that it was the process of secularization that allowed women to become equal to men in a country with a predominantly Muslim population at the beginning of the XX century. Still, since the 1950s we can see signs of Islamic revivalism in Turkey, and since the AKP started to rule the country, Islamization of society is becoming more overt.

In this context, I conducted a phenomenological study with five employed mothers from Turkey in order to explore their experiences related to the phenomenon of Islamization. The participants of this study have experienced deep polarization of the society, meritocracy being replaced with ideology, and increasing pressure on women. Polarization of society is perceived as a division of population on those who are religious and those who are secular, but also on supporters of AKP and those who are not.

Further, the employed mothers have experienced everything becoming more politicized than before, and ideology becoming more important for personal success than individual qualities and results.

Finally, the participants of the study are experiencing much more pressure from society than before. They have a feeling that a state pressures them to become mothers without providing them with enough economic opportunities. On their workplace, they are dealing with negative attitudes because they are working mothers, and they constantly need to prove themselves worthy of their job position.

References/Bibliography

- Akyol, Mustafa (2007), Turkey's Liberal Islam and How It Came to Be. *Turkish Policy Quarterly*, 7 (1), 77-87.

- Altinkas E. (2014), Islam and modernity: The case of Turkey and the Welfare party. *QScience Connect*, 2014:14   http://dx.doi.org/10.5339/connect.2014.14

- Alaranta, T. (2015). *Turkey Under the AKP: A Critical Evaluation From the Perspective of Turkey's EU Negotiations.* Helsinki: The Finnish Institute of International Affairs.

- Arik, H. (2012). Speaking of Women? Exploring Violence against Women through Political Discourses: A Case Study of Headscarf Debates in Turkey. *e-cadernos ces* [Online]. Retrieved April 31, 2019, from : http://journals.openedition.org/eces/1009

- Arslan, P. & Yildirim, S. (2015). Theoretical Frameworks, Methods, and Procedures for Conducting Phenomenological Studies in Educational Settings. *Turkish Online Journal of Qualitative Inquiry*. 6(1), pp. 1-20.

- Astalin, P. K. (2013). Qualitative Research Designs: A Conceptual Framework. *International Journal of Social Science & Interdisciplinary Research*, 2(1), pp. 118-124.

- Aydin, S. & Çakır, R. (2007). Political Islam in Turkey, presented at "Political Islam and the European Union Conference", Seville, 2006. Brussels: CEPS.

- Ayoob, M. (2008). *The many faces of political Islam: religion and politics in the Muslim world*. Michigan: Univeristy of Michigan.

- Barret, D. & Twycross, A. (2018). Data collection in qualitative research. *Evidence-Based Nursing*, 21 (3), pp. 63-64.

- Bayat, A. (1996). The coming of a post-Islamist Society. *Critique: Critical Middle Eastern Studies*, 5(9), pp. 43-52.

- Biernacki, P. and Waldorf, D. (1981). Snowball Sampling: Problems and Techniques of Chain Referral Sampling. *Sociological Methods & Research*, 10, 141-163.

-

- Bilgi University Center for Migration Research (2017). *Dimensions of Polarization in Turkey*. Istanbul: Bilgi University Center for Migration Research

- Braun, V. and Clarke, V. (2006) Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3 (2). pp. 77-101.

- Bourdieu, P. (1984). Distinction: *A social critique of the judgment of taste*. Harvard: Harvard University Press

- Carvalho, J.P. (2009). A Theory of the Islamic Revival. Economic Series Working Papers, University of Oxford, 424.

- Cebeci, T. (2015). *Gender Earnings Gap in the Formal Labor Market in Turkey (Report No. 102014-TR)*. Washington: World Bank.

- Celikoglu et al (2009). *Female Labor Force Participation in Turkey: Trends, Determinants and Policy Framework (Report No 48508-TR)*. Washington: The World Bank.

- Cindoglu, D. (2003). Bridging the gender gap in Turkey: A milestone towards faster socio-economic development and poverty reduction. *Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Unit, Europe and Central Asia Region, OECD.*

- Cirakman, A. (2002). *From the «Terror of the World» to the «Sick Man of Europe»*. New York: Peter Lang Inc.

- Cornell, et al., (2015). *Turkey Transformed: The Origins and Evolution of Authoritarianism and Islamization Under the AKP.* Washington: Bipartisan Policy Center

- Dağı, I. (2008). *AK Party survives Closure case; What is next?* SETA Foundation for Political, Economic and Social Research: Policy Brief No.19.

- Das, L. (2017). Are there Women in the Labor Market: the Role of State and Patriarchy in Neoliberal Turkey. *Asian Journal of Middle Eastern and Islamic Studies*, 11(2), pp. 107-120

- Durakbaşa A. & Karapehlivan, F. (2018). Progress and Pitfalls in Women's Education in Turkey (1839-2017*). Encounters in Theory and History of Education*, Vol. 19, pp. 70-89.

- Edelman et al., (2015). *Turkey Transformed: The Origins and Evolution of Authoritarianism and Islamization under the AKP.* Washington: Bipartisan Policy Center

- Englander, M. (2012). The Interview: Data Collection in Descriptive Phenomenological Human Scientific Research. *Journal of Phenomenological Psychology*, 43, pp. 13-35.

- Erdemir, H. (2007). *Turkish Political History*. İzmir: Manisa Ofset.

- Esposito, J. L. (1999). *The Oxford History of Islam*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

- Etikan, I., Musa, S. A., & Alkassim, R. S. (2016). Comparison of Convenience Sampling and Purposive Sampling. *American Journal of Theoretical and Applied Statistics,* 5(1), pp. 1-4.

- Genc, S. & Sengul G. (2015). *On the Future of Female Employment in Turkey.* Working Paper. Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey.

- Harrell, M.C & Bradley, M.A. (2009). *Data Collection Methods: Semi-Structured Interview and Focus Groups*. Santa Monica: RAND National Defense Research Institute.

- Jenking, G. (2008). *Political Islam in Turkey: Running West, Heading East.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan

- Kandiyoti, A. D. (1987), Emancipated but Unliberated? Reflections on the Turkish Case. *Feminist Studies*, 13:2, pp. 317-338.

- Kazanoglu, N. (2019). Work and Family Life Reconciliation Policies in Work and Turkey: Europeanisation or Ottomanisation. *Soc. Sci.*, (8)2, pp 36-49.

- Köni, H. Rosli, N. & Zin, A. M, (2015). History of Islamic Political Movements in Turkey. *Asian Social Science*, 11(10).

- Kruger, D. (1988). *An introduction to phenomenological psychology* (2nd ed.). Cape Town, South Africa: Juta.

- Kuru, T. A. (2007), Passive and Assertive Secularism: Historical Conditions, Ideological Struggles, and State Policies toward Religion. *World Politics*, 59 (4), pp. 568-594.

- Langdridge, D. (2007). *Phenomenological psychology: Theory, research and method*. Harlow: Pearson Education.

- Lester, S. (1999). An introduction to phenomenological research. Taunton UK, Stan Lester Developments. Retrieved from http://www.sld.demon.co.uk/resmethy.pd

- Lin, C-S. (2013). Revealing the 'Essence" of things: Using phenomenology in LIS research. *Qualitative and Quantitative Methods in Libraries (QQML)*, 4, pp. 469-478.

- Maguire, M., & Delahunt, B. (2017). Doing a thematic analysis: A practical, step-by-step guide for learning and teaching scholars. *AISHE-J: The All Ireland Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, 9(3), 3351-33514. Retrieved from http://ojs.aishe.org/aishe/index.php/aishe-j/article/viewFile/335/553

- Mandel, J., & Parija, S. C. (2014). Informed consent in research. *Tropical Parasitology*, 4(2), 78–79.

- Müftüler-Bac, M. (1999), Turkish Women's Predicament. *Women's Studies International Forum*, 22(3), 303-315.

- Özsoy, C & Altama, S. (2010). An Analysis of Trends in Female Labor Force Participation in Turkey presented at Proceedings of the Challenges for Analysis of the Economy, the Businesses, and Social Progress International Scientific Conference, Szeged, 2009. Szeged: Unidocument Kft.

- Palabiyik, M. S. (2018). Politicization of recent Turkish history: (ab)use of history as a political discourse in Turkey. *Turkish Studies*, 19:2, pp. 240-263.

- Palys, T. (2008). Purposive sampling. In L.M. Given (Ed.), *The Sage Encyclopedia of Qualitative Research Methods. (Vol.2)*. Sage: Los Angeles, pp. 697-8.

- Perchoc, P. (2016). *Turkey since the failed July 2016 coup*. Brussels: The European Parliamentary Research Service.

- Rabasa, A. & Larrabee, S. (2008), *The Rise of Political Islam in Turkey*. Santa Monica: RAND Corporation.

- Ritchie, J., Lewis, J., Nicholls, C. M., & Ormston, R. (2013). *Qualitative Research Practice: A Guide for Social Science Students and Researchers*. Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications

- Saktanber, A. (2018). *Living Islam: Women, Religion and the Politicization of Culture in Turkey.* New York: I.B. Tauris.

- Sancar, S. & Bulut. A. (2006). *Turkey: Country Gender Profile*. Ankara: Directory of Women Studies Center.

- Sarfati, Y. (2012). *Mobilizing Religion in Middle East Politics: A Comparative Study of Israel and Turkey.* Abingdon: Routledge.

- Schirrmacher, C. (2008). Islam and Society Sharia Law – Jihad – Women in Islam Essays. *The WEA Global Issues Series*, Volume 4. Bonn: Verlag für Kultur und Wissenschaft Culture and Science Publ.

- Shahnazarian D., Hagemann J., Aburto, M., and Rose, S. (2013). *What is informed consent? Informed concent in human subjects research.* Los Angeles: Office for the Protection of Research Subjects.

- Somer, M. (2007). Moderate Islam and Secularist Opposition in Turkey: Implications for the World, Muslims and Secular Democracy. *Third World Quarterly*, 28 (7), pp. 1271-1289.

- Sunata, U. (2014), State Policies and the Women's Body: The Turkish Case. *Analize-Journal of Gender and Feminist Studies*, 16 (2), pp. 73-96.

- Sunar, D. (2005). Contemporary Turkish Families, In: Gielen & J. Roopnarine (Eds.), *Families in global perspective*, London: Pearson, pp. 169-183.

- Theron, P. (2015). Coding and data analysis during qualitative empirical research in Practical Theology. *In die Skriflig/In Luce Verbi, 49*(3), 9 pages.

- Tuğal, C. (2009). *Passive Revolution: Absorbing the Islamic Challenge to Capitalism*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

- United Nations (2003). *Violence against Women in Turkey: A Report to the Committee against Torture*. Washington: United Nations Committee against Torture.

- Ünsal, A. (1979). Ataturk's Reforms: Realization of An Utopia by a Realist. *The Turkish Yearbook of International Relations*, 19, 27-57.

- Wagner, M. M. (2016), The Decline of Women's Rights in Turkey: Is it Political Islam...or Tayyip? *Undergraduate Honors Theses*. 1069. https://scholar.colorado.edu/honr_theses/1069

- White, B. J. (2003). State Feminism, Modernization, and the Turkish Republican Woman. *NWSA Journal*, 15(3), pp. 145-159.

- World Economic Forum (2018). *The Global Gender Gap Report*. Cologny/Geneva: World Economic Forum.

- Yetisgin, M. (2007). The Ottoman way of governing multi-ethnic and multi-religious communities. *Ankara Üniversitesi Osmanli Tarihi Arastirma ve Uygulama Merkezi Dergisi* 21: 135–168.

- Yilmaz, K. (2013). Comparison of quantitative and qualitative research traditions: Epistemological, theoretical, and methodological differences. *European Journal of Education*, 48 (2), 311-325.

Appendix 1. Interview Guide

Demographic questions:

Age:

City:

Occupation:

The highest level of education:

Marital status:

A number of children:

At what age you started working:

How would you rate your economic status from 1 to 10?

Questions about work:

1. Please describe when and how did you get your first job?

2. How important was it for you to build a carrier? Why? Who helped you the most in this process?

3. In your opinion, is it possible for a woman to be independent if she is not employed and not earning money? Please explain why you think so.

4. Please explain how did you manage to balance work and childbearing in the first 3 years of becoming a mother?

5. Who supported you the most during this phase of your life and what were the difficulties you were facing?

6. Did you ever experience a negative attitude from others because you are an employed mother? By whom? How did it manifest itself?

7. If you had enough financial stability, would you prefer quitting your job and focusing solely on your family? Please explain why you think so.

8. How would you react if your partner wanted you to quit your job and focus solely on caring about household?

Questions about politics:

1. What are, in your opinion, the biggest problems Turkish women are facing nowadays?

3. According to you, what were the good sides and what were the bad sides of Atatürk's legacy?

1. What are the observed changes that happened in Turkish society since AKP came to power?

4. According to you, what are the good things and what are the bad things that happened since AKP came to rule in Turkey?

6. Do you think the leading party in Turkey (AKP) cares about women issues? Please explain.

5. Do you think the leading party in Turkey (AKP) provides support to working mothers? Please explain.

2. Do you think it is easier to be an employed mother now than in the past 15 years? Please explain.

3. What are the biggest obstacles you encountered as a working mother in the past ten years?

4. How do you see Turkey in the next ten years? Do you think it will be harder or easier for women to pursue education and find a job? Please explain your answer.

6. Do you support Turkey joining the EU? Please explain why?

Questions about religion and culture:

1. Are you religious? How important is the religion for your life?

2. Do you think Islam has a significant role in Turkish political life? How does it manifest itself? What is your opinion about it?

2. Do you think the veiled woman should be allowed entrance to the University and public institutions? Please explain why you have this opinion.

3. Are there women that are wearing headscarves at your workplace? How do see this if you compare it with the period before it was not allowed?

4. Do you think Islamic studies should be obligatory in public school? Please explain your answer.

3. What do you think about the social position of women in countries that have Sharia law such as Saudi Arabia? According to you, what are the similarities and differences if you compare it with contemporary Turkey?

4. Do you think it is possible for Turkey to become an Islamic State in the next few decades? Why do you think so?

5. Do you think there is a negative or positive attitude towards Western culture in Turkey? What do you think about this? Please explain the reasons.

Appendix 2. Informed Consent
CONSENT AGREEMENT

You are being invited to participate in a research study about the effects of Islamist revivalism on the position of working women in Turkey. This research is being conducted by Mustafa Senyuva for the purpose of writing a master thesis on Nord University. This study is aimed to explore how working mothers perceive the latest changes in contemporary Turkish society.

Participation in this research is voluntary and anonymous. Your personal details such as name and any other information that can reveal your true identity will not be used in the paper. The interviews will be auido recorded and parts of the conversation will be quoted in the paper, but the researcher will not use any part of the conversation that can reveal your personal information or make someone identify you.

Feel free to answer the questions honestly and thoroughly, since it will help us to get more scientific knowledge about the social changes in Turkish society and its impact on working mothers.

You can withdraw from the interview at any time. Also, if you need any clarifications or explanations, you can contact the interviewer at any moment.

Thank you for deciding to participate in this study!

_____   _____

(Researcher)   (Interviewee)

_____

(Date)