


The Motherhood Experiences of Women Employees: An Interpretive Field Study in Turkey*

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ABSTRACT

Motherhood is an extensive research topic that can be seen in different disciplines. Problems arising from motherhood are the main research questions of this research. Social constructivism has been chosen as a philosophical basis of the research in order to understand subjective motherhood experiences of female employees through their self-expressions. According to social constructivism individuals try to make sense of the world they live in. Social constructivist theory discusses motherhood as a social construct which constructed by members of a particular society or culture, not as a fundamental feature of women or secondary product of social structure.

Phenomenological research approach has been chosen with qualitative research design. Participants of this study consist of 33 married working mothers with 0-6 years old children in Turkey. For sampling method, snowball sampling method was used as a purposive sampling strategy. Qualitative data is gathered by using an unstructured interview form with 13 questions. Qualitative data were analyzed using content analysis method. According to research findings, the first priority of working mothers is motherhood. Keeping a balance between motherhood and work is a real challenge for working mothers. Working mothers also experience various problems.

Keywords: *Motherhood, working mothers, women employees, gender, Turkey*

INTRODUCTION

This research aims to understand motherhood experiences of married women employees with 0-6 years old children in Turkey. The main research problem is to find out how motherhood phenomenon influences women's working life and which problems they experience.

In the motherhood issues, there are limited studies about working mothers' experiences in Turkey (Topgöl, 2016; Küçükşen ve Kaya, 2016; Sürgevil-Dalkılıç, 2015; Ünlütürk-Ulutaş, 2015; Metin & Kariman, 2013; Negiz & Tokmakçı, 2011; Gökdemirel et al. 2008; Eken, 2005; Aycan, 2004). According to a qualitative research of Sürgevil-Dalkılıç (2015), working mothers experience bias, psychological pressure, discriminatory behaviors at workplace. Physical conditions are insufficient and they cannot get enough support from the institutions. Therefore this study aims to bring contributions to the

field through creating awareness for working mothers' problems. By this means women's work life problems can be understood more easily by their self-expression and find solution to their problems. Accordingly, the needs and expectations of working mothers can be more fulfill by investigating this topic (for instance increasing postpartum maternity leave from four months to six months). Also the study has the potential to provide a basis for further studies in Turkey concerning working mothers.

Arendell (2000) explained that studies dealing with motherhood are concentrated in four areas which are 1. Meanings and identities, 2. Relationships, 3. Experiences and activities, 4. Social locations and structural context. First, the issues in the study of motherhood meanings and identities are; how women feel as being mother, how they make sense of motherhood, how they combine maternity duties and responsibilities

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with their working life, whether they have experienced identity struggles, what they experienced after being mother, how they balance their emotional, relational, economic and health urgent needs and how they perceive mothering activities. Secondly, studies dealing with maternal relations are; mother-child relationship, the relationship between the necessity of mothers and the needs and well-being of children, how maternal power is perceived and experienced and for what purpose it is used and how gender and family policies are generally reconciled. Thirdly, studies dealing with maternal experiences and activities are; mothers' duties and responsibilities, mothers' character in daily life, how mothers performed their child-raising activities, contributing of lived changes to mother and child development, how women are influenced by motherhood and how this influence promotes the growth and development of the child, the maturity and change of the mother, what are all behaviors and attitudes of mothers, how mothers experienced and managed emotional complexity and instability, how biology adapts to maternal activities and experiences. Finally, the topics studied in terms of social position and social context are; how women resist the dominant motherhood and family ideologies, how mothering is adapted to changeable gender politics, how mothering is influenced by increasing global capitalism and local products and service economies, how the region influenced maternal actions, for example, what it means to raise children in rural areas, in big cities, and among immigrants, how women mediate between their children and others, how they act as intermediaries between family units and other institutions, how women cooperate with other people in mothering activities and get support from others, how women make room for men about motherhood and what are the activities of motherhood and mothering in terms of political economy (Arendell, 2000, pp.1201-1202).

According to TUIK (2017) (Turkish statistical institute) labor statistics data in Turkey, in terms of actively participate in the labor market, the employment rate for women in 2017 was 29% while the employment rate was 65.6% for men. The employment of women by occupational groups in 2017 those who work in jobs that do not require qualification came first in 20.6%. Managers are in the last place with 2.4% in female employment. Economic and social factors that create obstacles to the employment of women are gender based wage gap, education, women-men business phenomenon, patriarchal structure, family responsibilities, child care and marriage (Özcan, 2019). According

to research by Ilkkaracan (2010) in Turkey, there are no kindergarten facilities for children under 3 years of age. In Turkey, the proportion of working mothers who take care of their children under 6 years of age is 28% and the rate of grandmothers is 17% (Kapucugil-İkiz, 2015). According to Turkey Demographic and Health Survey (2014) (TNSA) results, the ratio of working women who leave work because of pregnancy or child care is 14%.

In this study it is found that married working mothers experience various problems and difficulties at work and family life. As Sürgevil-Dalkılıç (2015, p.409; Seçer, 2010) explained working mothers tries to adapt to the intensive motherhood ideology of the society and fulfill the requirements of working life organized by male employees.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In conceptual framework of the study, motherhood phenomenon and working mothers will be explained and following intensive motherhood ideology will be discussed. In this study social-constructivist approach constitutes theoretical framework. According to social-constructivism, individuals develop subjective meanings to their experiences. Meanings are shaped in interaction and relationship process (Creswell, 2014).

Motherhood phenomenon

The concept of motherhood is defined as having a dynamic structure that can change with social interactions and relationships. Motherhood is also associated with negative concepts such as stress, depression, anxiety and pressure imposed on women as well as happiness and self-realization feelings in terms of social roles, because of increased workload and economic factors (Arendell, 2000, pp.1193-1196).

Becoming a mother is a primary responsibility for the fulfillment and needs of a child coming to the world and a role prepares the child for emotional, intellectual and social life (McMahon, 2004; Ridgeway & Correll, 2004). Although both parents are responsible for the child's cognitive, emotional and personality development, the responsibility is often borne by their mothers (Holden & Edwards, 1989). In traditional gender-based division of labor, childbearing, child rearing and dealing with housework are accepted as women's duties. Working in the market and earning money is considered the main duty of men (Özer & Biçerli, 2003). According to Metin & Kariman (2013), in Turkey working hours are not flexible, leave policies are insufficient and child care services are inadequate

and inaccessible for women employees. Paid paternity leave is new development and only ten days in Turkey for men employees. (Kapucugil-ikiz, 2015). As stated by Koray's study (2009), the patriarchal social structure and work and role distribution reveal inequalities in working life. Difficulties in working life, discrimination, obstacles in family life can have negative consequences for women participating in employment. New understanding and policies should be developed on child care with the increase in the family structures of female and male dual income. Even in the most developed countries, housework and childcare are largely women's responsibility. Women are expected to take these roles and women make self-sacrifices in working life (Koray, 2009).

Feminist perspectives criticize the view that the division of labour has biological basis, on the grounds that there is no natural or inevitable task sharing in society. According to feminists, there is no biological basis that prevents women from having a work and people are socialized according to the roles expected from them culturally. Feminist theories explain gender inequalities through social processes such as sexism, patriarchy and capitalism within society (Giddens, 2012, p.517). It is stated in the feminist approach that child care and housework roles and responsibilities should be shared between men and women thus a more equitable situation can be provided (Eken, 2005; Giddens, 2012).

Feminist constructors have also explored the ideology of motherhood. Feminists focus on the relationship of interest between mother and child. In fact, this relationship of interest is formed not only between mother and child, but also in all social domains and relationships (Arendell, 2000).

The feminist researcher, Nancy Chodorow (1978) uses the psychoanalytic framework to investigate the complex role that women play as a mother in society in her theoretical explanation on "The Reproduction of Mothering" book. Chodorow (1978) argues that motherhood is not of biological origin. Women as mothers are important actors in the field of social reproduction. Psycho-social factors (gender identity development, different socio-relational experiences with mother during infancy, mothering instinct, nature of femininity) are the main factors leading women to become mothers. In terms of psycho-social factors, maternity does not occur unless the woman has a sense of seeing herself as a mother.

Intensive motherhood ideology

According to Hays (1996), intensive motherhood is a completely child-oriented, personal and time-consuming concept and it requires sensuality. Within the scope of this ideology, the woman is a good mother by devoting herself to her child and pushing her wishes and needs into the background. Mothers should spend more time, physical and emotional energy and money compared to fathers in child-raising (Beets, Liefbroer, & De Jong Gierveld 1997). While ideology is changing toward a less traditional way, it is still expected that women will work less outside the home and have more intensive motherhood at home (Pas, Peters, Eisinga, Doorewaard, & Janssen, 2011, p.490). In addition, ideology assumes and strengthens traditional gender-based division of labor. Arendell (2000, p.1194) discussed that there are two approaches to intensive motherhood ideology: Universalist approach (maternal practices/activities) and another particularistic approach. The Universalist approach is based on maternal practices and activities. Motherhood is stated as a combination of individual and intercultural forms of action (Arendell, 2000; Phoenix, Woollett, & Lloyd, 1991; Ruddick, 1994). Another intensive motherhood ideology approach is a particularistic approach. Motherhood is not a universal relationship between women and children, but an individual, special, fundamental activity that must be considered separately from economic conditions (Arendell, 2000). This study is discussed within the scope of intensive motherhood ideology.

Working mothers

Dillaway & Pare (2008, p.444) explained working motherhood as an alternative to intensive motherhood ideology. Working mothers became popular in the ideological sense at the beginning of the 1970s, early 1980s and was considered feminist ideal. It refers to a mother who evokes a female image of career-oriented (lawyer, doctor, CEO) and works 40 hours or more per week outside the home despite various difficulties.

There is an opinion comparable to the "ideal employee" profile for working mothers in the business world. In male-dominated working conditions of the business world, an ideal worker is defined as a person who works full-time, continues his career until his retirement after completing the training process and does not allow to conflict family responsibilities with work. Working mothers do not fully comply with this ideal employee profile because of their interruption work even after a short period of time and sometimes cannot prevent

their family life from getting ahead of business life. Additionally, while the working woman tries to meet social expectations of the mother by reducing continuous and full-time working conditions she is also accused on account of the fact that she is not committed to work and has experienced declines in productivity (Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007).

Working mothers have difficulties in establishing work-family balance (Negiz & Tokmakçı, 2011, Küçükşen & Kaya, 2016). As a result of research by Özmete & Eker (2013) in public sector, individuals mostly use the strategy of making a good business plan in order to cope with work-family life conflict. Getting paid help for the child-care is the most common strategy. The research revealed that age and number of children determine the strategies used to cope with work-family conflict. According to the results of Topgül's (2016) research with women bank employees, long working hours may be problem in the balance of work-family life. In the care of young kids support of relatives plays important role in work-family balance for women.

RESEARCH METHOD

In this study, qualitative research was considered as the most suitable method in terms of research topic and questions. According to Creswell (2014, p.4), qualitative research is an approach to understand and discover the meaning of individuals or groups to social or human problems. Features of qualitative research method as questions and procedures shape in the research process, data are usually collected in the environment of participants, qualitative data analysis is inductive to reach general theme, researcher interpret the meaning of data and focus on individual meanings and finally, the research report has a flexible structure.

Creswell (2014) explains four different philosophical points of views that may be essential to qualitative research: post-positivism, structuralism (constructivism), transformative and pragmatism (utilitarianism). The researcher intends to understand and interpret the meaning of the world of others. According to social-constructivist approach individuals develop subjective meanings to their own experiences. Meanings are shaped in interaction and relationship process with others. Social-constructivist approach constitutes a theoretical framework and philosophical assumption in this research.

The main problem of this research is to find out how being a mother influences working life of women. The

basic research question is "How are women's experiences of motherhood in private and working life?"

Research design

In this research phenomenological approach was chosen as a qualitative research design from Creswell's (2007) five strategies. Phenomenological research explores the meanings of experiences which a large group of individuals experiences with a concept or phenomenon. It aims to reach a similar understanding from individual experiences and defines "what they experience" and "how they experience" (Creswell, 2007). The Phenomenological method may not produce definitive and generalized results in accordance with the nature of qualitative research. Within this framework in this study, how working women experience with motherhood and how they experience it are examined.

Participants

An in-depth, face to face interview was conducted with 33 (3 pilot studies) married working mothers with children aged 0-6 years in this research. Data were collected by using a snowball sampling method from purposeful sampling types frequently used in qualitative researches. According to Polkinghorne (1989), in phenomenological research by in-depth interviews with 5 to 25 participants who have experienced the same phenomena are sufficient for sample size. For example Gökdemirel et al. (2008) interviewed 10 working mothers to examine the working mothers breastfeeding experiences and the influence of employer attitudes in an university hospital in Istanbul. For this purpose, by considering working mothers with small children are rich sources of data because of their more problems and difficulties in working lives, they were included in this study. All of the participants are married working mothers. Participants working mothers ages are from 28 to 49 years old. Out of 33 participants 28 are working in public sector while only 5 participants are workers for the private sector. Most public employees are academicians in a university. The job experience of the public employees ranges from six months to twenty five years. Professions of participants are academician, teacher, officer, operation assistant, project manager, business associates specialist, administrative specialist, sales manager, computer manager, health technician.

Data collection procedure

Face to face and in-depth individual interviews were conducted as a data collection method. Based on relevant literature and research purpose, an unst-

ructured interview form consisting of 13 open-ended questions was formed. According to Creswell (2007, p.61), in-depth interviews with participants and using open-ended questions are an appropriate method for phenomenological research. Interview form begins with explanations and consists of 7 questions about motherhood perception and experiences in private life, 6 questions about motherhood experiences in working life and finally demographic questions. A pilot study with 3 participants was carried out between August and September to ensure functionality of interview questions before research. Interviews were conducted from October to March for 5 months with 33 participants (including 3 pilot studies) in order to obtain rich and diverse data sources. Each of the interviews took approximately 30-45 minutes. All interviews were recorded with permission for voice recording to ensure the validity of the research and records were transcribed. After the interview, a total of 216 pages of the raw data set was acquired. Researcher got an appointment from all participants before the interview and volunteer participation was provided. Interview questions were asked verbally to each participant in the same way. All interviews were conducted once with each participant by the same researcher because of the working environment and working hours.

Qualitative data analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research means diversity, creativity, and flexibility. At the same time, every qualitative research has different characteristics and requires new approaches in data analysis (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p.253).

Creswell (2014, p.197) generally explained data analysis in qualitative research step by step as follows:

- Raw data (transcripts, field notes, images)
- Preparing and organizing data for analysis
- Reading all of the data
- Encoding of data (by hand or computer program)
- Reaching the themes and descriptions
- Associating themes and descriptions (grounded theory, case study)
- Interpretation of the meaning of themes/descriptions. In addition in all these processes, accuracy and validity of the data must be ensured.

This qualitative study is conducted with content analysis. Through content analysis, it is tried to identify the data and to reveal the facts that may be hidden in

the data (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p.259). According to Creswell (2014) philosophical points of views, social-constructivist approach constitutes a theoretical framework and philosophical assumption to better understand married working mothers experiences.

Limitations of the study

Limitations of the study are inexperience of the researcher's in qualitative study, due to the nature of qualitative research results cannot be generalized and limited only to responses of participants, difficulty in reaching participants, practical difficulties and barriers of communication, small sample size, interviewing participants in their work environment and during work hours.

Validity and reliability of study

According to Creswell (2007), validity in qualitative studies is an attempt to assess the accuracy of the findings. It is also a way to ensure validity to spend a long time in the field, to make detailed descriptions and researcher's intimacy to the participants. However, voice recordings and transcripts are used to provide reliability. Importance of perceptions and sensitivity of the natural environment the main features of qualitative research causes problems about reliability. Besides human behavior is not static, it has changeable and complex nature. For this reason, regardless of the method, research on social events is not possible to reinvestigate. In the qualitative approach, a different interpretation of the same data by different researchers is usual (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p.293). Creswell (2014) stated that in phenomenological research multiple approaches are used to ensure the validity of findings and multiple perspectives and expressions of participants are included.

Within this framework, strategies to ensure the validity and reliability of this study are by voice recordings, accuracy of transcripts and participant expressions, data collection by long period of time in field, participants' expression with comprehensive descriptions, social constructivist philosophical approach, in-depth interviews, different expressions and interpretations, qualitative data analysis and results by expert confirmation, similar data collection processes, purposeful sampling method.

FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

In this study, based on the research and interview questions, content analysis was carried out from quali-

tative data analysis methods. 2*2 matrices were created for each interview question and important expressions of participants to interview question were included in the matrices to compare the expressions of participants. By examining similarities and differences of expressions, the most frequently cited by participants to interview questions were coded. Themes were set on the basis of interview questions. The content and meaning of the important expressions reflecting the essence of the motherhood experiences of participants were coded and these codes were grouped according to their similarities. In terms of research ethics, participants were coded as P1, P2, P3 P33 and their expressions were included by these codes.

The findings of the study are addressed in 3 upper themes as main titles: Findings of participant profiles, findings of motherhood perception and experiences in private life, findings of maternal experiences in working life. For detailed description all themes as a table form and participant expressions for each theme are presented.

1. Findings of participant profiles

According to participant profile based on demographic information, from 33 participants (included 3 pilot studies) consisted of 30 married working mothers live in Ankara/Turkey, 3 married working mothers live in other cities in Turkey with 0-6 years old children. Most of participants (28 out of 33) work in public institutions. Participants’ ages are in the range of 28-49 years. Most

of participants have one child and participants have various professions for example academician, sales manager, officer.

2. Findings of motherhood perception and experiences in private life

Findings related to motherhood perception and experiences in private life which determined on the basis of interview questions were thematized 7 sub-themes as meaning of being mother, life priority, internal-external support in child care, motherhood responsibilities, social culture, work-family balance, influences of working mother on child, in terms of married working mothers in Turkey.

Theme 1. Meaning of being mother

In the interview questions about the meaning of being mother, the most frequently expressed meaning by participants is “very nice feeling” (22 out of 33 participants) and “responsibility” (11 participants out of 33). Each participant has her own unique motherhood expressions and they have multiple different meaning to her motherhood.

P17: “Being a mother is a very nice feeling. First I want to say it. It’s very pure, but incredibly difficult because of their responsibilities. Children are like a part of your life, you are interested in everything related to them. There are material and spiritual difficulties according to old, but it is very nice how it is told, if the children are injured you will feel very sorry, I say so”.

Table 1: Meaning of Being Mother

Meaning of being mother	Participants	Frequency
Very nice feeling	P2,P3,P4,P5,P8,P9,P11,P12,P14,P17,P19,P20,P22,P23,P24,P25,P26,P27,P29,P31,P32,P33	22
Responsibility	P2,P7,P9,P11,P14,P15,P18,P24,P27,P28,P33.	11
Indefinable	P2,P3,P17,P20,P22,P23,P31,P32,P33.	9
Anxious and difficult	P6,P7,P8,P9,P15,P17,P24	7
Happiness	P6,P10,P14,P15,P25,P26,P28.	7
The meaning of life	P6,P13,P21,P22,P23,P25,P30.	7
Incomparable	P4,P5,P10,P20,P29,P32.	6
Love	P5,P7,P9,P24,P29.	5
Self- sacrifice	P1,P6,P9,P18,P21.	5
Maturing and developing	P2,P6,P8,P15.	4
Feeling every woman should have	P22,P23,P29,P31.	4
Natural process	P19,P25,P30.	3
Living and learning	P3,P5.	2
Understanding your own mother	P3,P5.	2
Patient	P4,P5.	2
Complex	P16	1

Theme 2. Life priority

Within the scope of the research question, mothers were asked whether their life priority was working women or mothering. 21 out of 33 participants mostly indicated that their priority was to be a mother.

P6: "So I try to balance two, but of course the priority is to be a mother, my child is in front of everything. But of course, this does not mean that I have left my work life behind as a working woman or do not care about my job. To be a mother is the priority but as a working woman, I also fulfill my responsibilities. But necessarily motherhood gets ahead of work".

Table 2: Life Priority

	Participants	Frequency (N=33)
Mothering	P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6,P7,P10,P11,P12,P13,P15,P20,P21,P22,P25,P26,P27,P28,P30,P31.	21
Prioritization, both	P8,P9,P17,P19,P23,P29,P33.	7
Maternity, but the obligation of the working mother	P14,P16,P18,P24,P32.	5

Theme 3. Internal-external support in child care

In interview question for internal and external support in child care and housework, all participant working mothers explained that they have received support from family members, pre-school, daycare center and caregiver for child care. Participants get the most (31 out of 33) support from their family members (such as grandmothers) then daycare center and finally caregiver support. Participants emphasized that daycare center are more reliable than caregivers and day care center are better in terms of childhood socialization and development. As a result, support from the internal and external environment is very substantial for working mothers.

P19: "I get a lot of support, both of my children are already in pre-school, there are caregivers, school support, relatives and there are my parents. I think they are very important in child care and so we need extensively support from all of them. So it influences widely the quality of your life. Maybe you need to be close to your family for their support. I really get great

support from outside and I'm very satisfied. I think it is nice to have the opportunity to get support".

Table 3: Internal-External Support in Child Care

	Participants	Frequency
Support from a family member	P1,P2,P3,P4,P6,P7,P8,P9,P10,P11,P13,P14,P15,P16,P17,P18,P19,P20,P21,P22,P23,P24,P25,P26,P27,P28,P29,P30,P31,P32,P33.	31
Daycare center or preschool	P1,P2,P5,P6,P7,P8,P10,P11,P12,P13,P14,P16,P17,P18,P19,P20,P22,P23,P24,P28,P29,P30,P33.	23
Caregiver	P2,P7,P9,P14,P15,P16,P19,P20,P21,P25,P26.	11
Help in housework	P5,P6,P8,P9,P10,P11,P18,P20,P23,P24.	10

Theme 4: Motherhood responsibilities

The majority of participants (19 out of 33) stated that they can cope with their motherhood responsibilities. Working mothers feel good for their motherhood responsibilities by establishing a good balance of responsibility, taking the job on the second plan, setting priorities well, getting support from family members.

P25: "Of course it's hard to be a working mother but I get certain support to fulfill my responsibilities. There is grandmother support, caregiver support, my husband is working less intensely than me so I think I can cope with my mothering responsibilities by the support. The most important thing is to give love to the child and to spend quality time with him/her. I think I can do these things".

Table 4: Motherhood Responsibilities

	Participants	Frequency (N=33)
Coping with maternal responsibilities	P1,P4,P5,P6,P10,P11,P12,P13,P14,P15,P16,P18,P19,P20,P22,P23,P25,P27,P33.	19
Unable to cope with maternal responsibilities	P2,P3,P7,P8,P9,P17,P21,P24,P26,P28,P29,P30,P31,P32.	14

Theme 5: Social culture

In the context of the social culture in Turkey, when asked participants whether social culture supports

mothering or working in Turkey, most of them (24 out of 33) emphasized that in Turkey social culture supports mothering. Participants stated that mothering was supported more in Turkish culture because of patriarchal/male-dominated social construction and priority responsibilities of motherhood. Participants also expressed that generally employers do not prefer women employees who are pregnant and mother.

P5: "I think with the patriarchal mentality we support mothering more as a society. So the majority of people priorities are motherhood I think, no matter how your career and job is high level. I mean, it seems to me that to neglect your motherhood responsibilities and to make a very good career and have a good job is not very acceptable in Turkish society. The first responsibility of a woman is motherhood and expectation from both wife and society is mothering than working".

Table 5: Social Culture

	Participants	Frequency (N=33)
Motherhood is supported	P4,P5,P6,P7,P8,P9,P10,P11,P12,P14,P15,P16,P19,P20,P22,P23,P24,P25,P26,P29,P30,P31,P32,P33.	24
Being a working woman is supported	P17,P18,P21.	3
Both are supported	P13,P27,P28.	3
Pilot study	P1,P2,P3.	3

Theme 6: Work-family balance

The majority of participant mothers (19 out of 33) stated it is difficult to balance between work and family life. In order to balance participants pointed out that they get support from family members, try to better manage time, try not to reflect work to home, make self-sacrifice, try to be planned and organized, determine their responsibilities and priorities well and try to spend quality time with their families.

P27: "I think my husband is very important to balance between work and family life. It would be more beneficial if the husband supports you both in your family and business life. To balance, of course, the work environment is also very important. I think there is a considerable influence on working in a peaceful way. Because it is important not to get tired of coming to

work from home or not to get tired of coming home from work. Sometimes in the house, small children have sleep insomnia at night and this can reflect to work. It is hard to balance but in a way, we have to balance between work and family life".

Table 6: Work-Family Balance

	Participants	Frequency (N=33)
Work-family balance is difficult	P1,P4,P5,P6,P7,P8,P9,P10,P11,P12,P13,P14,P15,P16,P17,P20,P25,P27,P28	19
Work-family balance is easy	P2,P3,P18,P19,P21,P22,P23,P24,P26,P29,P30,P31,P32,P33	14

Theme 7: Influences of working mother on child

Related to positive and negative influences of working mothers on the child, 33 participants explained that in the first years working mothers will have a negative influence on the child but in the coming years they will have a positive influence on child development.

P6: "The negative influence of working mothers on a child may be not to find mother close for the child. I have difficulties with limited time, but I think it can be adjusted to mother's job. Of course, the profession is very important here. But I think working mothers are better role models for their children. Because in front of a child there is a strong mother, a mother standing on her own feet can raise a child better. This does not mean that housewives cannot raise, I just look at myself as a working woman. So working mothers are more aware of what is happening in society and the world also they have better improved themselves therefore, I think that having such a conscious, they can also reflect this conscious to the child and they can raise a child with this consciousness. In addition, I think they can spend quality time for their children. There is also much more financial opportunities for mothers to offer their child."

3. Findings of maternal experiences in working life

Findings related to maternal experiences in working life which are determined on the basis of interview questions were thematized 6 sub-themes as complex feelings, motherhood's influence on work, workplace discrimination, legal rights of working mothers, institutional support mechanisms, difficulties and problems

in the workplace in terms of married working mothers in Turkey.

Theme 1: Complex feelings

Of the 33 participants, 24 working mothers expressed complex feelings while 9 participants stated not to have complex feelings. The most frequently emphasized expression by most participant mothers is time complexity.

P5:“Now, especially when I first started work, a few months ago, for example, I was feeling serious remorse. So I had to send kindergarten, child was about eighteen months old that it was too small when the kindergarten began. Especially during the first few weeks, it was very difficult, the first separation from the child was very difficult. He always in my mind, what did he do? Did you get there? Separated from me, so far the first time, what does he feel? Is he mad at me? How will he react when he gets home? So I had a conscious punishment. Therefore, the first thing I experienced was the conscience at that time. Surely I saw him happily, so I started to be happy. He gets ill in kindergarten since he is a small age and it is the first year, so now we have the worries about it too. That’s the way it is, the child is getting always frontal. But on the one hand, you have your job here and you like your job too, maybe I do not need financially work, but so working is psychologically satisfies me, something that makes me happy. But I have complexity feelings. Obviously, we are questioning ourselves”.

Table 7: Complex Feelings

	Participants	Frequency (N=33)
Experience complex feelings	P1,P2,P4,P5,P6,P7,P9,P10,P12,P13,P14,P16,P18,P20,P21,P22,P23,P24,P25,P27,P28,P30,P31,P33.	24
Not experience complex feelings	P3,P8,P11,P15,P17,P19,P26,P29,P32.	9

Theme 2: Motherhood’s influence on work

Most of the participant mothers (15 out of 33) expressed that motherhood has a positive influence on their working life. Among the positive influences, the most frequently expressed influences are increasing in empathy ability, more efficient use of time, more regular and disciplined, positive personality development.

P30: “I guess my motherhood’s influence is probably positive. I’m working in a student-centered institution and I look at students with empathy as if I’m their parents. I always think in the future my child will become a student. I always try to make them positive with a smiling face. I think it is such a contribution to my motherhood. Maybe if I were not a mother, maybe I could not look like that”.

Table 8: Motherhood’s Influence on Work

	Participants	Frequency (N=33)
Favorable	P2,P6,P11,P16,P17,P20,P21,P22,P25,P26,P27,P28,P29,P30,P33.	15
Unfavorable	P5,P7,P12,P19,P31,P32.	6
Neutral	P4,P8,P13,P14,P15,P23,P24.	7
Both favorable and unfavorable	P1,P3,P9,P10,P18.	5

Theme 3: Workplace discrimination

When 33 participants were asked whether they experienced discrimination positive or negative (prejudices, talentless, less work commitment) in the workplace, they explained that 13 participants did not experience any discrimination, 14 participants experienced positive (supportive) discrimination and 6 participants experienced negative discrimination. The majority of participants explained positive discrimination in the workplace.

P16:“No, there was not negative discrimination, on the contrary, in my workplace, our old department chair had two little babies, so my department chair never had trouble with me on maternity leave and when my baby got ill, so I always take his support”.

Table 9: Workplace Discrimination

	Participants	Frequency (N=33)
Not experience discrimination	P1,P2,P11,P13,P14,P18,P19,P20,P24,P25,P26,P28,P29.	13
Negative discrimination	P4,P17,P22,P23,P30,P31.	6
Positive discrimination	P3,P5,P6,P7,P8,P9,P10,P12,P15,P16,P21,P27,P32,P33.	14

Theme 4: Legal rights of working mothers

The legal rights of Turkish working mothers are addressed by maternity leave, unpaid leave, breastfeeding leave, and maternity allowance as stated in the Civil Servants Law No.657 and the Labor Law No.4857 in Turkey.

Working mothers are in the opinion of the legal maternity leave of 4 months is insufficient in Turkey. It is stated that the legal maternity leave period should be extended because of the necessity of breastfeeding for the first 6 months and in terms of secure attachment between mother and child, also it is an important issue for children social and physical development. Working mothers in the public sector are more advantageous in terms of legal rights.

30 participants (out of 33) explained that they could benefit from their legal rights. However, 3 participants did not use their legal rights enough. According to 31 working mothers legal rights are insufficient in Turkey. Working mothers emphasized that postnatal maternity leave must be increased to at least 8 months. At the same time, working mothers are not able to use the one-year unpaid leave enough.

P32: "So I used this period (maternity allowances) for one week before birth and five weeks after birth. I broke up a week before birth, I gave birth a week later so the rest was postpartum. I have not had a problem, I'm already getting enough support in breastfeeding leave. Of course, legal rights are not enough. When we compare with Europe it is certainly never enough. At least a paid leave or part-time work can be improved. But I think that especially kindergartens could be supported more in institutions, legal rights must be at the same level as Europe."

Table 10: Legal Rights of Working Mothers

	Participants	Frequency (N=33)
Insufficient legal rights	P1,P2,P3,P4,P5,P6,P7,P8,P10,P11,P12,P13,P14,P15,P16,P17,P18,P19,P20,P21,P22,P23,P24,P25,P26,P28,P29,P30,P31,P32,P33.	31
Sufficient legal rights	P9, P27.	2

Theme 5: Institutional support mechanisms

Institutional support mechanisms are flexible working patterns, leave policies and child care support. Flexible working patterns consist of part-time work, remote work, compressed work week, shift work, temporary work, and job sharing. Leave policies can be maternity leave, breastfeeding leave, unpaid leave, and necessity leave. And finally, child care supports are daycare center in institutions, contracted daycare centers, financial support for childcare costs and lactation room (Translated by Çakmak-Otluoğlu, 2015, p.82). In this context, according to all participant mothers institutional support mechanisms are insufficient in the workplace. The most frequent expression is that it is absolutely necessary to have a day care center in the workplace.

P8: "Now I think that our institution is quite backward about these issues. There is no support mechanism for working mothers at our institution. If we think of the university as a place with ten thousand employees, women employees are half of the total as five thousand, they always take care of mothering experience on their own, unfortunately. Obviously, I have not seen any support mechanism for working mothers of the institution. It must be a lactation room for women to breastfeed their children. In this sense, that is to say, the provision of on-campus care facilities, daycare center can be at least a good regulation for supporting. Kindergarten is between the ages of three and six, a kindergarten is thought to be zero to three years old, but it was unfortunately not possible. Women find their childcare solutions as informal by looking at their mothers-in-law, by holding a caretaker or sending them to the kindergartens in their neighborhood".

Theme 6: Difficulties and problems in the workplace

When 33 working mothers were asked about difficulties and problems caused by being a mother in the workplace, 25 participants stated that they had various difficulties and problems and 8 participants did not have any difficulties and problems. The most frequently problem expressed by participants is a restricted time.

P25: "The difficulty arising from being a mother is timelessness. I work very hard so I cannot spend too much time with my children during the week. Because the difficulty is that a very busy company anyone does not put pressure to keep you here, but because you are an international company and the nature of the business is very intense and exhausting, you are obliged to spend a great time here. So this also causes you to spend less time during the week with your child".

Table 11: Institutional Support Mechanisms

Support mechanisms	Participants	Frequency
Flexible Working Patterns		
Flexible time	P2,P7,P9,P10,P11,P12,P13,P14,P18,P19,P20,P21,P23,P24,P25,P26,P29,P31	18
Teleworking	P5,P6,P11,P14,P20,P25,P26,P27	8
Part-time working	P2,P7,P10,P22,P23,P24,P29,P31	8
Leave Policies		
Maternity leave	P1,P4,P7,P17,P19,P20,P25,P31	8
Breastfeeding leave	P1,P4,P7,P12,P16,P19,P20,P25,P32	9
Unpaid leave	P1,P2,P4,P7,P11,P12,P19,P33	8
Child Care Support		
Daycare center in the workplace	P1,P3,P5,P6,P7,P8,P9,P10,P11,P13,P14,P15,P16,P17,P21,P22,P23,P24,P25,P26,P27,P28,P29,P30,P31,P32,P33	27
Financial support for childcare costs	P1,P2,P4,P5,P6,P8,P9,P12,P14,P15,P17,P22,P23,P24,P27,P28,P29,P31,P32,P33	20
Lactation room	P1,P5,P6,P8,P15,P17,P19,P25,P26,P27,P28,P30	12

Table 12: Difficulties and Problems in the Workplace

	Participants	Frequency (N=33)
Experience difficulty and problem	P1,P2,P3,P4,P6,P7,P8,P10,P11,P12,P14,P16,P17,P18,P20,P22,P24,P25,P26,P28,P29,P30,P31,P32,P33	25
Not experience difficulty and problem	P5,P9,P13,P15,P19,P21,P23,P27.	8

CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

The study aims to examine maternal experiences of women employees in Turkey. In this framework, the research is designed with phenomenological pattern in qualitative research methods and social constructivism constitutes philosophical basis of the study. In social constructive approach, individuals try to make sense of the world in which they live and work. Through an interview form consists of 13 open-ended questions based on the literature, individual, in-depth, face-to-face unstructured interviews were conducted with 33 married working mothers in Turkey.

The first result of the study is that working mothers make sense different ways to their motherhood. Each participant has different and multiple meanings for her mothering experience. As McMahon (1995) pointed

out, working women have multiple and differential meanings and emotions to motherhood.

According to the result of the study, the priority in life is motherhood. Similarly, Hays (2011) in his qualitative research by conducting interviews with working and non-working mothers concluded that mothers’ priority and fundamental concerns are still their children even though they work. According to qualitative research by Maher (2005), motherhood and working women’s roles do not conflict, although the child is a priority, it does not need to completely exclude working life. In a qualitative study of Read, Crockett, & Mason (2012), it was emphasized that mothers had to spend time and energy on the child. Children become the center of their lives after maternity.

According to the result of the study, it is found that if working mothers do not get internal and external support for child care, they will not be able to balance both work and family life. The most important support is getting from grandparents because of their trustworthiness. Daycare centers are useful in terms of socializing children and acquiring necessary skills, training and are more reliable support than caretakers. Similarly, Alonso-Almeida (2014) explained that spouses, family members, and state should also provide support to mothers at the same time so that working mothers can decrease the stress they experienced in fulfilling the requirements of work and family life. Likewise, Uttal (1996) showed that in in-depth interviews with working mothers, the dominant cultural motherhood

ideology did not reflect the working woman's reality. It is a necessity to share childcare responsibilities with family and outside.

As the study result, the majority of participants (19 out of 33) can cope with motherhood responsibilities by taking support and putting work to the second plan. Dedeoğlu (2010) stated that motherhood was constructed socially and it was a natural instinct from the biological nature of woman. Women should take on all work related to motherhood and give primary responsibility to mothering. According to Holden & Edwards (1989), both parents are responsible for cognitive, emotional and personality development of the child as well as for the majority of the responsibility for mothers.

According to the result, the study revealed that social culture gives more support to maternity in Turkey. In terms of work life, patriarchal mind based on male domination, employers usually prefer single and childless women. Within the context of social gender-based roles, it is expected that men will be more active in their work life and women will be more active in their home life. The institutional support provided for working mothers in business life is inadequate. Indeed, as Hays (2011) pointed out, culturally the appropriate behavior expected from a woman is to be more interested in the child. Uta Garey (2009) argued that fertility characteristics and maternal activities of women cause social reproduction of gender and women to remain in the second position. Motherhood is able to acquire the characteristic of a social institution which causes hierarchy in the family and working life by creating differentiation based on gender (Walzer, 2007).

The study revealed that working mothers have difficulty balancing work and family life. The Eurofound (2013) work-life conflict assessment study found that while working women and men have problems in work-life balance, working women experience more problems than men. According to a study by Bianchi (2000), in order to balance work and family life women can reduce working hours, try to part-time work and incorporate husband more into child caring activities. Every woman often suspects about the style of motherhood. Women are trying to do their best for children and themselves.

According to the participants of the study, working mother could influence the child negatively in the first years. However, working mothers will have more positive contributions to the child in coming years for

the long term. As a matter of fact, Baum (2003) research found that when the child was younger working mother had a negative influence on the child's socio-emotional development. In first years working of the mother is related to weaker attachment, greater behavioral problems of child and less social skills. According to Chang's (2013) study, full-time working mothers' positive attitudes towards work positively influence child as socio-developmental. If work is a source of stress for mother and reduces the quality of mother-child relationships, it will adversely affect the child.

In the study, it is found that working mothers experience complex feelings related to work in their life. According to Parker (1994), in terms of psychoanalysis, motherhood is related to ambivalence and emotion complexity. This constitutes a natural part of motherhood and shows an unacceptable face of motherhood. Instability is a dynamic fluctuation experienced by mothers at different times of child development and varying among different children. Mothers are experiencing overwhelming feelings of freedom being lost. Although they love their children, sometimes they can live to regret about motherhood (Donath, 2015). In qualitative research by Crowley (2013), it is stated that working mothers have experienced emotional confusion, patience, and conflict as their reactions to the perceptions of discrimination in the workplace. According to qualitative research conducted by Hays (2011), although working mothers meet the needs of their children, they had a feeling of complexity about working outside the home.

According to the result of the study, being a mother influences working life positively. Brown's (2010) study of perceived realities and perceptions of Professional development after maternity showed that there is a great conflict between work and family life, although there are supportive and family-friendly policies in the workplace. Motherhood had a great and challenging influence of the mother in Professional career development. Most working mothers also choose to slow down their career even if employer policies are supportive. The study by McIntosh, McQuaid, Munro, & Dabir-Alai (2012) concluded that motherhood has a detrimental influence on woman career development. Working mothers with children at younger ages are more adversely influenced by their career progression. Nevertheless, Duncan & Edwards (1999) revealed that working mothers who persisted in traditional gender-based role beliefs experienced substantially stress and role conflict. The most important meaning of the role of a

working woman is to have a job and to support the family and this gives positive satisfaction to mothers. The qualitative study by Laney, Carruthers, Hall, & Anderson (2014) showed that to be a mother provides growth and development in personal, relational, generational and Professional sense to woman.

The study revealed that in respect of workplace discrimination, the majority of working mothers experience positive discrimination. Crowley (2013)'s qualitative research with 54 working mothers revealed that women have had various experiences characterized as discrimination in work life. These discrimination perceptions are not to be seen as employees who have ideal performance standards with their mother status, but also as not being skilled as non-mother employees. The most frequent reaction to discriminatory experiences is to be endurance or patience. According to the results of Correll et al. (2007), working mothers are considered more inadequate %10 in terms of talent and 15% in terms of commitment compared to non-mothers in the workplace. Ridgeway & Correll (2004) stated that the maternal status of women is a major negative impact on performance and talent perceptions at the workplace and working mothers need more flexible time.

According to the study result, the majority of women are aware of their legal rights and are able to take advantage in Turkey. However, legal rights are insufficient and especially postpartum maternity leave periods have to be increased to at least 8 months for working mothers. Scandinavian countries are in the first in terms of legal rights recognized by working mothers. Sweden and Germany rank first with 47-week "paid maternity leave". Norway provides 44 weeks, Greece 34 weeks, Finland 32 weeks, Canada 29 weeks maternity leave. While Japanese provides 26-week period maternity leave, Switzerland is in 24 weeks and the United States is in the last order with 14-week maternity leave. In Turkey, like 8 weeks prenatal and 8 weeks postnatal total of 16 weeks maternity leave is provided to working mothers (Tuaç, 2015, p.125).

The study found that there are no supportive mechanisms for working mothers in the institutions and mechanisms are inadequate in Turkey. The most frequently needed support mechanism is institutional daycare centers.

Supports provided by organizations for child care of working mothers to work-family balance are *daycare centers in the workplace* (Beauregard &

Henry, 2009; Glass & Riley, 1998; Meurs, Breaux, & Perrewe, 2008; Veiga, Baldrige, & Eddleston, 2004), affordable access to *contractual daycare centers* (Fowler, Gudmundsson, & Whicker, 2006), providing *financial support for childcare costs* (Beauregard & Henry, 2009; Glass & Riley, 1998) and providing *lactation rooms* (Çakmak-Otluoğlu, 2015, p.85). Similarly, research by Albrecht (2003) showed that the support mechanisms called "family-friendly workplace policies" do not adequately support working mothers. Costa et al. (2012) concluded that when working women return to work they are expecting flexibility at all stages of their motherhood adventure in managing their maternal responsibilities. Organizational support and employer flexibility facilitate the transition to motherhood process also, increase the organizational commitment of women following maternity leave and help them to balance maternal and employee identities. Study by Pas et al. (2011) found that the effectiveness of family-friendly regulations such as the possibility of part-time employment, flexible working hours and on-site care facilities is due to support for integrating work-family life and value cultures within the organizations.

Women and their working life problems are generally considered insignificant. Working women were either considered as being different from men or considered as bringing various problems (Translated by Ayyıldız-Ünnü, 2015, p. 229). According to research conducted by Gatrell (2014) in England, employers consider pregnancy and maternity as an objectionable, difficult, different, disorganized, complex and terrible situation in the workplace. In a traditional organizational culture, working mothers are less committed to their jobs and organizations. Working mothers who take a break by using maternity leave are considered unfavorable in the workplace (Çakmak-Otluoğlu, 2015, p. 87).

To sum up, the results of the research revealed that working mothers are following the intensive motherhood ideology of Hays (1996). In this ideology, the married working mother cares for her child intensively, her own desires and needs are of secondary importance, the child becomes a priority of the woman. According to ideology, working mothers spend more emotional and physical energy and spend more time with their children compared to their parents. As Hagelskamp, Hughes, Yoshikawa, & Chaudry (2011) pointed out, the most important means of working for women is to have a job and support the family. Also, working gives positive satisfaction feeling to women so this is reflected positively to the child. It is suggested that

the study can be expanded with working mothers in private sector (for example women bank employees) and using different research methods (for example mixed method).

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