A GLANCE BEHIND THE OFFICIAL:
MADRASA EDUCATION
IN CONTEMPORARY TURKEY FROM A GENDER PERSPECTIVE

by

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ABSTRACT

A GLANCE BEHIND THE OFFICIAL:
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Supervisor: Asst. Prof. Ateş Ali Altınordu

Keywords: religious education, women in madrasas, madrasa education

This thesis focuses on the experiences of women in the madrasas, which are unofficial 'traditional' educational institutions of systematic Islamic learning in contemporary Turkey. Based on semi- structured, in-depth interviews with these women and finding of participant observations in a madrasa and the neighborhood meetings, this study aims to reveal how these individuals acquire their subjectivities through the education provided by these unofficial institutions. Additionally, it is questioned why some women prefer to attend these madrasas instead of official institutions of religious education, such as faculties of divinity or other venues of higher education. Drawing on Saba Mahmood's critique of the analytical binary of 'resistance' and 'subordination', it is suggested that the madrasa education nevertheless serves as an alternative way for these women to gain acceptance into a certain social environment, and an in-community status as intellectuals or teachers (*hoca*). This thesis also analyzes how these women define themselves in relation to their educational background and their differentiated social status both within and outside their respective communities by defining their own kind of "proper and true knowledge" and "conscious Muslim". Finally, an overarching question is pursued, that is, how the definitions established by the political rule makers on who is educated and what is deemed to be valid knowledge for all come to shape these women's lives and their social relations with the larger world.

ÖZET

RESMİ OLANIN ARDINA BAKMAK:

CİNSİYET PERSPEKTİFİNDEN

GÜNÜMÜZ TÜRKİYE'SİNDE MEDRESE EĞİTİMİ

HİLÂL GÜL

Kültürel Çalışmalar, Yüksek Lisans Tezi, Temmuz 2018

Danışman: Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Ateş Ali Altınordu

Anahtar kelimeler: dini eğitim, medreselerde kadın, medrese eğitimi

Bu tez günümüz Türkiye'sinde sistematik İslami eğitim veren gayri- resmi ve geleneksel eğitim kurumlarından olan medreselerdeki kadınların tecrübelerine odaklanmaktadır. Bu çalışma bu kadınlarla yapılmış olan yarı yapılandırılmış detaylı mülakatlarla birlikte bir medresede ve mahalle toplantılarında yapılan katılımcı gözlem yöntemiyle elde edilen bulgulara dayanarak, kadınların gayri resmi eğitim kurumlarından aldıkları eğitimler çerçevesinde kendi bireyselliklerini nasıl kurduklarını ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Ayrıca, İlahiyat Fakülteleri ya da diğer alanlardaki yüksek öğretim kurumları gibi resmi alternatifleri varken bazı kadınların neden bu medreseleri tercih ettikleri sorgulanmaktadır. Saba Mahmood'un direnme ve itaatin analitik ikilik olarak kabul edilmesine getirdiği eleştiri üzerinden, medrese eğitiminin bu kadınların belli bir sosyal ortama kabul edilmelerini ve bu ortam içerisinde entelektüel ya da hoca statüsü kazanmalarını sağlayan bir alternatif bir yol olarak hizmet ettiği öne sürülmektedir. Aynı zamanda bu tezin amacı "uygun ve doğru bilgi" ve "bilinçli Müslüman" tanımlamaları üzerinden hem kendi sosyal çevrelerinde hem de dışarısında bu kadınların kendilerine tanımladıkları farklı kimlikleri ortaya çıkarmaktır. Politik kural koyucuların kimin eğitimli ve neyin geçerli bilgi olduğu hakkında yaptıkları tanımaların bu kadınların hayatlarını ve dış dünyayla ilişkilerini nasıl şekillendirdiğinin sorgulanması amaçlanmaktadır.

Dedicated

to everyone

who struggles to regain a kind of paradise

and

to my mom

who taught me to read tetra-syllable words

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: "BETTER THAN WAITING FOR THE HUSBAND AT HOME"

"My mother said 'it is better than waiting for a husband at home. Go and do something for your life' and she sent me here," (1) said a madrasa student following my question about her reason to being in an unofficial madrasa. Although, after four years I do not remember her name, I do remember these two sentences word by word. Because they have not changed only the direction of her life into be a student at an unofficial madrasa, they also have paved my research inquiries motivating this study. It was 2012 and I was a volunteer teacher giving lessons to students who were studying for the open high school exams in a place where was seemingly a Quran course affiliated with the Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı. It is seemingly because there is a sort of hidden life for the teachers and students in that place. This place actually is an example of a mostly unknown side of what Turkish students learn during the History of Turkish Revolution and Kemalism[1] courses, *"After Tevhidi Tedrisat Law, on March 11, 1924, by force of laic and modern education madrasas are closed*[2] (Ataş, 2017, s. 105)*"*. Even though, this law was successful to take away the nameplate of the madrasas, it has been not able to wipe off this educational system referring a kind of university level religious education for the study of Islamic religion. Certain Islamic scholars together with some religious communities relying on these scholars still have kept the madrasas and its curriculum alive in informal ways. These institutions set a precedent for how political decisions on what is acceptable and proper knowledge and who is intellectual affect the lives of women who choose/ or are made chosen informal madrasa education. The question I want to focus on is what notions of self and subjectivity are generated in the women's madrasas in modern Turkey, and if this system of informal education allows these women to claim any kind of authority in social and/or Islamic matters in public life.

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[1] "'The History of Turkish Revolution (and Kemalism)'course taught in Turkish Universities, covering the Kemalist system and espousing its principles began in 1934 with lectures organized by the highest state authorities." (Inan, 2007, p. 593)

[2] "Tevhid-i Tedrisat Kanunu'nun kabulünün ardından 11 Mart 1924'te, laik ve çağdaş eğitimin gereği olarak medreseler kapatıldı" (Ataş, 2017, s. 105)

It can be said that in accordance with first impression of the liberal feminists about these madrasas which is oppressive for the women, is evidence based. For example, the administrations of the girl madrasas are conducted by male members of the community who are named as *sorumlu* (the keeper). He has a place, which is a small room in the building, but not connected with the building except one window where he can get meals from the cafeteria. This room has a different entrance. This person is in charge for nearly every move in the building and operation of the education. He can change furniture, accepts guests, or not let some of them to come in, and regularly gets information from the head teacher in the madrasa. Every day he arranges basic foods from outside and decides for trips. It is not possible to go outside without his permission. For example, if a teacher or student has a doctor's appointment, firstly she needs to prove it to this person to get permission to go outside of the building. And sometimes, he accompanies her to the doctor, not to let her to go alone. Apart from this person, the building has a disciplined structure with dormitory rooms for students at the top which let the teachers monitor the students in an escape situation. Additionally, teachers have to maintain discipline in the building. If a student wants to go to bathroom during the lesson she should ask permission. The program of everyday, which contains such as wake up time, eating times and breaking times, is scheduled by the teachers, and every student in the madrasa must act according to this schedule. Additionally, everyone in the madrasa must dress accordingly with the dressing code with maxi skirt, headscarf and long sleeve. It is also valid if a student or a teacher needs to go to the bathroom at night.

The perception which focuses on subordination in these unofficial religious educational institutions can be illustrated with the language of the media and the comments of the users on the internet under the text of the news. For example, while I was doing my research for this thesis, a fire incident occurred in a building of a religious community where they provided religious education to the young girls. The main focus of these new pieces[3] was how these girls stayed in a place with the lots of restricted rules and regulations.

Focusing on these subordination in this topic is precisely the point that this thesis attempts to do away with what Mahmood (2005) calls the "trope of resistance" so as to not foreclose other valuable forms of human flourishing in the world that do not fit with what she calls "secularism's progressive formations" and narrow attribution of agentival capacity. Not to turn the interest into a more mainstream possible liberal feminist approach on "closed in a

[3] An example of these news: https://odatv.com/suleymancilarin-yurdunda-yanan-cocuklarin-ailelerinden-tuyler-urperten-aciklamalar-2405171200.html Accessed on June 10, 2018.

place under some restricted rules", rather, the present study aims to ask how these women perceive this sort of restrictive life. It is significant to open a space for their voice by considering their different cultural and economic capital, desires, and life stories. Scrutinizing everyday experiences and subjective narratives of these women means an opportunity to find out how these women relate to, generate, and transmit the knowledge that they have learned in these institutions, what they define as knowledge and proper Islam, what perceptions of self and world shape their wishes for now and future.

Departing from Saba Mahmood's questions and insights, in this research I explore how these women turn these institutions into an alternative space to have a better life. Over a long period of time, through informal conversations with female students, their parents, and female teachers in and out these madrasas, I have seen that for these young women these madrasas are more than religious schools. They can function also as an alternative space to gain status and acceptance in a form of social environment, while they can serve to formulate their lives in a more 'appropriate' way in accordance with Islamic rules. What I am curious about is why do some young women prefer to attend these madrasas instead of available official institutions with a religious education, such as Islamic Divinity Schools (*İlahiyat Fakülteleri*)[4] and other venues of higher education? Or is it really a preference? How do these young women define themselves in relation to their educational background and their differentiated positions of status with regard to their social relations both within and outside their respective communities? Do they have any problems about not having an official diploma for their education? Would they prefer to have one? These questions shape the ground of the present study. Additionally, I want to analyze how they are affected by their isolated lives in these madrasas.

My motivation as a researcher studying women in the unofficial madrasas in contemporary Turkey, through scrutinizing their narratives, derives not only from my personal commitments which have occurred with the questioning difference between my position in society as a university student and the position of my students who I gave lessons for their open high school exams, but also from my academic interests. This study concerns the constitution of subjectivities of the women who get/got madrasa education through the education provided by these unofficial institutions.

This study does not claim to be comprehensive, either in its coverage of the madrasa education in modern Turkey or its discussion of the women's situation in these madrasas,

[4] Divinity Faculty in Turkey was established in order to transform "medieval" system of Islamic education into "modern mental of science". (Alasania & Gelovani, 2011, p. 39)

because its focus is only on one religious community which operates some madrasas. In particular this study limits its focus to one region, Ümraniye in İstanbul, which is located in the Asian part of the city.

It is hoped that making an analysis on women in the unofficial madrasas in contemporary Turkey can open up a space to rethink the relationship between women trying to be religious and alternative educational institutions, like madrasa.

1.1 The Questions of Naming

1.1.1 *Medrese*, *Yurt* and *Kurs*

It is important to analyze why these institutions named as "madrasa" in this study. In the late period of Ottoman Empire, the higher religious education was named as madrasa, and the mentioned religious education in modern Turkey bears resemblance to this madrasa system in Ottoman Empire. For example, unlike the official educational system in Turkey, the unofficial madrasas are open to every person from every age without any strict time limit. In other words, the duration of education and the age for starting depend on the students. Additionally, they serve as boarding schools which allow students to get into a disciplinary system without any interference from the outside. In parallel with their religious sensitivity, the madrasas are divided in two as madrasas for men and women. (Baran, nd, pp. 5-6)

Furthermore, the curriculum of these institutions is very similar with the madrasas in the Ottoman period. These madrasas have special names for every step of the education. The first one is *iptidai* (primitive). This step is like preparatory class in the universities, and takes one or two years depending on the speed of learning of the student. Students have to finish the courses on reading Quran, and beginner level *ilmihal* (catechism), *tecvid* (the rules of reading Quran), *kıraat* (recitation) and reading Ottoman Turkish successfully. After passing the exams of *iptidai,* students gain right to pass the second level, *izhari* (declaratory). At this step students take courses on intermediate level *fıkıh* (Islamic law), reading Ottoman Turkish and *kıraat,* and beginner level *sarf (*grammar), writing Ottoman Turkish, literary arts, *kelam* (euphemism), and logic (İsaguci, Ebheri). At the next step, *tekamül altı* (before advancement), the students, firstly, repeat what they have learned the previous level, and then take the courses on intermediate literary arts and writing Ottoman Turkish and advanced *fıkıh,* reading Ottoman Turkish and *kelam*. In order to be qualified as a *hoca* (teacher), students have to pass their final exams at the last level, *tekamül* (advancement). These courses are beginner level *hadis usul* (historical study on hadith), and *feraiz* (Islamic law of inheritance), Mecelle (Ottoman Code of Civil Law), and

intermediate logic (Şemsiyye, El- Mubeydi), and advanced *fıkıh, kelam,* and reading and writing Ottoman. The students have to change places for every step. In other words, every madrasa has only one level students. They are naming them according to these levels, for example "iptidai yurdu". The successful students are graduated not with an official diploma, but with an unofficial "*icazetname*".

However, the features which are described above are not enough to qualify a place as a madrasa in the Ottoman sense. Despite the emphasis on "Ottoman heritage" in the interviews and some common features, it is still different in some respects. The first and most visible one is that women are able to participate in the teaching, learning and limited administrative practices in the contemporary madrasas, which obviously breaks the traditional aspects of the madrasa. The architecture of the madrasas is the second important difference. While in the Ottoman Empire, the madrasas had a specific form of architecture, the modern ones purport apartments. However, the most important difference lies in the naming of the institution by the community. In order to conceal the existence of these informal madrasas, the community names them as *kurs* (course*)* and/or *yurt* (dormitory). Even the teachers and students internalize this naming and during the interviews, they use course or dormitory, while they are mentioning about their everyday life. For example, *"... of course it is an advantage to have prepared meal and discipline in the course…"*(2) said one of my interviewees, Emine (18). The dormitory as a name for these institutions is also commonly used. "*It is my fourth year in the dormitory*" (3), said Cennet (17) as an example. However, when they refer to education and the curriculum, they tend to use the word madrasa. For instance, Cennet (17) said that "*education in madrasa changed a lot in me*"(4).

Along with the complicated naming situation in the community, in modern Turkey probably due to the power of the madrasa as a word with its historical reference to the Ottoman period, it is very common to use the name of "madrasa" for lots of Islamic religious educational institutions in different forms. But not all of these institutions have the same curriculum and educational system with the madrasas in the Ottoman Empire. In the current study, I would like to continue and limit the institutional meaning of the madrasa to those institutions which contain a systematical education of the Ottoman madrasas before Tevhid-i Tedrisat. This delimitation and strict usage of the term madrasa help me to crystallize the questions of the 'official diploma' and being an 'officially certified intellectual', by allowing a comparison with the time of the Ottoman Empire. However, this should not be understood as a verbatim copy of the meaning of the madrasa in the Ottoman period. It is interpreted as seizing of the meaning of the madrasa.

In other words, without ignoring the relationship between the current institutions with the modern life, these institutions are situated as a part of the continuing re-interpretation of the past.

Although this education is provided both for male and female students, its effects on the lives of two sexes are not the same. The male students are allowed to study in the official universities, while the female ones are not. Additionally, for these women *medreses* are more than religious schools. These institutions form an opportunity for the religious women to get a university level religious education, and have a sort of power among the other members of the community by being respected. They become intellectuals in their communities. The *medreses* can function as an alternative to gain status and acceptance to a form of social environment, while they can serve to formulate their lives in a more 'appropriate' way in accordance with Islamic rules. However, due to their unofficial position and being closed for an outsider, the life of these women is largely invisible to the out-group people. Thus, in larger society they are generally seen as ignorant because of their lack of legal higher education certified with official diplomas, although they have an influential status in their communities.

1.1.2 *Öğrenci* or *Talebe* and *Öğretmen* or *Hoca*:

In the madrasas, it is preferred to use "*talebe*" over the word "*öğrenci*" for referring to the students who are getting religious education. One of the teachers in the madrasa, Rakibe (23), said that "(*öğrenci*) it is a cold word to define a person who is faithfully learning his or her religion" (5). And also it is sort of similar situation for the difference in the usage of the words *öğretmen* and *hoca* for the teachers. Another interviewee, who is a teacher outside of the madrasas, Asiye (39) said that "I think the word "*öğretmen*" is someone who only educates her or his students. However, "*hoca*" for me is a person who tries to suggest a way of life. Not only teaching some sort of letters." (6). Some other interviewees said that they use these words only in order to differentiate the person who is getting or giving education in madrasa (*talebe and hoca*) and the person who is getting and giving legal education (*öğrenci and öğretmen).* They also support their argument with examples from their daily life. For example, Adile (16), who is a student in the madrasa, said that "When I say I am a *talebe,* everyone understands I am getting a religious education. But if I say only I am a *öğrenci* (student), everyone supposes that I am following official education." (7)

It is important to state the difference between being *a talebe* and *hoca* in the madrasas and being *öğrenci* and *öğretmen* in the official educational system. Students after graduation firstly are responsible to serve as teachers in the madrasas. However, the duration of this

responsibility can be ended, which is special to women in the madrasas, if the number of the teachers in a madrasa is in excess, the teachers who have had spent longest time teaching in the madrasas should leave. Marriage of the teacher is another reason to change her task. In both scenarios, the teachers are supposed to start to live in their homes with their family, and they are expected to be responsible for the religious education of women in their neighborhood. If there is already a meeting group in the neighborhood, they can divide it or the latecomer becomes a backup teacher in the group. As teachers, they have a busy schedule for the week. Apart from attending meetings as instructors, they are supposed to prepare weekly reports, texts of religious conversations, attend teachers' meetings where they discuss the common questions and give advice to each other, and prepare new plans for the charity organizations. Together with these responsibilities, they are also mothers, wives, and daughters in their homes.

1.1.3 Neighborhood meetings or Tea*:*

The neighborhood meetings are conducted in privacy. Only the participants know the time and place of the meeting. Even, the women use some encrypted words while referring the meetings. For instance, they commonly use the word "çay (tea)" instead of meeting. The reason of this confidentiality is explained mostly by referring to the past experiences I have witnessed. For example, Asiye (39), said that during the February 28, 1997 process[5], they were some people who tried to get in the community to get information about them.

The meetings were conducted weekly, mostly on Mondays, Wednesdays and Thursdays. Each meeting group was led by one or more teachers and included around twenty women participants from the neighborhood who were also member of the community, but did not get an education in the madrasas. Therefore, it can be said that they were "part-time students" for the teachers. The ages of these women were between thirty and sixty and all of them were housewives. Additionally, some of these women attended the meetings with their grandchildren who they were looking after while their parents were working, but these children were not allowed to enter the room during the meeting. They charged a person for looking after

[5] During the February 28, 1997 process, the secularist military in Turkey forced the coalition government to resign. It was leaded by Erbakan who was the head of Welfare Party which had also closed by Turkish military which was uneasy with the rise of the party's influence of the religious segments of the society. The religious and conservative people were arrested or fired from their job during the process. Therefore, the religious parts of the society turned into a defensive and concealing position (Dagi, 2008, p. 27). The influences of the February 28, 1997 also have affected the community which I studied. My interviewees stated that have become tend to be more invisible and closed after the process. However, they do not have any memory of being arrested or corporal punishment. Rather, most of them were afraid that their husbands could to lose their jobs as public official, or the madrasas could be closed down by the military. In order to protect their institutions, the administration of the madrasas took two years break in their education.

the children, who could be an elder child or a member of the group who was on her period and thus not allowed to participate in the meeting.

1.2 Notes on Methodology

For the present study, I have conducted 22 semi-structured in-depth interviews and engaged in participant observation in the madrasas and neighborhood meetings of the community which are led by women teachers graduated from madrasas. Because of the nature of the master's thesis as limited time and limited number of pages, I tried to limit my fieldwork to three different neighborhoods and to two different madrasas in Ümraniye, İstanbul, which is the most suitable place to study for this topic, since the density of the community member who live and the number of the madrasas there. Additionally, the study does not seek to offer a comprehensive discussion on the unofficial madrasas in contemporary Turkey. I limited my research to a specific religious community and its female members, although there has been different group which has educational institutions providing women a madrasa education. These institutions most probably have different structures that can result with different experiences of being women in the madrasas.

1.2.1 Interviews

During the interviews, I established my conversation around three sets of questions. The first set was about the interviewees' experiences and lives in the madrasas. While expanding my knowledge on these institutions and their curriculum and educational systems, I derived a sense about their story of entrance to madrasas, why and how they decided to pursue an education there, what was their own definition for their institutions, how and what they preferred to call it and why (kurs, yurt, or madrasa). Through the first set, I tried to understand their reasoning behind their preferences for this educational path. The second set which was mainly regarding social relations of these women provided some information on how they position themselves in society. In this set the conversation went on two parts of the questions: about their relations outside of their community, in- community relations including both with other teachers and students and with other members of the community who did not receive any madrasa education. In the first part, I tried to understand to what extent their unofficial educational positions as teachers or student affect their social position in the larger society, and additionally how they perceive and interpret this positionality that is given by the society. How is this position different when it comes to in-community relations? Are they aware of any kind of contradiction in their positions? If so, how do they articulate this contradiction?

In the third set of questions structured around their more personal lives, I tried to get a sense of their personal relations in their families. Are they respected in their family? If they are married, who is responsible for the house work while they have a busy daily schedule? These three sets were not organized as a strict map for my interviews. I preferred to turn the interviews into friendly conversations, rather than a structured interview. Therefore, the average duration of the interviews was relatively long, around two and half hours.

The women who I interviewed can be divided into three different groups: students and teachers in madrasas, and teachers outside madrasas who are responsible for the education of the women in the neighborhoods. As total, I interviewed 22 different women. 10 of them were students and 7 of them teachers in the madrasas. And 5 of them were teachers outside the madrasas, who work as heads of the neighborhood meetings. The average of the duration of the interviews is one and half hour. I have conducted 17 interviews with teachers and students in the madrasas, whose ages were between fifteen and twenty-three, and engaged in participant observations, in order to get information regarding what is unofficial madrasa education, its structure, and its historical background[6]. I also tried to understand and depict hierarchical relations and learning and teaching environment describing the alternative way of official education, and also how they construct their identities as learners, teachers, and daughters which were particularly revealed in their narratives of madrasa education.

My second part of the fieldwork consists of interviews that I have conducted with 5 women teachers of the neighborhood meetings, whose ages range between twenty-five and fifty-six. Interviewing these women helped me understand the role of the unofficial madrasa education in gaining acceptance into a certain social environment as a leader and an intellectual. In addition to their identity as "teacher" among their usually elder members, they also have other identities in their families as daughters, wives or/and as mothers. It was also interesting to see how they construct these identities in relation with their educational background in the unofficial madrasa education.

[6] I have to make it clear that the sources regarding the unofficial madrasas and women who get education from these institutions in the contemporary Turkey were appeared to be scarce. Therefore, I needed to find some alternative ways to collect basic information on how these institutions emerged, how they function as educational institution, what are taught there, and what is their daily and weekly schedule. I tried to get information about the institutions through spending time on questions regarding the basic information of these madrasas during the interviews. This allows me to write the previous chapter on naming.

I expected to learn from all of the interviews how these women see themselves in their own words and own worlds and how they build their relations with others in terms of their educational formation and status.

In order to protect the privacy of my interlocutors, I left out the name of the community which I worked with. I also avoided using the surnames of my subjects, and I changed their names with fictitious ones. I am aware of the risk to keep them in a seclusion through turning them into anonymous and faceless beings, but, together with the research ethics, I cannot take the risk of making them totally visible to the official authorities, unless they are not begun to recognize by the state as official institutions. However, against the possible risk of being intriguing study, the name of the site of the field is not changed.

1.2.2 Participant Observation

I followed six different neighborhood meetings and attended some lessons regularly for 16 weeks in the madrasas as a participant observer. One of the madrasa was *iptidai* (primitive) and the other one was *tekamül altı* (before advancement). The former one which consists of three buildings was quite crowded (around 800 students and 45 teachers), while the latter madrasa had 56 students and 8 teachers.

In the participant observation, I did not restrict my research to the lessons in the madrasas and neighborhood meetings. I also attended the meetings of 5 different charity organizations. I even worked in 3 of them as a volunteer seller. I also helped the part of the preparation process of these charities with making stuffed grape leaves (*sarma*) and Turkish type ravioli (*mantı*). Additionally, I was not only participant in the neighborhood meetings, I also followed some rituals, like reading some parts of Quran together with them. I even opened my own house for the neighborhood meetings for two times.

1.2.3 Field entry

It can be true to say that this study is conducted, not because of my conscious way of entering the field, but the field has entered my life spontaneously. However, it is a process, not a once thing (Üstündağ, 2005, p. 18). My initial encounter with the institutions providing madrasa education dates to fourteen years ago. I spent my four summer seasons as a *yazlıkçı* (summer season student) in order to get basic religious information. Because of my position as a *yazlıkçı,* I could not be considered as a madrasa student which needed continuous education. However, through my experience for four summer seasons, I could observe the relationship between madrasa students and teachers and also their relations with us, who were "less

knowledgeable" about the religion. That has allowed me to gain an impression of what is the meaning of *hoca* and *talebe*, what is the meaning of inside and outside for them, and what they think about *yazlıkçı* who choose to continue an official education at a regular school.

During my undergraduate years at the university, I again got in contact with a *madrasa.* However, this time I was there not as a student, but as a volunteer teacher who gave open high school lessons. One of my friends at the university arranged it for me. She was a teacher at the madrasa as well as a sociology student at Boğaziçi University. This was a quite unusual situation, even maybe impossible for other students and teachers at the madrasa. However, her familial position in the community had allowed her to have two identities.

I gave the lessons for two years. During this experience as an outsider and a teacher, I got the chance to think about the position of these students and teachers in the madrasas. And I started to ask some simultaneous questions with a restless curiosity. Why were they there while their coevals at the public schools? Why did they give up their formal education? Was it voluntary or forced? Then I started to build a relationship with them and ask questions in my mind, to explore their realties about religion, education, knowledge and being women or girls. Lots of them talked about their failure at high school, and this was their families or their decision to send them to a madrasa in order to ensure they would have a better future. Some of them were there only because of religious sensibility. They said how mixed sex education and male teacher was against their piety, and also they did not want to abandon their headscarf.

Additionally, there were also some women advocating their priority to learn religious knowledge. For them, other kinds of knowledge were secondary or unnecessary. These three groups were not exclusive, instead one could be, for example, both has religious sensitivity and at the same time see formal education as unnecessary. These interactions have built my future research interest, and as a conclusion, I had find out that some of these women in the madrasa where I teach, regardless of the reason of coming there as a result of coercive reasons, such as not being able to continue school because of low grades, or because of their piety, they saw their existence there as a best option. They commonly argued that they could not have a better chance to pursue a life as they wanted. However, when it comes to their dream life about the future, even some of women who saw the official education as secondary said that they also wanted to get an official education.

Thanks to my previous experiences, my initial attempts to make connections for my study were not difficult. I did already have a network in the community. I could be seen as "from outside", but I was not seen as "outsider". Therefore, I found my informants through this

network. Firstly, I informed my friend who was a sociology student at Boğaziçi University and a teacher at the madrasa. She introduced me to a neighborhood teacher who worked at a neighborhood in Üsküdar where I wanted to study. Before I started to study this topic, I attended some neighborhood meetings and visited the madrasa. I tried to expand my network.

Although my intention was to stay as a "researcher" in the field, it turned out something different. I had to be a follower of the neighborhood meetings and a part time student in the madrasa. It happened in time naturally without any mutual force. As I attended neighborhood meetings and lessons at the madrasas, I found myself there as one of them who reading Qur'an, memorizing prayers, and doing homework, such us finishing some chapters of the Qur'an. I also worked as a volunteer in their charity organizations serving to defray financial needs of madrasas, and I prepared some food and some handiwork in order to sell in the charity organizations during the fieldwork. I sometimes even forgot the reality that I was there as a researcher. It is possible to interpret this spontaneous integration in the fieldwork as great opportunity to reach information. However, it also reveals some questions about positionality in the field. Sometimes, for example, I had difficulties to switch my role from a "participant or member" to a "researcher". I even witnessed same difficulties from my informants' side. They did not see any need to mention some information during the interviews, because they thought I already knew that. In order to overcome this difficulty, I had to remind my informants about my information gaps during the interviews.

In addition, Haraway's argument in her article "Situated Knowledges" regarding acknowledging the researcher's positionality without falling into the "god trick" claiming an objective point of view which is "self-identical, unmarked, disembodied, unmediated, transcendent, born again (1988, p. 586)", thankfully has enlightened me how I should deal with my positionality problem in the field. She suggests a more complex way of seeing as an observer against the idea of the "god trick":

> "I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people's lives. I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring, and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. Only the god trick is forbidden (p. 589)."

In this light, I have created myself a more flexible position in the field through not keeping away myself from the community's activities while acknowledging my dual or in-between standing as "outsider" and "member".

It is also important to mention how my informants perceive me effect their expression about madrasa education. My initial thought about the encounter with the informants had been that my position as a university student who devoted more than 18 years of her life to official education could have a negative effect on their way to talk me. However, in most of my interviews, my apprehensive thought would not become true. Surprisingly, my informants often seemed to forget or ignore my education background in the official system, and if they had negative thoughts regarding official education, 16 of them did not hesitate to express their negative views. They narrated how they saw official education as something "unnecessary", "inferior to 'real' religious education", "useless (*malayani*)", "deviated people (if they do not have 'right' knowledge to guide them)", or "sink of iniquity (if being 'ignorantly' included)". It sometimes was psychologically hard for me to hear these words, because during these interviews I was aware that I was someone from the "sink of iniquity". On the other hand, this situation also let me think that this was prosperous, due to my above mentioned flexible positionality in the field, in order to see how they saw me as one of them. They often assumed that I agreed with them.

On the other hand, even though I already had known by the community, it was not easy to connect with them as a part of the study. Before I started to interview, I explained them I wanted to interview with them about the unofficial madrasa education for my thesis. Their first suspicion was regarding my intentions. They were curious about how I would portrait the madrasa: good or bad. Additionally, I was asked, particularly by elder informants, about the confidentiality in this study. Before their personal confidentiality, they were more suspicious that the community and the madrasas would become visible to the state and other part of the society. As they said, their fear mainly depends on their past experiences of closed or demolished madrasas, especially within the scope of the February 28 investigations. They thought that through my study the state could gather information about their community and unofficial institutions. They also insisted about they did not want anyone to know anything about them.

As a researcher, I had some responsibilities about significant ethical concerns, because the religious community which I had to negotiate with has a sensitive position due to its unofficial educational institutions. In order to make them comfortable about interviewing, I firstly assured that my intention was not about a good or bad portraying of the madrasa, and then I convinced them that this study was aimed to elicit how to be a woman who was educated in an unofficial madrasa in today's conditions. Additionally, along with using pseudonyms, I

also made it clear that I would not use or write any identity information about the madrasas and their communities. After few talks about their fears about my study, and especially after they were convinced that I was not a “state agent” and I was only a student who had a “homework” about unofficial madrasa education and in need for their help, they often let me to interview with them. Even they became encouraging of my study. However, I have to confess that my effort to be careful about the sensitive situation of the community caused each different interviewee brought a new difficulty. For example, most women that I interviewed said that they would be more comfortable, if I would not record the talk, although I made clear that I would not use their name, and it was needed for the quality of the study. Therefore, I did not record the interviews. This situation made hard for me to note, remember, and analyze the talk again.

I carried out the interviews mostly in the madrasa or interviewee’s home. It was hard to find a place to interview where I could stay alone with my interviewee. In the madrasa, I had done it during the breaks, and it was impossible to avoid other people around to interrupt the interview. However, sometimes this situation came with some advantages, such as witnessing their own relation between them. More importantly, I could observe the reactions of other persons who did not have any idea about my research. Even, some of them started talk about their ideas and stories about the madrasa and their own life.

CHAPTER 2

SITUATING THE STUDY IN THE LITERATURE

"THE STRANGE BEDFELLOW"

Zohreh T. Sullivan starts her article on a debate regarding the modernization process in Iran with a remarkable sentence from Karl Marx, "everything is pregnant with its contrary" (1998, p.215). She points out that the project in Iran to be more modern and Western bares some "strange bedfellows (p.236)" in itself. For her, the Shah's and the United States' strange bedfellow was the Islamic Revolution which has been produced against their modernization policies. Not in the exactly same direction, but, based upon this idea, it is probable to argue that the unofficial madrasa education in contemporary Turkey can be interpreted as a "strange bedfellow" of the Turkish modernization project.

Education plays an important role in the Turkish modernization project by strengthening the ideology of Turkish nationalism and continuity of the notion of laic-secular state, and also in the project aiming to establish an ideal homogeneous notion of Turkish citizenship through the imposition of so-called shared values (Neyzi, 2011, p.416). The Tevhid-i Tedrisat Law on the unification of education passed in 1924 has homogenized the educational system by abolishing the dual system of *medrese* and *mektep*[7] (school). This was the initial and biggest step toward eliminating other authorities over education and establishing a state monopoly over the education (Arı, 2002, pp.181-182), including religious education. Before the Tevhid-i Tedrisat Law, madrasas in the Ottoman Empire were not regulated by the state. They were financed and administrated by some charitable foundations (Özkan, 2006, p.68). This situation conduced to more independent curriculums and offered more diversity in authority over the

[7]Since 1845, Ottoman Empire organized its educational system as adapting to the western and modern education, and new educational institutions were named as *mektep*. However, the state did not intervene old educational system which maintained by charitable foundations, such as madrasas. Since Tevhidi Tedrisat Law in 1924, this duality in the education was continued. See for the further information regarding this duality: Özkan F. (2006). *Atatürk'ün Laiklik Anlayışının Eğitim Sistemimizdeki Yansımaları (1919- 1938)*. MA Thesis. Pp. 66-71.

education. However, these two characteristics posed a real problem for the new Turkish Republic which has tried to create a nation as a unitary entity.

Beginning from 1924, the Turkish state has been in a struggle for being the only authority to decide what is reliable religious authority, what is to be learned and what is not to be learned to become a proper religious Muslim. In accordance with these purposes, the state tried to suppress other religious authorities by using force when it was needed. The violent suppression of the Sheikh Said rebellion of 1925 as an example from Sunni sect and the Dersim rebellion of 1937-8 as an example from Alevi sect (the partisans of caliph Ali) were important developments in the history of early modern history of Turkey. The Turkish state engaged in violence to ensure their monopoly over the religion.

The Turkish state gave the responsibility of regulating religious tendencies of the Turkish citizens to the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*). The DRA (*Diyanet*), since its establishment has served as a state sponsored religious authority to determine what is real Islam, what is not and what is an alternative to traditional Islamic institutions. The DRA has been made dependent on the prime ministry. Its president has been selected by the Prime Minister, and the nominator is the president. Therefore, the state has the responsibility over the education, appointments, and salaries of the religious officials (Mardin, 1991, pp. 97-98). In order to "promote national solidarity and unity" as mentioned in the article 136 of the 1982 constitution[8], the responsibility of the *Diyanet* as a state institution has been always favored only one form of Islamic interpretation as "true Islam" which has no room for Alevis, Sufi understanding, other sects or other religious communities (Akan, 2003, p. 70). It has been used by Turkish state for social engineering (Gözaydın, 2009, pp. 216- 227; Kara, 2010, pp. 65-66).

In 1924, the Ministry of National Education has taken the responsibility for official religious education. In the early years of the republic, there was rapid decline in religious education. After the closure of the madrasas, Suleymaniye Madrasa was turned into the Divinity Faculty of Istanbul University which was only official institution for educating religious officials at that time. However, by 1933 this faculty was also closed, and the Institute of Islamic Research was established, but this institute had no function regarding the religious education and it also closed in 1936.[9] There were 28 Imam Hatip schools[10] and 2258 Imam Hatip students

[8] See 136th article of the 1982 Turkish Constitution: "… *milletçe dayanışma ve bütünleşmeyi amaç edinmek*…"

[9] See for the history of faculties of theologies http://www.divinity.ankara.edu.tr/?page_id=101

[10] Imam- Hatip (preacher- prayer leader) schools are public secondary educational institutions which provides religious knowledge for the students to prepare them to become religious officers such as *imam* or *müezzin* (Pak, 2004, p. 326).

in 1924 when they were established. However, in 1932 only 2 schools and 10 students left. In 1933, these 2 were also closed (Gözaydın, 2009, p.129). Therefore, the Quran courses of the Directorate of Religious Affairs (*Diyanet*) stood as only official institutions for religious education[11]. In mid 1940s, with the transition to the multi-party system, some in the Republican People's Party argued for religious instruction in the public schools. After this date, religious education has turned into a propaganda tool and became part of the political agenda of the political leaders (Şimşek, 2013, p. 391).

The justification of these voices was "the decrease in respect for parents" and "the precaution against the raising communism" (Öcal, 1986, p.115). Religion sessions have started to be taught as elective courses in 1949 in the primary schools (Mardin, 1991, pp.98-100). The curriculum and the content was prepared by the DRA and was checked by the Ministry of National Education (Gözaydın, 2009, p.130). However, the problem was the deficiency in the teachers to teach these courses. Therefore, Divinity Faculties once again came on the agenda, and opened in 1949 within the scope of Ankara University (Öcal, 1986, p. 116). In 1948, the Imam Hatip Courses was started. However, they were only for 10 months and not enough to fulfill the requirement to train a religious official. Adnan Menderes as a new Prime Minister in 1951 established Imam Hatip Schools (Ünsür, 2005, p.31), and they were affiliated with the Ministry of National Education. According to Tunaya, the role of the Ministry of National Education in the religious education was "the big mistake" of the new Turkish republic in the eyes of the conservatives of this period, because they believed that the republic proved they do not rely on the *ulema* class and their teaching from the Ottoman times (1962, pp.207-210). This belief was one of the reason why they have established unofficial madrasas.

Therefore, some religious communities have rejected this regulation and authority of the new laic Turkish state on Islamic education, and have tried to maintain their own understanding of Islamic education, relying on the madrasa tradition, aiming to establish alternative type of shared values and ideals, and even an alternative understanding of knowledge and intellectuals. The leaders of these communities were older members of the *ulema* class in the Ottoman times, and they were losing party over the status of being reliable

[11] However, as a government minister stated in 1965, we can understand that these Quran courses of the DRA were not seen qualified as unmitigated religious schools: "Kur'an kursu ne bir mekteptir ne bir ihtisas kursudur. Kur'an kursu sadece ve sadece Kur'an tilaveti tedris edilmek üzere ve Kur'an'ı iyi okumak için açılan bir talim yeridir." See Parliamentary Minutes Magazine (*Meclis Tutanak* Dergisi), I, (1965) 40, 105. Also: "… Bir kurs mahiyetinde sadece Kur'an tilavetini, sadece Kur'an'ın hafzını öğretecek bir mahiyetinde kalmasını, bir okul haline gelmemesini ısrarla istiyoruz." See same magazine, 353.

religious authority against the ideology of the new state[12]. This combouting the *ulema* from the religious authority let this class made approaches to the people. Eventually, it caused emergence of the new kind of cults (*tarikatlar*) and religious communities (*cemaatler*) under the leadership of this *ulema* class (Sarıkaya, 1998, p.96).

Just like other pietistic groups (Gorski & Altınordu, 2008, p. 71), the alternative religious education in contemporary Turkey can be recognized as a kind of Islamic movement against the secularist ideology of the state, although they are not visibly participating protests against the secular state structure in the public sphere, because they try to establish a life style through education aiming to teach how to be a "proper Muslim" in all aspects of life, which clearly cannot fit with the secularist ideal of how to be a "proper citizen". Additionally, these people have rejected to be educated in the official religious educational institutions, such as Imam Hatip Schools, Faculties of Divinity and Quran Courses of the DRA[13], except the situations that they can use these educations as means to reach some goals.[14]

Unofficial madrasa education is one example of these alternative educational systems which are held by several Islamic communities in Turkey. This study focuses on only one community's example, whose name cannot be disclosed due to the research ethics and the security reasons which are mentioned in the previous part. The community was led by an Islamic intellectual[15] who was educated in a madrasa during the Ottoman times. After the Tevhid-i Tedrisat Law in 1924, he served as a preacher in some mosques, and he started to teach students in private and unofficial ways. He underwent judicial proceeding several times, because of this secret role. Before a relief in regulations on the religious teaching with multi-party democracy in Turkey, he taught his students sometimes in train compartments or houses of some wealthy religious people. In the 1950s, he opened the first unofficial madrasa in Istanbul which was a Quran course affiliated with the DRA on paper. These institutions gradually have spread around the country. From 1957 on, the leader visibly started not to support Democrat Party which was the ruling party. This situation made it hard for the unofficial madrasas. Several of them were impounded by the DRA. From this date, the government has

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[12] See for the further information on power struggle between *ulema* class and the Turkish bureaucracy: Mardin, Ş. (1993). *Türkiye'de Din ve Siyaset,* p.39.

[13] See for the further information on conflicting relations between the religious communities and the DRA on the religious education: Gunay, U& Ecer, V. (1999). *Toplumsal Değişme, Tasavvuf, Tarikatlar ve Türkiye*, pp. 263- 266.

[14] It will be detailed in the Chapter 4.

[15] Because of confidential problems, the name of the intellectual leader of the community is not used in this thesis. And historical information about him and the activities of the community was obtained from the interviews.

changed several times, but there has been no change in the unofficial status of the madrasas. Additionally, until a change in regulations of the DRA about religious officials in 1965[16], teachers who had graduated from these institutions could easily become members of the DRA without any extra education. However, with this regulation, the DRA constraint the ways of becoming religious officials only with official institutions, such as Imam Hatip schools.[17] Eventually, these unofficial madrasas have become "strange bedfellow" of the new "modern" Turkish republic.

The position and history of the women in the history of this "strange bedfellow" are rarely known. Even the interviewees of this study speculated about the time of the opening of the first unofficial madrasa for the women. However, they commonly speculated around 1950s for the first unofficial madrasa for the women. Before the 1950s, the daughters of the leader intellectual of the community had organized religious lessons at the houses. These daughters became founders of the first women madrasas under this community. In order to explore in greater depth what is the meaning of these unofficial madrasas for the women, I find it is useful to, firstly, discuss the notion of freedom for feminist scholars. Following that, there will be a part which introduces some scholarly studies regarding Muslim women in contemporary Turkey who could have become visible for the academia, such as the women who protested the military's action during the February 28, 1997. The argumentations on how to define public and private spaces and their relationship with the women is also important to clarify in the context of the unofficial madrasa. Lastly, the education as a concept and its complex relation with the women will be questioned in dialogue with the scholarly studies.

As a self-proclaimed feminist, Saba Mahmood in her book *Politics of Piety* (2005), is critical of the analytical binary of 'resistance' and 'subordination' that she sees Western feminists employ in their methods for identifying what counts as resistance and what doesn't. Implicit in the use of the word resistance, Mahmood goes on to argue, is a secular attribution of agentival capacity which is premised on a universal projection of what are predominantly Western liberal values of individual autonomy and freedom from external pressures. The binary of resistance/subordination which produces this "trope of resistance" is problematic for it comes to "ignore projects, discourses and desires" that are not directly captured by these themes (Mahmood, 2015, p. 15). Mahmood is critical of "the inability within current forms of political

[16] Detail of the regulation: http://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.633.pdf

[17] These informations in this paragraph was written commensally from the combination of literature on the history of the community and interviewees' narratives. However, again because of the confidentiality, the references are not able to share.

thought to envision (other) valuable forms of human flourishing" which lie outside the strict bounds of what she calls "a liberal, progressive imaginary" (2005, p. 155). In looking at the women's mosque movement in Cairo, Egypt, Mahmood "meaningfully and richly in the world" would have been uncritically written off by many Western feminist writers as blatant illustrations of female subordination to what are patriarchal forms of social organization and religious doctrine. Beyond the romantization of "acts of resistance" defined in terms of secular formulations as striving for either gender equality or human freedom, what Mahmood is attempting to do is to replace the binary of resistance/ subordination which renders legible only certain forms of agentival capacity, with what is a more inclusive framework that will be sensitive to the "complex inter-workings of historically changing structures of power" (2005, p. 53).

Saba Mahmood (2005) conducts an interesting ethnographic study on the women in the mosque movement in Cairo and questions the women in the history of religious activism (piety movement), along with avoiding to use a hegemonic language of the post-colonial scholarship which is interest in "tracking the possibilities of resistance (p. 22)". Mahmood's analysis on this movement gives chance to understand how so-called non-political and non-public activities of the women, which is religious education and struggling to become pious Muslim, in Cairo can be read as a part of religious activism. Her study allows one to see and understand political activism in the madrasa education which is against the secularist hegemony in a different light. Her study is useful not only in terms of its methodological approach -ethnographic study- to these women's lives, but also her questioning of the current perceptions in the feminist theory. This is a reminder of how it is important to position oneself in the field as a researcher who studies women without falling in the trap of one's expectations.

Mahmood (2005) stated that "the desire for freedom and liberation is a historically situated desire whose motivational force cannot be assumed a priori, but needs to be reconsidered in light of other desires, aspirations, and capacities that inhere in a culturally and historically located subject" (p. 223). She does not refuse the existence of resisting for freedom and liberation or subordination of the women in the patriarchal societies, in her case Egyptian Muslim society. Rather she advises to focus on alternative possible experiences of the women in these societies, which demonstrates not a resistance as an action but an agency to follow an aim and redefining themselves with some ideal norms of the society.

In my case of the madrasa education in contemporary Turkey, the choices, understandings and experiences of the women seem close to the approving the male authority,

rather than protesting against it. However, I prefer to follow Mahmood's suggestions to reveal an alternative understanding of these experiences of modest dressing, restricted spaces, and constant surveillance. I aim to explore their own understanding of these concepts without trapping into predefined aspects of the progressive feminism, which traces the points of resistance in the stories of the women, especially in post-colonial part of the world.

In addition, Abu-Lughod in her study *Remaking Women* (1998) addresses the tension between the empowerment of the women through participating in the public sphere and the "discourse of domesticity" (1998, p.12). Although her study is about secular forms of education, a similar tension can be recognized in the case of women in madrasas. In some sense the training of these women can be interpreted as a practice of participating in the public sphere, even though informal education appears to promote values associated with domesticity. However, it is important to identify that this linkage between women's participation in the public sphere along with their empowerment and discourses of domesticity.

Additionally, India which has Muslim society as a minority group can be regarded as one of the similar countries to Turkey in terms of the madrasa education and women in these madrasas. In India, the question of the position of the madrasas and the women who have been educated in these institutions has been studied by Mareike J. Winkelmann (2005). In her study, the focus is on "how girls' madrasas emerged in India, how they are different from madrasas for boys, what notions of Islam and of the self are generated, particularly what is taught in girls' madrasas and if what is taught allows the young women claim an authority in Islamic matters in the public (p. 9, 2005)". She points out that these madrasas for the girls are relatively recent institutions, when we compare them with their male counterparts. She questions the absence and appearance of these institutions both in recent history and in the academia. For her, this is also important to shape the lives of these girls around the notions of "ideals of Islamic womanhood" which have been taught in these madrasas. Her studies are not only useful to discover different perspectives and questions for the similar topic, but also they allow one to understand how absentees of these madrasas in academia and society has come into the picture in India, and eventually how to deal with this lack of recognition and visibility as a researcher. With the broader context and the ongoing discussions elsewhere in mind, this thesis therewithal aims to focus on informal madrasa education in modern Turkey and particularly women in these institutions.

Studying on a topic involving a community which is closed to the outside also means obstacles to reach detailed academic works about it. In other words, the lives of these women

that I want to work with are not only invisible for the outside of their communities and official authorities, but also it is hardly possible to encounter their voice in the academic world. Because of their vulnerable position with regard to the secular state structure, these women also try to keep their activities in private. Alternatively, if we look at the literature from a broader framework, the Muslim women who try to become and live as "conscious Muslims" (Saktanber, 2002b, pp. 164-5) in the contemporary/ modern world, have been a popular topic for the academic community in Turkey. The first innovative scholars, for example Nilüfer Göle (1996), Aynur İlyasoğlu (1994), and Ayşe Saktanber (2002a), tended to divide Muslim women in modern Turkey into two distinct categories. On the one hand, there are the activist women who have shown themselves in the public areas, such as universities and political environments, and on the other hand there is a group of the women who are "traditional", and not politically active, are being oppressed and confined to the private sphere. In the study of İlyasoğlu (1994, pp. 46-47, 131) and Saktanber (2002a, p. 259), it is shown that the same division is also made by the members of the first group of women. When they think themselves superior, also they see themselves as "survivors" and "representatives" of the latter group of Muslim women.

However, I would like to study a group of Muslim women which can be regarded as a group between or above these two groups. Especially through the relations in the religious communities, the women can have a sense of social belonging, participate in social activities such as charities, and can get more even in terms of education. The relations of these women with the public and private sphere is complicated as Darıcı's argues about the girls who have attended the madrasa education by radical Islamic organizations: "In this sense, the reading house, which is technically a public space, assumes the role of a private home in which she can form intimate relations (2011, p. 466)." Although, these studies do not directly address the question of women in the madrasas in contemporary Turkey, they provide information about feminist theory and reading to comprehend the in-between situation of these women.

CHAPTER 3
THE MADRASA EDUCATION
AS A WAY OF BECOMING A CONSCIOUS MUSLIM WOMAN

> Havva (26): Look at the women who sit at home all day. Nearly all of them occupy themselves with how they can keep their home clean and what to cook for dinner. They think that they are only responsible for their Salah and fasting. I think, this means totally ignorance. They are made to believe that their religion advises them to stay at home. This is totally wrong. They are blind to the principles of Islam: *it is a religious duty to learn science (ilim)*[18] *for all Muslim women and men*[19]. It says that not only for men but also for women it is a duty. As Muslims, women also have to leave their houses to learn their science (*ilim*), and it is not limited to childhood. It is a lifelong learning. This sentence is the very first thing that we teach them… Before women's madrasas, there was really limited opportunities for women to get religious education. But now we try to reach these women, and make them not to waste their valuable time. (8)

Several women from whom I collected their madrasa stories mentioned the significance of improvement in the religious consciousness. In the first couple of encounters with these familiar expressions, I had ambiguous feelings. On the one hand, these women have received education from a "traditional" form of Islamic educational institution, and favor the historical-Ottoman heritage of their educational system. On the other hand, most of them seem to reject the traditional and "wrong" model of Muslim women built around past and present Islamic cultural traditions, while explaining their own positions as learners and instructors, as Havva's words above imply. Trained in the mediatized versions of "religious education" and "madrasas," one could assume that these women affirm their figure behind the curtain[20] which is not visible for the outside of their communities. As my research progressed, however, I noticed that the initial ambiguity I felt as a response to their expression of dichotomy between the "right" and "wrong" model of Muslim women was slowly giving way to an understanding

[18] This dichotomy will be detailed in the chapter 4.

[19] This sentence is a hadith, and it is also the first sentence of the community's book of Islamic catechism which is the first book to learn as the source of basic knowledge.

[20] The referencing to the title of the book by Mareike Jule Winkelmann*: 'From Behind the Curtain' A Study of A Girls' Madrasa in India*. 2010, Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.

of their realization of "conscious Muslim". I had by then learned that they do not mean to take away the curtain, rather they re-inscript the role of women while re-generating and extending the behind of the curtain with their own alternative ways which they have got from the madrasa education.

In this chapter, I situate my research about women in the madrasas in contemporary Turkey against the nexus of gender, tradition, education, understanding of the consciousness and the socialization of women. While doing so, I try to construct a dialogue between theoretical debates and the narratives of my interviewees through a discussion of the restricted position of the Muslim women in the society. The chapter, relying on the narratives of my research participants, begins with a discussion of being teachers (*hoca*) both in the madrasas and the neighborhoods. It is followed by a section where I convey the experiences of students (*talebe*) in the madrasas. I analyze the processes through which educated and conscious Muslim women established and articulated among the women in the community, focusing on what knowledge, womanhood and restrictedness mean to my research participants and how these impact their experiences of their daily life through discussion of notions such as belonging, status, and forming a community.

After presenting a picture how these women see their consciousness and womanhood in relation to their madrasa education, this chapter concludes with a series of critical questions regarding passivity, docility, and the desire for freedom. Can we speak of a possible feeling of uncomfortableness with being "behind the curtain" due to the closedness of their community, especially as female members in the community? How, furthermore, can we understand the relationship between their notion of consciousness and the position of Muslim women in society? Can we categorize it as a kind of "feminist consciousness"?

In what follows, I first discuss the connection between the consciousness and madrasa education by referring to the narratives of the women as teachers and students, then focus on how this consciousness changes or affects their gendered relations.

3.1. Teaching How to be a Conscious Woman

Giving importance to teaching Islamic knowledge to the women is a product of the combination of traditional-national ideology with modern Western notions. According to Shakry (1998), even Islam itself might have been transformed during Westernization projects in the Middle East, and people have started to discuss new subjects, such as society and women. Hatem (1998) also provides evidence about that the teaching of Islamic law (*fiqh*) to the women

in the nineteenth century can be interpreted as one of this kind of transformations, which were formed by a hybrid concept of the ideal Islam. There is complex dialogue between Islam and westernization which can be situated in the positional defense of the Islam and a critique of custom/tradition (Shakry, 1998).

During my interviews, I realized that the women in contemporary Turkish madrasas rationalize their concepts of true and false Islam, womanhood, consciousness, and knowledge within a hybrid and transformed understanding of Islam, in despite of the traditional roots of madrasas. They tend to emphasize the wrongness of eliminating the women from the Islamic teaching both as teachers and learners (a critique of the custom/tradition) by referring to the Era of Bliss (Asr-ı Saadet) which refers to the times of the Prophet.

While discussing the topic of gender, I did not hear anyone mentioning concepts with Western origins, such as feminism or patriarchy. Several women from whom I collected their madrasa stories, however, mentioned the lives of the Prophet and his companions. They tend to idealize the Era of Bliss (Asr-ı Saadet) as a model for women.

One of my interviewees explained how she teaches her students the models of Islamic women:

> Actually, there are three different Islamic role models for women: Fatma, Hatice and Ayşe. Fatma was one of the daughters of the Prophet. She was ideal to show a woman who prefers to be a housewife, caring for her children, responsible for preparing dinners, cleaning and so on. Hatice, first wife of the Prophet, was a different model, because she was a trader. She met the Prophet while trading. She was 40 years old, had three children, was married twice and divorced from ones which was so difficult for a woman at that time. She proposed to the Prophet while he was only 25. Her third marriage was with the Prophet and she gave birth to another six children. As a mother of nine children, she was always a strong trader women. But I think, Ayşe's story is the most interesting one. She was also a wife of the Prophet and she was very effective in politics, especially after the decease of the Prophet. Additionally, we also know the stories of women who waged the wars with the Prophet. I have to say that there is a commonality of these women. It is religious education. All of them taught women how to be true Muslim women, and they also were students of the Prophet. I have to mention that, however, the Muslim men of today like to put forward the story of Fatma over the others. I think with a proper education and proper environment, every Muslim woman can have different occupations. (9) (Şeyma, 22)

Zeliha (21), furthermore, informed me about the situation of the women in the era of the Prophet:

> In the time of the Prophet, there was no curtain between men and women in the mosques. The female companions could also attend every Salah with the Prophet and could listen to his speech. If a woman had a question she could ask the Prophet

> directly. The Prophet was open to teaching, and I try to imitate him to create a broad environment for my students. (10)

For some of my interviewees, the role of teacher for a woman was not recently invented but has been forgotten over time. It has its origins in the era of the Prophet. During that time, women performed not only the role of the teacher, but also the roles of soldier, trader, and politician.

The following excerpt by Azime (42) suggests yet another take on this question. Under the current conditions, she argues, becoming a soldier, trader, or politician are not suitable for a Muslim, regardless of any gender differences:

> Now we cannot build a society like the one in the era of the Prophet. We are in the doomsday (*ahir zaman*). The conditions of this time are actually dangerous not only for Muslim women, but also for Muslim men. However, unfortunately, someone must earn money, and I think men sacrifice themselves for their families. It is wrong for me, but unfortunately it is necessary nowadays. We as women are lucky to have the opportunity to be religious instructors, otherwise we would go to sacrifice ourselves too or we would just stay at home, waiting for our husband to come home—and most probably we would have been ignorant. (11)

Azime (42) presents a different perspective on being a teacher as an alternative way to living in the "doomsday". Teaching others is not only a matter of status, but also a vehicle of putting consciously a curtain between herself and the doomsday's sin while turning her into a knowledgeable person.

Additionally, while favoring religious education for women, my interviewees also formulate new ways of socialization for women where is an alternative way and hybrid of public and private sphere, madrasas and neighborhood meetings. This socialization cannot be understood with the narrow definition of the private sphere, which is popularly accepted, which limits the private sphere within the four walls of the households, whereas the public sphere is the domain that deals with the whole community. However, as some researchers indicate (Altorki, 1986 and Tapper 1978), there are some places for women get in touch with the larger group of people beyond their households, such as public baths and extended family meetings. Some of my interviewees, as we discussed in Azime's story, argue that madrasas function as alternative spheres for them to move away from the four walls of their house and feel a sense of belonging.

> In the Quran God tells us that 'can those who know and those who don't know be the same?[21] Because of that one should learn. But not the useless science, but the useful science. The most useful of it is the science of God. We teach the women the

[21] "Hiç bilenlerle bilmeyenler bir olur mu?"

> value of knowledge and learning. The Quran is our primary source. It is followed by Sunnah, ijma, and qiyaas[22]. After relying on these four sources, all other sources of knowledge are open for you. (12)

As Elveda (21) mentioned in this quotation, the teachers (*hocas*) who graduated from the contemporary madrasas in Turkey take teaching firstly the main principles of the Islam on as a duty. However, their role is not restricted to teach them, but also teach them how to put this knowledge into practice, and they are responsible for turning ignorant women into women with a conscious Muslim identity, as Elveda (21) points out:

> And the most important point here is that we teach them to act like that for God's sake. It is possible only when you learn why you have to act like this. You firstly have to learn what your God wants from you, and act like that. This is how one becomes conscious. And it has to turn into a lifestyle. (13)

In other words, the teachers want to make the Muslim women "serfs to God" before any attached roles.

> Our book says that 'the superiority is only at the piousness.' Because of that, we as Muslim women have to learn our religion well. Then we can see that it is the most important thing in the world. (14) Havva (26)

Nazire's (32) views support this description:

> What would they do if they stayed at home? They would watch TV, iron, struggle with cooking and the children. They [housewives] often forget their first role, which is the main reason of their existence. It is role of the serf of God. This servitude is not for God of course, he does not need it. The serf needs the servitude in order to realize and recognize the causation around her. It is an awareness rising. (15)

The following quotation will suggest yet another take on the roles of conscious women:

> The women are daughters, wives, and mothers. But of course firstly they are servants of God. We make them remember their true religion. At least, they read some pages of Quran and memorize the basics. Besides, if she learns her religion, she can become a better daughter, wife, or mother. Because, she will do it for the sake of God. (16) Zümrüt (22)

Selma thus interprets the roles of the women in a different way, which relates woman with the men in the families through their traditional gender roles. She legitimizes these roles by connecting them to the duties from God which are given to women.

To sum up, it is an important mission for women to be teachers who teach religious consciousness to Muslim women. With this concept, they build a rejection of the image of women who are unlearned persons and restricted to home as housewives performing the roles

[22] These are four main sources of Islam for the according to Sunni Islam.

of daughter, mother, and wives. Additionally, they revalue their status and oppose this image as knowledgeable persons.

3.2 Learning How to be Conscious

Some of my interviewees indicate that it is important to form the consciousness of both the students and their parents:

> I have to confess that I did not like madrasa when I came here. I cried a lot. I did not want to stay here. If I could find a way to escape, I would not have stayed. I was angry at my family, because they did not come to take me. There were lots of students like me. Especially summer students (*yazlıkçı*) and beginner winter students (*kışlıkçı*) like me. Non-stop classes, limited breathing times… Of course one could get bored. You can see the similar situation in the primary schools. It is not special to the madrasa. If the children could not have consciousness of learning yet and if they do not feel they belong to the environment, they got bored and wanted to leave. Think about that, even the madrasas are boarding. They leave their families, mothers, homes, toys and beds. It is not easy. And I see it as a normal reaction. However, like how the families ignore the reaction of their children as a beginner of primary school, they have to do same with the madrasa. But unfortunately generally they sympathize with their children and take them away from a great opportunity to learn their religion. I know lots of children who were taken away from the madrasas. When they cannot get used to the life here, and cry, the family comes and takes them back to home. We as teachers try to convince them to wait for a while in order to give time the children to get used to living here. But sometimes the families do not listen to us. This is because of their religious unconsciousness and ignorance. (17) (İbadiye, 20)

This interviewee thus emphasizes that without established religious consciousness, people cannot understand the value of the madrasa education. Students also imply that they have a different status in the madrasa, referring to their capacity of knowledge:

> First thing that I learned at the madrasa was to respect the people with knowledge. We have to say 'abla' (elder sister) or teacher (hocam) to students of the upper-class even if sometimes they are younger than us. The age does not matter. The important thing is the knowledge. After I started madrasa education, even my social environment outside of the madrasa started to respect me. My mother, father, aunts, grandfather... They changed their attitudes toward me. They started to listen me. I felt that. Also I feel more respect to myself too. Because I have more conscious to learn and teach my religion. (18) (Emine, 17)

As Emine (17) states, their positionalities at the madrasa, among family, and even from the eyes of themselves are related with their being as conscious and knowledgeable students.

Yet there is no strict line between being a teacher or a student for the women with whom I conducted interviews. Most of them mentioned that they have both statuses at the same time. They are "lifelong teachers and learners" (Asiye, 39). When the students in the madrasas passed

the first year, they became teachers for the beginner level of summer students. Then their double status continues.

"I always pray to God for the increase in my knowledge and consciousness" (19) said my oldest interviewee, Dudu (54). Additionally, Zümrüt (22) said that "our prophet Muhammad says that 'the best of you are those who learn the Quran and teach it'. I am glad that I am still in both of these categories. I am still learning while preparing my speech, and every week I meet with other teachers and we are learning and memorizing new prayers… I also believe that you learn when you teach"(20), while expressing where she saw herself in the society.

These women's wording blurs the categorization of the student and the teacher as learned and teach consciousness. This indicates that they see themselves as missionaries in the society to teach religious consciousness, while not omitting themselves.

3.3 Religious Consciousness or Feminist Consciousness

In this part, I try to discuss the complexity of the concept of "consciousness" used by the women in the contemporary madrasas, through its connections with the religious piety, the feminist thought and the concept of false consciousness. These are three important notions for understanding what kind of knowledge, womanhood and restrictedness of the women in the contemporary madrasas in the Turkey have. This discussion also includes a critical analysis of the assumption of the women's intrinsic involvements to the opposition of the Islamic thought.

Female teachers of contemporary madrasas in Turkey see themselves as the leaders of rising religious consciousness among women who are generally housewives or house-girls. However, this consciousness does not intrinsically aim to free women from their 'chains' and does not involve a progressive understanding of the emancipation of the women. Rather, it helps make Muslim women realize their "better" place in the family, in society, and especially in the eyes of the God, which was given to them in the "true" Islamic doctrine.

Additionally, during the interviews, the women never used the modern concepts of feminism, women's rights, or the subordination of women. Their focus was only limited to the ignorance and unconsciousness to position woman in the society. Ignorance is measured by what is known about the principles of Islamic thought. But with religious consciousness, they mean more then knowing and memorizing, it is an internalized knowing and compliance with this knowledge. Only with 'true' religious consciousness and 'true' Islamic thought can a woman become a 'true' Muslim. These women in the contemporary madrasas aim to teach the

other women, however, they do not have any intention to criticize the roles of women in society. Rather, they tend to add another role of the women to the list, a serf to the God.

Lerner (1994) defines feminist consciousness "as the awareness of women that they belong to a subordinate group; that they have suffered wrongs as a group; that their condition of subordination is not natural, but is societally determined; that they must join with other women to remedy these wrongs; and finally, that they must and can provide an alternate vision of societal organization in which women as well as men will enjoy autonomy and self-determination (p. 17)." Based on this definition, we can easily say that the women in contemporary madrasas cannot be said to possess a feminist consciousness. However, they also favor other social roles for women by relying on the historical background of Islam, such as trader, politician, and warrior.

Through informing women about religious teachings and moral conduct in order to create a religious awareness by providing ideal models of true womanhood (Fatma, Hatice and Ayşe) and grounding on lists of hadiths and verses, it can be eerily interpreted as Foucauldian-modern in their obsession with self-discipline (Abu Lughod, 1998 , p. 19). The new educated, self-disciplined, religiously conscious and properly Muslim women are guided to a new form of a space where they can create their own kind of socialites. Can we depart from Lerner's (1994) indication that "I trace the appearances of female clusters and female networks to explore their impact on the group of consciousness of women. The particular problems of women thinkers in the social spaces, in which they are considered equal, but still under male hegemony (p.19)" while understanding these women in the madrasas? As there are no arguments for gender equality and/or resistance to male authority, the actions of these women in madrasas could be seen as reinforcing male authority. If we rely on Saba Mahmood's interpretation of the women in Islamic communities, this is the wrong question to ask, because in this study the aim is not to trace any moment or action of resistance to the patriarchal authority over these women. Rather this chapter sought to investigate the women's own explanations and experiences about the relationship between the womanhood and their definition of religious consciousness.

In the next chapter I will trace the exclusionary relationship between the community of the unofficial madrasas and the officially recognized Islamic norms and education. These women aim to learn and teach 'true' knowledge and 'proper' religious consciousness. However, in addition to their unofficial status out of their community, how do they realize this trueness and properness outside of the community?

CHAPTER 4

SITUATING THE SELF AND THE '*ZAHİRİ* (THE OTHER)'

Whenever, the women from whom I collected their madrasa stories from put forward their perceptions about what they considered indicators of being conscious Muslims and proper knowledge (*ilim*), they simultaneously referred to the word *'zahiri'*[23] that means 'virtual' and 'unctuous' generally identified as the outside of the community, such as out- group Muslim Other, the Other who prefers a *malayani* (useless) education, the modern- westernized Other, and *kafir* (the unbelievers). While they affirmed their identities as the members of their religious community, they denigrated the Other in explicit and implicit ways through scorning Other's way of life. In this chapter, I analyze the relationship of the women in the madrasas with the Other and their positionality in the broader society. I also try to connect theoretical debates on the concept of the Other and construction of the social identity in the religious groups with my observations in the field and narratives of the women. The chapter begins with a brief discussion on the relation between the construction of the Other and feeling the group consciousness particularly in the religious communities. It follows with a section where I convey my experiences as an observer in the madrasa and relevant parts of the interviews that show how the women in the madrasa position themselves in the relationship with the Other and within their community. It is important to focus on this positionality because of that these women do not pursue an official education and learn officially recognized knowledge, which they believe as "true" education and "true" knowledge.

The meaning of the Arabic word '*zahiri*' is also marking their construction of the duality between their selves and the Other. By defining the outside of the community as virtual, unctuous, fake, and ostensible, they not only reproduced their situation as closed and confidential, but also claimed that they possessed the actual and sincere meaning of the real

[23] As I observed, the word '*zahiri'* was often used during lectures in the madrasa and the neighborhood meetings and also during our conversations with my interviewees. They interpret this word as the everyone other than their members of the community. It is interesting for me to discover that my interlocutors were surprise when they learned that I had no clue what was the meaning of *zahiri*. They did not aware that it was not a common word for the outside of the community.

knowledge and real Islam. Before proceeding to some examples of the expressions of the perceptions regarding the Other or encountering with the Other during my fieldwork, I want to look a little further at the concept of "othering" and the self as a member of a religious community, because the othering and being part of a group, together with construction self-concept with the identity as a group member, are reciprocally related (Brewer, 1999, p. 429).

Benedict Anderson (1983, p. 6 and 26) asserts with the concept of *Imagined Communities* that the nationalism is created with an artificial sense of resembling each other and togetherness. This imagined sense manifests itself in the ways of communication, rituals, traditions, art, and so on. The imaginary dichotomies between the group, and the self as a member of the group, and the Other. According to Lingaas (2016, pp. 90-91), the process of othering and stigmatization of the other become solidified over time, while often simultaneously the self recreates itself in this process. This is seen not only as differentiating the self as a member of a group but this othering process is a necessary thing to marking their existence as a real community with common features and common opposites. These statements can be verified with my observations in the madrasa and the neighborhood meetings. When my interlocutors talked about *zahiri*, they simultaneously talked about themselves as a group and its imagined lines, through emphasizing their differentness from their Other, and vice versa.

According to Tajfel and Turner (1979), the social identification with a group presents the member a higher social status and support as well as increases the person's self- respect and welfare. This process follows by a *self- categorization*, named by Turner et al. (1994), that is a perception of seeing other people as in two categories: *in- group* members and *out- group* members. While the individuals develop positive sentiments toward the former, such as loyalty, perceived superiority and pride, they perceive the latter as defective. Sumner (1906) describes this bipolar assumption with a sentence: "The exigencies of war with outsiders are what make peace inside (p.12)." However, the competition between in and out is not always consist of physical violence as Sumner describing in this sentence. This differentiation can also show itself in implicit attributes to the Other. As Freeman (2003) stated, this perceived dissimilarity between the groups becomes particularly significant when the people feel unsafe and insecure. Therefore, identification with a group can improve people's sense of confidence and belonging, as well as it can provide stabilization, "solid ground" (Kinnvall, 2004). It is suggested that this sense of security is resulting from two possible reasons: the organization of network in the community (Lim & Puntam, 2009) and the commonality of believing in a "higher power" (Pargament, 2002), which can be God for some communities. Although the religion reflects a

personal and spiritual connection to a higher power or creator, the society and groups are the main components of existence and development of the religion (Kınsün, 2016, p. 210).

While locating *zahiri* as their Other, the women in the madrasas also possess a certain social identity as a member of a religious group. A group which does not connected with the secular bounding but with relying on a way of religious belief, a similar construction of feeling togetherness is created through gathering around particular idea of a 'true' worldview. Some studies reveal that the members of the religious groups are not only feeling togetherness, but also they rely on their group memberships in the construction of their self- concept and personal and collective self- esteem (Luhtanen & Crocker, 1992). Additionally, in a study Lim and Putham (2009) argues that "praying together is better than bowling together, and better than praying alone", because the support of the religious group develops its members' self- concept and life satisfaction, which is a distinguishable characteristic of the religious groups from the secular groups.

The religious identity of the individuals is strengthened with the belief that their own religion is the true one (Kinnvall, 2004). Because the religious beliefs and rules cannot be confirmed or proved in an empirical way, the loyalty to the one's belief system and its truths are the cornerstones of the harmony and feeling togetherness of the members in the religious groups. Therefore, the belief in one truth may empower the in- group favoritism (Roccas, Klar, & Liviatan, 2006) following with out-group discrimination. Although displaying discriminatory attitudes to the Others can cause a conflictual relationship with the outside, it can also have some positive consequences for the individual's self- concepts. According to a work by Ysseldyk et al. (2010), the feeling of superiority for one's group and its unfalsifiable truths can help to develop a prosperity during the hard times of the individuals and provide them some coping strategies (p. 62). It may also be an explanation why there is such tenacity of religiosity (p. 60).

Grounded within the framework on the othering and religious group identity which is presented earlier, in the following sections of this chapter, I will provide some examples which shows how these women in the madrasas construct their own preeminence over *zahiri* or the Others, who can be categorized in four groups: out- group Muslim Other, the Other who prefers a *malayani* (useless) education, the modern- westernized Other, and *kafir* (the unbelievers). Through comparing themselves with these groups of people they tend to justify their own distinctness, such as pursuing a madrasa system.

4.1 The Muslim *Zahiri*

During my interviews and observations, I have noticed that the women mostly talked about or referring implicitly to the other Islamic religious communities and out- group Muslims in Turkey, more than other groups of *zahiri,* and their understanding of religious knowledge and conscious Muslim. It may demonstrate that they start to differ themselves from the groups whose boundaries with their community is blurred from the outside. While they argue that they possess the real meaning of Islam, this may cause a clash between other authorities over the Islamic knowledge, such us other Islamic communities which offer an Islamic education and state authorized Islamic education as Imam- Hatip schools, Quran courses affiliated to the DRA and Divinity Faculty education.

The negative approach particularly toward the other religious Islamic groups in Turkey is not special to the community which I studied with. According to Onat (2003, p. 29), since there is no religious authority which is accepted not only by the state but also by its people, there is information gap in Turkey. Therefore, the religious communities have strengthened through gaining power from the people against the officially accepted notion of Islam. Additionally, Çalışlar argues that the reason why these communities do not recognize each other's religious understanding relies on their different ways of functioning. These differences clash in order to become more powerful than others. There is a competition between these groups for gaining confidence of the religious Turkish people. To reach this target, the communities glorify their own belief systems and vilify the others' (as cited in Arslan, 2004, p. 30).

It was appeared during the teaching hours in the madrasa. For example, in the course of a *halaqa* (religious conversation hour) on the importance of *tekamül* education, which is the last stage to become a madrasa teacher, the instructor reminded the students that they did not expected them only to become religious and moral women or educate other women as religious and moral, but their main aim had to become living and teaching their real Islamic knowledge that they had learn from the madrasa. She explained herself with picturing a contrast between the other religious groups targeting only a soul purification and enamoring masses and her community which prioritizes the 'real' knowledge and its maintenance in the world and in every student who had learned it. She assigned them to be carriers of this knowledge. The instructor affirmed their own knowledge production process in the madrasas and in the neighborhood meetings, while underestimating the other religious communities' ways of engaging the Islamic knowledge.

On the other hand, during the interviews, I encountered a lot of examples of explicit expressions self- praise together with despising the Muslimism of *zahiri*. Ayşe (18) is one of them. While she expressed her experiences on her effort for explaining herself to outsiders, she compared madrasa education with the other more visible Islamic group's activities:

> When I explain what I am doing to a stranger, their first reaction is comparing us (*the community*) with other Muslim groups. I suppose this is because they know them better. They think we memorize Quran. However, we are getting detailed education. This is how you can educate wise people. (21)

My another interviewee, Hatice (21), mentioned the intellectuals of other Muslim groups:

> Sometimes I feel that I know very little. But I several times encountered with *hocas* of the other Muslim communities. They were ridiculously ignorant. Their main object is belief to God. How one can truly believe in something without deeply knowing it? This is a cheap Muslimism. (22)

She emphasized that comparing her knowledge with the other group's intellectuals provided to realize her superiority over the Islamic knowledge, and made her more confident.

Apart from images of the Muslim Other who is a member of other communities, especially during the neighborhood meetings, there were also actual encounters with some women whose perceptions of the religion challenged the views of the women in the madrasas. One day, a daughter of a member of the community, who was a Divinity Faculty student, came to the neighborhood meeting with her mother. As far as her personal history was concerned, her father was *imam* of that neighborhood, he was her first religious teacher, and he was not a member of the community which conducted the madrasas. Her father, further, did not want her to go madrasa for religious education. Additionally, not only the source of her religious knowledge, but also her dressing was different than the other women in the meeting. She was wearing pants, tunic and shawl, instead of maxi skirt, long topcoat and scarf. This image was also an apparent indicator of that she was not one of them.

When she came into the living room of the meeting house of the week, everyone tended to look at her. No one directly talked anything negative to her face, but one could feel the tense environment during the meeting. While the teacher giving the lesson on prayer (*namaz*) turned to the young girl and asked what they learned about this topic in the university. This question was a start for the long discussion on some technicalities of the sources of the religious knowledge and proper curriculum, and eventually two sides could not convince each other. Basically, the teacher argued that the religious education in the Divinity Faculty was distorted with Western- modern ideals, which could not be in concordance with the historical background

of the source of the religious knowledge. She even accused the Divinity Faculty of transferring non-denominational knowledge and bringing up non-denominational students. Oppositely, the young woman advocated the methods of the Divinity Faculty and more modernized version of Islam.

After the meeting, I got a chance to talk with her in private, and asked her how she perceived the madrasa education as a student of Divinity Faculty. She said that the teaching in the madrasas could not be seen as theoretically 'wrong', but it was deeply formalistic (*şekilci*) and enclosed for her. The imam's daughter advocated that the Divinity Faculty education was more open to different approaches and this modern world which was in a state of flux. She also added in a carefree manner that she would never wear a *pardesü* (long topcoat). For her, before the appearance as a Muslim woman, the deeply feeling of believing God was important. Along with the views of the imam's daughter, I also intended to find out about the teacher's thought of the Divinity Faculty education. The next week, I interviewed with her. Nazire (32) said that these institutions did not and could not provide *takva ehli* (pious) people for the society. For her, the curriculum of the Divinity Faculty was inadequate and full of redundant and degenerate information. She pointed out that "these inadequacies of this system created lots of people who did not actually know the religion, but had confidence to deliver their opinions on the Islamic subjects." (23)

The thoughts and positionalities of these two women, the imam's daughter and the teacher of the neighborhood meeting, were also significant for me to understand the concurrence of the official and the unofficial. Despite the negative thoughts of the teacher on the Divinity Faculty, the imam's daughter said as an answer to my question about her perception on the unofficial position of the teacher that she did not see the madrasa education and the teacher's knowledge as invalid because of her unofficial positionality. However, for her, the religious teachers should become certificated and monitored their actions by the state due to preclude exploitation of the religion by some malevolent people.

On the other hand, the teacher represented the other side of the coin, because ironically she was also a student of Open Education Faculty of Divinity. She justified her dual position in this dichotomy of Divinity Faculty and madrasa education with these sentences:

> This education (Divinity Faculty) is not my objective (*amaç*). This is only an occasion (*araç*) for me. Through this education, I can reach more people without any need for confidentiality. It does not mean that I will give up teaching madrasa education during the neighborhood meetings. The content of my lessons will not change. (24)

As an alternative to imam's daughter's argumentation sustaining state monitoring through certificating the intellectuals, this practice of the teacher disqualified the state authority and even provided her more powerful position in the larger part of the society. It is obvious that both of them give some importance to the certificating Islamic knowledge, however, their interpretations for this process are different from each other.

Similar with the relationship between the objective (*amaç*) and occasion (*araç*) by the teacher, my another interlocutor, Sümeyye (23) emphasized that she did not continue her education in the open education faculty of Divinity in order to learn more information on the Islamic knowledge. She said that "these courses are really easy for me to pass. I do not learn anything new with this education." (25) When I asked her what was the reason to motivate her to get this education, she talked about her intent to be open for the larger parts of the society.

> If we restrict ourselves only with madrasa education, we always have to limit ourselves with women in the community. This is also a choice. I do not underestimate that. I have some friends who do not have any problems with limiting themselves with the community. However, I do not prefer that. I like to have this diploma to have an official job. (26)

These examples above which represent the dichotomy between the official and unofficial Islamic education reveal that these women who educate both of them do not change their postulate about the real Islamic knowledge. They tend to use the Divinity Faculty education, which is belong to a *zahiri*, as a tool to gain more powerful position which can be valid not only in their community but also for the wider part of the society as intellectuals. Therefore, using *zahiri*'s education as a tool does not make them similar with the *zahiri* or does not devalue their status in the community.

Keeping in mind that this community serves as a closed group with a strong emphasis on the Islamic orthodoxy, it is not a surprise that the members use the word *zahiri* for the outside of their community, which means visible, virtual, unctuous, fake and ostensible. The above observations and examples indicate that the main objective of the community, while positioning themselves in the larger part of the society, is to maintain their understanding of Islamic knowledge and belief system, which indicate the opposite meaning of *zahiri* as true, real and sincere. Because of this dichotomy between the Muslimism of the members and the outsiders, the main Other of the community is Other Muslims who claim an authority over the Islamic knowledge. This othering is significant for the women in the madrasas to justify their uncertificated and unofficial years of endeavor in the madrasa education and working as teachers after the education. They perceive their sacred status as the maintainers of the real

knowledge. They constantly re-create this sacred status during neighborhood meetings and madrasas in explicit and implicit ways. On the other hand, it is also important to detailed in the relationship between the other people in the society who do not claim an authority over the Islamic knowledge, but over other types of the knowledge, and the women in the community.

4.2 The *Malayani* (Useless) Education and *İlim* vs. *Bilim*

The case with the imam's daughter reminded me my initial entry to the community as an outsider. My appearance which I turned heads was very similar to her dressing. However, due to my educational background, I was more exterior than the imam's daughter who was a student in Divinity Faculty in front of the members of the community. I had finished an undergraduate education in Political Science and International Relations department, and continued to my master education in Cultural Studies. These two fields were very unfamiliar to them. Nevertheless, my status in the community changed slowly, as I received respectability through showing my concern about Islamic knowledge and madrasa education together with changing in my dressing. In time, they even let me to teach beginners of the neighborhood meetings. This example of changing the position in the community was represented how upward social mobility could be achieved through cultivation of a willingness to learn the 'real' knowledge. As my research progressed, however, I noticed that they perceived my entry as an emancipation process, which was similar to their interpretation of being only house women mentioned in the previous chapter. Through the madrasa education for them I could fulfilled my deficiency.

As their perception changed about me my interlocutors also began to more explicit about their perceptions on my background. They basically defined this non- religious education as *malayani* (useless). During a crowded *halaqa* (conversation session), which was open to members of neighborhood meetings of three different neighborhoods around madrasa together with approximately hundred madrasa students and teachers, the lecturer, after emphasizing that the children should be primarily sent to the madrasas, argued that the people's center of the life should not be the *malayani* (referring to the formal and non-religious education). Additionally, ten of my interviewees explained that they would not see the non- religious official education as necessary. For example, Dudu (54) said that:

> Actually *icazet* (the ratification, verbal certificate of being teacher) from the madrasa is enough for me. For now, I also want to become a dentist. But we will see what life will show us. As I said, it is not so much difference for me (the original Turkish expression: *olsa da olur olmasa da olur*). (27)

On the other hand, I encountered and interviewed also some women who was university students or already graduated. Their major was various, such as the department of dietitian, management, and child development and education. Most of them were studying/ studied open faculties, which could not intervene their madrasa education or responsibilities as the teachers. Two of them were following formal training. But they were already finished their madrasa education. One of them, Ebrar (28) who was graduated from child development and education was working as a teacher in the kinder-garden of the madrasa which was affiliated with the madrasa. When I asked her the reason why she preferred to have a diploma on child education, she said that it was a mandatory rule to have a diploma to work in a kinder-garden as a teacher. However, she did not use the word "*iş* (work)" for defining her position in the kinder-garden, but "*hizmet* (duty)", because for her, her position was not different from the positions of other teachers who worked in the madrasas or in the neighborhoods. Therefore, the diploma was only a tool to become a teacher at the kinder-garden.

Another example was Seda (19) who was one of my interviewee. She was a student at the madrasa and also a student of distance education in sociology department. She justified her situation with the advice of the teacher. Her teacher had received the information from the higher status teacher that they had promoted to study sociology for the women in the madrasas, because they would become teachers who should engage with lots of people. Seda (19) said that "this (the advice) was my motivation to start this education. I believe that it will be useful for me in the future." (28) However, when I asked her did she want to work other places with after this formal education, she said that this is also a possibility for her, but on the condition that she would not abandon her position as a teacher.

These women who was in both formal and informal education were seen as more interested and excited about my research, while I got many questions form the other women, such as "what is the purpose of this research?", "can you change anything in a better way with this work?" and "why do you waste your valuable time- you are young and have clear mind- with this stuff?". The answers that I gave these types of question followed by convinced look, but they mostly thought I tried to finish a compulsory homework, which gave me significant chance to learn the "real knowledge". I coincided a woman, further, said directly that my research was totally *malayani* (useless) effort. In time, I felt that they seemed to forget about my research. However, my conversations with the women who was in both formal and informal education were very different and even consisted of theoretical aspects of the study, and sometimes they asked me about the process of my research.

I also wondered the perceptions of these women about naming the formal non- religious education as *malayani* (useless). I noticed that although they were not negative toward non-religious education as the other women who got only religious education, they still did not put their formal education as the main center of their educational life. For example, a woman who I encountered during a charity organization in the madrasa was working both as a dietitian and a teacher. Because she was busy as a dietitian the day, she organized a very exceptional neighborhood meeting which consisted of approximately ten working women. They came together two evenings every week. It was getting more and more interesting to talk with her, after I learned that she was a mother of two. The dietitian confidently described herself primarily as a teacher. The other women around also addressed her as "*hocam* (teacher)". I asked her thoughts about her dual position. She said that she was a dietitian for this world, but she was a teacher for this world and also hereafter. Therefore, being a teacher was more important for her than being a dietitian.

In the above observations and examples, I noticed that when my interlocutors talked about the madrasa education, they preferred to use the word "*ilim*" over "*bilim*", while both mean "science" in English. In the usage of these two words in Turkish, however, there are some differences which demonstrate a dichotomy and dissimilarities between the West and the East, religious and scientific, traditional and modern, and so on. Coşkun (2016) gives notice against the confusion in the usage of these two words, *ilim* and *bilim*. The former refers to the Islam civilization, while the other refers to the modern hard science (p. 222). And the following quotation shows how this dichotomy is interpreted by someone who favored "*ilim*" over "*bilim*": "We should note first of all those who talk about a conflict between religion and science refer to *bilim* not *ilim*. *İlim* is a word that connotes light and religion… *Bilim* on the other hand is a composition of darkness and chaos on the basis of its assigned role. While *ilim* is born in us and has got its essence from us, *bilim* is a product of the West its rationalism and positivism." (Yılmaz et al., 1998, p. 61). My interlocutors also associated *bilim* with the Western, modern and produced by a *zahiri* (an Other) who is an unbeliever. Therefore, they also tend to interpret the non- religious education as *malayani* (useless). This education became "useful" only when it can be used as a tool to serve while maintaining the real knowledge.

As members of a religious- unofficial community in Turkey, the women from whom I collected their madrasa stories construct their identity and their perspective in accordance with their relationship with the Other. Therefore, the terms, *zahiri* and *malayani* serve not only in the construction of their Other, but also their positionality and status from their perspective in

the larger part of the society as possessing genuine, true and real knowledge. It is important to study this process of othering and construction of the self in the connection of the positionality of the community and its madrasas in the larger part of the society.

The contemporary madrasas in Turkey offer an institutionalized- unofficial education which claims a background rooted in the history of Ottoman times. Together with the commonly and officially recognized education, the emergence of these madrasas creates a duality in the lives of the members of the community which operates these madrasas. According to Yavuz (2004), in Turkey, the religious communities, which were tried to be isolated from the public sphere with the modernization project, turned their inside and created their own intellectuals in their alternative public sphere (p. 294). The madrasas serve as unofficial institutions for this creation of the alternative intellectuals. In order to understand how the alternativeness of these madrasas effects the women's construction of self, in the remaining part of the present chapter, the relationship between the contemporary madrasa education in Turkey and the Bourdieu's analysis of schooling, habitus and cultural capital will be examined.

Through his observations in the French society, Bourdieu, in his studies including *Homo Academicus* and *State Nobility*, points out the classifications in the educational system by the power of the elites and the organization of types of the capitals. He argues that the state sponsored official education do not affect the mobility of the people in the society. For him, these educational institutions- especially higher education- serve to legitimize the hegemony of the elites, support their ideology and maintain the status quo (Bourdieu, 1974). Because of the close relationship between the cultural capital and the forms of power, the official educational institutions work for the reproduction of already existed hierarchy in the society. He names this re-production as 'destiny effect':

> "It is through the 'destiny effect' that the social institution of schooling contributes to the production and reproduction of the overall patterns of social, economic, political and cultural difference, differentiation and distinction" (Bourdieu and Balazs, 1999, p. 63).

The educational institutions are the embodied parts of a "structured structure" which is *habitus* referring a guidance system which operates unconsciously for the individuals in order to help them to situate themselves among the institutions. The people, instinctively, follow the similar paths and develop a collective attitudes and experiences. The habitus constantly reproduce differences and hierarchies in the society (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 170). Due to unequal distribution of the resources among people, the capacity to use the chances and probabilities in the lives of individuals is the parallel with their existed positions and habitus. Although,

according to some argumentations claiming that every individual has right to adopt the life style of the elites, in the reality it is not free from "the structured structure" (Bourdieu, 1990, p. 54). Therefore, the people unconsciously exclude the seemingly impossible possibilities for her/his position in the society.

In separable from the concept of habitus within the context of Bourdieu (1987) classified social classes and positionalities in a combination of cultural and economic capital. Thus, he points a relationship between the material ground and people's choices, perceptions and lifestyles, such as educational background, manner of speaking, reading habits, political ideologies, and so on. Cultural capital is categorized into three different forms: embodied, objectified and institutionalized cultural capitals. The embodies cultural capital shows itself with the body and attitudes of the individuals in the social environment. For example, language can represent the social class of an individual, such as differences between the dialects of Istanbul and the East. The objectified cultural capital refers the properties of the individuals which have, apart from their economic value, symbolic meaning of differences in the society, such as possessing an expensive piece of art. The last category, the institutionalized cultural capital, means academic credits and certificated qualifications. According to Bourdieu (1996) the changes in the economic and cultural capital can transform the new strategies of the reproduction of power distribution in the society. For example, in the French society there is a tendency to define superiority according to academic titles and bureaucratic positions (pp. 272-281).

However, along with the elite's hegemony over determining what is the superior for the common, in accordance with the differences of the individual's habitus, sometimes the alternative forms of the institutionalized cultural capitals and alternative superiors challenge the formal superior. For example, the home schooling which is built against the traditional form of the school system. This alternative system challenges the governance structure, traditional curriculum, and imposition of a particular philosophy (Mills & McGregor, 2017, p.1).

The official educational system in Turkey with its state monitored curriculum, organization and governance structure is a well- suited example of Bourdieu's picturing of the relationship between maintaining the authority of elites and schooling (Koca et al., 2009, p. 55). The unofficial madrasa education can be represented as a type of alternative educational system challenging the institutional cultural capital function of the official schooling system in Turkey. As mentioned earlier, the excluded communities, due to their nonoccurrence to the hegemony and commonly accepted truths, tent to construct their own public sphere, which has their own

understanding of intellectuals, elites, true, proper and superior knowledge. After the abolition of the madrasa education, its supporters have maintained its curriculum and fund of knowledge with unofficial alternative educational institutions. The members of the community motivate themselves with the perception of their superiority over the possession of true knowledge production and madrasa education without relying on any certificated qualifications. Within this habitus, they prioritize and affirm their own institutions and systems, which are their most differential feature form the Other. Furthermore, the language they use shows their efforts to be distinctive. Their common words to define different terms, such as *zahiri, malayani*, and *ilim,* feed their identities as the member of the community, as well as re-create their habitus in a linguistic way. These examples demonstrate that they explicitly and intentionally separate their own sphere and habitus from the Others'. Verbally refusing the commonly recognized institutionalized cultural capital which is diploma, or emphasizing of using formal education as a tool to get closer their aim to maintain the true knowledge, are also supportive preference to construction of the self as a community member.

On the other hand, the examples of studying madrasa education together with Divinity Faculty or other non- religious majors, such as child development to get an official permission to work in a kinder- garden, can be interpreted as the existence of effect of the commonly accepted institutional cultural capital. Additionally, it becomes more obvious with that they prefer to get an extra religious education from the Divinity Faculty, but not from other unofficial institutions which are operated by other religious communities. Although they emphasize that they prioritize their madrasa education, these maneuvers provide them ability to possess not only the status of *hoca* or *talebe* which is unofficial, and only recognized by the limited number of people, but also another status which is official and certificated.

These analyses on the construction of other and self in relation with the membership in the community can appear to not especially related with the women in the madrasa but with its all members. However, knowing that the encounters with the Other is so rare for these women, when compare with male members who are allowed to study official university education, makes these analyses more important to understand how these women relate their realities with the existence of Other. Consequently, it is observed that these women's main focus in their lives is the madrasa education. They construct their identities in front of the Other with this education emphasizing their own superiority.

Having discussed how to construction of self- definition of being conscious Muslim and the relations with the Other, building a dialogue with the academic studies the next section of

the present study addresses the searching for subjectivity in the motivations of the women in the madrasas to pursue an education in an alternative- unofficial institution.

CHAPTER 5:
"THE DANGER OF A SINGLE STORY"[24]:
UNDERSTANDING THE ALTERNATIVE EXPERIENCES

"The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie[25]

The talk on TED by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who is a Nigerian novelist woman is very impressive with her eye- opening cultural perspective on the power of the stories. She argues that attributing a single story to a continent, a nation, a gender or a person leads to the misunderstanding and generalization. For example, perceiving Africa only as a site of catastrophe or tribal music is an indicator of the ignorance. She does not claim that there is no catastrophe or tribal music in Africa, but she wants to point out that it does not consist of authentic music, dances, weapons, hunger, wars, disasters, destructions and calamities. The Nigeria's modern movie industry, the Nollywood, rock music groups or the lives of middle-class African people who are not poor should also be known as the characteristics of African life. She emphasizes that the life is more complex than degrading many stories and voices to one.

Maxi skirt, long topcoat, modestly covered up head, similar appearances, private and gender segregated environments, closeness to the outside, following a male Islamic leader… All of these images indicate only one part of the story of women in the madrasas in contemporary Turkey. I do not argue that these images are not existed or unimportant to examine. However, my main aim to reveal another side, which is more invisible than the semblance of these women, of the coin. Therefore, in this chapter, I would like to open up a

[24] As Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie puts in the subtitle of her talk on the TEDTalks.

[25] To watch Adichie's video "*The danger of a single story*" on TEDTalks: https://www.ted.com/talks/chimamanda_adichie_the_danger_of_a_single_story/transcript

dialogue between the feminist scholarly works examining the position of Muslim women and the alternative stories of my interlocutors in the madrasas. In order to excite the dialogue, the contradictive points especially will be emphasized, such as restrictions, gendered regulations, modest dressing and traditional roles of the women.

Although, these women the madrasas are willing to adopt their bodies and actions to the Islamic law, it is not the intend of this chapter to trace feminist bonds to justify the Islamic regulations on the Muslim women's bodies and actions. There are examples of works which focus on this connection in negative or positive ways, such as focusing on hegemony of the Muslim men over women (Berktay, 2000 p. 150; Sabbah, 1995, p. 99), the authority for the segregating space (Sabbah, 1995, p. 29), boundaries of sexualities (Art, 1996, p. 41; Bouhdiba, 1985, p.25; İlyasoğlu, 1994, p. 78), and veiling (Özdalga, 1998, p. 15). These studies seek to explain the position of the Muslim women in relation with the interpretation of Islamic law. However, I do not aim such a reinterpretation of Islamic principles, through searching any emancipatory points for these women. These efforts are less meaningful for this study. According to Saba Mahmood (2005, p. 158), this can be a pitfall for the researcher. Additionally, Abu Lughod (1998) mentions similar point where she connects the feeling need to justification for conforming the actions of the new modernized Muslim women, through reinterpreting Islam, with the internalized colonial perceptions (p. 15). Rather than focusing on positive or negative aspects of the Islam, it is purposed to understand the motivations and self-perception of these women in such an environment. As Winkellmann (2005) argues, while she was expressing the construction of female authority through unofficial madrasa education, "the young women's 'willing to be taught' seems to be more important than debate" (p. 120).

5.1 The Nexus between Agency and Discipline

The disciplinary mechanisms in the madrasa may constitute a contradictive point, while understanding the position of the women in the madrasas. As we saw earlier in the previous chapter, the scheduled activities, mandatory dressing, monitoring by the teachers and the male keeper, and type of the seating during the lessons can be the examples of these disciplining mechanisms.

According to Foucault (1995) in order to develop a disciplinary society, the first necessity is "the inversion of the disciplines (p. 216)". The former order, which was to maintain a control over the people who are inferior, turned into a positive mechanism, for example aiming to voluminously using the capacity of the individuals through an economical calculation. In a parallel move, the educational systems, which was firstly developed to teach

ignorant people, have turned into an organization of production centers for generating new individuals who are more useful (pp. 220- 211). Similarly, the madrasas or other systematic educational systems can be devices to develop more disciplining society.

Saba Mahmood (2005), in her reading of Butler who is a poststructuralist feminist, suggests that Butler sees two possible ways to be engaged with the disciplinary norms in the society, which are consolidation and subversion. However, Mahmood, without refusing her argumentation, but rather expanding it, offers a broader perception for dealing with the norms, which are "performed, inhabited, and experiences in a variety of ways (p.22)." She tries to explore of different types of agency, which cannot fit into the scope of resistance or subversion (p. 167), through doing a research with the women in the mosque movement. She advises to interpret agency, not only as an action of resistance, but as modality of action (p. 157).

Drawing on the Saba Mahmood's interpretation of the disciplinary program in the mosques movement (Mahmood, 2005, p. 158) and keeping with Winkelmann's findings in Madrasatul Niswan in India (2005, p. 102), the bodily actions of the women in the madrasas, such as veiling, modest attitudes- especially while in the relations with the other sex, preferring gender segregated environments also do not represent regulated actions. These should be interpreted as the effort to become more pious. The analysis I have presented of the practices of being modest does not claim that there is no securization of the male dominancy in the understanding of the modesty in Islam or in the society of Muslims. But the intention is that to show these women are not passive actors who accept inferiority and submit to the hegemony. Rather, they have different calculations which make themselves superior or inferior in front of the others or the God. I argue that these women do not have only the story of subordinations, but also other stories which prioritizing the practicing Islamic religious duties, struggling to become conscious Muslims, knowing better to have higher status into the community, or differentiating the Other to become more authentic self.

There are two junction points of the observable restrictions outside with the experiences and alternative perceptions of the women. The first one is the women's bodily existence, which refers to the modest dressing and actions. The second one is the spatial relationship of the women. The gender segregated environments and constant surveillance are subtitles of the experiences of women in the spaces, such as in the neighborhoods and madrasas.

5.2 Motivations of The Modest Body

The veil should be examined within the Turkish context, because it is the most visible component of the female Muslim body, not only for the view by the society but also by the academic studies. There are lots of academic discussions and analysis which focuses on the symbolization of the veil in the public sphere of Turkey. These studies categorize the veil into two different symbolizations. The first one indicates its most visible version, which involves the veil of the officially educated young Muslim women who live in the urban site and engaged in to the political activities. This veiling symbolizes the politicization of Turkish Islam and approval of the identity of the modern Muslim women in the public sphere. The second version of the veil is attributed to the traditional clothing of the women who are passive, uneducated, devoted themselves to their family and docile under the authority over men. These two different veilings have nearly nothing in common (Göle, 2001, p. 105).

According to Göle (2000), the former veiling challenges to the latter veiling through refusing the traditional roles of the women which serve to maintain the subordination of the women. The modern Muslim women show themselves in the public and raise their voices. They become educated and can turn into outstanding writers, politicians, frontwomen, or journalists. On the other hand, the traditional Muslim women restrict themselves with the familial roles, such as mothers and wives within the four walls of their houses (pp. 27- 28).

On the other hand, my interlocutors, who do not fit into neither of these two categories of Muslim women perceive the veiling in a very different way. The studies mostly focus on the Muslim women whose bodies are visible in the public sphere. However, while, they do not willing to show their bodies publicly, they also do not limit their identities within their houses. Additionally, as a part of their understanding of living like conscious Muslim women, they also do challenge the restrictedness of the bodies of the Muslim women within the four walls of their houses and making themselves busy only with the house work, as we saw the examples in the earlier chapter 4. The studies generally only examine the lives of the women who study in the official universities, not the lives of the women in the alternative educational systems. In my case, through the madrasa education, my interlocutors are able to become female intellectual authorities who spent most of their times for their own education and/or to educate others. For example, one of my interviewee, described her motivations of veiling as following:

> It annoys me when I hear 'turban' is said to the headscarf. In the past, I did not hear this word. It is a headscarf. I do not understand why they need turban… I cover my hair only because I am a Muslim. There cannot be another reason for this. If there

> is, it will be not a real Muslimism. Now, there are lots of women who use it for ornamental. Shame! I pity for these women… (29) Azime (42)

As we can see in this example, the women in the madrasa also annoy the usage the word of "turban" for their head cover. This word derived from the believing the veil as a political action of the ideological Islam in Turkey. However, the conservative sides of the Muslims do not prefer to use this word. Alternatively, they use *başörtüsü* (headscarf) which makes connections to the religious piety (Deniz, 2010, p. 3210).

On the other hand, I observed that these women do not have any grieved memories or sad experiences of the February 28, 1997, which is seen as the high point of the political Islam in Turkey and the emphasizing the political characteristic of the veil (Özinanır, 2015, p. 790). Although, all of my interviewees indicated that they were against the ban of the veil in the public sphere, some of them challenged the publicly stands of the women, through referring the features of ideal conscious womanhood:

> Vociferation does not clash with a conscious Muslim woman. I do not say they should not react. But they should not move away from their defended values. Of course, the alternative remedies can be found. How should I know (Turkish expression: *ne bileyim*)… For example, sit- in protest is a favorable method, I think. It would not against their values. (30) Güzide (16).

Additionally, another interviewee was even against any publicly demonstration by Muslim women. Alternatively, she advised to use private ways to obtain their aims, through referring their experiences during the process of the February 28, 1997. She introduced their continuity to confidentially learning and teaching as an action of reaction to the military government:

> The going out and demonstration by Muslim is not a true action. For example, they (the military government) attacked us too. I remember clearly. We were preparing our exams to pass the t*ekamül* stage. Busts were made. Kurslar (the madrasas) were shut down. At that time, they were also unfair to us (Turkish expression: *Bizim de hakkımız yendi o dönem*). We had to had two years break. However, we did not refrain ourselves from both learning and teaching. We secretly came together at the houses. Sometimes at the basements… (31) Asiye (39)

About the restrictions on the usage of headscarf, one of my older interviewees who saw the military restriction days, while expressing her experiences about exams of open school, stated that they could find the alternative ways, due to their perception of *malayani* (useless) and instrumentalism of the official status, as we saw in the previous chapter:

> Once, it was forbidden to enter the exams of open school with the headscarf. What did we do? Of course, we did not enter to the exam! Do you think, for such a

malayani work, is the headscarf such an important thing given up? What an ignorance! Nonsense! (32) Dudu (52)

Referring not only covering the hair but also body as a whole, it is also crucial to reveal why these women have different perception about the veil, which is the most visible component of the female Muslim body. The body is one of the most important focuses of the disciplining. Foucault (1995) argues that "a body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved (p. 136)". Additionally, he claims that the disciplining of the body tends to foster "the mastery of each individual over his own body (p. 137)". In other words, the disciplining has two different paths: enhancing the capacity of the agency of the individuals and bringing up the docility. In this perception, the agency is not equal to the act of resistance, but it is related with the capacity of action within the established relations (Mahmood, 2005, p. 18). In the case of the madrasa, similarly, the process of the disciplining with the systematical education may lead to fostering the women's capacity of the agency through learning how to manage the life and to become respectable person together with aiming an internalized docility.

Apart from the scheduled lessons on the *adab-I muaşeret* (etiquette), there are also more subtle types of disciplining the body of the individuals in the madrasa. The bodily appearance of the women in the community is significant. They have to cover their heads with a cheesecloth- not permitted in a space which is open to stranger men- or a scarf. Not even a shawl is allowed. Their faces are without make up. The skirt has to be long to their ankles. They have to wear a long jacket at the outside. However, during my fieldwork, I did not encounter any moment that any authority force them to dress up like that. Additionally, with a closer look one can easily discover that, although their appearances look like each other, some students and teachers are more careful to dress modestly. For example, some of them wear extra cheesecloth under their head cover, or prefer to wear larger top cloths. The shoes are differentiating woman to woman. While most of them prefer to wear closed shoes regardless of the weather condition, some of the women feel free to wear sandals.

However, the differences in the veilings of the women are not random. I realized that the women who are more educated than the others more willing to show it in their appearances- not only with their clothing but also with their attitudes-, while the new members or new students are more flexible wearing and behaviors. As my research progress, even, I began to recognize the position of the women in the community. The dressing and attitudes of the teachers, who were in charge of a region which consisted at least three closed neighborhoods, were modest. The teachers in the neighborhoods and madrasas were younger than them, but got

similar modesty. The students generally made visible themselves with their colorful cloths. Additionally, some of them wore cloths attached some images of popular culture. The members of the neighborhood meetings seemed to wear more flexible than the women who were engaged with the madrasa education. For example, one could see the hair of some of them from the top of their forehead. Foucault (1995) argues that the increase in the level of the education accompanied with increase in the level of the self- regulation (p. 138).

For example, one of my interviewee, Güzide (16), who was an *iptidai* (first year) student in the madrasa, wearing sport sweater with an image of logo of her favored football team. When I asked her about her dressing, she said that:

> I am a devotee of Fenerbahçe. I have lots of things with its logo. A key-holder, a wrist band, a necklace, and even an underwear… However, I do not wear this sweater, for example, in the *yurt* (madrasa), because we as the students of this path should not be fans of *malayani* (useless) things. I know that but it will take time to give up. (33) Güzide (16)

Consequently, according to these women, their own bodies are important signifiers of the level of piety and conscious Muslim. Its scope is not limited to the dressing, but also involves loudness and using female body as a part of reaction.

5.3 Spatial Relationship and Surveillance

The spatial conditions of the madrasa and neighborhood meetings can be categorized into three which have different effects on the women. The first one is the disciplining them to be more pious through the feeling of constant surveillance, due to limited space in the madrasa and common public places in the neighborhoods. The other is to offer a gender segregated environment, which is seen as a necessary to socialization for some of the Muslim women. Additionally, the teachers suggest the members of the community to come together regularly and frequently, through emphasizing acquiring more merit than worshiping alone at home. The third one is the enclave-ness of the madrasa, which refers walls, protected doors, as well as the distance to the outside mortal world.

Along with the disciplining through education and knowledge, the spatial condition of the madrasa and the neighborhoods are also functions to discipline the members of the community. Due to its crowdedness and space limited structure which is not allowed the individuals to stay alone with themselves- except the shower cabin and toilet, the building of the madrasa is a place enabling constant surveillance by the other members of the community.

These gazes effect the actions of the women, through making them more careful to be in accordance with the definition of conscious Muslim.

Additionally, in the common public places of the neighborhoods, such as markets, parks, post offices and cafes, serve as places of surveillance, due to its high possibility of encountering other members of the community. Therefore, not only during the weekly meetings, but every moment of stepping outside of the houses is a possible exposing to observation which can weigh the individuals' levels of piety.

Foucault (1995) suggests that, for example through the interpersonal communication and observation, the form of punishment after the 20th century has turned into the poststructuralist way, without any need to use physical force. The silence monitoring by the other people unconsciously force the individuals to discipline their behavior especially in the social places. My story to entry the field in the neighborhood where I live is an example of the disciplining through surveillance by interpersonal relations and possibility to be judged.

Especially during the earlier stages of my fieldwork in meetings in my neighborhood, I was not attentive to the dressing codes of the community, while I went out of the house. However, as my research progress, I realized its importance to get more acceptance to become an insider of the community. As I changed my dressing which became closer to their understanding of proper dressing, the attitudes and the looking of the community members became more approver.

During the fieldwork, I also realized that I was not the only one who experienced these changing attitudes by the other members. A woman from a neighborhood group explained to me how she changed her style of the covering head, due to her encounters in the neighborhood. She said that now she had more "proper" veil, which had been hard for her before becoming a part of this community and knowing these people. When I asked her this feeling of being observed did bothered her, she said that it was a facilitator actor for her to wearing more modestly.

In the case of the madrasa as a space of closed building, regular visiting time of the families and three permissions time of the holidays can be possible escaping ways from the constant surveillance for both teachers and students. To understand the effect of surveillance in the madrasa to their actions, I asked to some of these women that I interviewed with how they spent their holidays. Şura (17) said that:

> During the first times that I started *kurs* (the madrasa), I sometimes missed the time of the prayers or outgrew it when I went on leave. I killed time with watching lots of movies. After then that, as I learned somethings, I become annoyed with what I had done. This time I started to miss the spirituality of the madrasa, while I was at home. It is easier to pray and worship there (in the madrasa). When getting to home, a slackness comes. (34)

As Şura stated, some of these women perceive the spatial environment of the madrasa as more spiritual than the houses. Additionally, another interviewee, Seda (19) also mentioned her *malayani* (useless) activities in her house, while the togetherness in the madrasa made her time more valuable through the close and constant observations and reminders by the teacher rise the spirituality in the madrasa:

> I do not understand how time goes on in the home. I look and it becomes dark. But in the *yurt* (the madrasa) it is the opposite. I should admit that it can sometimes be tiring. But time is so productive… We always act together. Eat, study, perform ablution and prayer together. I feel that it does not take too long time while doing these. I think doing together is the reason. Your worship becomes more enjoyable. Besides, the togetherness with our teachers is effective. They constantly remind us the important of our doings. Thus, both we study more effectively and it becomes more meaningful. (35) Seda (19)

On the other hand, the spatial closedness of the madrasa as a building serves, together with its productive feature from the outside world, as a function to become more productive. It has always closed doors, drawn curtains, thick and long fences. According to one of my interviewee interprets this spatial closedness symbolically, like a veil to the malignancy of the world:

> The atmosphere of *yurt* (the madrasa) is so difference. In the house or any other places the earthly affairs are at your elbow. But it is not like that here. You are busy with learning and teaching your religion, and you also can be away from the useless works of the earth. Everything is behind this door. Your mind is clear; thus, you can focus on your education here. (36) İbadiye (20)

The positionality and visibility of the Muslim women in the community is related with the spatial conditions. It is argued that in the 'true' way to belief in Islam nothing wrong with the working, getting education and participating public sphere for the Muslim women, if some proper and acceptable spatial conditions are provided (Winkelmann, 2005, pp. 46-47). In the madrasas, these proper conditions are tried to be adjusted firstly through gender segregated environment, and cleaning all *malayani* (useless) works and materials, such as television, mobile phones, and any object which is related with the popular culture.

However, my observations show that, while the gender segregated environment is provided easily, it is not simple thing to keep away *malayani* works and materials from the madrasa. For example, during the fieldwork inside the building of the madrasa, I realized that some students had two different mobile phones. They gave one of them to their teachers, while keeping the other with them secretly. Additionally, I several times came across the singing the popular songs by the students in the lavatory.

On the other hand, the teachers were aware of these departing from the rules, but they preferred to wink. One of the teachers in the madrasa, Zümrüt (22) said that:

> Of course, we know all about them. For example, when we see, we take some of them (the mobile phones). Please they should not afford to bring (the original Turkish expression: *göze sokmasınlar*). But we should not go on at them. If we do that these will become more valuable thing in their eyes. They do again, they hide again. You cannot prevent it. I think every prohibition should know the bounds. (37) Zümrüt (22)

The gender segregated environment of the madrasa can function for these women to become socialized, educated, and respected as a proper alternative to the other official environments which are open to public. I observed that these women do not interpret the gender segregated environment as a special exclusion for only one gender, but as a necessary for economical needs. Havva (26) said about the permission to male students to attending official university education while they were studying at the madrasa:

> This is one of the main features of our education (gender segregated environments). Of course, there is a difference. If you are in a Girls' *Kur'an Kursu* (the madrasa), you cannot get a university education. However, it was the same for them twenty year ago. In order to make it to be allowed, they made pressure. The reason is to struggle to earn a living. Eventually, because the man is responsible for the earing of the family, it is good that they have good salary, and they also became the teachers too. It is good both for the budgets of the community and the families. Nowadays, there is slowly getting permission for girls' possibility to get university education. However, I am against the education both of the girls and the boys. They are already getting education. In time, they will be only busy with the works of this earth and forget about the value of this education. (38) Havva (26)

The neighborhood meetings also have gender segregated environment. One of my interviewee, who is a teacher of a neighborhood meeting group emphasized the importance of this segregation for the women who need permission from their husbands:

> I am sure that if these meetings were mixed, most of the women could not come. The woman might do not want to come either, but most probably her husband would not send her. It is not a problem because we are giving religious education and we are all women. So, the women can come to the meetings in the neighborhoods and

> in the yurt (the madrasa) freely. For example, the imam of the mosque also is giving lessons to the women, but lots of husband does not let the women to go there, but they let them to come to us. (39) Nazire (32)

Consequently, although the spatial conditions of the madrasa consist of restrictedness together with constant surveillance, the women in the madrasa can experience these conditions from the alternative views, such as interpreting it as a force to become more pious and conscious individuals, useful barriers which protecting them from the *malayani* (useless) and earthly things or a need to let the women coming out from their houses. It is also important to mention some points where they break these barriers and rules in the madrasa, such as singing a popular song or secretly using mobile phones. However, these little breaks do not mean lack of piety, but normal actions which can be tolerable.

Both the experiences of modest dressing and spatial restrictions mean for these women in the madrasa more than only closing themselves from the outside, but also create a maneuver which let them appropriate the capacity to action in an alternative environment. It is important to reveal not only the stories of women which includes emancipation, resisting, gaining rights, or enlightenment, but also the stories which have more complex aspects of life, such as togetherness of willing to be educated and preferring a female environment or considering the protection by a man necessary and struggling to have more respectful status.

CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSION

The present study sets out to investigate the self- perception and self- realization of the women in the madrasas of contemporary Turkey by focusing on their identities as students and teachers. In order to analyze their own understanding of the world in relation with their education in the madrasas and their motivations to pursue this education, I have attempted to reflect these women's narratives and my fieldwork observations on the identity formation process of these women in their own communities, focusing on their understanding of conscious Muslim woman and proper womanhood and their relations with the Other (*zahiri*). I investigated on their construction of self through constructing similarities and differences with the Other and, finally, the experiences and understanding of the aspects which can be interpreted as restrictive and sign of the subordination of these women.

Throughout the thesis, I have argued for the complexities of the process of self-perception and self- realization of these women due to their dual positionality between the outside and inside of their communities, which results from the unofficial status of the madrasas. By taking individual narratives and my personal observations in the madrasas and neighborhood meetings as the points of departure, I mainly investigated the complexity of changing norms around proper education, knowledge, womanhood, consciousness, piety and modesty. Furthermore, I put emphasis on the alternative stories of the Muslim women, which should not be limited through searching for the resistance and emancipation. As a result, it is argued for the function of these madrasas and the communities' activities as the alternative and more proper way for these women, while they both pursuing an education which provides them to have status and struggling for to be more conscious and pious. These findings contribute in several ways to our understanding of the possibilities of the positioning of the woman under the patriarchal structure and provide a basis for searching more remarkable experiences of women under similar structures.

The history of the madrasas and the community which operates these institutions is also important to understand how these alternative unofficial educational institutions have emerged after a process of so-called annihilation of an educational system with its own intellectuals, and ultimately have served to fulfill a need for a group of people. Additionally, the analysis of this history can help to understand how the endeavor of the women in these unofficial institutions and communities have regarded as non-existed. This study also explains the coping mechanisms of these women with this problem of invisibility, through identifying themselves as members of the community, while depreciating the Other, and using the official status as a tool to support their positionality in their own community.

Although, this study focuses on the experiences of the women in madrasas of contemporary Turkey, the findings may well have a bearing on the philosophical discussions on the political power to definition of official knowledge, status, educational systems, womanhood, and religiousness.

This thesis did not intend to introduce the experiences of the women in the madrasas of contemporary Turkey as riveting and impeccable. Although I appreciate the women experiencing bad situations in these institutions, I did not encounter any of them during my research in the field. Furthermore, the scope of this study is limited in terms of the number of women from whom I collected stories. The number is very restricted to claim any general consequences which includes every single woman in the madrasas of contemporary Turkey. Notwithstanding relatively limited sample, this study offers valuable insights in terms of the challenging the liberal-progressive feminist perspective.

Finally, this thesis does not address the experiences and stories of male members of the madrasa. It is surely important to study the motivations of people who can labor over two university education at the same time. Additionally, further research could be conducted to determine the influence of the knowledge production process in the unofficial madrasas over society, which could examine their ways to reach the people and motivations to become a collective entity. For example, the unofficial Friday sermons in the men's madrasas which are open to the outside of the community, while the content of the texts of the sermon is inconsistent with the official texts of the DRA.

I would like to end my thesis with the words of Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: "That when we reject the single story, when we realize that there is never a single story about any place, we regain a kind of paradise."

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APPENDIX: Original Quotes in Turkish

(1) ’Evde oturup koca beklemekten iyidir’ dedi annem.

(2) Elbette kursta hazır yemek ve disiplin olması bir avantaj…

(3) Yurtta dördüncü yılım.

(4) Medrese eğitimi bende çok şey değiştirdi.

(5) … dinini inançla öğrenmeye çalışan biri için çok soğuk bir kelime…

(6) Bence öğretmen sadece öğrencilerine öğreten birisi anlamına geliyor. Ama hoca bence bir hayat tarzı ortaya koymaya çalışıyor. Sadece harfleri öğretmek değil…

(7) Ben talebe olduğumu söylediğim zaman herkes dini eğitim aldığımı anlıyor. Ama sadece öğrenciyim desem direk resmi eğitim aldığımı varsayıyorlar.

(8) Tüm gün evde oturan kadınlara bak. Neredeyse hepsi evlerini nasıl temiz tutacaklarıyla akşama ne yapacaklarıyla meşguller. Sadece namaz ve oruçla mükellef sanıyorlar kendilerini. Bu tamamen cahillik bence. Dinin onlara evde kalmayı önerdiğine inandırılmışlar. Bu tamamen yanlış. İslam’ın kurallarından bihaberler. “Din öğrenmek her Müslüman kadın ve erkek üzerine farzdır”. Yani sadece erkeklerin değil kadınların da görevi bu. Kadınlar da Müslüman olarak din öğrenmek için evlerinden çıkmalı. Bu da sadece çocuklukla sınırlı değil. Hayat boyu öğrenme. Bu hadis bizim ilk öğrettiğimiz şeydir. Kadınlara medrese eğitimi olmadan önce çok sınırlı bir eğitim alabiliyorlarmış. Ama şimdi biz bu kadınlara ulaşmaya ve değerli zamanlarını mahvetmemelerini sağlamaya çalışıyoruz.

(9) Aslında 3 tane kadın modeli var İslam’da. Fatma, Hatice ve Ayşe. Fatma Peygamber efendimizin kızı. O çocuklarıyla ilgilenen, yemek hazırlamak zorunda olan ve temizlik gibi işleri yapan bir ev hanımının nasıl olunması gerektiğini gösteriyor. Hatice peygamber efendimizin ilk karısı. O ise başka bir model. Çünkü ticaretle uğraşıyor. Ticaret yaparken peygamberimizle tanışıyor. 40 yaşında, 3 çocuğu var, 2 kez evlenmiş ve birinden boşanmış. Ki bu çok zor bir kadın için o zamanlar. Peygamber efendimize evlenme teklif ediyor ve 6 çocuğu daha oluyor. 9 çocuğun annesi olarak aynı zamanda güçlü bir ticaretçi. Ama bence Ayşe en ilginci. O da peygamber efendimizin karısı. Ve siyasette çok etkili, özellikle peygamber efendimizin ölümünden sonra. Ayrıca bir sürü hikaye var peygamber efendimizin yanında savaşmış kadınlarla ilgili. Aslında bu kadınlar arasında bir ortak özellik var. Bu da dini eğitim. Hepsi doğru Müslüman kadın olmak üzere eğitilmiş. Hepsi peygamber efendimizin öğrencisi. Ama

şunu söyleyeyim. Şimdilerde Müslüman erkekler sadece Fatma'nın hikayesini anlatmaya hevesli. Bence doğru bir eğitim ve doğru bir ortamla her müslüman kadın farklı mesleklere sahip olabilir.

(10) Peygamber efendimiz zamanında camide kadınlar ve erkekler arasında perde yokmuş. Kadın sahabeler de peygamberimizle namaza katılabiliyor ve sohbetini dinleyebiliyormuş. Eğer bir kadının sorusu olursa direk sorabiliyormuş. Peygamber efendimiz öğretmeye açık biriymiş. Ben onu örnek alıyorum öğrencilerime öğrenmeye açık bir ortam oluşturmaya çalışıyorum.

(11) Şu an peygamber efendimiz zamanı gibi bir toplum oluşturamayız. Şimdi ahir zaman. Şu zaman sadece kadınlar için değil erkekler için de çok tehlikeli. Ama maalesef birileri para kazanmalı. Bence erkekler bunun için kendilerini feda ediyorlar. Yanlış bir şey tabi ama maalesef şimdilerde bu gerekli bir şey. Biz kadın olarak dini eğitim imkanımız olduğu için şanslıyız. Yoksa ya evde kalacaktık ve kocamızın eve gelmesini bekleyecektik ya da biz de kendimizi feda edecektik. Çok büyük ihtimalle de cahil olurduk.

(12) Kuranda Allah bize bilenle bilmeyen bir olur mu diyor. Bunun için öğrenmeliyiz. Ama faydası ilim değil, faydalı ilim olmalı bu. En faydalı ilim Allah'ın ilmidir. Biz kadınlara bilmenin ve öğrenmenin önemini öğretiyoruz. Kuran bizim ana kaynağımız. Ayrıca sünnet, icma ve kıyas var. Bu dört temele dayandıktan sonra tüm diğer bilgi kaynakları sana açık.

(13) … ve buradaki en önemli şey biz onları Allah rızana göre yaşamaları için eğitiyoruz. Bunu sağlamanın tek yolu neden öyle yaşaman gerektiğini öğrenmek. İlk önce Allah'ın senden ne istediğini öğrenmelisin. Ve öyle yaşamalısın. Böylece insan bilinçlenir. Bu yaşam tarzına döner.

(14) Üstünlük sadece takvadadır der kitabımız. Bunun için Müslüman kadınlar olarak dinimizi iyi öğrenmemiz lazım. Sonra bunun aslında en önemli şey olduğunu anlarız.

(15) Evde kalsalar ne yapacaklar? Televizyon izler, ütü yapar, yemekle çocukla uğraşırlar. Bunlar asıl var olma nedenlerini unutuyorlar. Allah'a kul olmak mesele. Bu Allah için değil tabi ki. Onun buna ihtiyacı yok. Kul kulluğa ihtiyaç duyar çevresindeki nedenselliği anlamak için. Farkındalık yükseltmektir bu.

(16) Anneler, birinin kızı ve eşiler. Ama her şeyden önce Allah'a kul olmalılar. Biz onlara gerçek dinlerini hatırlatıyoruz. En azından birkaç sayfa Kur'an okuyup bir şeyler ezberliyorlar. Dinini öğrendikçe daha iyi anne, kız ve eş oluyorlar aslında. Çünkü Allah rızası için yapmaya başlıyor bunları.

(17) İtiraf etmeliyim ki başta hiç sevmemiştim burayı. Çok ağladım. Burada durmak istemiyordum. Kaçma yolum olsaydı kesinlikle kalmazdım. Aileme çok kızıyordum beni almaya gelmedikleri için. Benim gibi pek çok kişi vardı. Özellikle yazlıkçılar ve yeni başlayan kışlıkçılar benim gibiydi. Durmadan ders, kısıtlı aralar… Tabi ki insan sıkılıyor. Aslında bunu ilkokullarda da görebilirsin. Medreseye özgü bir şey değil. Çocuklar daha öğrenmenin bilincine varamamışsa ve alışamamışsa ortama çabucak sıkılıp gitmek istiyor. Düşünsene bir de medreseler yatılı. Ailelerinden, annelerinden, evlerinden, oyuncaklarından, yataklarından ayrılıyor bunlar. Kolay değil tabi. Ben bunu normal görüyorum. Ama nasıl ilkokula giden çocuğun tepkilerini görmezden geliyorsa aile bunda da aynı yapmalı. Ama maalesef genelde çocuklarına acıyıp dini öğrenme fırsatını elinden alıveriyorlar. Kaç tane çocuk biliyorum böyle giden. Oradaki hayata alışamayınca ağılıyorlar aile geliyor ve eve geri götürüyor. Hoca olarak biz onları ikna etmeye çalışıyoruz çocuk biraz daha kalsın da alışsın diye. Ama bazen aileler bizi dinlemiyor. Bilinçsizlikten, cahillikten bunlar.

(18) Medresede ilk öğrendiğim şey bilene saygı göstermekti. Senden üst sınıfa abla ya da hoca demek zorundasın. Bazen senden küçük olabiliyorlar da. Yaş bir şeyi fark ettirmiyor. Önemli olan ne kadar bildiğin. Medreseye başladıktan sonra dışardaki sosyal çevrem bile bana saygı duymaya başladı. Annem babam teyzemler dedem… Davranışları değişti resmen. Dinlemeye başladılar beni. Hissettim değişimi. Hem ben de kendime daha fazla saygı duymaya başladım. Çünkü daha dini bilincim ve öğrenmem artmış gibi hissediyorum.

(19) Her zaman Allah'a dua ederim bilgimi ve bilincimi açsın artırsın diye…

(20) Muhammet sav. En hayırlınız Kur'anı Kerimi öğreten ve öğrenendir demiş. Hala bu iki kısımdan da olduğum için çok mutluyum. Hala sohbet hazırlamak için bir şeyler öğreniyorum. Her hafta diğer hocalarla buluşuyoruz yeni şeyler öğrenip, yeni dualar ezberliyoruz. Hem öğrettikçe de öğreniyorsun.

(21) Başkasına ne yaptığımı açıklamak zorunda kaldığım zaman bizim cemaatti hep başka cemaatlerle karıştırıyorlar ilk başta. Bence onları daha iyi tanıdıkları için. Bizi sadece hafızlık yapıyoruz sanıyorlar. Halbuki biz baya detaylı bir eğitim görüyoruz. Anca böyle alim yetişir zaten.

(22) Bazen çok az şey biliyormuşum gibi geliyor. Ama bir sürü kez diğer cemaatlerin hocalarıyla karşılaştım mesela. Komik derecede cahil olanları var. Sadece Allah'a inanmakla iş bitiyor sanıyorlar. Bir şeyi tam bilmeden ona nasıl inanabilirsin ki? Kolay Müslümanlık bunlar.

(23) Böyle eksik bir sistem yüzünden dinini doğru düzgün bilmeyen ama şahsi fikirlerini cesurca konuşup duran birçok insan ortaya çıkıyor.

(24) Bu eğitim benim hayattaki tüm amacım değil ki. Araç sadece. Bununla daha fazla insana ulaşabiliyorum. Gizli kapaklı olmasına gerek kalmıyor. Tabi ki toplantılardaki verdiğim eğiti bırakmayacağım. İçerik değişmez ki.

(25) Bu dersler bana çok basit geliyor. Yeni hiçbir şey öğrenmedim daha.

(26) Sadece medrese eğitimiyle kalırsak sadece cemaatin kadınlarına ulaşabiliriz. Bu da bir seçenek tabi. Bunu aşağıladığımdan değil. Sadece cemaatle uğraşan tanıdıklarım var. Ama ben bunu tercih etmem. Bir diplomam olsun isterim resmi bir iş sahibi olabilmek için.

(27) Aslında icazet yeter bana. Ama şimdilik dişçi de olmak istiyorum. Tabi hayat ne gösterecek bakalım. Dediğim gibi olsa da olur olmasa da olur.

(28) Bu bu eğitime başlamamı sağladı. İleri de benim için işe yarar olacağına inanıyorum.

(29) Türban dendi mi çok rahatsız oluyorum. Önceden hiç duymazdım bu kelimeyi. Başörtüsü işte ne gerek var türban kelimesine?... Ben başımı sadece Müslüman olduğum için örterim. Bunun başka hiçbir gerekçesi olamaz. Olursa da bu gerçek Müslümanlık olmaz zaten. Bir de şimdi süs için takan çok var mesela. Yazık! Acıyorum bu kadınlara…"

(30) Bilinçli bir Müslüman kadına sokak ortasında bağırıp çağırmak yakışmaz. Tepki göstermesinler demiyorum ama tepki gösterirken savundukları değerlerden uzaklaşmasınlar. Elbette alternatif çareler bulunur. Ne bileyim… Mesela oturma eylemi güzel bir yöntem bence. O değerlerine ters olmazdı

(31) Müslüman kadınların çıkıp eylem yapması bence doğru bir hareket değil. Mesela bize de saldırdılar o dönem. Çok iyi hatırlıyorum, tekamüle geçmeye hazırlanıyorduk, sınavlara girecektik. Baskınlar yapıldı, kurslar kapatıldı. Bizim de hakkımız yendi o dönem. İki sene ara vermek zorunda kaldık. Ama o iki yılda da hiçbir zaman öğrenmekten öğretmekten de geri durmadık. Evlerde toplandık gizlice. Bazen bodrum katlarda…

(32) Bir zamanlar baş örtüsüyle açık öğretim sınavlarına dahi girilmiyordu. Ne mi yapıyorduk? Girmiyorduk tabi ki! Sizce bu kadar malayani bir iş için başörtüsü gibi önemli bir şeyden vazgeçilir mi? Ne cahillik! Saçmalık!

(33) Tam bir Fenerbahçe fanatiğiyim… Fenerbahçe amblemli birçok eşyam var. Anahtarlık, bileklik, kolye, hatta bir iç çamaşırı… Ama bu kazağı yurtta giyemiyorum.

Çünkü bu yolun talebeleri olarak böyle malayani işlerin fanı olmamamız lazım. Bunu biliyorum ama bırakmam zaman alacak maalesef

(34) Kursa ilk başladığım sıralar izne çıkınca namazlarımı bıraktığım, kaçırdığım olurdu mesela. Bol bol film izleyip zaman öldürürdüm. Sonraları bir şeyler öğrendikçe bu yaptıklarımdan rahatsız oldum nedense. Bu sefer de evdeyken kursun maneviyatını özlemeye başladım. Orada namaz kılmak, ibadet etmek daha kolay oluyor nedense. Eve geçince bir rahatlık çöküyor insanın üzeine.

(35) Evde zamanın nasıl geçtiğini anlamıyorum hiç. Bir bakmışım akşam oluvermiş. Ama yurtta tam tersi. Bazen yorucu oluyor kabul ediyorum. Ama zaman o kadar verimli geçiyor ki… Hep beraber hareket ediyoruz. Beraber yiyoruz, çalışıyoruz, abdest alıp namaz kılıyoruz. Ve bunları yaparken çok zaman almıyor gibi geliyor bana. Beraber yapmak etkilidir diye düşünüyorum. Daha çok zevk alıyorsun ibadetinden. Bir de hocalarımızla birlikte olmak etkili oluyor. Sürekli yaptığımız işlerin önemini hatırlatıyorlar bize. Bu sayede hem daha verimli çalışabiliyoruz hem de daha manalı oluyor.

(36) Yurdun ortamı çok farklı. Evde ya da başka bir yerde hemen dünya işleri yanı başınızda. Ama burada öyle değil. Hem her daim dinini öğrenmekle ve öğretmekle meşgul oluyorsun hem de dış dünyanın boş işlerinden uzak kalabiliyorsun. Şu kapının dışında kalıyor her şey. Kafan rahat oluyor. Böylece burada aldığın eğitime odaklanabiliyorsun.

(37) Hepsinden haberimiz var tabi. Mesela birkaçını (telefonların) görürsek alıyoruz. Gözümüze de sokmasınlar bi zahmet ☺ Ama çok da üstlerine gitmemek gerek. Eğer gidersek iyice değerli bir şeye dönüşür gözlerinde. Yine saklarlar, yine yaparlar. Engel olamazsın. Her yasak ayarında olmalı diye düşünüyorum ben.

(38) Bu eğitimimizin en temel özelliklerinden biri (kadınların ve erkeklerin ayrı eğitim alması). Tabi bir fark var eğer kız Kuran kursundaysanız, üniversite eğitimi alamazsınız. Ama bu erkekler için serbest. Bundan bi 20 yıl önce onlar için de serbest değilmiş. Serbest olması için çok baskı yapılmış. Gerekçe ise geçim derdi. Nihayetinde erkek evi geçidiren olduğu için okuyup iyi bir maaş alıp hem de hocalık yapması hem cemaatin bütçesi için hem de aile bütçesi için iyi olmuş. Şimdilerde ise yavaş yavaş kızlara da izin çıkmaya başladı. Ama açıkcası ben ne kızı ne erkeği desteklemiyorum. Sonuçta halihazırda alınan bir eğitim var. Zamanla bu eğitimin kıymetini unutup dünya işlerine dalar bu insanlar.

(39) Ben eminim eğer karma olsaydı bu toplantılar çoğu kadın gelemezdi. Hem kendi gelmek istemezdi, ama çoğunun da kocası yollamazdı. Hem din eğitimi veriyor olmamız

hem de sadece kadınlar olarak buluşuyor olmamız sayesinde pek sorun çıkmıyor, kadınlar özgürce hem mahalledeki hem de yurttaki toplantılara katılabiliyorlar. Mesela cami imamı da kadınlara eğitim veriyor, oraya göndermeyip bize gelmesine ses etmeyen çok koca var.