MOBILIZING WITH AFFECT: GENDERED EXPERIENCES AND PRACTICES IN THE FEMINIST MOVEMENT IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

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Keywords: feminist activism, emotion, affect theory, volunteer, affective solidarity

Responding to the rising anti-gender agenda, across the globe and in Turkey, feminist resistance draws from emotions and affects when mobilizing and forming resistance. This study, locating expressed or unarticulated affect(s) as sites of analysis, aims to understand how feminist activists or volunteers sustain their presence in feminist communities despite the rising authoritarian politics and anti-gender attacks in Turkey. Upon conducting semi-structured interviews with thirty feminist, activist/volunteer women who reside and participate in feminist communities in Istanbul, I identify entanglements between affective dissonance, affective solidarity, and affective belonging as integral to developing resilient and transformative feminist activism in Turkey. I propose affective volunteering as an overarching phenomenon to encapsulate instances when participants feel dissonant at the beginning of their activism journey, experience solidarity as they become a part of a community and feel belonging to the movement and to the feminist cause. Here, affective volunteering as a complex but flexible phenomenon identifies intersections of dissonance, solidarity, and belonging as fruitful experiences that bear transformative potentials. I argue that through shifting between these three affective phases of volunteering, participants develop affective volunteering and this in turn makes their activism/volunteering resilient. This research adds a new framework, affective volunteering to the literature while also proposing a qualitative analysis of activists' experiences in feminist communities.

ÖZET

DUYGULANIMLA HAREKETE GEÇMEK: TÜRKİYE'DE FEMİNİST MÜCADELEDE TOPLUMSAL CİNSEYETE DAYALI DENEYİMLER VE PRATİKLER

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Anahtar Kelimeler: feminist aktivizm, duygulanım teorisi, duygu, gönüllülük, duygulanım danışması

Dünya çapında ve Türkiye'de yükselen toplumsal cinsiyet karşıtı gündeme yanıt veren feminist direniş, harekete geçerken ve direniş oluştururken duygulardan ve duygulanımdan güç almaktadır. Türkiye'de yükselen otoriter politikalara ve toplumsal cinsiyet karşıtı saldırılara rağmen feminist aktivistlerin veya gönüllülerin feminist topluluklarda pratiklerini nasıl sürdürdüklerini anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. İstanbul'da yaşayan ve feminist harekette yer alan otuz feminist, aktivist/gönüllü kadınla yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerden faydalanan bu çalışmada, duygulanım çelişkisi, duygulanım dayanışması ve duygulanım aidiyeti arasındaki ilişki Türkiye'de dirençli ve dönüştürücü feminist aktivizmi geliştirme pratikleri olarak incelenmektedir. Bu çalışma, katılımcıların aktivizm yolculuklarının başında çelişki hissettikleri, feminist topluluğun parçası olduklarında dayanışmayı deneyimledikleri ve feminist harekete aidiyet hissettikleri durumları bir bütün olarak incelemek amacıyla duygulanım gönüllülüğü kavramını önermektedir. Burada, karmaşık ama esnek bir kavramsallaştırma olan duygusal gönüllülük, katılımcıların deneyimlediği uyumsuzluk, dayanışma ve aidiyet duygulanımlarını dönüştürücü potansiyeller taşıyan verimli deneyimler olarak tanımlamaktadır. Sonuç olarak, bu tez katılımcıların deneyimlerinde bu üç duygusal deneyim arasında geçişler yaparak, Türkiye'de feminist harekette duygusal gönüllülük pratikleri geliştirdiklerini ve bunun da katılımcıların aktivizmlerini/gönüllülüklerini dayanıklı hale getirdiğini savunmaktadır.

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For Begüm,
And all feminist activists and volunteers
spending time and energy to advocate for gender equality in Turkey

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1. INTRODUCTION

The impetus behind this research is a question regarding the nature of feminist solidarity and resistance in authoritarian, anti-gender contexts. What brought me to this research was a curiosity for how feminists continue forming resistance and solidarities despite the challenges they face, clashing with anti-gender politics and patriarchal social norms in their personal/private and public lives in Turkey. Despite difficulties faced regarding recent political and social changes in the context of Turkey, that is the withdrawal from Istanbul Convention, increasing pro-natal policies, growing problem of gender based violence, reproduction and support for traditional gender based roles, and strengthening political pressure on the civil society through deployment of arbitrary arrests; gender-equality and human rights based communities continue to criticize the government while also advocating for gender equality in Turkey.

Adding to ample research done on the intersections of politics, activism, and the feminist mobilizations, in this research, I bring forward activists' affective negotiations in their journeys of becoming and being an activist and a volunteer in Turkey, a politically and socially complicated context. The aim of this study is to elaborate on these two questions: (1) How activists and volunteers continue forming resistance under such repressive conditions? and (2) What is the role of emotions in feminist activists'/volunteers' journey in activism in Turkey? Drawing from interviews conducted with thirty feminist activist women, I explain how participants refer to their emotions as an integral part of their activism or volunteering experiences, specifically in joining the movement and later developing belonging and resilience within the movement fully embracing the gender equality cause. Following Hemmings' argument on affective solidarity, I contend that emotions become a central element of gender activism, a tool to join in the movement, to find strength, and to maintain commitment. Thus, I showcase that bringing affective relations with and within the feminist movement to the forefront of analysis can provide a lens into how these women navigate a challenging activist atmosphere.

In order to explain affective negotiations' role in participants' narratives of being a part of feminist community, I frame a new phenomenon: affective volunteering. As an overarching framework, affective volunteering explains the complex and shifting interplay between affective dissonance, affective solidarity, and affective belonging. Following theoretical framings of Claire Hemmings on affective dissonance and affective solidarity (Hemmings 2012) and arguments of scholars working on feminist affect theory (Åhäll 2018; Ahmed 2018a; Pedwell 2012; 2014; Slaby and von Scheve 2019); affective volunteering encapsulates how through experiencing dissonance, solidarity, and belonging, feminist volunteers and activists form resilient feminist activism in Turkey. I argue that the shifting between these three frameworks is integral to being part of and remaining in the feminist movement in Turkey. I argue that as a framework, affective volunteering highlights the destructive and productive phases of affect and emotions in fostering resilient feminist practices that are rooted in affective connections and negotiations.

In analyzing accounts of volunteering narratives, Turkey posits a complex case. With a rising authoritarian anti-gender agenda and a conservative social structure, Turkey has become an unstable and dangerous ground for feminist women to perform gender activism. In the last decade, Turkey has been identified as an authoritarian country, the year 2010 marked as the turning point (Aydagül 2018; Keyman and Gumuscu 2014). As the EU-membership negotiations halted, the state started to push for a conservative and patriarchal take on social and political life. Following Gezi protest in 2013, a country-wide civil uprising against the state's authoritarian, capitalist and anti-gender decision making processes, and the referendum in 2017 where the president became the monopoly of power with increased legal and governance authority (Arat and Pamuk 2019; Arslanalp and Erkmen 2020). There is extensive of scholarship showing how the Turkish state has perpetuated anti-gender agenda and turned into an authoritarian government (Cin and Karlidağ-Dennis 2021; Günaydın 2021; Günaydın and Aşan 2020; Hülagü 2020; Kandiyoti 2021; Özuğurlu and Dayan 2020; Yarar 2020). Regarding this, the most current debate showcasing the anti-gender political approach is the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention (Arat 2021). This international agreement aims to prevent gender-based violence and appoints states responsible for diminishing any systemic regulations that perpetuate gender inequality. Turkey's withdrawal from Istanbul Convention in March 2021 has not only created a national uproar but also proved how "neither violence against women nor the amendment of the constitutions' gender equality was a substantive concern of the AKP governments" (Arat 2021).

Though Turkey posits a complex case, the ongoing clash between authoritarian anti-gender politics and feminist resistance is not unique. Globally, as far-right politics

and anti-gender political agendas gained momentum in various countries, feminist communities also strived to respond to legal, political and social changes that perpetuate traditional patriarchal norms and gender inequality. Mass feminist protests across the globe posit efforts to slow down the progression of the right while opposing conservative and patriarchal claims (Graff and Korolczuk 2022). In Poland, women took the streets to resist proposed policies that further restrict access to abortions. Gaining support and success, Black Protests marked a revolutionary moment when fear and anger was transformed into solidarity and empowerment (Gober and Struzik 2018; Korolczuk 2020). Similarly in Mexico, following the footsteps of the #MeToo movement in the United States, women joined forces to form resistance against gender-based violence, sexual assault and harassment through hashtags #RopaSucia and #MiPrimerAcoso. Soon named as the Glitter Revolution, women doing activism moved with their feelings of anger and frustration, but used glitter, a reminder of hop and joy, to remind the anti-gender actors about how "women's patience had been tested to the limits" (Garza 2020, 54). Moreover, in Argentina protests against increasing rates of femicide continue to criticize government apparatuses for lack of protective or preventive legal measures (Barros and Martinez 2020). In addition, in 2016, women in Brazil mobilizing under the group Ni Una Menos responded to rising femicides and gender-based violence through a street protest (Biglieri 2020). This protest, crossing borders of Brazil and influencing many other women across the globe, has made grief and vulnerability new sources to draw from when planning and doing transformative feminist protests (Sosa 2021).

Furthermore, feminist activism in Egypt and recently in Iran show contestations of hope, anger, despair, frustration, and disappointment to organize a united front against patriarchal and authoritarian states. Allam (2020), analyzing the recent feminist protests in Egypt, argue that feminist activists draw from the feelings they experienced in the Egyptian uprising in 2011 to sustain the mobilization and motivation around gender issues today (Allam 2020). Today, feminist activists and women in various contexts draw from their affective encounters and experiences to navigate political and social dynamics of subjugation and oppression. As Turkey present a similar civil and political context to aforementioned countries in the Global South, I locate this study in this context of transnational, collective and affective practices of feminist struggles and analyze it through the framework of contemporary affective solidarities of feminist resistance gaining momentum in different settings against anti-gender and authoritarian governments.

Despite the increasing anti-gender mobilizations, feminist communities continue to do online and offline activism to form solidarities (Graff and Korolczuk 2022; Sosa 2021;). In Turkey, feminist women come together to respond to gender-based vio-

lence, lack of legal protection, and anti-gender policies enacted by the government (Arat 2021; Kandiyoti 2021). As it becomes more essential to fight for gender equality, freedom and democracy; analyzing the experiences of women volunteers in feminist activism also becomes crucial to understand the reasons and motivations behind becoming part of such a powerful yet stigmatized form of activism. Through this study, I aim to analyze why women volunteers choose to become a part of and stay in the feminist movement, especially considering the current rising anti-genderism in Turkey. It is ever more essential to fight for democracy, freedom, and equality, but with an authoritarian government, volunteers' lives and liberties can sometimes be at stake.

This study is driven by the feminist motto "private is political" and takes emotions, which are deemed private, as sites of analysis. Through acknowledging feelings and emotions as politically motivating and driving forces, this research is primarily informed by the theoretical framework of feminist affect studies. Affect theory has long interested gender scholars working on feminist and queer activism to analyze epistemological underpinnings of social interactions. Even though some scholars argue that the particular focus on emotions and affects in social science scholarship can be described as an "affective turn" (Bargetz 2015; Koivunen 2010), some feminist scholars assert that emotions have long been included in gender studies (Ahmed 2014; Pedwell and Whitehead 2012). Authors such as Alison Jaggar (1996), Marilyn Frye (1983), bell hooks (1989), and Audre Lorde (1984) have already centered their arguments around emotions to analyze oppressive social structures. For example, Lorde (1984) argued that anger is integral to black feminism, moving women towards embracing solidarity building and joining in the feminist movement.

Feminist analysis of affect is particularly important for its critical engagement with experience, empathy, and caring relations (Clough and Halley 2007; Hemmings 2005; Koivunen 2010). Scholars argue that looking at negative, neutral, or positive emotions can highlight the transformative capacities of such emotions in feminist scholarship and feminist activism. For example, in developing a theoretical framework of affect to analyze activism, Hemmings explain affective solidarity as a form of community-building that stems from emotional attachments to the movement and to the bodies within the movement (Hemmings 2012). According to Hemmings, affective dissonance is also crucial in yielding individuals to activism. The state of emotional uneasiness can result in involvement in the feminist movement and forming of affective networks of support. Within the movement, individuals feel a type of belonging articulated through feelings of security and togetherness (Hemmings 2012).

Stemming from this relationship between affect and activism, I analyze women volunteers' narratives through a feminist affect theoretical framework. In my fieldwork, I see instances of affective dissonance, affective solidarity, and affective belonging. That is why I suggest affective volunteering as an overarching phenomenon that encapsulates how the entanglements between these three theoretical frameworks can foster sustainable and somewhat stubborn nature of gender activism in Turkey. Affective volunteering is a necessary framework to understand feminist activism and volunteers' feelings in this study. Affects are an undeniable part of these women's experiences, and they become how they negotiate their volunteering from the first moment of involvement to moments of disengagement, from moments of solidarity to moments of alienation. I contend that affective dissonance, affective solidarity, and affective belonging exist in these narratives either in a cyclical form or simultaneously. While some volunteers joined the movement because they felt dissonance and later found solidarity and belonging, others joined the movement to find solidarity but felt dissonance after being involved. Thus, moving forward, we need to acknowledge that affective volunteering is a complex and flexible phenomenon continuously contested and negotiated by volunteers in the feminist movement in Turkey.

The importance of this research is multilayered. First, this research adds to the literature on affect and feminist activism through an analysis of Turkey. Even though there is a vast literature on volunteering in the international area (Becker 2015; Daoud et al. 2010; Einolf and Yung 2018; Feenstra 2019; Li and Ferraro 2006); the scholarship on Turkey is still in the making. Current scholarly works mainly focus on the intersections of democracy, political participation, and volunteering (Bayhan 2002; Bee and Kaya 2017; Kadioglu 2005; Palabiyik 2011; Yıldız 2004), historical evaluation of philanthropy (Aydın et al. n.d.; Bikmen 2006; Çizakça 2006), youth volunteering (Atılgan et al. 2008; Balaban and İnce 2015; Bee and Kaya 2017; Eraslan and Erdoğan 2015; Kim and Morgül 2017; Şenel 2019) and these particularly fall short in acknowledging gendered dimensions of volunteering and activism. If we are to look at the research specifically on gender and volunteering in Turkey, current scholarship focuses on the gender and queer movement in Turkey and the sociopolitical dynamics around it (Arat 2021; Coşar and Onbaşi 2008; Kandiyoti 2021; Ozduzen and Korkut 2020; Simga and Goker 2017) which does not analyze the experiences and negotiations of activists or volunteers taking part in these mobilizations. Furthermore, research analyzing the relationship between emotions and gender activism in Turkey focuses on emotions of hate, hope and despair to analyze how individuals mobilize around such emotions to form resistance (Çevik 2017; İlaslaner 2015; Zorlu and Özkan 2020). Though these studies on affective nego-

tiations in queer and feminist resistance posit an introduction into how activism is entangled with emotions in Turkey, they do not focus on the transformation of emotions throughout activists' journey in feminist and queer activism. In addition, there are also few quantitative studies done to show the current volunteering rates in Turkey, not just in gender activism but overall in all areas (Aydın et al. n.d.; Erdoğan et al. 2019; Ersen, Kaya, and Meydanoğlu 2010).

Informed by the aforementioned literature on the intersections of emotion, activism and feminist mobilizations in Turkey, this research brings affective experiences of feminist activists and volunteers to the forefront of analysis. Focusing on how activists and volunteers draw from their personal experiences of dissonance, despair, and sadness to join feminist activism to later find hope and joy in it, contributes to the scholarly works on the role of affect in forming feminist resistance. More specifically, to analyze such affective transformations experienced as a result of being a feminist activist or volunteer, this research proposes affective volunteering as a complex and contested phenomena which can be used to understand the interplay between affective experiences of solidarity, belonging, and detachment in feminist solidarities. Affective volunteering encapsulates the complex, negotiated, and fluid affective nature of gender activism through an analysis of gender activism in Turkey. This framework can be helpful for future studies to critically analyze how activism performed under anti-gender politics can become sustainable and transformative personally and politically.

In addition, this study adds to the discussions around gender and activism or volunteering. When gender and volunteering are analyzed, most international scholars present a quantitative analysis of the involvement of men/women in third-sector work or volunteering duties. However, apart from these statistical studies, there is still a need for qualitative analysis of the role of gender in volunteering and activism to understand how experiences and negotiations in feminist activism or volunteering is informed by the gender dynamics. This study fulfills this need not because it is about the experiences of women volunteers in gender activism but because it acknowledges these narratives as gendered experiences and gendered affects shaped by sociopolitical patriarchal norms and biases in the context of Turkey.

1.1 Volunteering and Doing Activism

In this study, I interviewed women who identify as feminist activists and volunteers. Though some used the words activism and volunteering interchangeably, some made

a distinction between these two definitions. Hence, it is important to lay out the definitional differences and points of mergence between volunteering and doing activism. In the next section, I first offer an overview of the theoretical and conceptual literature on volunteering and doing activism. Giving an account of the differences and similarities between concepts of activism and volunteering lays a foundation of the interchangeable use of the two concepts in this study.

There is an ongoing debate around defining volunteering and activism as conceptually different forms of civic participation. Volunteering is often referred to as the pillar of civil society activities (Rochester 2010; Wilson 2000). It is a form of civic participation (Penner, 2004) that is unpaid, non-obligatory work. It is motivated by the affection for or a sense of responsibility toward the social good (Lyons 2000). Associated with forms of helping and caring, providing services for the common good, and portrayed as a leisure-time activity, volunteering is perceived as a concept devoid of power (Henriksen and Svedberg 2010). Volunteers seek to provide help and services through formally organized platforms (Gilster 2012).

In contrast, activism is a politically infused form of civic participation that strives for social change (Erdoğan Coşkun 2022). As actors that challenge and critique the ongoing system, activists form change-oriented collective actions and plan demonstrations, riots, marches, or other forms of street activism (Henriksen and Svedberg 2010). While volunteering targets improving people's lives, activism challenges the system and targets changing institutional structures (Zlobina, Dávila, and Mitina 2021). Activism aims to extend its reach to transforming systems of power and institutional mechanisms. Activism builds "collective action to achieve a collective good" (Musick and Wilson 2008, 23). Thus, in the case of activism, building a collective group identity and having a collective orientation become more crucial than in volunteering.

Volunteering and activism are distinguished from each other, but both are components of civic participation for achieving social good. It is also argued that activism is a form of volunteering (Musick and Wilson 2008; Wilson 2000). However, there are many overlaps between the definitions of volunteering and activism. Removing volunteering from the world of political action may result in understanding volunteering as stemming simply from altruistic behavior (Henriksen and Svedberg 2010). In addition, it might locate volunteering within an individual's attributes as compassionate, caring, and self-sacrificing, promoting a gendered perception. As a result, the boundary between volunteering and activism becomes blurred as the line between personal and political is questioned (Musick and Wilson 2008).

Musick and Wilson's summary of the differentiation between "change-directed" and

"service-oriented" volunteerism, proposed by the Task Force of the National Organization of Women, can help locate volunteering in the political sphere. Volunteers share a desire for social change and social justice in change-directed volunteering. Advocating for equal rights, policy changes, and volunteers' lobbying efforts can be examples of change-directed volunteering. In service-oriented volunteering, actors strive to "complement insufficiently funded social services with non-paid labor in order to alleviate social ills" (Musick and Wilson 2008, 18). However, as civic actors gain more knowledge about the service they are providing, their volunteering can also steer towards change-directed volunteering (Henriksen and Svedberg 2010). For example, volunteers working in a shelter call center may help maintain the center or answer the calls (service-oriented volunteering). But once volunteers start acquiring more knowledge about feminism and gender equality, they may begin to realize the underlying power structures and strive for social change (change-directed volunteering). Thus, recognizing the flexibility and fluctuation between definitions of activism and volunteering is integral to developing a broader analysis of forms of civic participation.

Acknowledging that volunteering and activism are interrelated concepts of organizing and performing collaborative social work, I also use these concepts interchangeably in this study. Participants do various volunteer and activist work, from designing flyers to planning marches. Some write blog entries to spread gender awareness, while some plan workshops and conferences on gender-based violence. The aims of these activities remain the same: achieving gender equality in Turkey. Thus, I find it hard to differentiate between volunteering and activism simply by looking at the participants' forms of activism. In addition, participants themselves use volunteering and activism interchangeably in the interviews. They do not differentiate between volunteering and activism since they associate their civic participation with both concepts. Using gönüllülük [volunteering] in Turkish, which involves gönül vermek [giving your heart out for something], highlights the centrality of emotions in doing activism as well. In using activism and volunteering interchangeably, I recognize that most activists are volunteers and that the concept of advocacy is a part of both experiences.

Musick and Wilson state, "In a relatively non-contentious environment, volunteer work stands for political action. As far as individual motivations and interests are concerned, the same activity can be interpreted in several different ways" (2008, 21). Thus, depending on the motivations of actors and the context they operate in, activism can be defined as volunteering and volunteering as activism. Moreover, a contentious atmosphere can require both volunteering and activism at the same, working in complementing ways to fill in the gaps that the state neglects to address

(Kourou 2020). For example, in Turkey, the anti-gender and authoritarian state solely support the protection of traditional family and conservative social norms, forcing activists and volunteers to work together to provide labor and time into services and advocacy to elevate the society. As a result, differentiating between activism and volunteering becomes a challenge.

1.1.1 Motivations

Quantitative and qualitative studies look at the reasons or motivations to volunteer (Gottlieb and Gillespie 2008; Handy 1990; Lancee and Radl 2014; Rochester 2010), changing habits of volunteering according to the life course (Gottlieb and Gillespie 2008; Grönlund 2011; Lee 2019; Warburton and McLaughlin 2006), benefits of volunteering (Merrell 2000; Leonard, Onyx, and Hayward-Brown 2004; Rochester 2013), and profiles of volunteers (Cemalcilar 2009; Dekker and Halman 2003; Leonard, Onyx, and Hayward-Brown 2004) as well as some requirements that are common in volunteers. In this section, I tease out these different studies to argue that despite the vast literature on volunteers and the act of volunteering, there is a need for studies that analyze the gendered and affective aspects of volunteering.

There are different arguments surrounding the motivations for volunteering. Clary and Snyder (1999) identified six motives around volunteering: (1) sustaining or promoting values that are important to the individual; (2) enhancing knowledge about the world; (3) obtaining positive psychological attributes; (4) achieving specific career goals; (5) strengthening social relationships; (6) reducing negative feelings or addressing personal problems. Similar to this categorization, Duguid, Mündel, and Schugurensky (2013) have also argued that motivations for volunteering can be threefold: "(a) altruistic or value-based motivations usually connected to religious beliefs, support for a cause, or a desire to help others; (b) instrumental motivations, like gaining work experience, exploring career paths, enhancing resumes and making contacts to increase future paid job opportunities; (c) social motivations, such as extending networks, making new friends, or responding to peer pressure in the community, an organization or the workplace. Learning for one's own sake is also crucial in motivating individuals to volunteer (Duguid, Mündel, and Schugurensky 2013). In addition, Okun and Schultz (2003) argues that these motivations can change over the life course, depending on what an individual prioritizes in life. As individuals age, social motivations become more important than career or knowledge motivations (Okun and Schultz 2003).

Motivation to volunteer is also closely related to altruistic behaviors in psychology.

However, Rochester (2010) explains that contemporary volunteering is less about altruism and more about forming social relationships. He defines new volunteering as reflexive and more about personal identity. This definition is also prevalent in the narratives in this study. The participants' motivations stem from relationships of care, empathy, and unique experiences. Even though some participants acknowledged that career gains could be one of the motivations to volunteer, none of the volunteers mentioned career advancement as one of their aims in joining a movement or an organization. Instead, their motivations ranged from seeking social justice to understanding politics, from wanting to help others to use their skills for a cause.

Acquiring capital in life also determines the motivation and possibility to volunteer. Capital can refer to resources or skills that individuals bring into any social network they are involved in, which benefit them in advancing their careers, acquiring better social positions, or achieving their aims (Wilson and Musick 1997). In their earlier work, Wilson and Musick (1997) relate the concept of capital to volunteering and argue that volunteering calls for specific characteristics. First, it requires human capital consisting of individual gains through education and in the labor market. Acquiring human capital up to a certain point can make individuals more appealing to specific organizations and can provide more volunteering opportunities for an individual. Second, volunteering requires social capital, that is, the social network. The types of formal and informal social connections a volunteer has can determine the amount of work they can and are willing to do. Third, cultural capital is beneficial in volunteering since it can determine someone's values and beliefs. Cultural capital, related to religion or other belief systems, can influence a person to help others, have empathetic characteristics, or feel responsible for working for social justice. In addition, Dekker and Halman's research also support that "individuals who possess certain characteristics will volunteer at higher rates" (2003). Finally, since volunteering is demanding, possessing more capital can benefit volunteers in finding appropriate conditions for volunteering and meeting the demands of volunteering, such as time, finance, and education (Lancee and Radl 2014).

1.1.2 Civil Society in Turkey

Before locating volunteering and feminist activism in Turkey, I believe it is essential to look back on how civil society transformed over the years and the current state of civil society to understand the social and political dynamics at play. In Turkey, the development of civil society dates back to the early periods of the Ottoman Empire (Zencirci 2014). However, in contemporary research on civil society, the development

period is commonly mentioned as the constitutional reforms made after the 1980s (Ergun 2010; Keyman and İçduygu 2003; Kubicek 2002). Another venture point in the argument is the 1990s, when EU accession discussions began for Turkey and when Turkey was considered a candidate for EU membership. Following Turkey's official membership, executive and prosecutive reforms also supported the development of civil society (Müftüler Baç 2005; Keyman 2006; Tosun 2007). In 1992 at the Rio Convention, the government of Turkey declared that not only the state, but also civil society should be responsible for finding solutions to social problems and that the participation of civic agents is essential for a democratic society. This statement proved that the relationship between the government and civil society started to improve and is perceived as a crucial element in becoming a member of the EU (Örnek and Ayas 2015).

When Turkey was declared an official candidate for EU membership at the 1999 Helsinki Convention, the Turkish government started to implement various social and political reforms to prove to the EU that they were making the necessary efforts to come up to the European standards of a democratic and free society. In these efforts, civil society was a crucial element emphasized explicitly by the EU Commission. The government of Turkey also regarded civil society as an essential and active agent that can grant access to the EU (Keyman and İçduygu 2003; Müftüler Baç 2005). Civil organizations were critical in filling out feedback reports about Turkey's social and political issues and some possible solutions the state could implement. These reports were attached to Turkey's progress report and were considered a crucial element in evaluating Turkey's progress. One of the examples of this positive relationship is the involvement of the women's movement in the EU accession period. For example, KA.DER, an organization that supports women's equal participation in politics, advocated for quota agreement in politics, and this has become a prevalent topic in the EU negotiations (Coşar and Onbaşi 2008). Since the protection of human rights, gender equality, and constitutional rights were emphasized repeatedly, the civil society organizations that work on these topics were also supported and financed by the EU so that they could become effective in the field and develop substantial projects (Göksel and Güneş, 2005; Keyman 2006). This development also resulted in a gradual increase in the number of operating organizations and various topics discussed in the field (Keyman and İçduygu, 2003).

After 2005, it was evident that Turkey could not fully meet the requirements of EU membership and the negotiations came to a halt. 2010 marks the authoritative turn in Turkish political history, as there are more controlling and limiting government policies. Especially the Gezi Park Protests in 2013, a voluminous public response to authoritative politics, was a sign of the tension between the government and the

secular (Ertan 2020). However, as the protests lost momentum, civil society, as an active agent organizing masses in the protest, faced multiple restraining measures such as bans on demonstrations, group gatherings, and arrests of well-known civil society figures (Yabanci 2019). The coup attempt in 2016 also added to the controlling civil atmosphere and restraining civil society organizations. Thousands of organizations were closed due to unlawful activities, journalists and academics were suspended because of membership in terrorist organizations, and public figures were arrested without any legible reason (Ertan 2020; Yabanci 2019). The EU Commission Report published in 2022 described Turkey's civil society as a repressed and shrinking space.

Another method of controlling civil society was to form government-supported civil society organizations (GONGOs), which also perpetuate the dominant authoritative state discourse in the civil arena. Through these organizations, the governmental agents found ways to control the dominant discourse in civil society and produce civil activism that would enhance governmental presence in the civil arena (Yabanci 2019). Some of the organizations formed under this purpose and supported by the government produced civil activism in women's rights, migration, politics of organizing, and diplomacy (Yabanci 2019; Zihnioğlu 2019). The increasing control over civil society and the presence of GONGOs show that civil activism has become a problematic issue in contemporary Turkey (Ertan 2020).

Today, the General Directorate of Civil Society Relations, formed under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, is the only governmental source that provides civil society statistics in Turkey. The number of active CSOs in Turkey is 121.689. This active CSO count includes trade associations, research and education associations, associations to support social values, and associations for health and religious affairs. The number of CSOs that focus on protection and advocacy associations is 1.506. Even though these numbers offer a perspective into the percentages of associations in Turkey and the topics they focus on, it is essential to emphasize the limitations of the data. In this data, the definition of the subject categories, the updated date, and the number of individuals volunteering in these organizations are not provided. In addition, non-hierarchically organized organizations do not have formal status as associations. Therefore, this data do not represent the platforms, initiatives, groups, and communities. Today it is impossible to find the number of all formal/informal CSOs in Turkey or list them all by name. This data limitation posits a severe limitation to research on civil society in Turkey and analyzing civil society for policy development purposes.

There are various organizing practices in civil society in Turkey. There are formal, in-

formal, hierarchical, and non-hierarchical organizations actively working in the field. Their activism takes many forms, including educational activities, consciousness-raising, lobbying for political changes, social media activism, and protesting on the streets. Even though from the 1990s onwards, civil space has become repressed and controlled, civil society organizations continue to find new ways to participate.

1.1.3 Civil Society and Gender

When we look at the intersection of civil society, volunteering, and gender, most of the scholarship provides a quantitative analysis of the gender distribution of volunteers (Themudo 2009). In this research, the arguments are built on a gender binary system and do not include LGBTQI+ activism in these analyses. Nevertheless, the literature argues that men and women practice volunteering differently, and gender-segregated data is crucial to understand the difference between how different genders perform volunteering (Wilson and Musick 1997; Einolf 2011).

When the organizational elements of institutions are analyzed, men mostly occupy higher administrative positions. They also primarily volunteer at hierarchical organizations that have formal status as associations. On the other hand, women volunteers primarily work at non-hierarchical organizations and volunteer fieldwork. In addition, women also practice informal volunteering, which stands for activities that are done in the form of assistance to kin or close circle (Gibelman 2000; Taniguchi 2006; Wilson and Musick 1997).

Analysis of women's duties at these organizations shows that women do work resembling their home responsibilities (Wilson and Rotolo 2007). Traditionally, women are perceived as the family's primary caregivers and are expected to be more empathetic and caring. This stereotypical gender role approach can also be seen in the organizational cultures of civil society organizations. Women commonly take part in volunteering work that requires emotional labor, empathy, self-sacrifice, and care (Quaranta 2016; Themudo 2009; Wilson 2000). Therefore, it can be argued that parallelism between women's domestic responsibilities and volunteering duties is a prominent pattern that needs to be addressed. A few research also look at the reasons why women choose to volunteer in the first place, and one of the common reasons is that they care more about the well-being of their community and the future of their society, which resembles the primary caregiver role as well (Einolf 2011; Themudo 2009)

Social cues that teach women gender roles are essential in understanding women's

volunteering practices. Still, to have a holistic understanding of these practices, we also need to look at women's participation in paid labor. Since women are perceived as the primary caregivers, they also perform most unpaid care work at home. That is why women choose to take up part-time, low-paid jobs to have the flexibility to complete their domestic duties (Einolf 2011; Helms and McKenzie 2014). It is also possible to say since women work part-time, they tend to have more time for volunteering activities. Volunteering gives them the flexibility they need to participate in their activities; they can also bring their close circle and their families to volunteering activities.

Moreover, women who take close care of their children tend to participate in volunteering activities at school for parents and stay for more extended periods in these organizations, primarily until their children graduate (Rotolo 2000). When we think about women's participation in paid labor, their domestic duties as the primary caregivers of the house, and the flexible conditions of volunteering, it is not surprising that women choose to participate more in volunteering. It fits their professional and family responsibilities (Helms and McKenzie 2014; Taniguchi 2006). It is also argued that when women choose the place they want to volunteer at, they also look for inclusive and flexible organizations (Maran and Soro 2010).

Some studies analyze gender segregation in the organizational culture of different non-governmental organizations. It is argued that gender roles within civil society resemble traditional gender segregation; male volunteers perform manager roles, which mostly require analytical skills, while women take on caring roles that call for empathetic relations(Taniguchi 2006; Marshall and Taniguchi 2012). In civil society organizations, it is observed that men take up higher administrative positions while women work in the field or as assistants (Wemlinger and Berlan 2016). In organizations where women take up higher positions, the organizational culture is more supportive of women and more flexible and non-hierarchical (Maran and Soro 2010). In addition, when women work as supervisors or occupy administrative positions, they also tend to take up similar responsibilities at the organizations where they volunteer (Marshall and Taniguchi 2012). These arguments show that it is crucial to posit an intersectional analysis of women's volunteering practices. The importance of traditional gender roles, opportunities for personal growth, daily routines in women's lives, and the activities they take up other than volunteering determine these practices.

It is important to emphasize that women's involvement in civil society has positive and transformative impacts on women's lives. Especially for women who volunteer at local organizations, the transformative effect of volunteering is crucial (Cadesky,

Smith, Thomas, Paz, Agerhem and Fadel 2018; Manchego 2019). Women who perform daily domestic responsibilities and do not necessarily socialize in the community find new ways to engage with and participate in matters that concern the well-being of their community. These women claim they become more mobile and free and are respected more within the community after volunteering. They also gain new personality traits and get the education they might not get somewhere else regarding political and social (Cadesky et al. 2018; Manchego 2018). They start to have a word in important matters and thus gain more respect as well as a more respectable stance within the community (Manchego 2018; Wemlinger and Berlan 2016).

We can argue that in the literature review, there are multiple elements concerning the intersections of gender, civil society, and volunteering in Turkey. The political and social history of civil society in Turkey has a crucial role in how individuals perceive civil society and how civil society agents have found ways to improve their activities. Today civil society in Turkey is restricted and controlled; however, organizations still find new possibilities to reach their target populations and deal with social issues. The research on volunteering in Turkey is limited; especially when we look at the motivations for women's volunteering, the research is scarce. Plenty of research looks at women's involvement in non-governmental organizations by looking at percentages and numbers. However, there is still a need for a qualitative study about women's motivations to volunteer and their gendered experiences inside or outside these organizations. This research will address this gap by bringing forward narratives of women volunteers in Turkey.

1.2 On Methodology

In this section, first, I explain the initial stages of field design and data collection. Here, I include a brief section about doing field research during the pandemic, which caused drastic changes in how I planned my fieldwork. Second, I provide information about how I analyzed the transcribed interviews utilizing grounded theory-inspired open coding and thematic analysis. Third, I lay out limitations in data collection and recommend some possible solutions for future studies analyzing the affect in feminist activism. Lastly, I present my positionality in the context of this research to give an idea about the perspective that the interviews are analyzed.

1.2.1 Field Design

Initially, this research was designed as ethnographic field research involving multiple research methods to investigate how the dynamics, meaning, and forms of volunteering change according to the political focus of the organization. As part of the field research, I planned to volunteer in two organizations: a feminist organization and a government-supported women's organization, to conduct participatory observation, focus groups, and semi-structured interviews with women volunteering there.

As COVID-19 gained momentum in the world and soon became a pandemic, by the time I planned to do my research, the quarantine measures were intact, and going out on the streets was forbidden for specific periods. This containment in the houses forced me to downsize my field and change the research methods. Due to the impossibility of doing physical ethnographic research, I decided to conduct online ethnographies in organizational meetings and conferences. Unfortunately, even though most activist communities continued their activism online, not all welcomed new volunteers during the pandemic; some even shrank in size. That is why I decided not to do comparative research involving multiple organizations but instead focus on personal accounts of volunteering in Turkey.

The group of interest remained the same as the first field plan: feminist women who volunteer in the women's movement in Turkey. There are two reasons why interviewing women was the aim of this research. First, as explained above, women constitute the majority of volunteers in civil society. In the feminist movement in Turkey, women are on the frontlines of activism and volunteer work as well (Coşar and Onbaşi 2008; Simga and Goker 2017). Second, since I wanted to analyze the experience in the feminist movement, interviewing women only allowed me to not only learn about women activists' experiences in the movement but also inquire about their gendered personal experiences of discrimination or dissonance as women living in Turkey and connect these experiences back to their choices to volunteer back to these experiences. Being a feminist was integral for this research since I aimed to highlight the clashes between doing feminist activism in a country where the state attacks gender and women's rights. As feminist women, participants also had well-informed knowledge about conflicts surrounding women's issues in contemporary Turkey, which enabled them to give a more developed insight into the challenges surrounding their activism and the role of their gender in experiencing these.

In designing the first field research, I located the field in Istanbul since Istanbul continues to be the hub of activism in Turkey due to its high population and the high number of civil society organizations or communities operating in Istanbul. On

the website of the Department of Relations with Civil Society, the number of rights-based organizations (formally recognized by the state) is the highest in Istanbul, with 349 organizations present ("İllere ve Faaliyet Alanlarına Göre Dernekler" 2022). Moreover, due to the implementation snowball sampling method to meet potential participants, the scope of the project organically became centered in Istanbul since participant women also referred their friends for the project who live in Istanbul.

As I was interested in documenting the personal experiences of women activists and volunteers, I did center this research on a specific organization. Instead, I shared an open call for participants. Thus, I included independent activists and volunteers as well. If the participants were to be associated with a community, I asked the participants if the organization identified itself as a feminist organization or if the organization used feminist discourses and approaches in their volunteering work as well as in shaping their community culture. This strategy left out any volunteering or activism done in government-supported organizations or simple charity work that relies on donations and fundraisers.

In designing and doing the fieldwork of this research, the feminist agenda of bringing forward stories of women activists and their situated perspectives was central (Haraway 1990). Rather than reaching for the 'truth' and 'objectivity,' I aspired to embrace multiple and situated interpretations of social reality (Reinharz 1992). As Stanley and Wise argued, feminist research does not strive to unravel "pure and unravel truth" but provides the analysis with multiple and alternative understandings of the world (Stanley and Wise 1993, 158). This intervention to objectivity also informs this study. Ultimately, I become the storyteller of another person's story (Oakley 2016).

There is no single method for conducting feminist research (Hesse-Biber 2011; Reinharz 1992). Feminist researchers utilize different tools to analyze racist, sexist, patriarchal, discriminatory social and systemic structures (Letherby 2003). I identify myself as a feminist researcher entering the field to learn more about the experiences of feminist activists in Turkey. I contend that by adopting in-depth interviewing as this research's core method and using open-ended questions, I achieved openness and collaboration with the participants (Hesse-Biber 2011). I do not treat the participants solely as providers of data. Instead, their perspectives and experiences are the centers of this research. This collaborative approach also allowed me to form a trusting relationship with the participants.

1.2.2 Doing Field Research During the Pandemic

During the time of the field study, as the pandemic increased its toll on populations, traveling, holding group meetings, using public transportation, and going out on streets were prohibited for long periods. People became anxious to get in physical contact with others, to be in crowded spaces, or to invite friends over (Sedysheva 2020). The pandemic has disrupted daily routines and challenged qualitative fieldwork methodologies (Eggeling 2022). Ethnographic researchers discussed the possibilities of finding alternative fields in online settings and using online tools to conduct observations and interviews (Sah, Singh, and Sah 2020; Sedysheva 2020). Challenged with the adaptability and flexibility requirements of the pandemic, many qualitative researchers reinvented doing fieldwork. Though this was a challenging process, the pandemic also showed the alternative ways ethnographic fieldwork can take and further legitimized digital methods for qualitative data collection (Eggeling 2022).

Due to the impossibility of conducting fieldwork face-to-face, I also switched to online data collection methods. Conducting interviews using video call options on Skype, WhatsApp and Zoom was a reasonable alternative to continue data collection. On the positive side, with the pandemic, many feminist organizations have already been using online platforms in planning meetings, workshops, and panels to raise consciousness about the rise of gender inequalities during the pandemic. In addition, many feminists involved in civil society became familiar with online platforms as participants or simply as viewers, which made conducting online interviews perceived as an acceptable practice in the field. On the downside, using online mediums made building rapport more complex, and knowledge about and accessibility to specialized software became a prerequisite to participate in this project. Below I explain both sides of the argument about online interviewing.

Online interviews are critiqued for the lack of visual and physical cues in face-to-face interviews (Holmes 2021; Linabary and Hamel 2017). Meeting people for the first time over Zoom or Skype made building rapport between the researcher and the interviewee difficult. At times, participants were hesitant about sharing their personal stories of activism since they worried about confidentiality. Considering this, as the researcher, I made a conscious effort to acknowledge their worries and be open and transparent about the research project, the interviewing process, and the possibility of dropping out of the project at any point they wanted. I also adopted giving opening and closing remarks as a strategy. At the beginning of the interviews, I presented the research and discussed the changes in my fieldwork and how the online interview will proceed. I also made sure to take questions and concerns from

the participants if they had any. In the closing remarks, I acknowledged the difficulty of doing the interviews online. I reminded them of my contact information if they had any reservations about the project or the interviews.

In addition, when I introduced myself at the beginning of the interviews, I acknowledged my identity positions and told the participants about my educational past. This practice helped me build a personal connection and friendly rapport with the participants. Since most participants were closer to my age or were familiar with academic research (they participated in one, conducted it themselves, or read one before), they approached me in an understanding and friendly manner. They could also empathize with the difficulty of conducting research during a pandemic. Besides, I contend that as a young feminist woman living in Turkey, participants perceived me as a relatable subject. As Oakley stated, doing interviews with the participants soon transitioned into a dialogue of friendship based on shared gendered experiences (Oakley 2016).

Using online tools for conducting interviews also raised concerns about the accessibility of the internet (Holmes 2021; Sah, Singh, and Sah 2020). Online conferencing software requires a laptop or phone with an internet connection and the necessary knowledge to use them. Over the course of looking for participants, I had to cancel three interviews due to technical difficulties or a lack of software knowledge. In the future, a hybrid field study, including both online and physical interviews, would be beneficial to include various perspectives regardless of technological skills.

It is important to note that utilizing online data collection methods also had advantages both for the participant and the researcher. First, online interviewing provided a timing advantage in scheduling interviews (Sah, Singh, and Sah 2020). Since commuting in Istanbul is time-consuming, conducting online interviews made scheduling interviews easier for the participants and me. The ability to do the interviews from the comfort of their homes without worrying about where to meet and how to get there made it easy for the participants to agree to an online interview. Second, online interviewing also allowed us to stop the interviews if anything came up and continue at another time. If we were to meet physically, it would be harder to plan another meeting and reconvene at another time. Third, considering the topic of this research project, doing fieldwork during the pandemic allowed observing why and how participants did not stop doing activism during such a drastic time. As they were experiencing the difficulty of being away from the field, participants negotiated the alternative ways they adopted to sustain activism and offered insights about why it is crucial for them to keep doing activism in times of global disasters and pandemic. Thus, here pandemic provided a new perspective not just for the

participants but for this research as well.

1.2.3 Data Collection

Drawing from semi-structured interviews conducted by women activists in Istanbul between March-October 2020, this research asks, what role do emotions play in experiences of feminist activism? Upon approval of the ethics committee at Sabancı University, I posted a call for participants on social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn. This call aimed at reaching volunteers working in feminist organizations in Turkey. I sent the poster to several Facebook groups where graduate students, gender scholars, and activists were members. In addition, I also reached out to my close circle and inquired about their acquaintances who might be volunteering at feminist organizations. In the initial stages, the participants filled out a Google form, providing demographic information about themselves. In the last section, the form asked the participants if they wanted to be contacted for an online interview. I compiled a list of participants who ticked this box and provided their contact information. Once I contacted the participants, we scheduled the date and time of the interview. I sent the zoom link to the participants via email or Whatsapp.

In order to increase the number of participants, I asked the initial participants to refer me to their acquaintances who might be interested in joining. Furthermore, recruiting new participants through snowball sampling allowed me to reach out easily to participants. As a result, I conducted and recorded thirty online interviews over the course of eight months (between March - October 2020).

Participants gave verbal and written consent for the interviews. The interviews were in Turkish since both the interviewee and interviewer were native speakers. I recorded the interviews on a voice recorder and kept the recordings on my personal computer. The semi-structured interviews consisted of open-ended questions that took shape according to the participants' answers. The duration of the meetings was three hours, the longest. Participants were not provided with the interview questions beforehand and heard the questions for the first time during the interviews. The interview questions aimed to inquire about the participants' volunteering story, their desires and feelings associated with volunteering, and how they make meaning of their activism in Turkey. The core guiding questions were (but were not limited to):

- How did you start volunteering?
- Why did you continue volunteering/activism in Turkey despite the current

changes?

- How do you perceive/define volunteering or feminist activism?
- How do you feel when volunteering or doing activism?
- In what circumstances do you believe volunteering can be successful?
- How do you think the feminist movement and volunteering coincide in Turkey?
- What shapes does the volunteering take under the current political regime?
- Have you had moments of disappoinment when volunteering/doing activism? Could you describe them to me?
- How would you define feminist organizations or feminist organizing principles?
- How did you feel when you first started volunteering?
- In what ways does volunteering or doing activism affected you as a person, as a woman living in Turkey and as a feminist?
- What are the strategies you undertake to deal with despair or emotional labor in volunteering or doing activism?

In order to ensure anonymity, all participants are given pseudonyms and the organizations they volunteered at or associated with are not mentioned. Participants' ages ranged between 25-60 years old and they all resided in İstanbul. Participants' mediums of volunteering ranged from online (Twitter campaigns, posting infographics, writing informative blog posts, contributing to feminist websites, organizing a digital conference or workshop) to physical (demonstrations on streets, attending organizational meetings in person, participating in marches, designing banners and posters). At the time of the interviews, all participants continued their activism online due to pandemic measures. A few volunteered at communities that foster both online and offline activism. Their overall volunteering periods at the time of the interview ranged between 2 years to 20 years (For a more detailed look on participant information please see Appendix A). Twenty-six of the participants started volunteering of their own will. Four participants were encouraged to volunteer and introduced to the feminist movement by their close circles. All participants were based in Istanbul and volunteered in communities located in Istanbul. Twenty-three participants have been volunteering in a specific feminist organization, and 7 participants chose not to be associated with an organization but instead preferred joining in movements and collectives in different periods of time according to their interests.

As part of my online fieldwork, I have also attended six general organizational meet-

ings held via Zoom. Four meetings were held by a nationwide collective (Organization A) that strives to form public opinion about violence against women in Turkey. At the time of participant observations, I was a volunteer at this organization, so I received an invitation to the meetings. The meetings were open to all volunteers, regardless of their experience in the organization, from different cities doing different activities. In addition, 2 of the meetings I attended were held by a smaller collective (Organization B) that is working to raise awareness about gender equality and women's rights in Turkey through organizing workshops, panels, and presentations. The field notes during these meetings offer a lens into the organizational context where the participants volunteer and the principles they volunteer for.

Below is the chart that lays out the number of participants and the meeting discussion topics.

Table 1.1 Attended Meetings (Name, Number of Attendees, Meeting Topic)

Organization	Number of Attendees	Meeting Topic
A	418	Attending protests of other organizations
A	253	Deciding on the type of language the organization uses on social media
A	312	Whatsapp groups and their uses
A	143	Issues of translation
B	24	Incresing number of volunteers
B	18	Organizing a feminist movie screening

During my participant observation, I took note of the moderation principles of the meeting (i.e., how the moderator was chosen, how the topics were decided, who talked the most, who spoke on behalf of the community, how did the meeting close and the discussion points were shared with the broader public) as well as the language they were using when discussing gender equality. I approached these meetings as showcases of feminist organizing since both organizations openly embraced feminist non-hierarchical principles of organizing. Moreover, discussion topics revealed what gender issues are relevant to contemporary politics and the feminist movement in Turkey. I coded my field notes using the codebook I created for my interviews. Here, it is important to note that these are solely my notes and hence my perception and interpretation of the issues at hand. I attended the meetings as an observer and did not participate in decision-making. Thus, none of the organizations are accountable for the claims made here. My arguments are also not comprehensive of all feminist organizations or the entire feminist movement in Turkey. I acknowledge that the number of participants in these meetings was high because holding the meetings online made participation from other cities possible. If they were to be held physically, the participation would be much lower due to physical and spatial constraints. Here, online meetings became beneficial for my research as they provided a more inclusive negotiation space enriched by the participation of volunteers from different backgrounds and cities.

1.2.4 Coding and Analysis

Guided by the grounded theory, I let the codes emerge from the data (Glaser and Strauss 2010). Drawing codes from the interview transcripts enabled me to find the codes that best fit the field. For instance, the theoretical framework of this study is derived from the data as the main code: emotions.

Complementing open coding, this research utilizes reflexive thematic analysis as the primary method. Thematic analysis is a qualitative research method used to organize, describe, and report themes in a data set (Braun and Clarke 2006). Most importantly, thematic analysis is a reflexive process that treats meaning as multilayered and socially constructed. Thus, this analysis looks beyond the data, focusing on underlying ideas, assumptions, and conceptualizations (Braun and Clarke 2006). Thematic analysis fits this research because it is a qualitative research method and enables more flexibility and a more in-depth form of analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006). Therefore, I meticulously followed Braun and Clarke's step-by-step approach when analyzing and coding the data for this research (2006: 87):

1) *Familiarizing oneself with the data*: I transcribed the interviews, allowing me to read through the data. After transcription, I read –without coding—over 400 pages of transcribed data and meeting notes for the second time. Then, again, I took notes on the margins that helped me in the coding process.

2) *Coding*: I coded the transcriptions and the field notes twice using the MAXQDA software. I used the open coding method in which the codes emerged from the data and the notes taken during the first reading round. Upon the first round of coding, 34 codes emerged. On the second round of coding, codes are merged under 25 codes.

3) *Searching for themes*: Upon looking at codes, I have grouped codes under three main themes: organizational culture, political conjuncture, and daily struggles. I also made one of the codes the overarching theme of the study: emotions/affect.

4) *Reviewing themes*: I read the coded segments again to ensure they correspond to the theme they are grouped under.

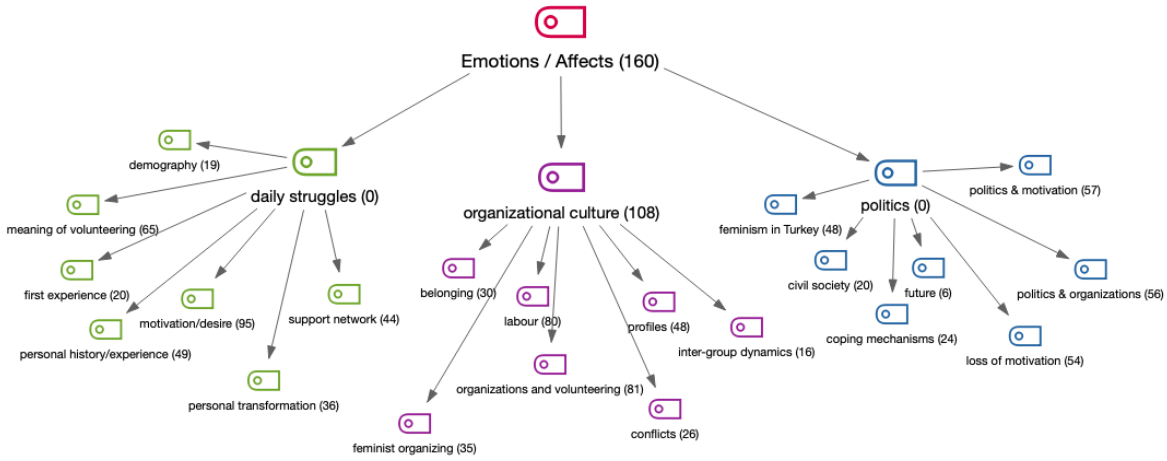
5) *Defining and naming themes*: I have written short descriptions for each theme to clarify their scope. I have also matched them with theoretical conceptions such as affective solidarity, affective dissonance, affective belonging, and affective volunteering.

6) *Producing the report*: This dissertation is the result of this analysis. The final product is written in five chapters.

Even though several themes are emerging from the data, the three common themes are coded under the overarching code: emotions. Both basic emotions (happiness, sadness, fear, and anger) and more complex emotions (such as loneliness, hopefulness, empathy, disappointment, despair, wonder, etc.) are coded under this code. In addition, three themes appear under emotions: organizational culture, political conjuncture, and daily encounters. These themes consist of various subcodes.

Below is the coding chart with the frequency of codes in parentheses.

Figure 1.1 Coding Chart produced in MAXQDA



Each theme encapsulates seven sub-codes. Emotions/affect are the overarching theme, which also became the theoretical framework of this research. The first theme, daily struggles, looks at the initial stages of volunteering, the motivation for participation, and the personal gendered experiences that led these women volunteers to gender activism. The second theme, organizational culture, analyzes how women volunteers explain their involvement in the feminist movement and the feminist organization they belong to. The third code, politics, refers to the mention of political instability and the atmosphere of volunteering in Turkey. Finally, affective volunteering, as this study's overarching theoretical framework, navigates how I analyze instances of solidarity, belonging, and dissonance experienced within gender activism in Turkey.

1.2.5 Limitations and Possibilities

There are certain limitations to the method of this study. First, the participants of the study came from similar socioeconomic backgrounds. They are all university graduates, urban, and identified themselves as from the middle-upper middle class. All of them had paid jobs or economic stability so that they could spare time and labor for volunteering. I acknowledge that their socioeconomic backgrounds shape their motivations for volunteering and how they make meaning of their efforts in activism. Some of the motivations, for example, stem from having the will to share their skill sets and resources with other people in need, which in retrospect, can create a power imbalance, locating the volunteer in a privileged position. Thus, I want to highlight that these women's perspectives come from a specific background and should be read accordingly.

Second, this study interviewed women who knew each other from the field and who volunteered together. Here, snowball sampling became a limitation for the confidentiality of the interviews. Though few participants knew that their friends were also participating in the study, I never discussed names or specific content with the participants during the interviews. Therefore, I do not generalize the findings of this study and acknowledge that I am looking at volunteering and activism experience in Turkey through a small window opened by women volunteering in similar feminist organizations. A more comprehensive study with more participants from different cities in Turkey could also offer a fruitful perspective into understanding alternative ways and experiences of forming solidarities in different contexts.

Third, doing online research on affect is a challenging process. Affect can be articulated in words such as anger, hate, love, and disgust, or it can be felt in the room as an abstract presence. Since I was doing online interviews, feeling the atmosphere was unattainable. During the interviews, I meticulously followed visual cues and made notes when participants made a facial expression or a hand gesture. Doing face-to-face interviews will be beneficial to experience the affective atmosphere in the room and even observe dissonance caused by the interviewing process (Ayata et al. 2019).

1.2.6 Positionality

I entered the field as a young, feminist, heterosexual cis woman living in Istanbul for three years. I was doing a doctoral degree at Sabancı University, a distinguished private university with English-only education. My identity is the lens through

which I perceived the participants' interviews. Thus, it is important to unpack some of the dynamics in the interviews, primarily shaped by my presence in the room.

Being a young feminist cis woman had an impact on the way participants approached me. As a young feminist woman, I was perceived as someone who could understand the challenges of being a feminist and a woman in Turkey. In the interviews, participants talked openly about male privilege, toxic masculinity, and gender inequality. Thinking that I had experienced discrimination and marginalization in this country, they knew their remarks would not be judged. During interviews, acknowledging my feminist woman identity, participants said, "you probably know this," or asked, "have you experienced this as well?" when talking about harassment on the streets or male privilege. My identity as a doctoral student from a successful university provided me with a respectable and trustworthy outlook. However, my identity as a researcher who would write a study on participants' perspectives about feminism created a power imbalance in the interviews. Some participants asked multiple times whether this research would be published and if their names or the organizations they volunteer at would be identifiable. Some participants did not worry about anonymity but desired to meet the "standards of the research" by giving "correct" answers to the questions. As we continued our conversation, this approach transformed into a more organic format, and the participants started to warm up to me.

I was then 27 years old and was interviewing women close to my age. In these interviews, I felt like I was talking to close friends and exchanging thoughts and ideas with them. Even though this could prove that we reached familiarity and rapport with each other, it also turned the setting into an informal one. Sometimes I had difficulty cutting interviews short or interrupting participants to ask questions. At the end of the interviews, some participants said that they were happy to help a gender studies student. This was prevalent especially in the interviews with older participants. At times, I became the student, and the participants became the teacher, telling me about how the feminist movement developed over the years. Though I was aware that referring to this age difference came from a place of sincerity, it made me feel like the young and inexperienced person in the room.

When I started conducting interviews, I had been volunteering for three months at a national organization. I did online and remote volunteering, translating reports and news articles for the organization from Turkish to English. This brief volunteer experience made me more knowledgeable about pressing issues. However, I was still an inexperienced volunteer. I was not a complete insider in the field and often

perceived myself as an outsider. Interviewing people who put hours of labor into volunteering and activism, I was hesitant to share my volunteering experience or even conduct research on volunteering and activism practices. When I disclosed this to my participants, none thought it was a missing perspective. On the contrary, they claimed that sometimes when you're an insider, you become too involved in the work to realize the aspects that are not working for you. Thus, even though it would be beneficial to be an insider when planning the fieldwork and to reach out to the participants, I was also aware that being an outsider gave me a broad perspective to recognize conflicts and struggles in volunteering.

1.3 A Guide to Chapters

In the next chapter, I explain the theoretical framework of this study: affect theory. Upon briefly explaining philosophical and psychological approaches, I outline the social and feminist arguments on affect theory. Drawing from Sara Ahmed's book The Cultural Politics of Emotion and Claire Hemmings' articulation of affective dissonance and affective solidarity, I bring forward two further embodiments of affect: affective belonging and affective volunteering. In forming connections between participants' narratives and the centrality of emotions in these gendered experiences, I outline affective belonging as a phenomenon formed as a result of forming affective connections with the feminist movement in Turkey. Finally, I contend that experiencing affective dissonance, affective solidarity, and affective belonging; feminist activist women in this study embody affective volunteering, which is resilient, long-term, and sustainable.

In Chapter 3, bringing forward participants' stories of the beginnings of their activism, I analyze the role of affective dissonance and affective solidarity in their motivations to join the feminist movement. Due to daily gendered encounters, I contend that women experience affective dissonance in which they struggle to make meaning of their identities as women in a patriarchal society. These affective negotiations of feeling uneasy and confused steered the participants towards finding solidarities. As they joined feminist communities, participants also discussed their activism as emotional healing and forms of self-care. Affect became integral to how participants define volunteering and activism in Turkey.

In Chapter 4, I trace the impact of politics on participants' decision to join and remain in the feminist movement in Turkey. Living and doing activism in an authoritarian country, feminist activists in this study negotiated their feelings about

anti-gender developments in Turkey. As a result, affect becomes an energizing component in feminist activism and participants' lives responding to political turmoil. I contend that contemporary developments in Turkey bring out anger, hate, disgust, shame, disappointment, and desperation among activists. These affects motivate feminists to form solidarities and remain in the movement. Navigating a politicized and marginalized civil space, participants find creating affective solidarities to be a form of resistance and a resource for them to draw from in their activist lives.

In Chapter 5, I analyze participants' negotiations of their expectations from feminist communities, their frustrations and disagreement with it, and their desire to remain in the movement despite experiencing despair and detachment. As feminist communities organize around participatory democracy, inclusivity, and intersectionality, failing to meet these principles results in interpersonal or communal disagreements and detachments. Here, discussions centering on care work and emotional labor becomes integral to solving such a negative situation. As volunteering and activism are fields resting on unpaid labor, acknowledging volunteers' labor is crucial to strengthen activists belonging to the movement. Still, affective belonging becomes the reason why activists return to the movement. Their emotional negotiations about how activism affected their lives and how it improved their emotional state motivated them to stay in the movement.

In conclusion, I offer an overview of how affect shifts and transforms activism from the beginning. Evaluating different stages of activism, I argue that activists in this study experience affective dissonance, affective solidarity, and affective belonging simultaneously or in different orders throughout their journeys in the feminist movement. Finally, looking at the affective negotiations of activists in their stories of participating in activism, managing volunteering, and separating from communities, I contend that activists embody affective volunteering.

2. AFFECT THEORY

This chapter is an overview of the theoretical framework which informs the research question; How do feminist volunteers and activists get involved in and continue participating in the feminist movement in Turkey? As this study follows the grounded theory approach, emotions emerge as a foundational element in activists' or volunteers' narratives about their motivation and desire to be involved in feminist activism in Turkey. Hence, in order to center emotions as part of the analysis, feminist analysis of affect theory informs this research. In what follows, I explain studies of affect theory and the feminist approaches to this framework. In this chapter, in addition to explaining Sara Ahmed's and Claire Hemmings' approaches to affect studies, I also explain the overarching framework formed as a result of this study: affective volunteering.

Affect marks and moves us. It sticks and travels between individuals, systems, and objects. Can your feelings about the world or your surroundings change your actions? How does your feelings impact your ideas and values? What does it mean to just 'feel the room'? Seeking answers to these questions, this chapter brings together various scholarly works on affect studies. I start with a brief explanation of pioneering studies of affect in psychology and philosophy (Deleuze 1988; Massumi 1995; 2015; Spinoza 1994). Later, the chapter moves on to the studies of affect in cultural and feminist works, specifically highlighting recent works written by feminist scholars; Sara Ahmed (2004; 2006; 2010a; 2010b; 2014; 2018a, 2018b), Claire Hemmings (2005; 2012), Lauren Berlant (2011), Linda Åhäll (2018), Sianne Ngai (2007) and Ann Cvetkovich (2003; 2012).

In this study, drawing particularly from Sara Ahmed's articulations about feelings of anger, wonder, hate, and happiness; I trace the when, where and when these emotions were felt in the course of participants' activism or volunteering journeys. Primarily building my argument around these feelings offers a multilayered lens into "how subjects become invested in particular structures such that their demise is felt as a kind of living death" (Ahmed 2014, 12). In other words, through bringing

forward emotions and experiences of dissonance and relationality, I analyze; why and how feminist activists in this research join the feminist movement, which desires and values motivate them, and the reasons for them to stay in activism despite the negative feelings and experiences.

In addition to Ahmed's arguments on affect, I draw from Claire Hemmings' discussion about the role of affective dissonance and affective solidarity in building transformative feminist solidarities(Ahmed 2004; 2010a; 2010b; 2014; 2018a). Taking Hemmings' argument one step further, I add affective belonging as another phase and characteristic of building solidarities and performing affective volunteering. Participants share stories of emotional uneasiness before joining feminist activism, which I define as experiences of affective dissonance. These experiences become motivations to become a part of a feminist struggle or a community. Following the active participation, volunteers/activists develop affective attachments to the feminist community and the cause of feminist activism, that is achieving gender equality in Turkey. Defining their activism as doing lofty and responsible work, participants develop affective solidarities within the movement and affective belonging to the feminist struggle. Due to these affective negotiations of dissonance, solidarity, and belonging; I argue that through experiencing affective dissonance, affective solidarity and affective belonging as women doing feminist activism, participants build resilient activist identities which are continuously re/constructed within the movement but remains affectively attached to the gender equality cause and to the feminist community. Affective volunteering defines a type of activism which is experienced as a result of affective negotiations made during gendered and lived experiences in feminist activism.

2.1 Studies of Affect

With the affective turn in 1990s, the poststructuralist cultural studies focused on affect as site of analysis in textual, deconstructive, and ideological works (Clough and Halley 2007; Koivunen 2010). This turn "expresses a new configuration of bodies, technology, and matter instigating a sift in thought in critical theory" (Clough and Halley 2007). Critical theory regarded this ontological turn to affect as necessary in theorizing the social. Focusing on body in critical studies and cultural studies, affect is argued as a constructed matter. Studies of affect aimed to analyze how bodies interacted with the world outside and was affected in return (Clough and Halley 2007; Hemmings 2005).

Pioneering approaches to affect theory defined affect as relational, transcending the individual, and as something converging and diverging the body-mind duality (Massumi 1995; 2007; Spinoza 1994). In Ethics, Spinoza identified affect as a form of "becoming-active of mind and body" in ways that can only be conceived as a "third state, prior to the distinction of passivity and activity" (Massumi 1995, 93). In this approach, body conserves affects that might not be always visible to the eye. Spinoza brings together affection of the body with the idea of affection to argue that conscious reflection of affect is only possible when the idea of affection is attained and doubled (Spinoza 1994; Vogler 2021). That is when affect is perceived, understood and reflected. In Spinoza's argument, "the body" does not necessarily coincide human body, but it encapsulates human and non-human objects as well as collections and ideas (Deleuze 1988).

Further developing Spinoza's arguments, Brian Massumi identifies affect as an intensity or a feeling of "the change in capacity" (Massumi 2015, 1). Massumi's argument on affect compromises of three key points. First, this intensity is not necessarily connected to individuals or human subjects, but it is connected to the forces between and within bodies, or how the bodies exist in relation to the world. This intensity is the capacity of the body to affect or to be affected. A person always has an impact on the world while they are also affected by their surroundings. Affect is "a stronger sense of embeddedness in a larger field of life" (Massumi 2015, 6).

Second, affect cannot be captured or fully articulated. Here, Massumi centers the attention on the abstract and flexible nature of affect; encapsulating it as a transhuman intensity rather than regarding it as a static, unchanging, articulated concept. In this abstractness, affect is created through the potentiality within the vagueness and ambiguity of a situation. In other words through the multiple possibilities it can have (Vogler 2021).

Third, addressing the difference between emotion and affect, Massumi argues that affect transcends subjective nature of feelings (Massumi 2007). He states that feelings are predictable and expected, while affect can be experimental and relational, it is not fully comprehendible (Massumi 2015). In other words, Massumi regards affect as an autonomous abstract order, something different than emotion (Boler 1999; Massumi 1995). Affect cannot be reduced to one event because it is a "dimension" (Massumi 2007). In this account, affect is understood almost as a transhuman, non-social, pre-personal, nonconscious, and non-subjective order (Åhäll 2018). Feminist works on affect criticize this positionality as it may lead to thinking affect in masculinized ways, while attributing feminized characteristics to emotion; thus, creating a hierarchy between affect and emotion, situating affect as a higher order or

an overarching discourse (Åhäll 2018; Ahmed 2004).

Furthermore, Sara Ahmed critiques the difference between affect and emotion. Massumi identifies affect as "the point of emergence in actual specificity, the virtual" (Massumi 2015, 94). He claims that emotion is "formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions" (Massumi 2015, 96). Sara Ahmed, contesting this proposed difference between affect and emotion, asserts that "this distinction between affect and emotions under-describes the work of emotions, which involve forms of intensity, bodily orientation and direction that are not simply about subjective content' or qualification of intensity. Emotions are not 'after-thoughts', but shape how bodies are moved by the worlds they inhabit" (Ahmed 2010a, 32). She underlines that differentiating these two discourses means that we are also differentiating and creating a hierarchy between intentionality and consciousness v. bodily and physiological changes (Ahmed 2014). Sara Ahmed argues for a more combined approach that encapsulates both physical/bodily and social/relational changes. Ahmed claims that in everyday life, emotion and affect "are contiguous; they slide into each other; they stick, and cohere, even when they are separated" (Ahmed 2010a, 32). As emotion is used more commonly in daily life than 'affect' and that is why it can be a better way to encapsulate daily, cultural, sociopolitical experiences (Ahmed 2014; 2018b). Following Ahmed's argument, in this research, affect and emotion are also used interchangeably, complementing each other.

2.2 Feminist Analysis of Affect

1980s onwards, feminist scholars and thinkers actively contributed to the field through following the feminist motto, 'Personal is political.' Scholars discussed how sex, gender, and sexuality marginalize and stigmatize certain bodies more than others. Adding to this discussion, intersectionality argument brought forward articulations of how racial, religious, ethnic, economic categories also situate individuals in the social and political hierarchical ladder. Even though focus on affect has gained popularity in the past twenty years, hence referred as 'affective turn,' many feminists were discussing the role of emotions in experiencing discrimination and oppression, especially resonating with the lives of feminist women of color (Boler 1999; hooks 1981; 1984; 1989; Lorde 1984; Mohanty 1984;). An example of how emotions find a place in feminist scholarship is Audre Lorde' (1984) signature work, Sister Outsider. Through giving examples from her daily life, she explains that her response to ongoing racism is anger. Her actions and thoughts from then on stems from this

response and was infatuated by the anger she felt towards how people treated her in her daily life. Whether it be called feeling, emotion or affect, critical feminist studies paid attention to how the way we feel can determine our acts as well as our perception of the world (Ahmed 2018a).

2.2.1 Sara Ahmed's Politics and Objects of Emotions

In her pioneering book on feminist affect studies, titled *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, Sara Ahmed analyzes how emotions are intentional, contextual and directed towards an object. Through looking at different emotional states, such as anger, hate, fear, anxiety, disgust, shame, and love, she lays out how individuals are moved by emotion towards or away from something (Ahmed 2014). In addition to these feelings, she worked on presenting how happiness and hurt move between individuals, creating divergences and solidarities (Ahmed 2010b; 2018a). In these published works, she articulates, "how bodies are pressed upon by other bodies, but how these presses become impressions, feelings that are suffused with ideas and values" (Ahmed 2014, 208). Her focus on emotion does not treat emotion over agency but regards emotions as a mode of learning and sharing. As emotions are contagious and moves individuals, they become individuals draw knowledge from to form thoughts, values, and perspectives. In other words, affect is not pre-human or unconscious, but there is an element of 'choice' or 'agency' that also adds into individuals' emotional negotiations.

Since this study utilizes Ahmed's arguments about anger, hate, happiness and wonder, offering a more detailed explanation of these feelings is integral to understand in what ways these emotions can be used as a framework of analysis to understand women activists' experiences in Turkey. Anger and pain move individuals in certain directions. Stories of pain and instances of anger can be shared, though they are not experienced similarly by everyone, they could still offer a possibility to make emotional connections between feminist subjects. Ahmed states, "The response to pain, as a call for action, also requires anger; an interpretation that this pain is wrong, that it is an outrage, and that something must be done about it" (Ahmed 2014, 174). This type of doing activism or politics utilizes feeling of resentment to react to the cause of the pain and object of anger, rather than act on it to initiate change. For feminist subjects the object of anger can be many things; patriarchy, gender relations, sexual difference, or racism (Ahmed 2014). Anger becomes a reading of and response to what surrounds us and implicates forms of oppression. In order feminist subjects to draw from this anger to energize their activism and form

resilient solidarities, they need to hear others' anger and move through and with pain into political resistance. This, as hooks argues, is integral to "overall education for critical consciousness of collective political resistance" (hooks 1989, 73).

In explaining hate, Ahmed takes the post 9/11 period and argues how individuals who are Muslims or look like Muslims (wearing traditional or religious clothes) became objects of hatred. As emotions are social and contagious; this hatred expanded over the American society, locating Islam and Muslims as the enemy and thus the hated object, which soon spilled over other countries as well. Through their sociality and ability to travel between/towards individuals, emotions gain accountability and social value. With the term "sociality of emotion," Ahmed (2014: 211) aims to understand how emotions can be attached to certain bodies more than others and hence position those bodies as objects of specific emotions, in this case hate. She argues that emotions move, sliding "sideways between figures, as well as backwards, by reopening past associations, which allows some bodies to be read as being the cause of our 'hate'" (Ahmed 2014, 45). This formulation of hate moves between individuals as well as communities, locating the object of hatred as the 'other' which is a threat to my existence and hence needs to be controlled, surveilled, or eradicated.

Though Ahmed brings forward nationalist, fascist, and hate groups in her argument about hatred; I argue that this can be extended to anti-gender groups and far-right politics as well. Creating an endangered subject in need of protection, communities mobilize around hatred directed towards the reason of that endangerment, hence the object. In anti-gender mobilizations, population and traditional family become the endangered entities that need protection by the state, religion, and anti-gender groups (Graff and Korolczuk 2022). I contend that this locates equality driven groups, such as feminists, human rights defenders, LGBT+ activists, as the object of hate. Through reproduction of marginalizing and discriminatory rhetoric about these groups and repressing their spaces of political or civic involvement, anti-gender mobilizations manage to sustain the discourse of hatred. On another note, I contend that this hate also triggers angered mobilizations in response, for example angry feminist solidarities in the case of this study, and these mobilizations motivated by anger and hate can also be interpreted as emotions resulting in transformative mobilizations which can create change.

In Ahmed's articulations about hope, she argues that politics without hope is impossible and that it makes forms of involvement enjoyable to an extent. With hope, individuals act on what drives them or what they envision in their futures and even transforms anger into something productive, not destructive (Ahmed 2014). Again, experienced in relation to an object in present, hope assumes that if achieved, the

object will promise fulfillment of the hope. To give an example, in feminist solidarities subjects hope to achieve gender equality. With this hope, feminist activists and scholars work to argue for transformation of policies and social norms. When and if achieved, law reforms for instance, fulfill the promise of hoping that a gender equal society is possible, and that feminist work can achieve change. Ahmed states, as we reach for what is possible with hope, this keeps feminist movement alive and moving (Ahmed 2014). In this study, hope is present in the participants' narratives about beginning to activism and joining in a feminist community.

Sara Ahmed identifies wonder as the emotion that brings her to feminism, the emotion that energizes her hope for transformation and her motivation to join political resistance. Presenting wonder as another emotion that motivates subjects to join activism; Ahmed acknowledges wondering as "an act of opening up of what is possible through working together" (2014, 181). Moreover, Ahmed recognizes wondering as an act of learning through having a curiosity for what surrounds us and how we come to feel in certain ways. Wonder is about seeing the world as something came to be historically and thus something that can be transformed in different ways.

Similarly, in *Happy Objects* she also adds happiness to her analysis of sociality of emotions and argues that happiness is also a form of 'happening'. It involves intentionality (we are happy about something), evolution (we think what we are happy about is a good thing) and affect (when we are happy about something we are affected by it) (Ahmed 2010b, 29). Happiness circulates in social circles and through this circulation happiness becomes "what sticks, what sustains or preserves the connection between ideas, values, and objects" (Ahmed 2010b, 29). Reaching happiness becomes a driving force in decision making processes and forms expectation not only from one's surroundings or life in general, but also from one's self (Ahmed 2010a; 2006).

What is striking in this argument is that affect creates "affect aliens" as well, which are individuals who refuse to reproduce the happiness that the society seeks to enjoy (Ahmed 2010b, 30). Feminist killjoys, unhappy queers, and melancholic migrants are the ones who fall in the margins of the circulation of happiness. Thus, Ahmed underlines that affective atmosphere of a community also creates counter objects, the individuals, values or norms that it contests in order to maintain the order. She claims, "The feminist is an affect alien: she might even kill joy because she refuses to share an orientation towards certain things as being good because she does not find the objects that promise happiness to be quite promising" (Ahmed 2010b, 39). Claiming that feminists are affect aliens who criticize the system, which was enjoyed by and produced happiness for many, also poses a critique towards how

affect is integral to our understanding of the world around us.

Ahmed's take on affect presents how research on emotion can lead researches to analyze different social and political conflicts as well as community formations. As Seigworth and Gregg argues in their introduction to the *Affect Theory Reader*, "affect marks a body's belonging to a world of encounters or; a world's belonging to a body of encounters but also, in non-belonging" (Seigworth and Gregg 2010, 2). Simply taking common emotions as sites of analysis, Ahmed shows that our belonging and non-belonging or our capacities to affect and to be affected is contextual, relational, and intersectional. Following Ahmed's analysis of hope, anger, pain, wonder, and happiness; this study analyzes fragments of such emotions in participants' narratives of being feminist volunteers and activists in Turkey. Participants embodied and gendered experiences show that activism is an affective field, fueled with emotional drives and negotiations which are defined by sociopolitical conflicts and personal dilemmas.

2.2.2 Affective Dissonance and Formation of Affective Solidarities

Affect is discussed as a force that brings individuals together for a shared purpose to form collective action (Bargetz 2015). Drawing from Ahmed's (2004) and Berlant's (2007) arguments on affect, Hemmings proposes "affective solidarity" as (Hemmings 2012, 148), defined at "a broader range of affects –rage, frustration, and the desire for connection– as necessary for a sustainable feminist politics of transformation" (Hemmings 2012, 148). In her articulation of affect as a way of enabling the formation of feminist solidarities, she argues that we can use emotions or affect to further understand the feminist processes of becoming a feminist and coming together. Additionally, Hemmings situates affective dissonance as central to forming feminist affective solidarities (Hemmings 2012). In her words, affective dissonance is, "feeling that something is amiss in how one is recognized, feeling an ill fit with social descriptions, feeling undervalued, feeling that same sense in considering others" (Hemmings 2012, 150). This discrepancy between our sense of being and how the world views us can result in transformative communities and formation of alternative feminist pathways. Experiencing affective dissonance reveals one's politicizing potential to challenge mainstream systems of power (Ngai 2007). Specifically, Hemmings is concerned with how feminists move from affective dissonance to affective solidarity, and the possibilities and limitations of such moves.

Concerned with how these dissonant interactions between ontological and epistemological perceptions of ourselves and others around us lead individuals to feminism

and feminist solidarity, Hemming's points to the rhetoric around empathy. Summarizing Probyn's argument on affect and empathy, Hemmings claims "in order to know differently, we have to feel differently" (1993/2012, 150). Knowing differently also brings forward differences in embodiment and location, values that are central to feminist epistemology (Haraway 1990). Here, affective dissonance as well as empathy becomes integral to politics and methods of feminist activism.

Empathy works as a catalyzer in moving from dissonance to solidarity. She states, "Relationality and intersubjectivity are thus affectively as well as abstractly conceived and are intimately related to care and empathy" (2012, 151). Being concerned about others, trying to find solutions for their problems, or forming sentimental attachment to one another, in other words empathizing with others, is central to forming affective solidarities.

Hemmings' also addresses that empathy should not be regarded as a "feminist capacity through its association with femininity and womanhood" (2012, 154). In order to steer away from this stereotypical understanding of empathy, Hemmings highlights the need for emergence of affective dissonance in shaping feminist identities. Empathy does not precede the feminist identity or become a womanly characteristic, but rather it emerges as a result of affective intersubjectivities and relationships between women in solidarity. Women forming solidarities had already experienced affective dissonance, realizing the difference between their expectations from the world and the society's expectations from them, which in turn moved actors to solidarity to make meaning of their identities and maintain their own sense of self. She argues that "affective dissonance is central to feminism and can be theorized as the basis of a connection to others" (2012, 154).

In the initial stages of becoming feminist, women experience dissonance between the sense of self and social reality. This gap between the two creates a desire for change. Being reflexive about one's identity and privileges in a society can result in realizing the structures and systems that preserve one's marginalized position. Developing criticism towards inequalities is not promised in reflexivity, however, reflexivity can open doors to improving feminist solidarities. As Hemmings argues, "to move from knowing more to valuing that knowledge requires a shift of some kind in this scene, a shift that will invariably call for critique. I suggest that an affective shift must first occur to produce the struggle that is the basis of alternative standpoint knowledge and politics" (Hemmings 2012, 157). The rising affective dissonance makes it possible for knowledge to move between individuals, creating different standpoints and approaches to an issue. Only then it would possible to mutually recognize and appreciate these standpoints and form affective solidarities

that prioritize empathy.

2.3 Affective Belonging and Affective Volunteering

Hemmings' articulation of affective dissonance and affective solidarity are relevant to this study since emotions become reasons to be a part of a community and how doing activism make them feel. Upon analyzing these narratives through the lens of affective dissonance and affective solidarity; affective belonging becomes integral in explaining why these women chose to stay in the movement despite the clashes and contradictions they faces in activism. Instances where participants negotiate emotions in relation to their volunteering and activism –which I refer as affective negotiations—become integral for them to make meaning of their activism and continue participating the movement.

Affective belonging, used in various scholarly works (Dyer and Mecija 2022; Juvonen and Kolehmainen 2017; Kanai 2017; Overell 2012; Wood and Black 2018), refers to a type of spatial and emotional belonging felt towards a community or a space. Usually interpreted as something positive individuals aspire for, belonging makes individuals feel content and safe in what surrounds them (Juvonen and Kolehmainen 2017). Lacking a full definition, the intersections affect and belonging remains an understudied area.

That is why articulations of belonging and non-belonging can be utilized to come up with a definition of affective belonging. In studies of sociology, anthropology, and feminism, belonging is defined as a form of close affiliation with people, collectives, and spaces that represent that share values and practices (Anthias 2006; Juvonen and Kolehmainen 2017; Röttger-Rössler 2022; Yuval-Davis 2009) . Belonging in daily language is referred as "being part of" or "being at home". Positing a more detailed account of belonging, Joanna Pfaff-Czarnecka argues that belonging arise as a result of the interplay between "the experience and performance of community, social relations based on reciprocity, and material and nonmaterial bonds of attachments (2012, 12; translation by Röttger-Rössler 2022). Hence, belonging has multiple dimensions affected by relationships, social locations, surroundings, and the personal experiences. It can be perceived as a form of "affective social positioning" where bonds between similar ideas, networks, and experiences are articulated. This familiarity resulting in formation of such bonds also make individuals feel safe and at home (Röttger-Rössler 2022).

What is also important here is that belonging is attached to articulations of non-belonging. Understanding feelings associated with non-belonging also unpacks the reasons why individuals desire to feel belonging (Anthias 2006). Non-belonging is associated with being an outcast and an outlier in a group (Banerjea 2019). It is a feeling of estrangement and marginalization that distances someone from the shared world. As this feeling can dominate one's life, the desire to overcome it and hence longing for a place to feel belonging becomes crucial. Non-belonging creates a dissonance, steering individuals towards networks of shared knowledge and feelings. This juxtaposition between belonging and non-belonging is an affective process where emotions influence decisions and motivations.

Drawing from definitions of belonging and non-belonging, I contend that affective belonging is not just concerned with spatial attachment to an organization or a community, but also refers to affective embodiment and embracing of community values. One's sociocultural location, ideologies surrounding them, and interpersonal relations they foster define the degree and strength of affective belonging. Though affective belonging or belonging was not articulated openly in many of the interviews, the ways in which participants made meaning of their activism and the attachments they formed with the community implies that they feel a strong belonging to this physical and ideological space. It becomes central to their lives. That is why, losing this affective belonging is unthinkable. Communities and forms of activism may change, but their activist identity and desire to be active in the movement remains.

In this context, I would like to draw attention to the overarching term I use to describe the interplay between affective dissonance, affective solidarity, and affective belonging. Affective volunteering as an umbrella term, explains the entanglements between these affective experiences specifically in feminist struggles forming under authoritarian government structures. In these contexts, affective volunteering encapsulates negotiations of solidarity and belonging where activists explain their experiences in relation to their feelings. As feminists perform activism, they foster affective negotiations of how activism contributes to their self-love, self-care, and self-healing. These affective negotiations make resilient and long-term activism possible. As civic actors feel belonging towards the community and the ideology, their detachment also becomes hard. Even though they fall into disagreement and as a result detach from volunteer groups, their desire to be an activist persevere. I name this perseverance and resilient activism as affective volunteering and use this term to explain the ways in which participants of this study form long-lasting solidarity practices despite navigating a marginalizing and oppressive political space.

3. ACTIVIST BEGINNINGS AND AFFECTIVE NEGOTIATIONS

In the history of the feminist movement in Turkey, politics, and emotion play a determinant role. Feminist movement, when bringing gender issues into political discussions and forming communities against the current repressive and authoritarian state, establishes a space for resistance and resilience. In understanding how activists get involved in feminist activism and their affective gendered experiences in the movement, it is crucial to understand the role of politics in the feminist movement in Turkey. The next section lays out the historical transformation and progression of the feminist movement.

3.1 Building a Feminist Movement: A Historical Overview

The feminist movement has its roots in the late Ottoman era when women formed organizations and published on issues such as women's roles as wives and mothers (Çakır 1991; 2007). They mainly criticized how women are classified as subordinates, belonging to the domestic space, and demanded that women share the public space with men (Çakır 2007; Tekeli 1995). Through participating in and organizing discussions and meetings, as well as publishing women's journals, women in the late Ottoman era created a public space for women (Berktay 2003). Journals such as Terakki Muhadderat (Progress of Women), Hanımlara Mahsus Gazete (Newspaper Particularly for Women 1895-1909), and Kadınlar Dünyası (Women's World 1913-1921) could be given as examples of women creating a public discourse around women's rights and social inequalities. These publications offered a space for women to read journal articles on women's issues and send letters to share and discuss their struggles at home (Çakır 2007; 1991). These deliberation spaces could be accepted as early forms of feminist work in the late Ottoman era.

With the formation of the Republic in 1923, modeling the Western way of living

has become a crucial part of the state's political and social agenda. Modernization, secularization, and nationalism were the core principles of achieving a democratic and prosperous society (Arat 1994). In this process, separating Islam from the national and political discourses was deemed essential to rebuild the nation (Keysan 2016; Sancar 2012). This period described by some as "state feminism," where the state controlled the legislation and implementation of equality rights. Upon replacing Islamic law with the secular Civil Code in 1926, many legislations concerning marriage, divorce, inheritance rights came into effect (Durakbaşı 1988; White 2022). Women gained full suffrage rights in 1934, making the new Republic a predecessor of women's rights in Europe. Türk Kadınlar Birliği (Turkish Women's Association), which was the first political establishment organized by women, was closed now that the state gave necessary rights to women and that women did not need to advocate for equal rights (Tekeli 1995).

This model of state feminism is defined as "recognizing women's demands for liberal equal rights on the one hand and silencing down the feminist voices with a potential for independent organizing on the other hand" (Şen 2020, 2451). That is why the state focused on creating the ideal secular woman who is educated, modern, urban, and devoted to her roles as a wife and a woman (Durakbaşı 1988). Social and political developments prioritized women's emancipation in public spaces but ignored domestic/private inequalities present in these women's lives (Çağatay 2017; Sancar 2012). Women were encouraged to pursue education and professional career while carrying on their duties as the bearers of future secular generations (White 2022). In the modernization project of the new Republic, women were perceived as the models of Westernization and modernization through their clothing and education (Berktay 2003; Sancar 2012). However, the limits of this role were constantly defined/redefined by men so that women did not become "too" professional or "too" educated to demand independence and leave their traditional domestic lives (Berktay 2003; White 2022).

In the following years, until the 1970s, feminist communities focused more on protecting the existent rights rather than pushing for more. Feminist struggles primarily were positioned alongside the secular/Kemalist movement while rejecting Islamic laws and ways of living. Inequalities at home and gender-based violence remained undiscussed (Ecevit 2007; Eslen-Ziya and Kazanoğlu 2022). Women were to choose between their rights as women or their rights as citizens of the Republic and were left to constantly bargain with the patriarchal state (Bağdatlı 2020; Coşar and Özkan-Kerestecioğlu 2017). In the 1970s, parallel to the rise in left-wing activism, women active in left-wing organizations formed new women's organizations such as İlerici Kadınlar Derneği (Association of Progressive Women), which held cam-

paigns, petitions, rallies, and demonstrations to advocate for women's rights. They worked to raise consciousness about the labor rights of women working in factories and supported professional women to become leaders in their workplaces (Bağdatlı 2020; Ecevit 2007). Soon, women's movement established itself as an independent movement from the right and left politics.

1980 coup drastically changed the sociopolitical structure of Turkey. Due to left-right polarization in public spheres, the military took control of the government, consequently changing the Constitution of Turkey in 1982 (Tekeli 1995). This period is also vital for developing civil society, particularly the women's movement in Turkey (Aksoy 2018; Eslen-Ziya and Kazanoğlu 2022). A small but influential group of secular, urban, middle-class women organized in the counter-public spheres. It brought personal issues to the public, challenging the state and the patriarchal politics to establish gender equality (Çağatay 2018a; Timisi and Gevrek 2002). Having used to playing a more paternalistic role in establishing women's rights, the political context was not in close dialogue with the feminist movement. This distancing from the state also contributed to making the feminist movement a more autonomous and self-proclaimed movement (Ecevit 2007; Talay-Keşoğlu 2020). This new feminist movement had all the core principles of feminist ideology and started to discuss domestic violence, sexual assault, harassment, and body politics, and demanded legal protection.

The more feminists in Turkey started to adopt the motto "personal is political," the more they started to work for raising awareness. Consciousness raising groups, which were also a part of the second wave feminist movement in the US, also formed among middle-class, urban, educated feminist women in Turkey. In these groups women who knew each other through common friends got together to discuss the patriarchal society they are living in and the ways in which they could resist this structure (Timisi and Gevrek 2002). Motherhood, marriage, family, solidarity among women, responsibilities of men and women within and outside the household, virginity, abuse and battery, domestic violence were among the topics that were discussed. Questioning the gendered division of labor in their household and its reflection within the society as well, these women played an important role in raising awareness (Tekeli 1995; Yüksel 1995). These gatherings also brought forward the similarities among women and built pathways between what is deemed personal and political (Timisi and Gevrek 2002).

The first feminist campaign was organized under the titled "Women's Petition" and soon became the first mass campaign and demonstration called "Women Mobilizing Against Battery Campaign" (Timisi and Gevrek 2002; Yüksel 1995). Even

though the state signed the petition in Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1985, the practical implementation remained none existent or ineffective. Thus, the petition and the campaign organized by women living in urban cities called for implementation of CEDAW in order to prevent gender-based discrimination (Beril 2017; Yüksel 1995). Through deploying a mass campaign publicly pointed out women's issues, however they are also criticized by women who did not find a representation within the movement, for not realizing their privileged position as educated, middle-class, urban women. This also emphasized the importance of identity politics and intersectionality within the feminist movement in Turkey (Çağlayan 2014). Despite criticism coming from women from different classes and ethnicities, women who joined the campaign emphasized the need to form a united feminist solidarity and find common grounds among women to form a strong resistance against the patriarchal state in Turkey (Talay-Keşoğlu 2020; Timisi and Gevrek 2002; Yüksel 1995).

Around the same time, when identity politics gained a ground in the feminist movement, women from different ethnic and religious backgrounds started to gather around their own similarities (Işık 2020; Taylı 2020). Kurdish Women's Movement, as one of the groups that came forth in 1990s, separated itself from the Kurdish National Movement in efforts to highlight the gendered aspects of women's oppression in the Kurdish movement itself and in Turkey (Açık 2007; Arakon 2015; Aras 2012; Işık 2020; Yüksel 2007). This intersectional approach which highlights how different class, ethnicity, gender, and political stance create different levels of oppression forced the feminist movement forming in urban cities to realize who they are leaving outside of the movement. Through publishing their own journals titled "Women Freely Living," "Roza and Jujin," and "Jin ú Jiyan" Kurdish women brought forward issues such as discrimination in the Kurdish national movement, gender-based violence and sexual harassment (Açık 2007). Centering the effects of war and military occupation on women's bodies, Kurdish women aimed to raise awareness and empower Kurdish women through offering them a space of representation, a space which they could not find in the national feminist movement (Arakon 2015; Yüksel 2007).

Islamist women also actively engaged with the civil space but not with the nationwide feminist movement (Arat 1999; Aslan-Akman 2011; Simga and Goker 2017). They aimed to expand the so-long secular public reach to include women with headscarves, and for that aim, they embraced the human rights framework and argued for an equal share of public areas (Aksoy 2018; Çağatay 2018b). They started to form their own organizations and became active in civil society (Kadioglu 2005). Their focus was mainly on criticizing secularism as outcasting pious women with head-

scarves not just from the public space but also from the debates concerning women's rights (Aslan-Akman 2011; Göle 1999). Despite differences, Islamist women joined other feminists to push for law reforms to emancipate women's rights and political representation in Turkey (Simga and Goker 2017). Their involvement in the civic space and their collaboration with other feminist organizations enriched the debates within the movement and encouraged other women to join the movement (Çağatay 2018a).

As women's groups started to gather around values of gender equality, number of groups, collectives, institutions, associations, foundations also increased. Institutionalization of the women's movement also increased at the beginning of the 1990s (Acuner 2007; Talay-Keşoğlu 2020). Feminist women who came together in consciousness-raising groups joined protests against gender-based violence and worked for gender equality in access to rights came together under organizations, associations, and foundations (Işık 2007; Kardam and Ecevit 2007). These formal structures gave feminists legal recognition by the government, which they strategically used to advocate for feminist gains (Kardam and Ecevit 2007). However, these formal structures also caused conflicts within the feminist movement. Some feminists, whose ideals and perspectives did not match specific organizations, chose not to be involved in hierarchically formed organizational models (Işık 2007; Özdemir 2016; Yurdalan, Paker, and Esmeray 2012). Some others formed informal and flexible settings such as initiatives and collectives to perform feminist activism. However, despite their organizational differences, the feminist movement acted harmoniously to open women's shelters, increase women's and girls' literacy levels, improve women's employment conditions, and disseminate knowledge about women's health and reproductive rights. Some of the profound organizations active during this period were KA.DER, Mor Çatı Kadın Sığınağı Vakfı, Uçan Süpürge Vakfı, and Socialist Feminist Collective (Bora 2007; Kardam and Ecevit 2007; Özelkan 2009). Thus, the 1990s could be described as a fluctuation of institutionalized, national, and global changes concerning gender issues in Turkey.

Membership negotiations with the European Union, gaining momentum in 2000s, opened a space for the feminist movement to negotiate gender equality claims with the state (Coşar and Onbaşi 2008; Ergun 2010; Eslen-Ziya 2007). Triggered first by Turkey's ratification of the CEDAW in 1985 and later with the start of EU-negotiations, gender equality had become a significant topic of interest for the government to maintain a democratic international representation (Ecevit 2007). In the EU accession period, feminist movement also employed a national and global approach to lobby with the government and to advocate for gender equality (Candemir 2020). On the national level, feminists conducted advocacy through coalitions

with other feminist groups that are not short-termed (Çağatay 2018a). On an international level, they followed the global advancements to articulate how they could inform the domestic feminists' struggles (Aksoy 2018). They also informed international groups about anti-gender mobilizations in Turkey so that external pressure could be formed for the government to act on discriminatory policies. They also contributed to the negotiation processes through drafting reports on gender issues in Turkey and offering possible policy-making solutions for the government.

These efforts of the feminist organizations yielded some results in forms of legal reforms and pushed the government to ratify international agreements. Due to EU's criteria to include gender equality in key legal frameworks, Reforms in the Constitution, Civil Code and Penal Code improving women's legal representation significantly (Candemir 2020; Çağatay 2018a). With the new Civil Code, family is defined as a partnership formed between equal individuals. In Penal Code, abandoned the patriarchal rhetoric that men are the head of the household. The first legislation referring directly to gender equality and prevention of gender-based discrimination and violence was enacted through the Law on the Protection of the Family no. 4320, which then reframed and revised becoming Law No. 6284 on the Protection of Family and the Prevention of Violence Against Women (Ayata and Candaş 2019). In addition to these legal changes, the state also ratified the Istanbul Convention without reservations, which showed willingness to implement policies and institutional systems to prevent violence against women in Turkey. These legal and political developments improved women's legal representation in the country and it happened as a result of unwavering negotiations and lobbying efforts of the women's organizations (Ayata and Candaş 2019).

As the number of women's organizations increased and started to cover many areas of gender equality work, they also started encountering financial difficulties in managing charity works, fieldwork continuation, and staff salaries (Talay-Keşoğlu 2020). In order to sustain their activities, these organizations were heavily drawn to international funding for feminist projects. Coming from consulates and international foundations, this project funding made financial sustainability possible for many organizations. This type of civic work was later named "project feminism," which negatively connotes dependency on funding for project implementation or any activity planning (Çağatay 2017; Kandiyoti 2021; Özelkan 2009). Project feminism was also criticized for its ultimate focus on the end of project reports and outcome numbers, but not necessarily qualitative achievements (Kabeer 1999). In a way, it was seen as distancing the organization or the movement from the field and what the field has to offer for the feminist project. The neoliberalization of the field, a continuous push for implementing short-term projects with measurable outcomes, was

also a factor in why project feminism was ever more prevalent in today's women's movement (Kandiyoti 2021). Since organizations and some collectives started to rely heavily on the money from these projects, they had to apply for more projects to be sustainable.

In the 2000s, also marking the first term of the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi (AKP), there were two dominant narratives in the civic space: Europeanization and Islamization (Doyle 2018; Negrón-Gonzales 2016). The first was driven by the negotiations with the European Union, while the other was brought by the increasing conservative efforts of an influential Islamist party, AKP. In the first two terms, AKP, "Europeanization and Islamization projects went along hand in hand, as an opportunity for an Islamist party to adopt liberal democracy practices and democratize Turkey's political system" (Çağatay 2018a, 66). To gain support and a vote of confidence from the public, AKP "instrumentalized" the discourse of women's rights (Arat 2021, 3). Their political agenda on gender equality heavily relied on the enhancement of women's rights who were wearing headscarves. Since this also aligned with the human rights framework explained earlier, AKP strategically utilized the headscarf issue to appear as an advocate for gender equality, which in turn brought more votes for the party.

This manipulation of the equality of opportunity in gendered matters assisted the state to bring in a new form of patriarchy, coupled with neoliberal and religious motifs (Çağatay 2018a; Erol et al. 2016;). In this new form, the notion of fıtrat, referring to the nature of morals of two genders, was used to designate family as the sole institution where women and men can fulfill their traditional civic roles. Following this, feminist movement actively engaged in countering discussions about family-oriented declarations from the politicians and the prime minister at the time (Altınay 2014; Coşar and Özkan-Kerestecioğlu 2017). Erdogan's declaration that he does not believe in gender equality marks the beginning remarks of backsliding in women's rights.

Following the Gezi Park protests in 2013, which took thousands of citizens to the street to resist the conservative authoritarian regime of AKP, the state found an excuse to insert political violence and surveillance on civil society starting in 2015. Feminist marches and gatherings were banned from Taksim Square while many academics and civic actors were arrested for supporting anti-state propaganda. In this shrinking civic space, feminist movement continued to form resistance and counterpublics. As Çağatay puts it, "The main challenge for feminist activism stands in persisting to ask for a public space, based on rights because both conservativism and neoliberal politics work through the dissolution of the basis on which rights can be

claimed collectively" (Çağatay 2017, 167). Therefore, in forming resistance under a repressive, authoritarian and Islamist prospect, feminist movement relies heavily on the human rights discourse, legal frameworks, and determent activists (Yarar 2020; Zencirci 2014).

Alongside these counterpublics, there were non-governmental organizations established by Islamist government (GONGOs) that disseminate a conservative take on gender equality and feminism. KADEM, established in 2013, promoted pro-family, anti-egalitarian rhetoric, supporting AKP's conservative take on gender issues (Doyle 2017; Eslen-Ziya and Kazanoğlu 2022). Even though there was a limited collaboration with women's NGOs on the issue of legal abortion, KADEM continues to work as an active agent in the civil arena, representing conservative and neoliberal interpretations of equality (Aksoy 2018; Doyle 2017; 2018).

The recent withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention proves the worrisome degrees AKP can go to disaggregate gender equality from social, cultural, and political spaces in Turkey (Arat 2021; Grieve 2021). The feminist movement, with the hashtag #IstanbulSözleşmesiYaşatır, organized an immediate online campaign and physical demonstrations to advocate for the agreement (Candemir 2020; Ozduzen 2019). These demonstrations underlined the importance of the Istanbul Convention in holding the state responsible for establishing legal and political systems to ensure gender equality. Despite the withdrawal from the convention, there is still a vibrant feminist movement that continues to put forward demands for ratifying the Convention again. This resilient activism shows that feminist movement continues to form solidarities and communities, resisting backsliding.

Overview of the history of the feminist struggles in Turkey shows that feminist struggles in Turkey grow resistance in response to the political changes. Navigating a liminal space between conservativism and secularism, feminist movement made gender equality a prevalent topic of discussion. Through the emotional, physical, and mental efforts of activists who took a role in demonstrations and online activism, achieving gender equality in different areas of life became a prominent aim in the feminist movement in Turkey. Moreover, research shows that considering the authoritarian turn in Turkey, feminist activism has become an emotionally challenging space for activists as well. In the following section, I present recent studies done about the role of emotions in feminist and queer activism in Turkey.

3.2 Feminist Activism, Emotion, and Affect in Turkey

In Turkey, feminist and queer movement history are interwoven with emotions and affects. Hope, anger, shame, honor, and joy are discussed in the literature formed around gender struggles in Turkey. Even though this literature utilizes analysis of emotion as a way of looking at the workings of counter-publics and forms of resistance, the discourses of affect, affective dissonance, and affective solidarity remain new to the scene and thus underdiscussed.

Recent studies extensively focus on the interplay between digital activism and emotions. For instance, Savaş (2019) analyzes digital activist practices to trace how affect and emotions experienced in these online forms of activism offer a space for the formation of collective resistance and hopeful possibilities of collective imaginations. Savaş argues that through engaging in digital activism, activists transform negative feelings into forces that motivate them to form resistance and find hope in difficult times. Similarly, upon analyzing three feminist websites operating in Turkey, Goker (2019) argues that these websites create a common emotional world while archiving and commemorating women in history and sharing personal stories to create a discussion about feminist identity and politics. In the process of forming digital solidarities, feminists blogging on these websites also mention that expressing emotions attract more people to the websites as well. Furthermore, analyzing #sendeanlat movement, Kesen argues that emotions work as "a catalyst for the non-feminist, non-organized women's engagement with women's issues" (2017). In brief, mobilizing affect in online spaces helps women identify with the feminist movement and participate in it.

Field studies done about feminist activists centering emotions also show that resistance, resilience, and affect are related to each other in the context of Turkey. In Toktaş' field study, women's life stories were collected and Toktaş traced the feeling of "regret" in the course of these women's lives. She argues that participant women's regret comes from evaluating their past gendered experiences and evaluation of such instances results in increased gender awareness and informed understanding of gender inequality (Toktaş 2002). Furthermore, Avramopoulou (2017) upon analyzing feminist struggles against death and violence, argues that hope is a performative affect that factors positively into women's navigation of hopeless contexts charged with violence and death. She asserts that tracing articulated or nonarticulated affect can only be meaningful coupled with a serious analysis of the histories and politics of the places as well.

In addition to these arguments, Yıldırım's analysis of South-Eastern Turkey also enrichens Avramopoulou's analysis of emotions and resistance to violence. Looking at the experiences of people living under political violence and surveillance in South-Eastern Turkey, Yıldırım (2019) asserts that politics are affective charged tension zones where individuals bear dissonance and emotional turmoil. This study expands the category of affective dissonance to resistance/resilience, which is also a contribution of what this study-at-hand aims to do. Lastly, Direk (2020) analyzes shame in the context of feminist activism, focusing on public and political shaming in the feminist movement to lay out the possibilities and shortcomings of the feeling of shame. According to her argument, while political shaming works as a tool to shame the government and its authoritarian ways, public shaming of feminists within the movement itself can harm the feminist discussion and weaken the movement itself. Thus, she argues for strategic ways of using shaming to empower the movement.

A significant amount of studies analyzing the interplay between emotions and activism center on queer/LGBTQ+ activism in Turkey. Similar to the course of studies done on the feminist movement and emotions in Turkey, studies about the role of affect in queer activism focus on activism and demonstrations on the street (İlaslaner 2015) and digital media as a central tool for queer activism in Turkey (Bayramoglu, 2021; Gündüz 2017). Focusing on Pride in Turkey, İlaslaner discusses how the emotional habitus created as part of the solidarity in the Pride walk opens a space for social transformation. In this analysis, İlaslaner argues that the identities and reasons of the activists to participate in the walk itself create a certain emotional habitus where different emotions clash and combine, building a united queer front against the oppressive political framework. Due to and through this emotional habitus, activists find the means to engage in Pride activism and advocate for equality. Similar to İlaslaner's analysis, Bayramoğlu (2021) also analyzes queer counterpublics as a site for queer hope in authoritarian, repressive, militarist, and Islamist regimes. Through analyzing newspaper archives after the 1980 coup and Pride march in 2015, Bayramoglu asserts that hope not only helps activists map out possible futures for themselves in such contexts, it also becomes a driving political force that sustains queer determination to maintain a presence in the public sphere.

In contrast to the analysis of hope as a political driving force, the phenomenon of trans deaths was analyzed as a site for remembrance and building solidarity in queer activism (Gündüz 2017; Zengin 2019). Gündüz (2017) analyzed trans deaths and the way the trans community remembered/commemorated these deaths to argue that emotions of loss become a common ground for queer activists to build a public representation and solidarity. Similarly, Zengin analyzes funeral practices

as sites of grief and mourning for the loss of a transgender person and argues that these emotions are negotiated in relation to the entanglements between belonging, citizenship, kinship, and belief.

Feminist and queer activism analyses centering affect focus on feelings of hope, shame, regret, loss, and agony as sites of building counterpublics in authoritarian and repressive political spaces. Through bringing forward the role of emotions in these online and offline activist practices, the studies show that emotions play a vital role in the reasons why individuals are motivated to participate in activism and the workings of emotions in creating collective resistance. This study-at-hand contributes to the research on the interplays between the feminist movement, activism, and emotions. In this chapter, through bringing forward activists' affective and gendered experiences in the beginnings of their activism in the feminist movement, I argue that affect plays a key role in the ways women make meaning of their confusing experiences in their daily encounters.

3.3 Emotions and Motivations in Starting Volunteering

Motivations and desires behind starting an activist journey, be it personal reasons or more idealist notions of helping others, are important precursors defining how an activist journey can take shape. In the negotiations of whether to join activism, as seen in the interviews of this study, there are stages of affective dissonance where activists negotiate their role as a woman, as an activist, and as a feminist. These instances of following or contesting emotions before or at the moment of starting activism will be referred to as affective negotiations from now on. In the following sections, I trace affect in the activist beginning stories and explain them in three parts: personal stories, emotional healing and self-care, and defining volunteering. In the first part, I analyze the daily encounters activists had before they started volunteering and the emotional reflections these gendered experiences had on their decision to be involved in activist practices. In the second part, I look at the phases of emotional healing and self-care that are mentioned by the participants as their initial motivations to start volunteering. I analyze these two discourses and look at the types of emotions they attach to such experiences. Last, I bring forward the role of defining volunteering and associating it with certain emotions in dealing with instances that they experience affective dissonance in their lives and in increasing participants' desire to participate in the feminist movement.

3.3.1 Personal Histories and Gendered Experiences

The beginnings of feminist activism can be personal. An activist/volunteer is usually inspired by an event they lived or witnessed and looks for ways to engage with the issue critically. Women living in Turkey, for a long time, have been experiencing sexism, racism, heterosexism, ableism, transphobia, and homophobia in their daily encounters. When a volunteer comes face to face with these acts, as the narratives show, volunteers chose between these two options: either ignore the situation or react to it. That is why analyzing how a volunteer/activist starts their journey into the feminist movement offers us a point of analysis where we also analyze their prior affective negotiations. Participants' stories of involvement posit affective dissonance, which are experiences, moments in which an individual encounters a situation and feels uneasy before being a feminist activist volunteer as an unconscious force that pushes these women to join the feminist movement.

Overall, participants in this study claimed that their activism started with feeling "out of place" or "weird" due to daily encounters at home, school, on the street, or more indirect encounters such as news and policy changes. Some participants explained their volunteering experience in a linear line where they experienced affective dissonance when they were young, affective solidarity during volunteering, and affective belonging as a result of their volunteering experiences. Here I center moments of affective dissonance, following Hemmings'(2012) argument about these dissonant stages as the first step towards building transformative solidarity practices and trace these dissonant stages in participants' beginning-to-activism stories to understand their desires and feelings behind joining the feminist movement. I aim to understand how emotions and gendered experiences get entangled in the way these women begin their activism by asking participants about their stories of involvement. I contend that feminist awakening happening due to personal encounters in close social circles or daily life on the street motivates the participants to join the feminist movement. For the interlocutors in this study, participating in something more significant, here it is the feminist movement, is described as a way to make meaning of and eventually transform these affective dissonance instances experienced in their personal lives.

When asked about how their activism story started, most participants gave examples from their high school and university years. Teenage and adolescent years, growing up as a young woman in Turkey, had "challenging" (Selcan), "eye-opening" (Ahu), and "unsettling" (Hülya) effects on the participants. Seeing only male politicians on television, receiving no sex education, being warned for dressing up too showing or too conservative at school, and continuously watching women in the news

getting killed for males' or families' honor were mentioned as some of the factors that stroke them as discriminatory practices. Recognizing these discriminatory instances eventually became their first step towards emancipation from patriarchy. However, participants also explained this realization as an emotionally challenging process. On one side, their experiences were associated with feeling fearful and hopeless, thinking that as a woman, they were being discriminated against and their options in life were limited. On the other side, once realizing this double standard between men and women, even though they felt stronger, they saw themselves as estranged from their support networks and felt lonely. These first realizations of discriminatory practices could be analyzed as phases of affective dissonance where the participants' realization of the limiting discourse surrounding them results in an unsettling emotional state.

I approach these affective dissonance phases of "feeling out of place" as constructive and positive experiences because participants tell these stories of realization to show the motivations behind joining the feminist movement, which has been a valuable and life-changing experience for them. Some activists claim that they found joining activism "helpful," while some explained it as "challenging but necessary." Nehir, 28-year-old translator who also volunteers as a translator for a women's organization, said,

> Maybe it's because of the stage I was in my life, or maybe because of the country's state, I am not entirely sure, but I felt like I had to do this [join activism]. Or perhaps because it's about "women" specifically. Yes, I felt alone because whenever I said something about feminism, they outcasted me as a feminist (laughs); it was a bad word. But even this feeling of loneliness proves me correct. The way out of this feeling was to do something about it. And I started looking for feminist organizations.

She expressed that working in a feminist organization helped her psychological and emotional state. She found solidarity to understand feminism and the society she lives in. She also found tools to describe her situation better. In addition to Nehir, Ferda who manages a social media account and posts about gender equality, said, "I loved writing for so long. I loved keeping a diary and a blog. Then I thought about turning it into something about women's rights. I received a lot of criticism and hatred online. But I kept going. I kept reminding myself that these bad views can't bring me down." In different activist settings, whether online or physical, dissonant phases improve activism experiences. Realizing and naming the emotions while also understanding the anti-gender ideology underlying these instances, participants start an emancipatory activist journey where they feel content.

Finding support became essential for most participants to elevate themselves from these feelings of despair, loneliness, and alienation, sometimes caused by their close circles. For instance, Selcan, 32-year-old blogger who writes about violence against women, stated that,

> I realized I was in an abusive relationship; I could finally call it abusive. I told this to my family and friends as well. But because I confided in them, they found the audacity to tell me things like 'why are you telling this to everyone, why are you humiliating yourself, you are making a big deal out of this.' So I decided to keep it to myself for a while until I realized I was not the one in the wrong here; they were. They should be better people; they should have been supportive. So I decided to go online and write about it. Find support elsewhere, you know. I was not going to be alone in this journey.

Like Selcan, Yasemin who works in third sector and volunteers at a feminist community said, "When something is threatening your being, and especially when you start thinking that you are the only one in this situation, finding a place to belong is significant. Then, once you find it, you realize that you are not the problem." Here, realizing where the problem lies helped both Selcan and Eylül to resolve their affective dissonance due to their alienation. In addition, Dicle, 33-year-old lawyer working on issues of gender-based violence, also mentioned that vividly seeing how her gender was a point of discrimination was a life-changing moment in her life. She said,

> In high school, when I was working to earn my pocket money, men would put their hands on my knees, hug me weirdly, and shut the elevator door to be alone with me. Then, eventually, I realized these are happening because society perceives me as a woman. They perceive me as inferior. I didn't have a definition like this before. But after this realization, I started understanding other systems of discrimination; I started observing my surroundings.

As shown in these statements, participants found these moments of resolution productive since they found the motivation to look for alternative ways of dealing with discrimination in society and finding a community. Realizing how they are discriminated against as women, they embraced their identities and moved forward with finding solidarity with other women. This in return "healed their broken hearts" (Ahu, 35-year-old lawyer).

In addition to these stories, Ceren, working as a lawyer on cases about gender

based violence, said, referring to how she started activism as a result of realizing the emotional and psychological violence she endured in her marriage, "The things I endured in my marital life showed me that if I was going through this, someone else was probably living the same thing too and what if that other person did not realize it was violence? I had to do something to raise awareness." Having a similar realization story, Ferda stated, "Once you realize the violence in your life and name it as is, you start seeing it everywhere, and you feel like you need to step up and do something about it." Ayça, 29-year-old lawyer taking on cases of gender-based violence, is a connecting her activism motivation to one of her daily fears, said "I am in this struggle because I face it daily. I can be harassed at any time. Yes, when I look around me, I think being murdered is a low possibility, but still, the fact is it's a possibility (emphasize added)." For them, their experiences of gender-based violence became a base for making meaning of the bigger systemic violence and this became the reason why they chose to work on issues similar to theirs.

The context in activism stories matters because living in a patriarchal conservative social context shapes women's daily experience. Some participants also referred to affective dissonance they experienced after certain political events. One of the prime breaking points mentioned in the interviews was the murder of Özgecan Aslan in 2015. Özgecan was a high school student brutally murdered after being sexually assaulted by a minibus driver. This femicide created an uproar in Turkey and mobilized hundreds of women in different cities. Participants who were going to the university and were close to Özgecan's age claimed that their awareness was triggered by the anger they felt. Ceren, as a 20 year old young woman at the time, referring to how her desire to form solidarity was elevated, said, "everyone is shouting that this is wrong. We know this is wrong, we live it every day, but seeing the solidarity in saying this, that people can come together to shout this, that's when I realized I don't want to do this alone." Her emotional uneasiness about what is happening to women in Turkey, coupled with an actual example, Özgecan Aslan, can be read as an instance of affective dissonance. This state of uneasiness has brought Ceren closer to the feminist movement and forming solidarities.

Another political breaking point was the Gezi Park movement in 2015. This nationwide protest demonstrated the public resistance against the authoritarian turn in the state in Turkey. Seeing the injustice happening daily in policies and the legal system, the public placed demonstrations for days to show resistance. Referring to this, Zeynep claimed to join the Gezi Park protests as a citizen sharpening her activist-self because she could never tolerate injustice. She said, "I could never tolerate injustice and Gezi proved that. I started from the socialist leftist side as an activist, but then feminists were on the streets, and they were adding gender into

the field. I found myself in it and I had to join. Doing this healed my cries for justice in a way. I found strength."

Hemmings (2012) claims that when someone's feeling of self contradicts someone's perception within society, that creates affective dissonance, a state of doubtful uneasiness. In the excerpts provided above, narratives show that participants had affective dissonant phases before starting their volunteering journey. Even though these instances can be hurtful, their negative experiences become the source these participants draw from to find reasons and motivation to participate in activism. Feelings of alienation, betrayal, realization, emotional crisis, and discrimination result in a feminist realization where these participants define their experiences and find reasons to resist them. This articulation of feelings also builds an emotional bond with the movement possible. In the next section, affective activist beginnings are analyzed through the lens of emotional healing and self-care.

3.3.2 Activism and Volunteering as Emotional Healing and Self-care

Volunteering becomes a space where activists' experiences find meaning and purpose through offering help and empathy to others (Boz and Palaz 2007; Stukas et al. 2016). For the participants of this study, the field of activism becomes a space for working with their emotions to build a movement that can benefit others and, in relation, accompany volunteers in their emotional and personal transformation journey. Building empathy and the motivation to help others can be points of departure for the participants. Still, these phases also present themselves as experiencing self-care and emotional healing along the way. Following the theory of affect, participants experience moments/feelings of affective dissonance that turn them towards finding ways to help others. Supporting and joining the field transforms this dissonance into feelings of affective belonging and solidarity.

Before explaining how participants negotiated "help" in their activist beginnings, I would like to note that the discourse around help is not constructed from a superior positionality in the interviews, which can be linked to the Western rhetoric of "saving," as discussed by Abu-Lughod (2002). Instead, the act of helping here is constructed as a two-way relationship between the volunteers/activists and the people in the field. Participants were not just offering help to others. Still, they were also receiving support concerning making sense of gendered situations in their lives and understanding feminist discourses further.

Helping others is presented as a decisive motivating factor to start volunteering.

Pointing to her online blog about abusive relationships, Selcan said, "Living through psychological violence, I realized I could at least use this experience to benefit other women who might not realize they are in an abusive relationship." Here, helping others became a way for her to understand her relationship further. When she started writing her blog about abusive relationships, she also started reading articles, studies, reports, and guides about it as well. The motivation to help others made her learn more about her situation, gender inequality, and feminist activism in Turkey. In this learning journey, she became a feminist and an activist. Like Selcan, Ferda said that as a woman working in a male-dominated industry, she wanted to work with businesswomen to raise awareness on issues such as glass ceiling, gender mainstreaming, and equal working space. Zeynep, 54-year-old editor in Istanbul, describing a memory from her late university years, said that she wanted to help women in journalism like her at a time when women could not work in banking as inspectors. She said, "I couldn't become an inspector at the Central Bank, and I knew this was nonsense. We were as qualified as, and sometimes more qualified than, our male friends. I had to help women like me so that women did not have this problem in the future." Referring to women in the next generation, she also positions the reasons for her motivation to help by investing in an equal future society.

The motivation to help others did not necessarily stem from obtrusive life experiences; it was also driven by personal curiosity or need. For example, Elvin, a 42-year-old third sector professional, said her desire to help others increased when she started volunteering for an organization during her university years as part of a university course. Once she realized how much they could accomplish as a student organization raising awareness about gender issues in Turkey, she wanted to do more because she was aware these would eventually help other women. Eylül stated that her desire to volunteer on issues of inequality in sports stemmed from her realization of how sexist sports are. Another participant Nehir said that she desired to help others because she could not find emotional satisfaction at her full-time job and that she felt the need to do more to benefit the society. Even though the desire to help in these stories stemmed from milder dissonant stages, be it dissatisfaction with a job or willingness to learn more, "feeling discontent," "experiences uneasiness," and "becoming aimless" were the ways these participants felt before starting their journey in feminist activism.

In the stories of involvement in activism, experiencing the need to help is also discussed in relation to one's characteristics, upbringing, and identity. Pelin, a 30-year old researcher and independent activist, when describing how she started working in a third sector job and volunteering simultaneously, stated that her willingness to get involved comes from her upbringing. She was raised by her grandparents who

always made sure to be involved in some form of volunteering and took Pelin with them. She said, "Because I was raised helping others in any way possible, I could not unsee when something happens to a woman. I am a woman. It's a part of my identity as well." Dicle, telling how she decided to leave her well-paying job to do something more meaningful (her words), said, "I felt like I didn't have a story; I felt this was missing in my life. I worked hard, yes, day and night. I earned a good salary, paid taxes, and went on vacations. I had a good life but I didn't invest in people. I wanted to work for something that could benefit others. I was not using my skills for the betterment of society. I was simply benefitting myself only." Nehir also said that her willingness to volunteer is closely related to her giving and nurturing personality. She said, "I don't look out for my self-interest, it's not in my nature," and that is why she could allocate time and effort to volunteering and helping others.

Along with the discourse of help, empathy also has a crucial role in participants' journey in helping others through volunteering or becoming a part of an activist circle. In the interviews, participants indicated that building empathy motivates them to continue their activism further and stay longer in the field. Empathizing has two reflections on volunteers' lives: motivating and re-traumatizing. On the motivating side, participants claim that the need to help others stems from the vivid understanding of what these women feel, think, and experience. For example, Alev, who is a retired reporter currently volunteering to raise money for women in need, in a thoughtful empathetic manner said, "I don't want other women to experience some of the difficulties I have experienced in my own life" (Alev). Other examples of such claims were, "I identify with women who experience injustice because I experienced it myself, and this is something that sharpens my activism" (Ahu); "When you listen to others' experiences, you start thinking about your own experiences and find meaningful attachments between your life and the women sitting next to you" (Ferda) and "I lived through all of that [discrimination], and that's why I can do this [activism]" (Serpil, 33-year-old lawyer). Empathy becomes a strong emotional response to what they see as part of their daily life and in their lives. It also drives them into volunteering/activism since being involved is perceived as a coping mechanism.

For other participants, empathizing caused re-traumatization through remembering, but it contributed to their self-healing journey. Ferda, talking about the direct messages she receives on the Instagram account she manages, "Followers share their stories of abuse sometimes. And some resemble my experience a lot. I immediately empathize and start visualizing some of the things that happened to me before I started this account. I got carried away by that feeling of shame, hurt, and

loneliness for a while. I can't shake it off. But then I think to myself, this is why I am managing this account. So that other women and I can make meaning of the harassment surrounding us. I find myself healing and finding the strength to go on." Another participant, İrem who is a young researcher at a foundation said that, having done traumatizing fieldwork as a volunteer, listening to stories of rape, abuse, and murder shaped her approach to doing activism. Having been traumatized by these experiences, she considered refraining from volunteering. She said, "I could stop volunteering, but I realized helping these women by putting their stories out there is more important than me being traumatized. I was making an archive, which healed these women followers and possibly other women who were abuse victims." Finding healing through healing others is a way some participant women in this study navigated the affective dissonance they felt as a result of their identity-based alienation. Being a woman, as one participant claimed, "makes you look for a way to heal yourself. The society makes you feel like you are a damaged good, then you start believing that, and this is an ugly feeling. You start looking for other women who like to heal each other." (Hülya).

The discourses of healing and moving forward were continuously associated with the experiences of empathy and re-traumatization. This articulation shows that despite the affective dissonance felt by the participants as a result of their experiences in their private and public lives, became a motivating factor to join the feminist movement. Feeling angry, shameful, alienated, and lonely transformed into feelings of belonging, contentment, self-confidence, and satisfaction after they joined the feminist movement and became a part of "something bigger."

3.3.3 Affect in Defining Volunteering and Forming Solidarities

Volunteering and activism have various definitions in the literature as explained in the previous chapters. As part of the interviews, I also inquired about how the participants articulated the meaning of being a volunteer/activist. These articulations showed that often participants associated emotions with volunteering or being an activist, which also reflected on the reasons and motivations for becoming involved. Participants also emphasized the importance of working in safe, trusting, and result-oriented organizations to feel content, happy, and belonging in their identities as activists as well. These negotiations about volunteering and organizations show that participants look for organizations that have a similar definition of volunteering to theirs and choose to participate in organizations that share their values about activism. By doing so, these participants eliminate their chances of feeling

affective dissonance as a result of beginning their activism journey.

In the interviews volunteering and being an activist are defined as what they are and what they are not. For what constitutes these identities, participants mentioned being a giving, thoughtful person, having an eye for social inequalities, diverging from selfishness, building an emotional bond to the cause, and caring for the work as prerequisites. Individuals who share such characteristics, according to the participants, become involved for longer periods of time and grow emotions of belonging, happiness, hope, and desire. On what volunteering or being an activist is not; participants mentioned being pragmatic, having personal gains in mind, not willing to share responsibilities, solely focusing on the end-result, and not pursuing the social good. Participants negotiated that these perceptions result in divergences, conflicts, and waste of time/labor.

In Turkish, *gönüllülük* (volunteering) has the word *gönül* (heart) in it, pointing to the role of willingness and enthusiasm in putting labor into volunteering. Participants also referred to this derivation in the interviews when talking about the meaning of volunteering or being an activist. Eylül said "first of all, you need to put your heart into it. Then it doesn't feel like a job or a duty," when talking about how different volunteering is from other paid jobs. Yeliz, who is a legal consultant at a private firm and does volunteering in the weekends, said when describing her involvement in a voluntary organization, "I need to have my heart in whatever that organization is working for. Then I can desire to be involved." Similarly, Selcan stated, "It comes down to what's in our hearts. What we desire to accomplish and how much we care about others," showing that the emotions an activist/volunteer has in their hearts are reflected in their volunteering definition. Lastly, Dicle, referring to how one starts volunteering, said, "You need to worry about a problem in your heart. You need to fret over something so that you desire to become involved in activism."

When defining volunteering, participants frequently mentioned trust and feeling safe. In the interviews, these two phrases contested and complemented each other. Participants negotiated trust in relation to the cause, to the organization/group, and co-volunteers. Alev said, "I think the most important thing is trust. If you trust someone, you also trust the cause and the people they work with. You trust them to be involved and feel safe in that position." For Ayça, trusting the organization and the people she worked with, made her feel comfortable in her identity as an activist. Another participant talked about breaking away from an organization because she could not trust them. She said, "They said one thing, but then did something totally opposite. When I asked for the reason, I never got satisfying answers. So it felt like they were only doing these things to obtain more respectability. I can't

trust that approach." For these participants trust was one of the defining things in their activism. Building trust eventually transformed into resilient activism as these women felt safe and comfortable in their identities and the organizations they work with. İrem said, as a volunteer working with traumatized women, "Trust is built both ways, you trust the organization to do the right things by the participants and the organization trusts you as a volunteer. If you are working with other people, victims of abuse for example, then you also build trust between yourself and those women. If you don't build that trust, does your activism achieve anything? No, I think it becomes a selfish act." Here, she emphasized how trust was central to her position as a volunteer in her organization and building trust defined the reasons why she volunteers in the first place (i.e., doing good for the society). Trust and safety are often felt when organizational transparency is achieved.

When talking about choosing certain organizations to volunteer at, participants repeatedly mentioned the importance of transparency within the organization itself. According to these women, transparency is one of the crucial prerequisites of building a safe and honest volunteering space. Here, if we trace the affect in volunteering, we see that the affect is formed after certain conditions are met by the organization, transparency being one of them. When talking about her first years in volunteering, Eylül stated "First you need to see that you are making some kind of a change. Then you start trusting the process." Similarly, Pelin said, "I want to see that the equality I strive for is achieved. Small or big, it doesn't matter. I need to see it. Then volunteering makes sense to me. I feel proud." Adding to these, Dicle claims that she defines volunteering as being useful for a cause and she takes seeing the end result of her volunteering as proof of benefiting the society as an individual. She said, "An organization should show a volunteer the results as well. They should not just take take take, but also give the volunteers a reason to go on. Once you see that, you know you are doing good and you start building a relationship with your activist self."

The act of "sharing" was also mentioned as one of the cornerstones of the journey of activism. Participants emphasized the role of sharing emotions in forming a community and a feeling of belonging. Ahmed also argues that feelings are contagious (2014). Feelings are shared among people and become stronger in the process. Supporting Ahmed's point, explaining the importance of sharing emotions in forming resilient collective action, one of the participants Hülya said,

> You feel together, you move together. That feeds the movement. In this materialist world that we live in, we forgot about sharing and caring. Volunteerism reminds you of that. Experiencing anger or happiness to-

> gether with other activist women slowly shapes your approach to the world and to the feminist activism. You feel belonging because you find resemblance in that space, not just of yourself but of your emotions as well.

Emotions become a fundamental part of moving together as activists in Turkey not just because affect brings individuals together but also because, like many other authoritarian countries, people criticizing the government are bound to feel anger, resentment, hate, love, and hope to be involved in the feminist movement. Dicle, emphasizing how feeling threat pushes people into finding activist communities, said "Your being is threatened in this country. There is nothing for you but to be afraid that you'll lose your rights, your freedom, especially as a woman. And when you realize it's not just you feeling this, you find support and you don't want to leave that support. That's how you stay strong." Thus, building affective solidarity becomes a way of coping with the oppressive patriarchal atmosphere that surrounds women and demonizes feminist activism in Turkey. Through sharing emotions and forming affective solidarities, these women activists also acquire emotional resilience (Kandiyoti 2021).

The history of feminism shows great collective resilience despite oppressive authoritarian policies. In an environment that desires to preclude feminist activists, volunteering becomes a stigmatizing and alienating experience. That is why analyzing motivations for volunteering and how participants find belonging and resilience in volunteering can offer a perspective into the types of emotions that they attach to their activist identities, their role in the movement, and the reasons to stay in it. As discussed above, participants negotiated instances of affective dissonance, created as a result of private or public instances, to be one of the primary motivating factors in their involvement in activism. By joining the feminist movement, these participants found solidarity and a form of belonging. In addition, how participants defined volunteering had an integral role in the value they attach to their activism journey. Explaining volunteering in relation to sharing, caring, and having a heartful connection, the participants displayed a form of affective attachment and affective belonging to the movement. Through defining volunteering as such, participants also attribute importance to their actions as volunteers/activists, and thus leaving the movement becomes a complicated matter.

3.4 Ignorance is a Bliss, But not Always: Becoming Aware and Its Emotional Contestations

Self-transformation or transformation of the surroundings can either be the end goal or the unexpected outcome of activism. In the interviews, "becoming aware" is central to the experiences of self-transformation. In the previous section, the transformation of emotions in activism is discussed in relation to affective dissonance felt at the beginning of activism and the ways participants defined volunteering or being an activist. In this section, I diverge from the beginnings of the activism journey to take a closer look at how becoming aware in the process transforms the activist self and the various affective responses/dissonances it creates. I argue that, through leaving the ignorant stage behind by joining in activism, activist women step into complex emotional negotiations of observing the society, the feminist movement, and the politics in Turkey.

In their journey toward becoming resilient activists, participants mention the thoughts and feelings they had at the beginning of their stories. Participants claim to be more arrogant, self-centered, ignorant, and daring when they started volunteering. Some claimed they thought they could "save the world," and some assumed that the organizations "would benefit from their knowledge." As they placed themselves and their motivations above the cause, the activist experience they envisioned was, in Alev's words, "set to be doomed." However, becoming a part of activist circles became a self-transformative learning experience for the participants. In the interviews, participants acknowledge the fact that their journey into activism made them more aware of their flawed values about volunteering and civil society, and hence being involved in the field transformed them into their better selves. In this, I take a closer look at the flaws that were mentioned by the participants, their emotional reactions to these flaws, and then analyze how their activism transformed these flaws into strengths with positive emotional associations.

The transformation that occurs in participants' lives is mostly discussed as a positive change. Joining the feminist movement gives the participants an outlet to express these emotions and mold them into fruitful ones. Oya, who is a 33-year-old psychologist and chooses to do activism independently, started activism on the streets by participating in demonstrations. She said,

> In the beginning, I was furious at everything, I had strict lines. At that time, I was in the anarchist movement, and it was normal to feel that way. There were times when I said I would never sit at the same table as

> discriminatory people. But then I learned in the feminist movement that patience could offer you more. It teaches you the benefits of finding the middle ground and sitting at the same table with sexist, homophobic, discriminatory people. You learn how to act strategically. You feel calmer and still achieve a lot. Your anger does not control you anymore. I changed a lot. I am not the same person when I first started my activism. I feel totally different, in a better way of course.

For Oya, learning the benefit of controlling emotions and finding the correct way to respond to injustice, transformed her into an activist who knows her grounds and demands and manages to achieve them. Her transformation from a stereotypical angry feminist activist to a more patient and calmer feminist activist was due to her involvement in the feminist movement. Damla, who also carries out independent activism, had a similar experience and explained herself in the first years of activism as "edgy" and "bold." But later, in the further years of activism, she claimed to become more "mature" and "peaceful." When pointing to the reason for this transformation she said, "In your organizational experience, you smoothen your sharp edges (a phrase in Turkish, *törpülenmek*) in time. You become more accommodating, and I see this as normal. Becoming mature gives you the ability to realize alternative perspectives. You realize the importance of discussion and reconciliation rather than simply reacting." The affect that acts as a motivating factor (i.e., anger, frustration, anxiety) to push one into activism, could create a space for transformation as well. Participants describe these stories of transitioning from anger to calmness, boldness to maturity as fruitful transformations that contributed to their growth as feminist activists.

These transformative experiences could also result in strengthening some of the emotions felt towards gender inequalities and discrimination in Turkey. Curiosity is discussed as one of the emotions that triggered individuals to join feminist activism and it also got stronger as participants indulged more in the feminist movement. Yeşim, a 28-year-old elementary school teacher said, defining herself as an activist, "I see myself as grown, mature, informed, and capable in many ways. I learned a lot. And I still have the curiosity I had in the beginning, I am still eager to discover and learn." Alev refers to her growing desire to be involved as follows: "I wonder if I can do more, learn more, participate more. Starting my activism was not the goal for me, I feel like there is still a lot to accomplish." Yasemin, who worked in capacity building activities for NGOs said, "Seeing that you can convince people who never donated before to donate some money or time into activism is precious. Achieving that makes you happy. But then you know you're not done; you wonder if you can find other ways to make people participate or donate. You become even more

curious." These accounts show that curiosity becomes a source of encouragement and transformation. Achievements do feed into one's curiosity, but it also calls for more interest in being involved in activism in other ways.

In the interviews, participants claim that activism taught them to embrace their womanhood as well. They highlight that embracing their identities as a feminist woman living in Turkey transformed their positionality in an authoritarian context. They became more "confident," "secure" and "loving" towards their daily and activist life. For example, Selcan said "As time passes, I feel womanlier. I realize the importance of embracing my body, my feelings, my presence in this society as a woman. Then I feel like I am contending with my being, and I can do my activism satisfactorily." This self-transformation also reflects on the society as participants use their self-confidence to challenge stereotypical ideas about what a feminist woman looks like. Ahu said, "I dress up to show my womanhood, I feel confident in my shoes. I know I have the power. I dress nicely to show them that a woman wearing high heels and doing makeup can be a fierce feminist activist." Embracing their femininity, participants not just transform their beliefs about their power, they also challenge the society in return.

Becoming a knowledgeable and confident feminist activist woman also has minor negative reflections on participants' lives. Joining the field of activism also transforms participating women's perception of social problems and exchanges. Leyla, who had invested years of her life in feminist activism, for example stated that she cannot bear to ignore a problematic, discriminatory situation anymore and that she finds a way to solve it. She also said that this process of realizing a problem and finding a solution has a draining effect on her energy as an activist. Another participant, Ceren said, "I first feel desperate when I encounter a situation on the street let's say. I want to find a solution and I start looking for it. But it takes my time and my effort. Sometimes there is simply nothing you can do. And that pushes you further into desperation." Here, as a well-informed, experienced activist Ceren stated that she chooses not to ignore a problem, but this can turn into an energy-draining issue. She then said, "That's when I wish I was ignorant. I now understand what they meant by ignorance a bliss. I miss that phase sometimes." Her wish to go back to ignorance signals how emotionally consuming it is to show daily resistance to oppression and sexism.

Lastly, participants mentioned becoming "more emotional" as a change in their lives and characters after they started activism. Each participant referred to being more emotional in different ways but some of them are; crying more, continuously coming to tears, having no barriers as to when they show emotions, talking about feelings

more, having more empathy towards others, and recognizing others' emotional states more. As activists, they talk about encountering various traumatizing situations and the emotional damage they endure in the process. They work on issues from harassment to violence, poverty to physical insecurity, and they deal with many problematic situations.

4. POLITICAL ALWAYS BECOMES PERSONAL IN TURKEY

"Everything you experience and feel is because of a broader political agenda, You can run from it or towards it."

–Damla, participant, April 24, 2020

Over Zoom, my participant and I are about to begin the interview. I take my phone to start the recording. I realize a notification on my phone from one of the news outlets I follow. It reads; "Heated debates continue about Istanbul Convention: Will Turkey withdraw from the international agreement?" We start the interview with this topic, both angry and confused, trying to figure out what the future holds for women in Turkey and the feminist movement. This moment sums up this chapter: two women, sitting together talking about activism and exchanging their worries and fears, while outside there is a fire burning, further restricting women's freedoms and rights in Turkey.

Due to neo-conservative and patriarchal politics, the political and social atmosphere in Turkey has become inhabitable for feminist and queer movements (Ecevit 2007; Kabasakal Arat 2007; Sosa 2021). In recent years, there has been an increase in pro-natal policies, dignification of women's role as mothers, and intensification of control over women's bodies and their reproductive decisions. Albeit this negative atmosphere, the women's movement continues to form resistance (most recent example of a similar mobilization is Iranian protests for women's liberation, NY Times 2022). Women activists dedicatedly come together to discuss alternative strategies to show resistance against oppressive policies.

The current chapter analyzes the relationship between politics, emotions, and activist experiences in Turkey. This chapter discusses two questions: What type of emotions emerges and is expressed as part of becoming an activist/volunteer in Turkey, and in what ways affective solidarity is fostered in response to anti-gender political attacks? I argue that affective solidarity and gendered activist experiences emerge as a result of authoritarian government policies and increasing anti-gender attacks. I contend that activists' articulation of politics in Turkey has motivating

and demotivating effects on the way these feminist women participate in, detach from, and come back to the feminist movement in Turkey.

4.1 Anti-Gender Mobilizations

4.1.1 Global Waves

Far-right politics targeting civil rights and freedoms that human rights activists have fought so hard for are on the rise globally. Distinguishing anti-gender mobilizations from far-right politics is essential to differentiate the specific type of conservative opposition to gender and sexual equality from any other type of national or religious events (Paternotte and Kuhar 2018). Even though far-right politicians contribute to anti-gender mobilizations, Korolczuk and Graff also argue that "analyzing conflicts revolving around gender equality and sexuality is a necessary step in order to properly grasp the logic behind the current crisis of democracy, the global rise of the populist right and the prospects for progressive opposition" (Graff and Korolczuk 2022, 4) In addition, gathering under the umbrella-term Global Right, attacks on gender mostly come from populism, far-right parties, religious fundamentalism, nationalism, racism, and neoliberalism (Graff and Korolczuk 2022). Using the power of institutionalized discriminatory discourses, Global Rightists also contribute to the success and expansion of anti-gender campaigns in the West.

In anti-gender mobilizations, the word gender is strategically used to refer to the changes caused by advocacy for women's rights, sexual freedom, and gender (Goetz 2020). Through twisting the meaning of gender, the far-right managed to demonize gender equality as the enemy of conservative values and traditional family, equating it with moral chaos (Goetz 2020). Through demonizing gender, anti-gender actors position themselves as the warriors and protectors of traditional moral values from any form of deviation. In this perspective "gender" is attacked on three levels: as a concept, as an ideology/theory, and as a social practice and political project. First, as a concept they use gender equity or gender justice instead of gender equality, to add men's rights and equality for men to the debate. Anti-gender actors claim that men's rights are under attack and that men are treated unequally as gender equality imposed by the West brings custody and alimony to the public debate (Hülagü 2020). Second, general opposition against gender equality as an ideology/theory includes forming a movement against LGBTI+ rights and freedom of sexuality by criticizing theoretical developments that debunk essentialist and naturalist claims

about gender and sexuality (Paternotte and Kuhar 2018). Third, politically and socially, the gender equality movement is also regarded as a neocolonial project imposed by international institutions offering money to such projects in exchange for acceptance of certain Western moral gender ideals and regulations. In this debate, anti-gender actors locate gender equality as a new form of enslavement and erasure of moral and traditional values (Graff and Korolczuk 2022; Paternotte and Kuhar 2018).

Anti-gender agents utilize the rhetoric of protecting the traditional nuclear family when forming mobilizations. Family Day marches organized in Spain in 2005, Italy in 2007, and Slovenia in 2010 exemplify the first public demonstrations of pro-family advocacy in Europe (Cossutta and Habed 2021; Eslen-Ziya 2020). Many other European countries also followed this movement and blamed gender for demolishing families, destroying femininity, and the binary gender order (Eslen-Ziya 2020). Creating this alternative narrative, anti-gender actors also argued against same-sex marriage since it results in a decrease in reproduction and hence a decline in population. Anti-gender campaigns used "the child in danger" and "traditional family in need of protection" as campaign logos and images. Through this, campaigns achieved legitimation in the eyes of rightist, conservative, and religious individuals and mobilized parents with great success (Graff and Korolczuk 2022).

Anti-gender campaigns not only advocate for political changes against same-sex marriage and freedom of sexuality, but they also work to implement institutional changes and influence knowledge production (Çağatay 2019; Paternotte and Kuhar 2018; Unal 2021). Through building their own sources of knowledge, anti-gender actors also create new sources of knowledge that support conservative ideologies such as new institutions, public intellectuals, experts, media outlets, and civil society organizations (Korolczuk 2020). For example, through eliminating sex education from teaching plans in schools, anti-gender actors promoted abstinence and pronatalism. To expand, conservative politicians accused gender studies scholars for teaching deviant sexual relations to children and thus were demonized for promoting immorality among students (Çağatay 2019). The attacks on gender studies and gender mainstreaming in higher education also present an example of how anti-gender epistemologies create a space for advocating its values within universities (Göker and Polatdemir 2022). Additionally, several conferences on the protection of family were also held internationally to promote anti-gender and conservative knowledge production. First held in 1997 in Prag and the latest in Italy in 2019, the World Congress of Families Verona Conference presents its aim as "to unite and equip leaders, organizations, and families to affirm, celebrate, and defend the natural family as the only fundamental and sustainable unit of society" ("About the Congress"

2019; Cossutta and Habed 2021). Conferences focusing on pro-family values are also strategic tools used to disseminate anti-gender knowledge across educational and social settings.

Mainstreaming anti-gender ideologies in the West gained momentum after the mid-2000s, marking a turn in the mobilizations against feminism and gender equality. Centering on the family as the core unit of society, anti-gender actors demonize gender equality and promote gender ideology which sustains an understanding of gender within the limits of essentialist and naturalist claims (Graff and Korolczuk 2022). Operating within a binary gender system, anti-gender mobilizations oppose gender as a concept, an ideology, and a political project. While doing so, anti-gender actors strive to create their own mechanisms of knowledge production and dissemination. Authoritarian, populist, and far-right states are the primary supporters of such agenda. In the last ten years, Turkey has also become one of these governments. The next section outlines the anti-gender strategies utilized by AKP, the ruling party in Turkey, in promoting pro-natal, pro-family, and traditional forms of thinking and living.

4.1.2 Authoritarian Turn and Anti-gender Policies in Turkey

Though it is hard to pinpoint the time around when Turkey became an authoritarian government, most scholars writing about women's issues and activism locate this turning point as 2010. (Aydagül 2018; Keyman and Gumuscu 2014) This is the year when the negotiations for a possible EU membership halted, thus AKP started to implement patriarchal and heteronormative policies without any responsibility to report to international committees. In 2013, when Gezi Protests happened, the restrictions on civil society increased to silence leftist or activist voices that might rise against the government (Çevik 2017). In 2015, scholars defined the state as "authoritarian" (Arat and Pamuk 2019; Arslanalp and Erkmen 2020). The referendum in 2017 was key in this development as it monopolized the power of governance to the head of the state, giving one person the ability to control legislative, executive, and judiciary mechanisms (Arat 2021).

Similar to anti-gender mobilizations in the West, with the authoritarian and conservative turn, the state embraced the rhetoric of protecting the traditional and cultural values of the society. Arat, in her article surveying the 20 years of AKP dominance in politics, argues that AKP instrumentalized women's rights discourse to gain voters initially while also presenting a secular, egalitarian image in international settings, but then slowly promoted conservative gendered insights by centering its politics

around pro-natalist and pro-family ideals. Referring to this, Arat claims that authoritarian governments who promote women's rights only do it for political gains: international representation, the resilience of the regime, international legitimacy, gaining international aid, reputational boost, and maintaining power (2021). Even though AKP reaped the fruits of promoting gender equality in its first two terms, later its anti-gender turn proves that they instrumentalized women's rights to gain stability and establish political dominance.

Acar and Altunok argue that during AKP's terms in parliament, there have been multiple discriminatory political moves regarding the right to politics of reproduction and politics of sexuality. Tracing what they call "politics of the intimate," the authors argue that neo-conservativism and neoliberalism have ultimate effects on how AKP adopted anti-gender politics about sexuality, reproduction, marriage, and gender equality in general (2013, 14). The timeline of anti-gender policies started with AKP's declaration in 2003 that the parliament would prioritize family-centered policies (Günaydın 2021). On national media, then-prime minister Erdogan openly said that families should have "at least three children" in order to contribute to population growth and hence increase economic prosperity ("Erdoğan: İş Işten Geçmeden En Az 3 Çocuk" 2009).

Later in 2012, President Erdogan stated that "abortion is a murder" and that he is against cesarean births (Bianet 2012). These statements were criticized by women's organizations and feminists to violate women's reproductive rights and women's freedom of choice (Toksöz 2012). Even though in the same year the government ratified Istanbul Convention which aimed to formulate a gender equality framework in legal and political settings, AKP fell back on putting comprehensive measures into practice and failed to meet the regulatory requirements of the agreement (Grieve 2021). In contemporary Turkey, AKP withdrew from Istanbul Convention arguing that the agreement demolished families, increased gender-based violence, and encouraged "deviant" sexualities (Günaydın 2021). Considering the lack of practical implementations of gender equality measures, one can say that the state has not ratified the Convention wholeheartedly in the first place. It is also important to note that while discussions about women's rights are predominantly argued within the perimeters of marriage and family, arguments about the rights of LGBT+ are nonexistent (Acar and Altunok 2013), leaving this population as marginalized and legally as well as socially unprotected.

Anti-gender actors not only aim to change legal and social frameworks, but they also strive to transform education by implementing anti-gender ideology within institutions and knowledge production processes as well. Bearing some similarities

to anti-gender mobilizations in Europe, AKP's rhetoric on gender equality demonized gender as a concept and as an ideological theory. Building a neo-conservative definition of "gender" that glorifies family and heterosexual relations, AKP refuted any other definition of gender that promotes reproductive choices, abortion, sexual orientation, and pre-marital sexuality (Acar and Altunok 2013; Yarar 2020). One example of such discursive change is abolishing the word "gender" from official government documents and from the names of university research centers that carry out research on gender equality in Turkey. As the word "gender" became more and more stigmatized, many research centers in public universities which obtain funding from the government either dropped the word "gender" from their titles and remained as "women's rights research centers" or adopted "family" in their names, becoming women and family research centers. This discursive change signaled that universities needed to align with the government's anti-gender agenda in order to remain in the field and have financial sustainability. Furthermore, increased reporting to the state authorities about planned workshops and training, as well as heavy surveillance of such activities further constricted these centers when doing critically engaged work or projects that criticize the state. These restrictions sometimes result in academics and researchers moving abroad to gain more freedom in their research on gender issues (Göker and Polatdemir 2022).

Furthermore, gender equality programs in the education system were also withdrawn and gender as an agenda item was disregarded in yearly educational plans. In 2019, the Ministry of Education banned the pilot program titled "Developing Gender Equality in Education" in all K12 schools and the content of school books (Çağatay 2019). As religion became a required course in K12 education, most images in schoolbooks also included heteronormative family images that promote cultural norms. In the same year, the Higher Education Council also declared that they stopped the program named "Gender in Higher Education Institutions" claiming that "the project did not align with our social values and norms" (Gazete Duvar 2019; Günaydın 2021). Moreover, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Family and Women collaborated with the Ministry of Religion to plan programs centering on family (Günaydın 2021). "Traditional gender roles and purpose of creation (*fıtrat*)" also entered the school curricula while the revised content taught gender binary systems of living as the norm of the society (Çağatay 2019; Eslen-Ziya 2020).

In addition to demonizing gender as a concept in systems of education, the state also brought anti-gender rhetoric to civil society by forming government-supported civil society organizations. Founded by President Erdoğan's daughter Sümeyye Erdoğan, KADEM, as one example of government-funded nongovernmental organizations in Turkey, systemically works in the civil society to conserve essential values of women

in Turkey so that they can live with honor (Eslen-Ziya 2020). Adopting the framework of "gender justice" which also resembles "gender ideology" adopted by the anti-gender mobilizations in the West, KADEM promotes family-oriented feminism and gender equity. Working in both civil society and political settings, KADEM has become AKP's advising collaborator in international reports on women's rights in Turkey. This collaboration between KADEM and the state also resulted in the marginalization of NGOs and collectives that criticize the government and advocate for feminist values (Doyle 2018). KADEM, through organizing international conferences (i.e. Annual International Conference on Gender Justice) and bringing together scholars with state officials, also takes on the responsibility of family mainstreaming through bringing the family to the core of the growth of the population and economic prosperity (Eslen-Ziya 2020). As KADEM gains ground within politics and increases its membership database, opposing civil society agents lose their presence in politics.

4.2 Advocating for Gender and Shrinking Civil Space

Dissemination of anti-gender and authoritarian values reflects on the political and social atmosphere in civil society in Turkey. Regardless of gender equality work, the current civil space in Turkey is defined as "restricted" which implies a limited space for activism and social transformation. Especially since the Gezi Park protests, which was the biggest civil society activism in Turkey, the conditions in civil society have been deteriorating. The state of emergency enacted after the protests restricted fundamental freedoms such as freedom of association, freedom of assembly, and freedom of speech, thus making social transformation hard to achieve. Even though the state of emergency ended in 2018, as explained below, its repressive effect on civil society remains.

The state enacted attacks on civil society on different grounds. Human Rights Defenders' Report on Civil Society in Turkey divide these attacks into three main categories: (1) stigmatization and discrediting of civil society actors, (2) judicial harassment and arbitrary detention, (3) surveillance and harassment of associations through administrative measures ("Turkey Part II: Turkey's Civil Space on the Line: A Shrinking Space for Freedom of Association" 2021). Following Gezi Park protests and the failed coup attempt, expressing criticism towards the state has been demonized and portrayed as the enemy of the government. For example, President Erdoğan called protestors participating in Gezi Park protests called terrorists, loot-

ers, thugs, rotten, and sluts in his speeches (Dokuz8haber 2022). These attacks from the government have also been directed at civil society actors. Referring to these actors' international relationships and donors, the state accused them of having alleged terrorist connections to foreign powers and organizations which try to overthrow the government of Turkey (Bianet 2017). Human rights defenders became "a threat to public security rather than agents of positive change" ("Turkey Part II 2021). Feminist and queer civil society actors advocating for gender equality and criticizing the anti-gender tendencies of the government are also further stigmatized as their advocacy is portrayed as against the cultural norms that the society shares as a whole. For example, again in a public speech, Erdoğan said "These feminists have nothing to do with our religion," referring to religion as a strategy to discredit feminist activists in the eyes of the public (Bianet 2015). These developments in Turkey provide examples to the three-level categorization of the Human Rights report and show that the civil society in Turkey is restricted.

Judicial harassment and arbitrary arrests are other ways that the state controls civil society and the actors operating in it (Demokrasi İçin Birlik 2017). Groups that openly criticize the government, be it about financial policies or gender inequality, are in danger to be taken under criminal investigation and even face prosecution. Press statements, participation in demonstrations and meetings, taking part in training or workshops, planning events, or posting on social media are some of the ways that civil society actors choose to express dissent and because of which they could be convicted. Since what constitutes "terrorism" remains vague in legal frameworks, it results in the criminalization and prosecution of a wide range of activities. This danger of being arrested or detained refrains actors from engaging in activism ("Turkey Part II" 2021). Disproportionate police presence and reverse handcuffing during arrests of civil society actors also give the message to the public that these individuals are dangerous criminals with international ties. For example, in the Las Thesis "Ni Una Menos" performative activism in Kadıköy carried out by feminist activists, pioneering 6 activists were arrested at the scene on grounds of "failing to disperse despite police warning" (Gerçek Gündem 2019). The images of these activists reverse handcuffed and taken to custody by force were shared on social media by feminist organizations, presenting proof that civil society and activists are silenced by the government while actual perpetrators charged with femicide are walking free on the streets. Such police brutality and arbitrary arrests wear down the activist struggle and result in the scaling down of activities and public outreach.

Not only the risk of being arrested or charged with terrorism but also time spent behind bars or in police surveillance until the charges are dropped also create a major problem in the lives of civil actors. If taken in custody, civil society actors

spend months sometimes years waiting for the formal charges against them. Pre-trial detention is applied regardless of the Criminal Procedure Code and depends solely on the judges' decision ("Turkey Part II" 2021). Since the coup attempt in 2016, many judges have been dismissed and new judges are still catching up with the paperwork of the old cases. As a result, the trial procedures also take longer times, leaving civil society actors with a travel ban and sometimes obligation to give the signature of presence in a police station every week or month. This bureaucratic and psychological burden of not knowing what the future holds also affects civil actors' involvement in activism.

Apart from the attacks on civil society actors who openly criticize the state by joining in street demonstrations, training, and social media campaigns, the state also attacks organizations by requiring them to submit a heavy load of bureaucratic paperwork, which falls into the category of harassment of organizations by administrative means. Permissions for training, collection of donations and membership fees, administration of the organization, charity work, and distributing free products are all subject to state audition ("Turkey Part II"2021). For example, after the coup attempt, many associations and foundations in the Southeast working with survivors of gender-based violence were closed on grounds of carrying out non-permitted activities, lack of correct administrative paperwork, and inciting terrorist propaganda (Karataş 2017). Closure of such women's centers caused not only the loss of a space that provided safety for many women and children in the Southeast but also caused the loss of institutional history as the state confiscated all the documents and historical materials ("Turkey Part II" 2021). That's to say, the authoritarian state used its power to dissolve institutions that rendered critical thinking against the state. Through requiring heavy load of administrative work, the state created new excuses to close organizations and acquire total control over civil society.

In this authoritative atmosphere, as the narratives in this study point out, advocating for women's rights has become a physical, mental, and emotional challenge for activists. Considering the increasing patriarchal and discriminative policies as well as personal and ideological attacks aimed at activists, operating as a feminist organization or a feminist activist is unsettling and risky. Yet, considering shrinking civil space and increasing attacks on human rights, involvement in civic activism is ever more important to challenge the patriarchal governmental policies, as well as discriminatory social and cultural norms, and eventually create a safe space for the formation of counter-publics where oppositional ideals can be formed, negotiated, and supported.

Considering attacks on gender and civil society, how do activists participating in this

study doing activism and perceive the feminist movement? What are the gendered and affective implications of such activism in relation to politics? In what ways do activists and volunteers discuss the role of the feminist movement in shaping, contesting, and transforming not just their emotional states but also the political agenda? With these questions, I lay out how a constant shift between states of affective dissonance, affective solidarity, and affective belonging is necessary for embodying sustainable and resilient feminist activism in such political turmoil and personal danger. Through these affective and gendered experiences of activism, activists find a point of start, a direction, and a complex desire in their volunteering. First, I discuss how politics are entangled with affect that render possibilities and dangers for certain publics. Then, I discuss how participants in this study negotiate their activism in relation to politics in Turkey.

4.3 Political Affect and Feminist Movement in Turkey

In a discussion of the "affective turn," the relationship between emotions, politics, and power is discussed by feminist theorists with regard to the politics of gender (Ahmet 2014; Butler 2009; Thrift 2007). Therefore, the space where feminists discuss rights, freedoms, and democratic ideals is deeply entangled with emotions. Slaby and Bens argue that the "creation of political subjects, be they individual or collective, is not conceivable without processes of affective attachment, whether to a system of governance, a political cause, a group, or to individual peers or comrades" (2019, 345). That's to say, feminism as a political ideology, recruits and creates political beings that are emotionally attached to the cause of gender equality.

The feminist motto, "personal is political" not just brings issues deemed personal to the public arena and creates resistance around them, but it also highlights the role of emotions in daily life and their potential to create change in broader politics. Sara Ahmed, in her book titled The Cultural Politics of Emotion, analyzes hate, fear, happiness, shame, and love to understand how social norms become affective over time and create discrimination and marginalization. Ahmed also states that emotions can move from inside to outside, resulting in forming solidarities and positive/negative acts. She states, "emotions are directed towards something. They are intentional and they show a form of stance towards subject" (2004, 7). In her book Happy Objects she also asserts that emotions are sticky in ways they make the connection between ideas, values, and objects. For Ahmed, there is a sociality of emotions (2014). This view sees emotions as inseparable from their objects.

Emotions circulate in our daily politics creating attachments to objects, people, and groups; and in the case of feminist activism: to a common cause. Emotions such as hate, love, disgust, and hope are considered private feelings rooted in interpersonal relationships. However, feminist theory and activism have long been centering these emotions when creating arguments about gender equality.

The emotions circulating in the feminist movement in Turkey through the perspectives and experiences of women activists who are taking part in this movement give an outlet for analysis. There are multitudes of emotions felt by the individuals themselves as well as emotions that become the cause and consequence of wider political actions. In the interviews, women activists stated that anger, hate, loneliness, and alienation were circulating the most within state politics, mostly targeting women's organizations and women activists/volunteers. However, these women activists' articulations of these emotions and their involvement in the feminist movement transform these negative emotions into positive entanglements with the movement and with their activist identity. Even though they feel dissonant within their identities as women and activists, this dissonance transforms into affective belonging and solidarity through involvement in feminist organizational activities, activist protests, and resistance. I contend that through this constant transformation and negotiation of affect in feminist activism, attachment to the movement becomes resilient and strong. In the next section, I analyze these entanglements with examples provided from the interviews. However, these experiences are specific to the individuals in this study and are merely constituents of the feminist movement in Turkey.

4.3.1 Politics Create Affect, Affect Results in Feminist Struggle

Operating in an authoritarian space, feminist activists feel the necessity to find alternative outlets to express their feelings, share stories, find good examples, and learn new coping strategies. As argued in the previous chapter, many participants in this study experience affective dissonance before or during their activism. Some feel dissonant as a woman in Turkey, as a result of the experiences they encounter on the streets, at their homes, or through politics. Some feel dissonant after joining the movement as they become more aware of the patriarchy surrounding their daily lives. Some remain in this dissonant state so that they can survive in society and help the movement survive as well. Anger, hate, disgust, shame, disappointment, misery, desperation, and such negative emotions are continuously mentioned in relation to politics in Turkey. But it is also important to note that participants' dissonance and emotional uneasiness also become sources they draw from in their feminist activism.

Participants are in dissonance with the political conjuncture which becomes a major force that pushes them to "do something about it." While their emotions towards politics demands taking feminist action, this dialogue also opens new spaces to negotiate with the government as well. According to the participants, being actively involved is the way the activists find trust, steadiness, and hope in a repressed space.

The social and political atmosphere directly has an impact on these women's decision to join feminist activism and the feelings they experience while doing activism. In discussing what motivates them to join activism, participants described the reason as "the state of the country," "because of where we live" and "today's conditions" which points to the current political atmosphere in Turkey. For example, when talking about volunteers' experiences starting activism, İrem said, "I guess it's about the state the country is in. People want to do something. They feel desperate to take on responsibility, [they think] what can I do to make it better, I should do whatever I can." Due to feeling responsible for the cause and the community because of the oppressive atmosphere in Turkey, "doing nothing" becomes unpreferable for these volunteers and there is a need to turn this uncomfortable emotional state into something positive and productive. Alev described these affective transformations as "a process that starts with worry and evolves into a need to feel useful." Ferda, on the other hand, with a concerned look on her face, stated that "in this country, doing nothing is basically accepting whatever happens to you or other women around you. You accept to live in inequality, and I don't know how anybody can live with that." Puzzled with emotions of caring for others and fearing for the future, Eylül said,

> I understand people might be hesitant to join us[feminist movement], but what do they do otherwise? I mean, how is not joining an option considering all the things happening today? They are attacking women's rights, and our right to be equal to men. Like, they even had the audacity to say pregnant women should not laugh in public. How does someone bear sitting at home and doing nothing when they [politicians] say such things? Well, I know I can do nothing. If I want to change the politics in this country, and give an equal future for my kids, I need to participate in the feminist movement somehow. The little or bigger things that you do matter.

In the participants' narratives of their motivation to join the movement, politics and the uneasiness created as a result of political changes emerges as a motivating source. Looking at the short snapshots of İrem, Alev, Ferda, and Eylül, their engagement with politics was initiated with anger towards the political changes happening in Turkey and their desire to change the course of these anti-gender acts. Anger and care work together to create an affect of "the need to be useful" or "the need to

overcome anxiety for the future" by joining a feminist movement and volunteering for equality.

A part of being useful also stems from perceiving politics as insufficient in addressing gender struggles. This incapability of politics or its "purposeful neglect" (Arat, 2021) of gender issues also drives women activists in this study to think "Turkey needs this [activism] in order to balance the good with the bad" (Selcan). As the state apparatus refrains from taking the responsibility to mainstream gender equality across different institutions, feminist activists felt responsible to organize around advocating for gender equality in politics, legal systems, and social structure. . Nehir, talking about femicides in Turkey, "Everyday, something happens in this country. Women get killed and beaten; they get lost and later are found murdered. And every day, you see guilty people walk the streets without any punishment or politicians say nothing about what happened. This drives me mad." Participants mention the lack of impunity for femicides multiple times in the interviews and it emerges as one of the major gaps between political involvement and gender equality. Drawing from her experience as a lawyer providing free legal consultation to victims of gender-based violence, Ceren said, "The police have the authority to establish precautionary measures. This is in the law. Victims call the police multiple times, the police do not arrive at the scene until it's too late, until the woman is murdered or beaten to death. And if they happen to arrive early enough, then they just say I am not authorized. But if it was a complaint about someone cursing President Erdogan, they immediately go to the scene and arrest that person. This is how corrupt politics is right now." This purposeful neglect by the police forces creates uneasiness and anger as expressed by Ceren. She articulates this uneasiness as a force to start volunteering for protecting the rights of these women as a lawyer. Dicle also refers to this purposeful neglect of gender-based violence as one of the reasons why she chose to volunteer at an organization that monitors cases of gender-based violence in Turkey. She said, "As long as there is gender inequality and as long as the politics continue to ignore this, we [activists/feminists] will be on the field. We will fight this battle." Even sometimes this purposeful neglect makes activists feel so powerless that they fall into despair that they will not be able to "solve anything by law and order" (Ceren). However, since they continue to observe small changes in society and in the lives of the women they volunteer for, participants continue to get involved in the movement.

This affective dissonance felt as a result of the purposeful neglect of gender issues and femicide cases specifically bears a significant effect on women activists' perception of politics and their activism in Turkey. They not only volunteer to make living conditions better for surviving women but they also volunteer to advocate for

establishing gender-aware political systems to protect themselves as well. Belen, 28-yea-old teacher volunteering on issues of gender-based violence, said "Here [Turkey] you cannot trust the government to protect you as a woman. They don't care. You should do something to change this or at least to protect yourself." A similar course of thinking comes up in Ayşe's negotiation about being a woman in Turkey. As an experienced activist she said, "I walk the streets alone at night, I'm afraid. Yes, I'm afraid that someone might jump at me. But I'm also afraid that there is no legal system to punish that person. The legal system blames the woman walking outside alone at night." This victim-blaming and lack of legal punishment, or "purposeful neglect" by the government, result in feeling unsafe and unprotected. Feelings of anxiety, however, do not stop these women from becoming activists. The feminist movement becomes the outlet for them to recharge, reset, and feel protected. Ayşe said, "I know that the state does not care if I'm safe outside or if I have equality. But I care. I need to work to make it better. I need to find a way to shout for my rights. I need to escape from this feeling of worry. Then I go to a meeting for a demonstration, I see others as angry as me and that's how I recharge." Affective solidarity becomes an outlet to express feelings and worries, while also feeling content in working for the betterment of the future. These activist and volunteer women defy purposeful neglect and work hard to overturn it.

Participants' embodied experiences in patriarchal authoritarian politics also add to their perception of the role civil society and activism play in Turkey. Their gendered experiences as a woman living in Turkey shapes the way they interpret politics and their activism responding to those politics as well. Ayça says "Being an outcast in the society means that you need to keep pushing for your rights, you need to be involved and do something. That is bravery itself, simply advocating for your own life and rights every day." That's to say, the motivation to be involved in civic activism stems from their need to improve their conditions and even survive in a patriarchal society. Alev said, "especially in times of desperation and hopelessness, people feel stuck and realize others are stuck as well. And that's when they are more inclined to help themselves and others as well." Alev points to a shared feeling of despair and a look for hope among women. Women's activism is formed because of the relationship they build between their embodied experiences and their concerns for other women. This empathetic relationship is being built and rebuilt under the political changes in the country and new needs and desires uproot in order to meet the attacks coming from the state. However, it is also important to note that despite their gendered experiences, activists do not mention other categories of identity such as ethnicity, class, age, ableism, or education. This lack of intersectional perspective probably stems from the privileges they had as middle or upper-middle-class, educated, urban,

and secular women.

Since daily politics in Turkey demand affective participation in the feminist movement, participants also refer to these anti-gender politics in emotional terms as if politics have feelings itself or represent certain emotions. In the interviews, some participants referred politics as "angry politics," "shameful politics," and "apologetic politics" when talking about anti-gender policies or lack of legal protection in Turkey. This attribution of emotions to politics shows that the current pro-natal, traditional, family-oriented, conservative politics create specific negative emotions for women activists and volunteers. One of the prime examples of politics creating emotional responses was the feminist uproar against the abortion debate in 2012. Erdogan, the prime minister at the time, announced that they aim to decrease the time for abortion to four weeks. This statement created major resistance in feminist circles, resulting in street demonstrations. As a result of this resistance, the state withdrew the proposal, and this scored a win for the feminist movement. Referring to her emotions during the abortion debate, Oya said "not just our feelings about the discourses or the current political agenda, but also the feelings of the politics change. They evolve. Like the abortion debate. They [feelings] first are curious, questioning, and neutral, but then they become full of hatred and anger; hatred for women's ability to decide for themselves and their freedom to decide about their bodies. And this [hatred and anger] makes us angry in return." In Oya's example, the state produces hateful and angry politics, which also creates an angry response.

Here, affect not just moves between individuals but also finds an object. With the aim of protecting the traditional family, the state locates feminists as the object of hatred and anger. On the other hand, women activists' motivation to establish gender equality and protect their rights locates the state and its anti-gender policies as the object of anger. These relations, in particular, posit politics as an "affectively charged tension zone" (Yıldırım 2019). As the aims change, object of affect changes, creating a fluctuation of affect in the political and civic space.

The attachment of emotions to politics or feeling a responsibility towards the community relates to Sara Ahmed's discussion about emotions and objects. In the case of emotions and politics, hatred, shame, and anger are attached to politics in Turkey. Women volunteers in this research constantly refer to politics using negative feelings and connotations. This attachment determines their involvement in activism and the degree they feel responsible for the cause. Here, the responsibility is attached to women volunteers, almost as if they are the only ones who feel responsible for the emancipation of women's rights and the perpetuation of gender equality in Turkey. These emotional attachments and the object of attachment have a profound effect

on the way women activists describe their involvement in the movement, as well as their belonging to it.

As feminist resistance becomes powerful and vibrant in public space in Turkey, affecting hundreds of women and gathering them on the streets, anti-gender politics also mobilize around and against these women. Participants repeatedly mentioned how forming a dialogue between the state and the activist fronts is crucial for a social transformation. The state, realizing the power of feminist activism in creating change, is forced to understand the feminist word and feminist demands. Çağla, 33-year-old teacher doing activist independently, explained this situation as follows: "Since more women start to appear in activism, there is an increasing need to understand feminism. It [the feminist movement] threatens them [the state]. That is why they [the state] felt the need to turn their face to feminism. There is a shared experience and women are organizing around it. They [the state] are forced to understand it to fully to address against it." Beril, 42-year-old realtor volunteering to organize fundraising events for women's shelters, referred to the relationship between the state and the feminist movement as a "dialogue" that looks like a "boxing match". Even though a boxing match awakens a feeling of danger, calling it a dialogue softens its affect to a more settled, peaceful negotiation. According to Beril, this dialogue between feminist activism and the state looks like a boxing match because state-led anti-gender mobilizations and feminist resistance are constantly challenging each other. Giving an example of this situation, Beril said,

> They [the police] handcuffed our friends because they were on-site during the Las Tesis resistance. But then we photoshopped photos of our friends in handcuffs next to a femicide perpetrator walking free, unaccused of the murder he committed. This created a major public uproar and criticism. They had to let our friends go. The next day, there was a police force outside the courthouse because they feared us. They are afraid that people will follow us. They hit you, you hit back. This angry fight makes me excited, to be honest. I feel like it's worth it. Because you force the state and its agents to follow your moves.

As Beril described, feelings are in flux when doing activism against the state. This thrill resulting in recognition by the state becomes the way activists emotionally relate themselves with the movement as well. They describe their activism through mixed feelings of stress, sadness, happiness, trauma, solidarity, and disappointment. Bengi, who does activism independently and actively participates in demonstrations on the street, said "We want them to listen to us to hear our demands. And they need to listen to us to form an agenda." Despite extensive gatekeeping, Oya's statement

shows that activists, no matter how small the interactions are, desire to sit at the same table with politicians and negotiate their deeds.

One of the highlights in activists' stories was the Gezi Park protests. During these protests the dialogue between the politics and feminist activists almost disappeared since the focus was more on criticizing the authoritarian turn in Turkey (Çevik 2017). Even though the dialogue between the feminist movement and the politics lessened during and after Gezi Park protests, hundreds of women mobilized to resist the discriminatory and patriarchal policies of the state. Being involved in the demonstrations at that time, Alev said "Being a feminist, politically speaking, became something as a source of pride for others as well. Up to that point, we [feminists] were defined as furious women who hate men." Following the Gezi Park protests, realizing the extent the state can go to protect its authoritarian ways, women realized the importance of joining a movement to protect their rights." The police brutality and oppression at that time politicized emotions as well as individuals, leading them to the feminist movement.

In efforts to change politics, activists work to disseminate feminist knowledge and change the dominant patriarchal political discourse. For example, in the 2000s, killing women in the name of *namus* (honor) was called "honor killings" in Turkey (Sev'Er and Yurdakul 2001). Describing how they transformed honor killings into male violence, Damla said,

> When a feminist discourse, or phrase, loses its significance or effect in the public space, we change the name of the discourse. This way you stay engaged and manage to move emotions. For example, violence against women used to be called honor killings. We transformed it first into femicides (*kadın cinayeti*), and then it became violence against women (*kadına karşı şiddet*) or masculine violence (*eril şiddet*). Now, using honor killings is outdated and irrelevant because we showed that it is bigger than the issue of honor. It is the whole discourse around it that ties honor to women and holds men responsible for protecting it. Seeing that we made this change in society gives us hope and motivation to go on.

Here, Damla emphasizes the interaction between the state, public discourse, and the feminist movement. Activists take pride in how their activism changes discourses around women's struggles, and this becomes central in defining their activism. Transformation, as mentioned in the majority of interviews, is key to feeling accomplished and content in feminist activism. Participants emphasized that the "feminist movement has a potential to create and disseminate knowledge and should

use this potential to the fullest" (Damla). Therefore, one can say that the affective dissonance of these feminist activists gives them the motivation to move political discourses. Also seeing that they can make an influence in the world, whether it be small or big, adds to their affective belonging to the movement, which is their affective belonging to the cause and the movement itself.

4.3.2 Navigating a Politicized and Emotionally Charged In-between Space

Navigating a politicized and marginalized civil space is both a challenge full of emotional negotiations and also a productive experience to refer to when building their activist identities in Turkey. Having been involved in a conservative, authoritarian, repressive space for years, more experienced activists define the interaction between the state and the activists as a dialogue, a boxing match, and at times a learning practice for the feminist movement. In addition, participants mention that this emotionally charged tension zone between themselves, and politicians also positively transforms activist strategies, dominant discourses, and personal feelings, which in turn gives activists hope and motivation to continue. Despite the political gatekeeping and stigmatization, once activists see that their efforts yield a social change, be it in the form of a discursive change or a practical change, feeling "good" (Damla), "proud" (Leyla) and "happy" (Dicle).

As one of the strategies activists use to navigate this space is that they control their feelings in order to present a powerful front against anti-gender mobilizations. Ayça said that as a feminist activist, she constantly feels the need to balance and hide her feelings from her colleagues. She says "in a marginalized group, to survive, you need to push yourself harder. That is bravery. They would say things about you, it will hurt, you will lose motivation, but you need to suck it up and go to that meeting or protest still, to ask them why they said those things and confront them." This shows another burden that feminist activists carry while volunteering for women's issues in Turkey. Being involved means, being attacked and learning how to navigate emotional states and hold the feminist motto above all else. Similarly, Pelin asserted that "we need to be alive in order to play the game. We need to survive. Not just physically but also emotionally. We need to be able to handle the things they throw at us. We cannot be disqualified." Her metaphor of the game resembles Deniz's metaphor of a boxing match. Mediating feelings are essential to the game as they can be used against the activists to take them out of the game or make them a target. Dicle also said, "I don't show feelings on the street. They

only see anger or determination on my face. But when I come home, then I let it out. My fear of being on the frontlines, my worry for those being arrested and that I can be one of them too, and my anxiety over what is going to come next. I will not show these to them [the state] because then they might think we are weak." That is, being a feminist activist/volunteer in Turkey demands living with different emotional facets. The restricted civil space demands being furious, angry, and stubborn. Participants control their emotional reactions and learn ways to stay in the game/match to continue the conversation and hold the line of connection with politics alive.

Adding to participants' struggles with balancing their emotions, the dominant political structure continuously shuts feminist activists out with multiple gatekeepers or change of discourses, leaving them with feelings of desperation and disappointment. To get over these obstacles and gatekeepers, activists and volunteers find strategic ways to continue lobbying and planning demonstrations. For example, Selcan said, "you feel a wall right there. You try to change something, but you can't get through the hatred against you and what you are fighting for. But that's okay because then you start forming a different type of resistance. That becomes productive for the movement." Affective dissonance, felt in times of unsuccessful attempts, led activists in this study to adapt their ways and transform their ideas and feelings in order to achieve their means. Hülya also said, "I didn't know that at times it would feel impossible. Sometimes your hands are tied. You don't know what to do, what to say, or even how to feel. They [the state] do something so outrageous that your shock overwhelms you." Describing a state of affective dissonance, Hülya claimed that, given the state's actions, activists found themselves in a confusing state, but they managed to step out of it to move forward, or as Pelin said, to "remain in the game".

Activists also talked about how AKP demonizes feminism and feminists through producing political rhetoric. Hence, at times, participants' support networks considered being too sharp or being "too feminist" as dangerous and they advised the participants to "hold their horses" to protect their wellbeing. With the current authoritarian changes in society, activists also advise self-protection over feminist activism. As Ahu, who is also involved in opposition politics told, "You're a feminist and a dissident. You don't have to be associated with a political party. You're not married, you don't have children. You advocate for freedom. You go out there and shout your demands. You are active, you are an activist. You write, post, and demonstrate. You could become a scapegoat. They punish this lifestyle and attitude." Her worry about fitting a stereotype that the anti-gender agents use to demonize feminist politics also adds to her anxiety about being out in the public as

a politician. She added, “If we want to keep doing this, we need to adjust. We need to protect ourselves personally and legally. For example, don’t post provocative stuff just to be brave. That’s not the only way to do feminist politics. Please don’t shine too much. That’s not safe anymore.” Her remarks about safety and protection solely relate to navigating an authoritarian space where you could be arrested on account of terrorizing society or harming traditional values.

On the other hand, some activists mention that maintaining a stern movement and a furious attitude towards politics is the key to showing the determination of feminist politics. Ceren said, “I don’t like moderate language. Especially in rights-based activism, you can’t try to understand the perspective of the perpetrator or the anti-gender politics. There are women as angry as me and we need to use that anger as a basis for our motivation and utilize it in our negotiations with others too. This is not something we do in our free time; this is a struggle.” Locating feminist activism as a struggle increases its political importance and thus calls for more emotionally engaged volunteering. Supporting this view, Ahu said, “I get strength from my anger. I think it’s vital for our endurance on the street. You need to be angry to demand and to resist.” Fueled by their emotional states, activists gain strength and willingness to be active in the movement. In addition, for a determinant movement, participants mentioned that stubbornness is also key. Selcan said, “I am stubborn by nature and that is my driving force in my activism and my life generally. I demand answers, I look for the truth all the time. And I am stubborn to find it.” As a precursor, being stubborn and determined becomes a vital characteristic for activists to remain in the field and continue doing activism. Activists use their states of anger and stubbornness to navigate the politically charged activist space without being too affected emotionally.

I argue that experiences of affective dissonance, the moments the activists felt disappointed, sad, and worthless due to discriminatory statements released by state officials are specific to the context these women live in and their emotional reflections intensify because they live in Turkey. Navigating this space of constant emotional turmoil and political resistance becomes tiring, time-consuming, dangerous, and challenging. Despite these negative experiences on the field and the increased gender attacks, activists’ belonging to the feminist movement and gender equality cause overarches any despair or hopelessness. I contend that due to operating in such a complex civil space, feminist activists build a thicker skin that enables them to remain in the movement longer. They strategically embrace their emotional states to remain in the field and build stronger activism responding to anti-gender attacks.

4.3.3 Affect Builds Feminist Solidarities

The feminist movement is peculiar in terms of how it is entangled with gendered and emotional experiences. In Turkey, past experiences of women coupled with marginalizing conservative political discourses such as increasing emphasis on pro-natal policies and heteronormative families, create emotional responses among feminist activists. Through centering these emotions, women in this study define the feminist movement and find reasons to stay in it. As women become emotionally entangled to the movement and to the feminist cause, they develop affective belonging. When describing the movement, affective belonging is described through complex emotions of feeling content, useful, and courageous. Their volunteering experiences positively influence participants' lives as women residing and performing activism in Turkey. Their emotional references to the movement and their volunteering practice show that these women have formed affective bonds with the feminist movement. I argue that their affective belonging and affective solidarity within and towards the movement work together to positively influence their experiences. Through belonging and solidarity, they experience positive emotions, which in turn results in them continuing activism. Their stories about starting activism, volunteering, producing discourses against the state, and causing small or big changes in the discourse motivate these participants. Without these emotional entanglements, it would be easier for them to move forward with their lives without getting attached to a feminist cause. They emphasize that the solidarity they find within the movement makes them stronger and happier.

When we look how participants talk about the feminist movement in Turkey, they emphasize the reasons why they wanted to find solidarity. Participants claim that their "activism is personal but achieves something political" (Lale, 42-year-old teacher). In this sense, emotions become not just a reason for them to join the movement, it becomes the basis on which they build their solidarities. Belen asserts that she feels "desperate because I have nowhere else to turn to, I need the support of an organization." Selcan said, "I feel like I exist with this heated debate. It's everywhere in my life, I must defend my rights everywhere because politics is against me. It almost becomes a habit." As an experienced volunteer and activist Leyla said "Where do we hold on to? How do we catch up [with politics]? Sometimes I believe we cannot solve this by using legal procedures." Participants' strong assertion of their feelings in relation to feminist activism, shows that their dissonance with politics reflects on their everyday life as well as their association with the movement. For these women, forming solidarities and finding a community becomes essential in their lives as they felt politics are not representing or protecting them.

Since these women feel the presence of activism in their lives so strongly but also acknowledge that the current state continues to marginalize them, they also emphasize the importance of adapting strategies that saves them from unlawful prosecution by the state. As I mentioned earlier, following the Gezi protests and the coup attempt, the state has started to monitor civil society closely while also prosecuting activists for defamation charges. Serpil summarizes the current period by saying "After the coup attempts everything changed drastically. We felt it, everyone we knew was now being prosecuted. The space shrank." Naz, a 27-year-old activist who volunteers at an organization, also described this period as "a period of hopelessness and sadness. We didn't have any energy left." For the participants, the political prosecution marks experiences of affective dissonance because it was one of the biggest risks they encountered and feared the most. To remain in the movement, another participant, Hülya said "You need to make sure you do not stick out too much. They would know you, follow you, and catch you at the first chance they get." Despite the negative feelings, these activist women wanted to remain in the movement. I contend that this stems from the affective belonging to the movement. Ahu said, "you can't let go because it becomes a core part of yourself, your understanding of everything around you, it has become you."

In an effort to transform these feelings, activist women find meeting other activists and performing activism useful. When feeling desperate, sad, and hopeless; participant women activists find positivity by going to the meetings of the community they take part in, calling another activist friend, discussing possible solutions with each other, and making plans to get involved. In describing the need for solidarity, Ferda said "In this country, you need to find people like you and walk with them. That's the only way to survive. Otherwise, you feel lonely and desperate the entire time." Belonging to a community when creating resistance, specifically in an authoritative state, is crucial for activists to remain in the movement. Affective solidarity (Hemmings 2012) is fundamental for the feminist movement to reach its collective capacity in creating political changes where affective belonging is of the essence – not just between volunteers but also between the individuals and the movement/organization. I find a resemblance of this articulation of solidarity in the interviews as well. Zeynep said "through forming solidarities, meeting others that suffer the same, you realize this is not about you. This is not a personal attack. It is systemic and suddenly it becomes resistible. When you feel in solidarity with others, you also feel strong and start resisting." Thus, perhaps affective solidarities become the aim of joining the movement for women who feel alone in their marginalization. From then on, the gendered experiences in their daily lives are interpreted as part of a bigger patriarchal systemic oppression.

4.3.4 Affective Responses, Politics and Loss of Motivation

Loss of motivation when doing feminist activism in Turkey becomes almost a predicted experience for the activists in the field. Women activists in this study negotiated the instances that they lost motivation for the activism they pursue and sometimes detached from the movement. However, their stories of demotivation also posit how and why these women find their way back to the feminist movement and continued their activism. Again, I argue that their emotional belonging to the movement and its cause becomes a determining factor in their desire to be a part of this "chaos that actually results in positive change" (Merve, a 27-year-old student).

Participants mention the lack of power to significantly change society as one reason why they lose motivation over working for gender equality. Navigating an authoritarian political scene in a shrinking civil space, participants mention that their activism can only cause minor changes which they cannot observe directly. For example, Alev said, "We fall into despair. We say this is not going to lead to any change. We drop things. Negativity surrounds us. It's like you look for a needle in a haystack. Observing the positive change is almost impossible because you work on a micro level. Social change happens slowly." Alev who volunteers for an organization that aims to make reading a habit in rural women's lives recognizes that her activism yields results but slowly. Even though this recognition makes her lose motivation towards spending time and effort on something that she cannot observe the result, she still embraces the process and continues her activism. Another participant, Dicle said, referring to how she manages to remain in the movement despite the political attacks on gender and stigmatization of activists, "If I were to hear every bad thing they [politicians] say about us and our work, doing activism would have been impossible. Yes, I lose motivation. I distance myself from my work sometimes to put myself back together. But I try to see the overall picture here. I try to remind myself of the bigger aim and why I do this activism on gender-based violence. It's because gender-based violence is systemic, it's patriarchal, and it's embedded in systems of oppression." Again, Deniz, as someone who is actively involved in politics as well, strategically transforms her loss of motivation by realizing the ultimate reason why she joined activism in the first place. As a feminist activist working for eliminating gender-based violence in Turkey, she realizes that the space she is operating in is challenging. However through embracing this challenge, she manages to stay in the movement and continue her activism. This sustainability ensured by emotional and logical negotiations is valuable since it is the way feminist activism continues to strengthen their motivations and expectations according to increasing anti-gender attacks.

Personalizing the failure in efforts to achieve gender equality is also one of the reasons why participants lose motivation in the movement. Hülya when talking about one of the legal cases she lost, said, "I couldn't bring justice to that woman. I really wanted to, but I failed. Maybe it was because I was a rooky, and it was the beginning of my activist journey. But also, it could be a journey set to fail since the system is against us." Being unable to distance themselves from the failures they experience in the movement directly affect how they perceive their activism, which is articulated as "useless," "unsatisfying," "aimless," and "working for nothing." The absence of the state in building policies for gender equality creates this affective dissonance between volunteers' and activists' work and their perception of their efforts. For example, Ayça was talking about how she could not make big promises knowing that her volunteering might not yield the expected results. As a lawyer offering free legal consultation, she said, "we try to give these women assurance. I don't know at least we show them we're siding along with them. But I can never say "Nothing will happen to you from now on. No one can hurt you. The state can't say this, why would I? I can't even say this to myself." Here, Ayça realizes the actual responsibility is on the shoulders of policymakers, but still she finds herself in a dissonant stage where she describes instances that made her feel hopeless and desperate. Connecting her embodied experiences as a woman living in Turkey to her activist experiences, this affective dissonance gains more power and more influence on her. A similar connection also happened in Oya said, "In 2015, when several bombs exploded in İstanbul and Ankara, I was not feeling good about myself, my activism, or this country. I had mixed feelings of wanting to quit but also wanting to be in this field of activism, knowing it's needed even more." Oya's activism is connected to politics and her emotional state. When the political situation is confusing and dangerous, Oya's attachment to her activisms weakens. However, again, since her activism is connected to politics, she realizes that her activism is needed if she were to resist the patriarchal politics in Turkey. Even though the participants personalize the failures they experience in their activism and lose emotional and logical connection with their activism, their affective belonging to the movement becomes the reason why they return and continue participating. I argue that this flexible and sometimes cyclical relation builds sustainable activism.

As Yasemin said, feminist activism is "tiring and time-consuming." In a time when feminist knowledge should be transformed and disseminated more rapidly than ever, feminists could not find the time and the energy to do so because of emotionally dealing with the anti-gender attacks. Referring to this lack of energy, Serpil said, "This[feminism] should be something that the public knows and talks about too. People should not fear calling themselves a feminist. But activists do not have the

energy to find ways to build new knowledge or find alliances. They are bombarded by political attacks and responding to those takes up all their time. Knowledge and solidarity building, unfortunately, falls through the cracks." Moreover, Ceren in an agitated voice asked, "Where do we start? How do we keep up? What are we going to do?" Every year hundreds of women are killed, beaten, and harassed in Turkey and as an activist working with the survivors of such attacks, Ceren is overwhelmed with the injustice and attacks about gender happening in Turkey. Feeling responsible for the cause she is working for, she also stated that she felt "suffocated" but that she "felt responsible enough to go on." This responsibility stems from not just the affective belonging to the cause but also the amount of feminist work that needs to be done for gender equality in Turkey. Even though tiredness and lack of time affects participants' attachment to activism, their responsibility, and determination to overcome political attacks weigh heavier, leading them into feminist activism again.

Most participants work for organizations that utilize physical and digital mediums to perform activism. As activists prioritize certain events, rights, and laws more than others depending on the political and discursive changes, they also question whether emphasizing these issues more than others make them vulnerable to gender attacks. For example, Ceren described a case she had for years about a woman who survived her husband's sexual harassment and how she advocated for this case on social media as well by tweeting, writing blog posts, and mentioning government officials. Her efforts led her to be seen by the politicians and this case was taken on by the news outlets as well. Even though this may seem like a positive development, to gather the attention of the state to a women's rights issue, the surviving woman had to read negative comments about herself and felt discriminated against and marginalized once again. Referring to this experience, Ceren asked "These past days I keep thinking, are we hurting them more by trying to help them?" This question is not only about feminist activism in Turkey, but it also questions the political framework in that activists operates. One might think that feminist activism yields good results, small or big. However, in Turkey, Ceren's question shows that due to the current stigmatization of activists and the issue of gender in politics, any issue activists raise is also seen as a field or a person to attack. Yet, as activists continuously question themselves and the work they do, they find alternative ways to overcome these attacks and utilize different strategies to protect their efforts and the people they work with.

In the interviews, feminist activists mention different perspectives as to how they transform instances of motivation loss and the strategies they utilize to handle feelings of despair, hopelessness, and sadness. Oya said, "Of course, there are times

that I feel tired and consumed, even hopeless that nothing's going to change. But this is not like I give up completely. I change the type of volunteering I do; I switch from online to offline, or if I'm in charge of posting things on social media, I take responsibility for taking photos during demonstrations. This helps to keep my motivation up." Oya also talked about self-care and self-checking as useful processes for her to realize her emotions towards activism. When she feels hopeless and tired, she asks; "how are you feeling, what are the things you do simply for yourself, what can help you overcome this feeling, do you want to continue doing this?" This self-check assists them psychologically to handle the negativity, ignorance, discrimination, and stigmatization that she daily faces as part of her activism. Adding on to self-check and self-care, Dicle said, "collective care is useful to get over emotional stuff when doing activism. We may not be affected by the same thing, but still, the things that affect us are a part of a bigger political system." Collective care, as a strategy, also works for Hülya. She said, "Collective care, in addition to self-care, is important for the activists to elevate their self-compassion." Through practicing self-care, self-checking, and collective care simultaneously, participants find strategies to transform their negative emotions into something positive and reserve their motivation to do activism.

4.4 Striving for Resilient Feminist Activism

Intensifying in the last ten years, AKP fostered an anti-gender approach throughout its policymaking processes (Çağatay 2019; Hülagü 2020). From education to international agreements, this agenda presented itself as the protector of traditional family and national values. Given that feminist activism works to elevate the conditions of women and LGBTQ+ by advocating for equal rights and representation in politics, this conservative agenda formed around family values formed its support through demonizing gender and blaming them for decreasing birth rates and the rise of "deviant" sexualities. While the authoritarian state regarded criticism as terrorism or an attempt to overthrow the government, it also deployed strategies such as arbitrary arrests, prolonged periods of detainment, public shaming through forceful arrests, and judicial complications in order to further silence the civil actors. As a result, the space feminist activists navigate became politically and emotionally charged, making volunteering difficult to sustain.

Despite these political difficulties, participants' accounts show that activists regard politics as an active force that initiates, transforms, and disrupts their activism.

These affective negotiations open spaces for activists to understand the feelings they are experiencing, find their connection to politics, and transform their activism to change these associated emotions in return. As Serpil said, "I give myself the permission to be depressed. I allow myself to turn off and back down. Because then I can come back stronger. I know that I can't leave this space, it's a part of me." This shows that negative political affect become feeble when activists openly face these emotions and use them to come back to activism.

Analyzing the relationship between politics, volunteering, and affect through the accounts of women volunteers actively working in the feminist movement in Turkey, I argue that regardless of these women's stages and forms of volunteering, their description of the volunteering experience serves as a mirror into the complex and deep emotional entanglements they have with the politics in Turkey and their feminist activism. Through bringing emotions to the center, especially emotions experienced as dissonance, negotiation, solidarity, and belonging, I argue that these women develop an emotional understanding of their volunteering experiences. This understanding also feeds into their formation of identities as feminist women living and doing activism in Turkey and in return develop affective belonging to the movement. I contend that these women's activism becomes sustainable because they realize the affective processes they are engulfed in and consciously work to transform these emotions. Through alternating between complex emotions and finding strategies to cope with them, these women retain their activism and continue forming online and offline solidarities.

5. AFFECTIVE BELONGING AND ORGANIZATIONAL CONFLICTS IN FEMINIST COMMUNITIES

I was then coding my interviews, having interviewed twenty-four participants, when I saw the outing of the feminist Filmmor Women's Cooperation on Twitter by its volunteers for abusive and laborsome working conditions. Known for their work on promoting gender equality in cinema and media, Filmmor also organizes the Annual International Filmmor Women's Film Festival on Wheels and screens international/national movies focusing on human rights, gender equality, and social justice since 2002. The disclosure pamphlet signed by thirteen volunteers refers to the first disclosure in 2015 and adds the struggles of women+ and LGBTQ+ to the discussion. The latest pamphlet stated, "As LGBTQ+ and women+ members of the organization, we are all in solidarity. The violence we endure here is not personal but a political matter. We ask everyone to realize their privileges and take all disclosures seriously in order to end this violence within the feminist and LGBTQ+ movement." Several accounts retweeted the pamphlet and soon with the defensive replies of the director of Filmmor, this disclosure became a discussion on feminist organizing principles, mobbing and harassment in feminist organizations, and ways or possibilities to form feminist solidarities around such oppressive atmospheres.

Upon witnessing this disclosure online, I interviewed six individuals who took an active part in such disclosures of feminist organizations over the last five years and also further coded the previously-conducted interviews to analyze instances of divergence and detachment from feminist activism, which –surprisingly—are not that rare. Through tracing affect in these experiences of detachment, I bring forward the affective negotiations of care work involved in feminist activism and the principles of feminist organizing. So far affective beginnings and political associations of feminist activism/volunteering have been discussed to argue that affective dissonance, affective solidarity, and affective belonging form a poignant activism experience that results in resilient solidarities. Adding to the activism dynamics of personal history and the political context, this chapter analyzes how organizational culture shapes

participants' relation to their own activism and the feminist movement in general.

5.1 Feminist Organizational Culture and Affect

Though for decades feminists are organizing in groups, collectives, initiatives, foundations, associations, nongovernmental organizations, and many other platforms in great numbers in the field, literature centering around feminist organizing is still growing. The current literature focuses on values and desires associated with feminist organizing as well as personal and organizational differences that create dilemmas between the individual vs. the organization, and the state vs. the organization (Acker 1995; Beril 2017; Johansson and Wickström 2022; Guenther 2009; Korolczuk 2016; Martin 1990; Mumby and Putnam 1992; Coşar and Özkan-Kerestecioğlu 2017). The majority of the published works focus on feminist organizations that take institutional forms or work as third-sector civil society organizations (Arxer 2013; Beril 2017; Göksel and Güneş 2005; Guenther 2009; Korolczuk 2016; Mary Alice Haddad 2009; Morgen 1994). Some focus on the organizational dynamics within digital communities (Ihm 2017; McCarthy and Glozer 2022). This section brings together both formulations of feminist organizing and uses the term feminist communities to refer to both structured and loosely structured organizational culture(s) (Abrahams 1996; Acker 1995; Boz and Palaz 2007b; Ertan 2020). In addition, I also use feminist organizing to refer to the processes of forming activism, evolving and changing dynamics included in building solidarities, and how organizations are constructed and reconstructed through the actions, decisions, and values of the participants (Acker 1995).

Feminism, as an ideology, advocates for establishing political, economic, and social equality among individuals in a society and strives to foster and promote an inclusive and intersectional approach (Ahmed 2018; Collins 2017; Coşar and Onbaşi 2008; Crenshaw 1991). Building around principles of feminism, feminist organizational culture also adopts similar values; which model humane, egalitarian, and democratic relations (Acker 1995; Altuntaş 2019; Martin 1990; Vachhani and Pullen 2019). Contrary to bureaucratic and hierarchical organizational structures, feminist organizations emphasize participatory democracy, collectivity, and consensual decision-making (Morgen 1994; Özdemir 2016). That is why, in the first published works focusing on different organizational cultures, feminist organizations are also referred to as "counter-bureaucratic organizations" or "feminist alternative organizations"(Acker 1995; Martin 1990; Morgen 1994). Now, feminist organizations

are referred to as communities, collectives, and organizations (Altuntaş 2019; McCarthy and Glozer 2022). In this chapter, I will use feminist communities as an overarching term to refer to various forms of formally structured feminist organizations (foundations, non-governmental organizations, federations) and collectivist groups (issue-based groups, collectives, initiatives) that exist simultaneously in the feminist movement in Turkey.

The feminist principle "personal is political" is also reflected in the feminist organizational culture. Similar to feminist activism work, the statement that personal is political underlines the approach that private-deemed issues such as sexuality, interpersonal relations, emotions, and family could be discussed in the organizational realm (Morgen 1994; Mumby and Putnam 1992). Discussion of such issues is welcomed and expected. Volunteers or activists are encouraged to express their needs, desires, values, and ideas freely. In this supportive and nurturing atmosphere, participants actively engage in community building while also sharing their emotions (Santos 2020). This approach underlines the feminist principle to deconstruct power hierarchies. Though one cannot attest to the full incorporation of such inclusive approaches, feminist organizations continuously strive to cultivate intersectional and open activist spaces.

According to Morgen, there are three main reasons why it is hard to separate personal issues from feminist organizational spaces (1994). First, feminist communities are fueled by the values, ideas, and actions of the participating actors and these also determine the type of activism expected from or planned by the participants. Second, feminist communities aim to maximize autonomy and collective work while also offering personal improvement spaces for the volunteers/activists. Third, these communities specifically create platforms or plan meetings for participants to share their emotions and thoughts (Morgen 1994). Describing these three elements, Mumby and Putnam develop the concept of "bounded emotionality" to refer to "an alternative mode of organizing in which nurturance, caring, community, supportiveness, and interrelatedness are fused with individual responsibility to shape organizational experiences" (1992, p.474). Though not all are present in every feminist community, still feminist activist spaces aim to achieve these in order to make activism physically and emotionally sustainable.

Core values and organizing principles also determine whether a community is feminist or not. Patricia Yancey Martin (1990) developed a ten-point scale to evaluate the organization and its feminist values. These points are feminist values, feminist goals, outcomes for the members and the society, founding circumstances, structure, practice, members and membership principles, scope and scale, and external rela-

tions such as autonomy, funding, network linkages (Martin 1990). This scale could be beneficial to evaluate organizations that do not necessarily identify with feminism but do feminist work. It could also be useful to evaluate organizations that identify themselves as feminist communities but do not necessarily carry out feminist values and organizational culture. However, it should be noted that these categories are not exclusive, more can be added depending on the topics of the activist work.

Moreover, neo-liberalization of the civic space has an impact on the way feminist communities determine their structures, goals, outcomes, and many more. Neoliberalism has become a major challenge in feminist organizing, demanding measurable goals and outcomes which may yield financial benefits to ensure the viability of organizations (Aslan and Gambetti 2011; Korolczuk 2016;). Getting major funding from international organizations for their activities, some feminist communities are criticized for reproducing the neoliberal agenda of self-reliance and the capitalist market (Coşar and Özkan-Kerestecioğlu 2017; Fraser 2009). In the interviews, this neoliberal mindset of allocating responsibilities, measuring outcomes, and drafting reports are also mentioned as motivating factors for feminist activists. Some participants, on the contrary, mentioned the dedication of long hours and free labor that goes into such activities, which could be used otherwise in doing a demonstration and digital activist work. In order to challenge the hegemony of neoliberalism in civil society communities and maintain the balance between activist labor and project work, the meaning of communities should be reconstructed to acknowledge solidarity and care as practices and as basic human needs within feminist communities, which have considerable importance in ensuring sustainability and resilience for communities (Ghodsee 2004; Korolczuk 2016; McRobbie 2009).

5.1.1 Care Work and Feminist Activism

Embedded in our everyday lives, care becomes integral in shaping our perceptions of the world around us as well. Joan Tronto defines care as "everything that we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible" (1993, 103). She argues that by bringing care from its peripheral location to the center of our understanding of morality and human nature, we will be able to unpack the ways in which humans are interdependent on each other. This human interdependence can also show how the societies we live in are structured in a way to underestimate this human interdependence, highlighting reason and logic to marginalize people who do caring work (Tronto 2011). How is caring related to feminist activist work? Felipe Santos (2020) defines two types of caring in femi-

nist activism: politics of care and care work. While politics of care refer to the reasons why activists participate in activism without expecting personal gains, the latter is explained as the act of caring for each other and committing to the feminist community (Santos 2020). Politics of care, as explained in Chapters 2 and 3, are observed in participants' negotiations of politics and personal daily encounters as reasons to join activism in Turkey. In this chapter, I take a closer look at the intergroup dynamics of feminist organizations through participants' articulations of co-dependency, emotional labor, and reasons for detachment from the movement.

Drawing from Felipe Santos' articulation of care work as "being able to address grievances through contentious collective action" (Santos 2020, 139), I attend to feminist activists' labor in the field as care work. Individuals that work together and face similar personal grievances develop solidarity if their needs for emotional attachment and personal satisfaction are met within the organization. When members of a community, in this context feminist communities, observe that others are committed to the collective as well, they work more comfortably.

In order to understand the care work in activism, utilizing Tronto's (1993) identification of five phases of caring is beneficial: caring about, taking care of, caregiving, care receiving, and caring with. Related to these phases of caring, she also emphasizes five elements of caring: attentiveness, responsibility, competence, responsiveness to the care receiver, and trust and solidarity (Toronto 1993). The table below, taken from Sandberg and Elliott's article, summarizes how these phases and elements are connected to each other:

Figure 5.1 Taken from Sanberg and Elliott (2019)

TABLE 1
Meeting One's Caring Responsibility

The phases of caring	*The elements of caring*
Caring about: Recognizing need	*Attentiveness:* One is receptive to individual needs; care cannot happen without attention to need.
Taking care of: Acknowledging your responsibility to respond to need	*Responsibility:* Knowing and understanding to whom one is responsible.
Caregiving: Taking action to meet need	*Competence:* If one lacks education, training, knowledge, etc. in how to do a job, the result will be ineffectuality; good care is competent care.
Care receiving: Assessing the success of the action in meeting the need	*Responsiveness to the care receiver:* One must verify with the one who is cared for that the care given has actually met their needs.
Caring with: Building a feedback loop between carer and the one who is cared for to build expectations for the future of caregiving	*Trust and solidarity:* Trust is built when people realize they can rely upon others to participate in their care. Solidarity forms when individuals understand they are better off engaged in care processes together rather than alone.

Note: Adapted from Tronto (1993, 2011, 2013).

Acknowledging needs and the ways to meet those caring needs, activists can form a feminist ethics of care within the community itself (Sandberg and Elliott 2019). Activists engage in forms of caring about, taking care of, caregiving, care receiving, and caring not only when they work with care receivers, but also when they work in collaboration with each other. Activists themselves also become care receivers themselves, expecting responsiveness to their personal needs and desire within the community in order to build trust and solidarity towards the community and the movement (Young 1986). Focusing more on structured organizations, such approaches can enable shared dialogue within the organizational culture and provide more trust and flexibility between coworkers or volunteers (Stensota 2010).

Feminist ethics of care "attaches value to understanding the needs and values of specific others (whether they proximate or distant), it undermines the idea of an unambiguous homogeneous moral subject" (Sevenhuijsen 1998, 60). This approach to caring, therefore, emphasizes the uniqueness of individual experiences, values, and desires; and incorporates it into the interactions among activists (Ramdas 2016). This relational approach creates an inclusive and participatory space for feminist activism, where situated knowledge and emotions are central to forming solidarities.

In conclusion, care work and care labor are central to the way we approach people around us and the way we care about and take care of the world. In doing feminist activism, volunteers and activism join the movement with caring intentions; caring for gender equality, caring about social injustice, and to take care of structural gaps that the state ignores (Ari 2018; Yurdalan, Paker, and Esmeray 2012). Apart from caring for what surrounds them socially and politically, volunteers also engage in relations of care within the organizational culture (Özdemir 2016). The intrapersonal relations become important in defining how activists feel as part of a movement and it can determine the sustainability of their activism. Analyzing both intrapersonal and organizational care relations can open spaces for further understanding the role of care work in feminist activism.

5.1.2 Doing Emotion Work in Feminist Activism

Emotions also contribute to practices of care work and feminist ethics of care in feminist activism. As argued in the previous two chapters, affect plays a significant role in building empathy towards the cause, motivating individuals to participate in activism, and forming affective belonging to the community. Emotional caring among activists is also argued as an integral part of developing solidarities despite individual differences (Michels and Steyaert 2017; Santos 2020;). Recognizing the

emotionality of organizational experience opens up new venues of caretaking, nurturance, empathy, and connectedness (Morgen 1994; Sandberg and Elliott 2019).

In doing activism, feminist communities build a shared emotional energy that fuels their activism and replenishes their solidarity (McCarthy and Glozer 2022). This emotional energy is fostered by a common "emotional rhythm" that is shaped by group dynamics, parallelism between individuals' goals, and common emotional reactions towards social injustice. This emotional energy is provoked through switches between highs (excitement, passion, desire, enthusiasm, joy) and lows (frustration, disappointment, despair, anger) (Michels and Steyaert 2017; Parke and Seo 2017). This shared emotion is reflected in the field itself, as in cases when you receive hate you may also project that negative emotion towards your activist circle, or it can be experienced as a result of activists' interactions with each other when planning activities, demonstrations or during meetings (McCarthy and Glozer 2022). Thus, emotional connections between activists become vital in forming sustainable communities (Santos 2020).

This "emotional energy" in the feminist community is also referred to as the "affect climate" (Parke and Seo 2017). In this atmosphere, emotions are utilized in two ways: to use emotions for functional purposes and to control emotions to prevent dysfunctionality (Parke and Seo 2017). As Parke and Seo describe, in the first case, emotions such as anger, hate, frustration, and despair are used as forces to create counter-publics and plan activism. Second, emotions are filtered before experiencing in the community in order to provide an emotionally settling environment that is clear of inner group conflicts (2017). In addition to these two strategic uses of emotions in communities, Hochschild argues that in organizations and communities members strive to match the common emotion within the community (1979). This emotion work, the process of working on or managing an emotion, results in adjusting emotions to present a united front with the community, regardless of personal desires and feelings.

Drawing from arguments about how emotions are at play in organizational settings and in feminist communities, I argue that feminist activist women in Turkey navigate an emotionally charged space not just created by authoritarian politics but also as a result of their involvement in a community. The organizational and interpersonal dynamics in the community influence the degrees feminist activists participate in and remain attached to that community. Feminist activists who specifically preferred to remain independent in their activism also presented an integral part in feminist community building, pointing to inadequacy of feminist care ethics and organizational principles.

5.2 Fingers Crossed: Happy Contestations about Feminist Organizing

Joining a feminist community has been described as a rewarding experience accompanied by different emotions. From the way, the community welcomed newcomers to the extent that the volunteers found themselves useful within the community, experiences shared by the participants showed that becoming a part of a community is a happy and safe experience for them to practice activism in Turkey. Their affective negotiations of how they felt when they first joined a feminist group or a feminist demonstration also represent their hopes and expectations from the movement. I argue that participants joined the movement with pride, hope, and trust; and expected to find solidarity, freedom of expression of thoughts and identities, and a space for personal growth as feminist women. As these expectations were met, feminist activists grew an affective attachment to the community as well.

The majority of participants mentioned the inclusivity and welcoming nature of feminist communities as a positive experience, something that made them feel joy, hope, and belonging as newcomers. In her first meeting at a feminist community, Ayça described how appreciated and excited she felt despite her strangeness to feminist activism and to the community itself. She said, "I was attending without knowing anyone. But no one asked why I was there. Just the opposite, the welcoming committee was extremely excited to meet new volunteers. They repeatedly said, 'We are glad you're here.' This motivates you because you don't know what you want to do there, you are unsure. But the community embraces you and tells you that your being here means so much for them." Feeling welcomed becomes a recurring theme in the stories of participants. Yasemin also said, "The organization I volunteered at was clear on one principle: no matter who you are, it is enough that you are a woman. For example, there is no such thing as you recently joined, you can't speak at the meetings. They value your opinions even if you're a newcomer." This welcoming setting also inspires the newcomers to embrace the community and have the desire to do more. Upon having been greeted so warmly, Ayça said that she wanted to learn more about feminism and the feminist movement in Turkey so that she could "return the favor."

This welcoming nature of feminist communities is discussed in relation to the structure and size of the community. Having volunteered in smaller communities with a maximum of ten core members, Eylül asserted that she enjoyed the privilege of befriending everyone easily and learning the work by heart quickly. Being in a closely knit community becomes a positive experience for Eylül, an experience where she builds affective relationships. Similar to Eylül's experience, Naz also volunteers at

a small community with women of similar age. This small community becomes are comfortable" and "safe" space for her to express herself. She said "You start to feel like you are surrounded by people who won't judge you or your opinions. That is a wonderful feeling. That is what keeps you going." Adding to this, Alev argued that working in a small group makes building trust easier among peers. She said, "You trust someone and then you trust the people they work with as well. You trust the work they do. Because once you know people closely, you know their intentions as well. That is easy to understand in a small community."

Building affective belonging in small feminist communities is not solely tied to intra-personal relationships, but it is also closely related to developing a hands-on volunteering experience. Eylül said, "I always came across small feminist communities. I was very lucky I think, I got to do a lot of things and I got experience in a lot of things as well." Though I will discuss volunteer labor in feminist communities, here Eylül mentions her labor spent performing multiple tasks and taking on multiple responsibilities as a positive experience that developed her volunteering skills and her attachment to the cause. Deniz mentions the importance of multitasking and embracing the feminist community to feel belonging. She said, "At first, you must get your hands dirty. You should take multiple responsibilities so that you have an idea about what everyone does in this organization." Even though running multiple errands in a community can be tremendously tiring and time-consuming, participants discuss this as a valuable initiation experience. For some participants, knowing the community they are entering and closely following the activist work they do validates their hopes to accomplish good and strengthens their belief in feminist activism. This also relates back to importance of shared emotional energy within the community to boost motivations and positive intra-personal relations (McCarthy and Glozer 2022). Referring to how her emotional energy improved, Eylül said, "Yes, I was overwhelmed at first. But then you realize that you feel like you are a part of something. You are contributing to a better cause in your own way. You are in this[activism] together with other people who are dedicated like you. You are a part of a community." The warmth and calmness in Eylül's voice prove that she appreciated handling various responsibilities and that as she gained experience, she also developed an affective belonging to her volunteering.

As a result of volunteering in non-hierarchical organizations where every opinion is valuable, unique, and respected, participants also feel respected, hopeful, and belonging. Ceren describes these inclusive spaces as,

> No one patronizes others. Everybody pays attention to using politically correct and inclusive language. They try not to judge each other

> and warn if anybody uses discriminatory language. Everybody respects each other's past experiences and values their contribution as something unique added to the community. There is so much we can learn from each other, and we try to open up new possibilities for knowledge exchange as well. I think this truly comes from the heart.

Her elaboration of the feminist community resembles the definition of feminist organizational culture in the literature as spaces that foster participatory democracy and intersectional policymaking (Guenther 2009). Ceren's affective belonging towards the community stems from this inclusive community culture. This community space is also described as continuously being de/reconstructed since there are no fixed hierarchical structures. Serpil described this community as a "vibrant, always changing, dynamic space." Due to this dynamic nature, she argues that the feminist community manages to build stronger bonds among each other. In addition, Oya described the principles of a feminist collective, "Collective decision making, collective will, and a collective organizational structure. Agency is important. Everybody is autonomous and every opinion is valuable." Performing activism in these communities build activists' hope toward accomplishing gender equality. Their affective belonging not just towards the community but also to the principles itself becomes poignant in determining their broader approach to feminist activism as well.

5.3 Frustration: Detachments and Disagreements

No communal space is exempt from disagreements. Feminist communities, despite having been built on the principles of inclusivity, flexibility, and intersectionality, also experience intra-personal and intercommunal disagreements about care work and volunteer labor within the community that goes unrewarded or underappreciated (Ari 2018; Santos 2020). As a result of these conflicts, volunteers lose confidence in the community and choose to break ties. Some break away from the community and move on to another one, some choose not to be affiliated with a community anymore and remain independent, and some come back to volunteering. What is common in these breaking-away narratives is that these volunteers and activists desire to be a part of the feminist movement in one way or another. I argue that their affective belonging to the movement outweighs their experiences of detachment.

In a similar concept, McCarthy and Glozer (2022) use the theoretical framework "affective embodiment" to explain the emotional energy that makes institutional work possible despite intra-communal tensions. They argue that actors in the organiza-

tion draw their energy from affective solidarity, which reminds them of aligned personal and communal experiences. In this section, adding to McCarthy and Glozer's argument, I introduce affective belonging as a specific type of emotional bond forming between civic actors and the community, a connection that feeds from personal history, situated knowledge, and experiences in the community. By using affective belonging, I emphasize this two-sided relationship between the feminist community and activists, the processes of building, cutting, and reconstructing affective connections. Rather than focusing specifically on how activists regain emotional energy to come back to activism, I bring forward the personal, political, and emotional reasons for their negotiations.

In what follows I analyze discussions about care work, volunteer labor, and intrapersonal relationships as sites of conflict and detachment in feminist communities.

5.3.1 Negotions of Care Work in Volunteering

Lack of community discussion about care work and volunteer labor is the most mentioned reason for detachment in the narratives. By nature, volunteering is perceived as offering free labor and time for a cause (Boz and Palaz 2007). Participants draw attention to how defining volunteering or activism as "noble and selfless" replaces the ethical responsibility of ensuring fair volunteering conditions from the community or organization to the individual. İrem said, "In civil society, you work for a small amount of pay or you are expected to do it even if there is no money in it. Because you're working here for a lofty cause. You are trying to bring justice to women. This puts you in a position where you can't demand anything." Reframing İrem's statement, Ayça said, "We don't get paid for what we do here. But we don't mind at all. Because we know this is for the public good. But sometimes when it feels too much when you want to say no to something, you should be able to do so without worrying about whether someone will judge you or not." Similarly, Eylül claimed that at her paid job she could decline a request easily if she thinks it is not her responsibility, but she could not and would not do that in volunteering. Realizing that even though volunteers are willing to spend time and labor on activism because it brings them satisfaction and joy, their volunteering also requires negotiation of allocation of responsibility and limits of providing assistance to the community.

In the interviews, few participants embraced the rhetoric of having lofty aims in doing activism but also complained about a lack of discussion regarding care and labor in the community. Though knowing that they are volunteering for a lofty cause

makes them proud and happy, this being used as an excuse for labor exploitation makes them sad and disappointed. Pointing to this İrem said,

> The saddest part, at one point we[volunteers] working the system also try to convince ourselves. Otherwise, of course, you don't want to accept that you are in an exploitative system. You can't demand time off; you can't demand a pay increase. Then you say, okay that's true I can't want these. Your friends with white-collar jobs also praise you for doing a noble thing. They boost your ego, and you start to think no matter what it's worth it. And you try to forget about all the exploitation that. You start reproducing the discourse about how noble volunteering is.

Pointing to a similar experience, Eylül who explicitly said that a volunteer should do whatever they were asked to do without expecting anything also asserted that in some organizations she felt taken advantage of. When I pointed out that her approach to activism and reasons for breaking away from certain communities contradict each other, she said "I would hate myself if I were to say that this is an exploitation of labor. But yes, it is that. I don't want people to use me because I am volunteering there. I might not be getting paid, but I still have boundaries." Having a similar contradiction, İrem said, "They were using me, taking advantage of my volunteering. I knew that. But I said to myself, 'My labor matters. I am not being used. I am doing this so that children can have a better life.' I felt like I should not complain because I was volunteering with a lofty purpose." These women convince themselves that the lofty purpose weighs heavier than their personal desires and needs as volunteers. However, perceiving their efforts as "normal" demands of volunteering, they also disregard the emotional and mental toll they are experiencing. This neglect of personal needs gradually yields to distancing from the experience itself and losing emotional touch with the purpose. As Hülya said, "I was ignoring the fact that I was being exploited. Once I fully realized it, my volunteering never felt the same again." This exploitation of labor could also relate back to the interplay between feminism and neoliberalism. As the number of projects undertaken by feminist communities increase, demands from the volunteers also become extensive and laborsome (Coşar and Özkan-Kerestecioğlu 2017). As Korolzcuk highlights, managing volunteer labor and maintaining balance between volunteers' time and labor in the community becomes crucial (2016).

Activists' complaints about their volunteering experiences create affective dissonance and confusion about how they are feeling about their activism and being a part of the feminist community. Some participants claimed this realization of exploitation felt like "betrayal" and some defined it as "disappointing." Regardless of the type

of exploitation, the fact that it happened in a feminist community had the utmost impact on participants' negotiation about breaking away from volunteering or activism. As their expectations from the community did not match their experiences, they felt emotionally and ideologically challenged. Witnessing the welcoming and inclusive nature of feminist communities, Serpil said, "It came from a place that I least expected. I think that is the hardest part. You would expect to be exploited in a hierarchical institution. But here they [feminist communities] take pride in being fair and open." As feminist communities embrace solidarity in their organizational culture, they are also expected to pay more attention to personal needs and desires. This expectation creates dissonance when activists feel that their needs are not taken under consideration in an organization that is built on principles of equality and democracy (Altuntaş 2019; Vachhani and Pullen 2019).

In addition, feminist activists in this study state that both the feminist community and the activists are responsible to bring work ethics to the discussion table. As one of the organizing principles of feminist communities, discussing and defining boundaries builds a safe activism space. Referring to this principle Ferda said, "Feminist communities if they are aiming to create change, should also be open to discuss conflicts in the community and change its ways as well. Rather than completely opposing negative comments, the community should provide a space for confrontation." As feminist communities base themselves on being safe spaces, owning up to ethical responsibilities and discussing problems becomes essential for volunteers to feel belonging (Santos 2020). For example, Damla said,

> In volunteering, it is difficult to discuss labor. What does volunteer labor equate to? How do you differentiate physical, mental, and emotional labor? What is more important in volunteering? Who makes that distinction? How do you argue for your labor or prove that you are exploited? One might have time to dedicate to street demonstrations and one might be on call for emergency phone calls coming from survivors of gender-based violence. How do you evaluate these two different acts of labor? It is difficult. But if somebody feels like their labor is not appreciated or that they are being exploited, they should find a ground to deliver their complaints and the community should discuss it together. Then maybe we can find a systematic solution.

Addressing the affective dissonance of a volunteer can prevent detachment and even prove to the volunteer that their efforts are recognized. This recognition strengthens the affective belonging the activist feels towards the community.

Participants who are independent feminist activists explain their reasons to remain

independent from a fixed community as the lack of discussion about what volunteering entails in terms of care work and emotional labor. Having joined a community and left as a result of conflicts about dedicated time to volunteering, Ferda said, "I think volunteering is not properly defined and its boundaries are not fairly set. That is why it is open to exploitation. I can't put myself through that again and just wait until somebody takes advantage of my time and labor." Another participant, Oya, claimed that she preferred having no community restrictions when doing activism. She said, "If you're volunteering at a fixed community, then conflicts are unavoidable. Of course, there will be somebody who does not respect your boundaries or who has high expectations. I lost my belief in that organizational setting. I love the way I do volunteering. I am happier, freer, and way more flexible." Trusting in her intuition to remain independent, Oya made her volunteering sustainable by thrusting away from working in a fixed community. Though continuously switching communities sounds like making the process of building a connection with the movement more difficult, instead, Oya found her own affective belonging in remaining as an independent feminist. Damla, after working with certain well-known feminist communities, also appreciated being an independent activist, free of community ties. She said, "This is the only way I can continue activism. I know that. I may go back to my old community, but not right now. I always leave a door open, you know, just in case. But I listen to my desires for volunteering, and this is what they are telling me to do."

Care work is also presented as another challenge activists face throughout their volunteering experience. Caring is perceived as an inherent element in activism because "you volunteer if you care" (Hülya). However, a discrepancy between the amount of care expected in the community and the care that activists are willing to give may result in detachment from the community (Sandberg and Elliott 2019). Ayça who was working with survivors of gender-based violence pointed to the emotional difficulty of legally advising these survivors. She said, "Survivors call you on your phone and tell all the details about how the abuse happened. You are expected to care for that person and advise them on their next steps. Sometimes I feel like I take on the emotional burden as well." Empathizing with the survivors makes volunteering emotionally challenging. Not knowing how to tackle this emotional turmoil, activists expect guidance from the community. Dicle said, "I do my part and meet with the survivor. But I must be equipped with the necessary tools to cope with all the sadness, despair, and violence I am bombarded with. Because then I go home, and I keep remembering what the survivors told me. It's hard." Offering training or psychological consultancy for volunteers can be a way for communities to show their appreciation and acknowledgment of the care work performed by the volun-

teers. This mutual appreciation may also yield stronger emotional bonds. Instead, the lack of these services creates dissatisfaction and results in distancing from the field to prevent one's mental health.

Furthermore, participants mention how their gender adds to the expectancy to do care work in the field. As women activists, they are perceived as caring individuals by nature. Referring to this gendered aspect of care work, Zeynep said, "You are a woman listening to another woman. They feel like they are talking to one of their friends. You are present there as a woman from then on. Not as a volunteer or as a lawyer." Drawing on her experiences Pelin also said that "womanhood precedes your volunteering. It is the first way someone perceives you and they immediately think of you as someone who will listen to their depressing stories and give advice."

Though participants cannot escape others' gendered perceptions, they find withdrawing themselves from the field an easier solution. Nehir said, "I cut the time I was spending on the field because I was very uncomfortable continuously being asked whether I was a mother or I had any advice for them." Another participant, Dicle said that she implemented some strategies to keep the dialogue brief and professional. She said, "When I first meet the survivors and if they ask me whether they can smoke or not, I say yes of course. I don't smoke with them, even though I would like to. If I smoke too then the atmosphere turns into a venting session. I don't want that. I want them to see me as a volunteer who is there to professionally help them." Finding strategic solutions to mark boundaries in the field is useful for activists to overcome the gender stereotypes that precede them. Besides, their volunteering experience becomes sustainable for them as well.

5.3.2 Intra-personal Conflict and Disagreements

In addition to care work and labor exploitation in feminist communities, participants point to intra-personal conflicts as another reason that disrupts community peace and hence their volunteering experience. Everyone enters activism with different intentions and desires. Even though feminist communities strive to embrace situated knowledge and identity differences, when these desires are in conflict with each other, personal disagreements become unavoidable. Participants discussed selfish gains, personal agendas, and different understandings of feminist discourses as the reasons why intra-group conflicts happen. Though these conflicts occasionally result in one party breaking away from the group, feminist communities also regard these instances as chances to build stronger solidarities through practicing self-criticism as a conflict resolution mechanism.

Having an ulterior motive in joining feminist activism, such as gaining respect, acquiring skills for a paid job, or building up a CV, is regarded as a facade by some of the participants. In the narratives, participants mention is with expressions of anger, repulsion, and surprise. For example, Ahu talking with an expression of anger on her face said, "Unfortunately this struggle for women's rights is something that is used for personal gains. I don't even call some of them activists. They are like dealers of women's activism. Because they advertise their activism. They are doing it for the money and fame." She goes on to talk about how these women eventually break away from the group, "Once they feel like they are not getting what they want, they move on to another field. Or sometimes the group slowly pushes them out. Of course, these women don't admit they are using activism to gain something. But rather they blame the group for being discriminatory." Ahu told this is one of the reasons why feminist communities cannot refrain from disagreements. Emotional attachment (affective belonging) is crucial for the participants to do authentic activism where the activist desires to do good and gain nothing else. Described as "ego-wars" by multiple participants, conflicts arising between individuals over personal gains has an impact on the atmosphere. Seeing how the field can be taken advantage of, for instance, Ayça asserted that "I lost my hopeful perception that everybody does this by heart. No, you will also come across people who simply do it to gain a reputation or get some praise from others." Thus, seeing that activists they collaborate with are not emotionally dedicated to feminist activism, participants claimed to lose motivation.

These "ego wars" are also triggered by the over-identification of certain activists with specific organizations, collectives, and initiatives. Monopolization of power also occurs in feminist activism. Participants raised this issue as one of the problems in the communities they were engaged in and one of the reasons why they lost confidence in being a part of a feminist community. Ceren named this monopolization of power as "identity building through activism" which describes the ways in which some individuals attach their identities to the work they do in women's activism. She said, "Ego-wars, ambitious people, marginalization of newcomers, ageism. Some people have been involved in activism most of their lives and they don't give way to young activists. It's almost like their identities are built on this. If they get out of activism, they will be left with nothing." Serpil talking about a known figure in feminist activism said, "These types of people do a weird identity building. That is why they cannot let it[activism] go. If you take this organization from this woman's hands, she might die. It is a very toxic relationship." Finishing her sentence with "toxic relationship" points to her disapproval of such a sense of ownership that she encounters in feminist communities. This monopolization of power in communities

marginalizes people who do not fit the profile of the community or simply who do not get along with the actors who hold the power. Since it is against the inclusivity and openness about which feminist organizing takes pride in, participants lose belief in the principles themselves, and this damages the affective relationship between the activist and the community.

Marginalization and ageism posit another reason for intra-personal conflict in feminist communities. Ageism stems not only from age differences but also from differences creates as a result of having various activism experiences. In her early activist years in one of the communities, Ferda said that her ideas were disregarded because she was a young inexperienced activist. She felt that experienced activists were looking down on her and they kept giving orders to me. At the time, as a young feminist, she did not find the courage to step up to these women and this experience draw her out of the activist scene as she felt alienated. In addition to Ferda's experience, Ceren said,

> Women who founded the organization or have been working there since the beginning in the community are so much so that they push you out. There is an age difference as well. They act all like [mimicking older feminist activists] 'We started this organization. We did so many things in the past to fight for women's rights. What do you know about feminist activism or how this organization works?' And you're young, you really don't know. But this attitude, them looking down on you, does not make you want to learn about it. It marginalizes you, makes you angry, and you get demotivated.

Intra-personal conflicts triggered by ageism and marginalization in communities also impact activists' affective belonging towards the community. A community that is not open to new ideas and newcomers or presents itself as one but still fosters generational conflict, reproduces hierarchical power structures, creating an imbalance between activists' expectations and the reality in the community.

Whether it be because of a lack of discussion about care work and emotional labor or because of marginalization and ageism, intra-group conflicts negatively affect the affective atmosphere of feminist communities. Maintaining a positive affective atmosphere not only provides an open and safe space for activism but also makes it easier for volunteers to feel belonging to the community. The emotions we feel mark our bodies and hence, these intra-personal conflicts in the community have a troubling impact on the bonds activists build with their activism. Acknowledging and addressing these conflicts becomes crucial to prevent any detachment from feminist activism and sustain the affective solidarity in the community.

5.4 Affective Belonging in Stories of Resilient Activism

Albeit all the conflicts and challenges mentioned above, why do participants continue activism and remain in the field? What brings them back to feminist activism and what types of solutions do they present to make feminist activism resilient? Affective belonging, discussed in the interviews as responsibility and caring for the future as well as loving the work, provides a basis for the reasons why activists choose to remain in activism. The positive sides of feminist activism, that is finding solidarity, performing activism for gender equality, and feeling hopeful, outweigh the negative aspects. Participants underline the fact that despite these difficulties in the organizational culture, feminist communities have the ability to reform and reshape since they value cycles of self-evaluation and feedback.

The emotional satisfaction that volunteers and activists experience fuels the affective belonging they feel towards their community and steers them back to activism. Alev said, "Once you get the taste of activism, the satisfaction you feel from helping others or being useful, and of course the beauty of doing it with other people, there is no way you can fully drop this and go." Ceren, stating something similar, said, "Once you get in and become a part of a community, you feel that you belong. You find the strength to go on. I don't think you can experience that anywhere else. Even if you stop doing activism for a while, you still keep coming back." Moreover, Zeynep pointed to the advantage of being in a community in achieving solutions as a reason why she could not detach from feminist communities. She said, "You could do small things individually, yes. But you can only make an impact if you are in a community. I realized that I was stronger this way. That is why I always kept being in a community. I had my share of disagreements, but they are not as important as achieving equality." In these accounts, participants highlight that their belonging to feminist activism grows stronger as they feel happy, satisfied, and in solidarity. The lofty aim of achieving gender equality is more important for them than their personal conflicts.

Participants remain attached to the feminist movement as the activist field provides opportunities for growth for them. This growth not just satisfies them but also develops an emotional responsibility toward the community. Describing the feminist knowledge production within communities, Damla said, "We were not just doing activism. We were also producing new knowledge about feminism. And we were gaining more knowledge in return. This is so gratifying. I am always thankful that I started my activist life with feminist activism." These opportunities for growth in feminist communities foster a fruitful affective atmosphere for activists. Leyla,

referring to her initial years in activism, said, "I was looking to learn more about feminism and this community gave me that. I learned the feminist discourses, I did feminist readings, and I acquired activism skills. It is almost like a family that wants you to grow as a well-informed, aware, and fair individual. I love that resemblance." This family metaphor proves the strong connection Leyla feels toward her community. Experiencing this growth as a feminist woman, activists and volunteers remain in the movement not simply to keep growing but also to provide other newcomers an opportunity to grow as well.

Participants also share a belief that feminist communities can resolve and learning lessons from a conflict. Practices of self-evaluation and community feedback bring activists back to their communities. Even though they highlight the fact that these systems do not always work, they still highlight the importance of having such a system in place to foster an open space for constructive feedback. To reconceptualize constructive feedback cycles, once a conflict arises in a feminist community, both parties of the conflict are asked to submit a letter of self-evaluation, stating the reasons and the consequences of their action. Upon receiving both letters, the community meets so that two parties can talk the problem through and solve the problem if possible. Feminist communities which practice such mechanisms claim that self-evaluation offers constructive feedback to the individual and to the community so that these conflicts do not occur again.

These mechanisms were also mentioned in the interviews as productive practices proving that feminist communities are open spaces. Having hope that the community you participate in can transform itself or resolve conflicts become crucial for participants to remain in the community. For example, Damla said, "If feminist communities want to have the potential to transform someone's life, it should also be able to transform itself as well. It should provide an open space for discussing conflicts." In addition to Damla's perspective, Ayça said,

> The more feminist communities focus on what is not working, the more they will be able to become resilient. I want that for feminist activism. I want us to openly discuss our conflicts so that we can move past them and focus on what matters the most, activism. Knowing that feminist communities can open that space gives me hope and makes me feel safe. If I ever have a disagreement with anyone, I don't have to switch organizations. I can resolve it with the mechanisms in place.

Safety is a recurring theme in participants' narratives about conflict resolution mechanisms. Implementation of such feedback systems fosters trust and safety in the

community. For instance, Hülya said, "I trust that most people in this community would want to address my problem. They would not simply ignore it. That's why I feel safe here. My opinions and feelings are respected." Another participant who was involved in a self-evaluation mechanism also claimed that the mechanism itself proves that feminist communities are resilient and sustainable. The fact that they are willing to openly discuss their problems shows that they are also willing to preserve their activist body.

Lastly, participants belonging to the movement and to their communities are also visible in their use of language. Speaking in the first-person perspective and using the pronouns we and us whenever they were describing the feminist community structure show that they identify themselves as part of that community. When I asked why they were using "we" or "us," they talked about the belonging they felt. Eylül said, "You know how you feel like you've been there since the beginning, that's how I feel. I am a part of this community." Moreover, Ayça said, "I really feel like I belong here, nowhere else." Ahu said, "I never realized I was using 'we.' At some point, they become your closest friends and sometimes your family in desperate times. They are also my fellow activists. I value that so much. I am thankful to be surrounded by such people." Referring to doing demonstrations together Oya said, "I always had a friend with me protesting. I feel like I belong there. They share my worries, fears, and desires." Dicle also asserted that she felt a close belonging to the movement because it brought a new purpose to her life, something she felt was missing in her career in corporate life.

Transforming from "I" to "we" is an affective process, where activists experience multitudes of emotions from hope to alienation. But in the end, this affective belonging drives their ambition to remain in the movement. The principles and aims of feminist communities resonate in these women's lives to the extent that they come back to activism despite having labor-some and exploitative volunteering experiences or complicated intra-personal conflicts. The emotions they felt in the community mark these activists in a way that they not only grow a desire to remain in the movement but also to do more.

6. CONCLUSION

In this research, I aimed to understand feminist women activists gendered and emotional experiences in Turkey. This aim inevitably brought me to analyze interplays between the feminist movement, anti-gender mobilizations, and strategies of resistance that exist in the sociocultural trajectory of an authoritarian, repressive, conservative field. Feminist activists' experiences provide a lens into further understanding the ways feminist activism continues to flourish despite the challenges and attacks directed at discourses around gender issues in Turkey, such as reproductive rights, gender equality in politics and workplaces, and gender mainstreaming in institutions.

In this study I locate feminist mobilizations in Turkey among the global upsurge of feminist mobilizations against anti-gender and far-right policies in countries such as Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Iran, and many more. With the rising authoritarianism and shrinking civil space in Turkey and around the globe, feminist communities find ways to organize demonstrations, deliver demands, and form transnational networks. In sustaining these networks and forms of activism, emotions become an important source that feminist draw from. Through emotions such as anger, hate, despair, and frustration, feminists find new grounds to do activism and create resilient fronts against the anti-gender attacks.

Upon conducting fieldwork with thirty participants, in the end, I see three main areas where feminist activists talk about their motivations to join the movement and stay in it: daily encounters, politics, and community culture. The affective dynamics, which I define as affective dissonance, affective solidarity, and affective belonging, shape participants' experiences in feminist activism. Affective negotiations of being an activist, being part of a community, doing gender equality work, critically engaging with politics, and actively working to disseminate feminist knowledge become meaningful and productive for the participants of this study. Their activism is formed in an ambiguous in-between space where different emotions clash and through shifting between phases of dissonance, solidarity, and belonging; these

women foster a resilient and transformative volunteering/activism, which I define as affective volunteering. Furthermore, experiencing happiness, anger, hope, despair, fear, hate, pride, and peace simultaneously, feminist activists articulate their activism as a learning practice that makes their activism sustainable and long-term.

Asked about how they decided to join feminist activism and what drives their desire to continue being a part of it, participants discuss the role of (1) daily encounters of marginalization and discrimination, (2) anti-gender political conjuncture which perpetuates discriminatory policies and oppressive social norms, and (3) the influential determined work done by the feminist movement as the reasons that steered them towards actively participating in civil society. While daily encounters and anti-gender politics cause affective dissonance, joining in solidarities becomes emotionally satisfying. This shift between negative and positive emotions is key to vitalizing participants' desire to join the feminist movement. As they realize they can transform their anger and frustration into hope and joy through feminist activism, participants become eager to do more. In other words, when their affective dissonance turns into affective solidarity and affective belonging, participants embody resilient activism practices. In particular, I call this activism "affective volunteering" to highlight the overall experience shaped by contextual and affective negotiations of why and how one becomes a feminist activist or volunteer.

I regard civil society in Turkey as a unique and complex site of analysis. Continuous interplay and clash between secularism, neoliberalism, and conservative politics challenge civil society's formation and operation. As the state distances itself from discourses of gender equality, which is the case in contemporary Turkey today, civil society organizations, communities, and independent activists become the agents to provide services to overcome systemic failures. In efforts to fill these gaps, volunteers, or activists in the feminist movement work to advocate for gender equality, find funding through international opportunities, take active role in the management of support centers, lobby and foster political networks to secure legal recognition of gender-based violence and protection of reproductive rights. This tremendous civic work demands immense labor, time, and dedication. That is why understanding the emotional underpinnings of such dedicated work becomes crucial in recognizing feminist activists' efforts and motivations to take responsibility for such a consuming workload.

Participants tell two stories about activist beginnings: how their decision-making is motivated by emotional reactions and how positive emotional consequences of volunteering or activism became their motivations. Overall, their activist journeys started with a feeling out of place and experiencing marginalization and discrimina-

tion not only by the political system but also by their close circles they encountered every day. This affective dissonance becomes fruitful in motivating participants' desire to become part of something "bigger and better" (Ahu, participant). Further, finding emotional support in feminist communities and forming affective solidarities with like-minded people marks a significant turning point in participants' narratives. Activism allows them to find purpose in their lives and feminist identities through exercising empathy and care toward others. I argue that since these negotiations involve a transformation of emotions, they become stronger attachments.

Affective negotiations at the beginning of feminist activism are also embedded in an authoritarian political and social atmosphere. When performing activism, participants navigate an emotionally loaded political space. Participants bring forward instances when they become objects of hate because they perform feminist activism, something demonized by the patriarchal state. In addition, the more state embraces anti-gender approaches, the more participants direct their anger and hate toward them. Thus, participants' accounts of the interplay between politics, affect, and activism shows that affect travels between these three discourses. Affect fuels participants' activism, giving them a source to draw from when putting their lives, ideas, and values on the line. Though participants discuss their fear of being prosecuted or stigmatized, they continue being involved in activism. I argue that these clashes between politics and feminist activism and the resulting affective responses make activists' bonds with the feminist community resilient.

To understand how activists remain in the movement, I find affective belonging as a productive framework. While experiencing dissonance in their daily experiences and finding communities as a response, participants develop a specific bond with the movement and the community. Affective belonging, in other words feeling a part of a community, positively marks activism experiences. Even though participants encounter communal and intrapersonal conflicts due to labor exploitation, ideological conflicts, lack of discussion about care, and ageism, participants claim that they never think about leaving activism. Even though detachments happen, they do not last long. As Ceren said, "once you get your hands dirty, it's too late. You're in it." Their accounts of belonging involve positive emotional associations with feminist activism. Even though participants discussed the hardship and problems of doing feminist activism throughout the interviews, they also fostered an affirmative connection with the movement.

This study's importance is twofold. First, it adds an analysis of feminist activism in Turkey to the literature, which previously highlighted historical, political, and ideological research or centered on specific emotions and their impact on feminist ac-

tivism practices. Through centering the analysis on affective negotiations, I analyzed the processes of becoming an activist and feminist and sustaining these identities. Second, this study works as a memory work as well. By accounting for activists' and volunteers' stories and combining them with values of political activism, feminist organizing, and daily encounters, this research adds a new layer to feminist stories shaped in Turkey. In addition, these participants' negotiations about their activism journeys become sources future research can draw from.

Conducting semi-structured online interviews amid a global crisis, the COVID-19 pandemic, posed practical difficulties. However, this research exemplifies how alternative strategies can be utilized to adopt a feminist research methodology. Online methods limit possibilities for building rapport, and more responsibility falls on the researcher to ensure that participants' collaboration in the interviews is encouraged and appreciated. I found openly discussing the difficulties of the pandemic and distancing myself from the interview questions to foster a dialogue format to be helpful practices in building a trusting and friendly space.

Though I am aware that this study is not representative of the entire field of feminist activism in Turkey, I believe it offers a fruitful analysis of feminist identity formation, emotional entanglements in feminist activism, and the meaningful ways of attachment towards activism. Sara Ahmed says, "It is not just that we can be happy about something, as a feeling in the present, but some things become happy for us if we imagine they will bring happiness to us" (Ahmed 2010b, 33). With this thesis, I aim to show how feminist activism becomes happy for the activists and volunteers in this study, something not just makes them happy but allows them to make others happy as well.

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APPENDIX A

Participant Information

Table A.1 Participant Information (name, age, location, volunteering type, volunteering topic, volunteering medium)

Number	Name	Age	Occupation	Location	Volunteering Type	Volunteering Topic	Volunteering Medium
1	Ahu	35	Lawyer	Istanbul	in organization	women's political representation	Physical/Online
2	Alev	55	Reporter	Istanbul	in organization	women's and girls' education	Physical
3	Ayça	29	Lawyer	Istanbul	in organization	women's rights, violence against women	Physical
4	Ayşe	53	Retired Teacher	Istanbul	in organization	women's rights, violence against women	Physical
5	Belen	28	Teacher	Istanbul	in organization	women's and girls' education	Physical
6	Bengi	33	Researcher	Istanbul	freelancer	march and demonstration organization, advocacy	Physical
7	Beril	42	Realtor	Istanbul	in organization	fundraising for shelters	Physical
8	Çağla	33	Instructor	Istanbul	freelancer	women's and girls' education	Physical/Online
9	Ceren	30	Lawyer	Istanbul	in organization	women's rights and violence against women	Physical/Online
10	Damla	33	Coordinator	Istanbul	freelancer	women's rights, advocacy	Physical/Online
11	Deniz	55	Politician	Istanbul	in organization	women's and girls' education	Physical
12	Dicle	30	Lawyer	Istanbul	in organization	women's rights and violence against women	Physical
13	Elvin	51	Project Director	Istanbul	in organization	gender based violence	Physical/Online
14	Eylül	25	Researcher	Istanbul	in organization	women's and children's rights	Physical/Online
15	Ferda	33	Lawyer	Istanbul	in organization	women's and children's rights	Online
16	Hülya	27	Lawyer	Istanbul	in organization	women's rights, violence against women	Physical
17	İrem	28	Researcher	İstanbul	in organization	women's rights, violence against women	Physical/Online
18	Lale	42	Teacher	Istanbul	in organization	girls' education	Physical
19	Leyla	60	Translator	Istanbul	in organization	women's political representation	Physical
20	Merve	27	Student	Istanbul	in organization	LGBTI+ rights	Physical
21	Naz	27	Psychologist	Istanbul	in organization	women's and children's rights	Physical/Online
22	Nehir	28	Translator	Istanbul	in organization	feminist knowledge production, translation, blogging	Online
23	Oya	33	Psychologist	Istanbul	freelancer	women's legal rights	Physical/Online
24	Pelin	30	Researcher	Istanbul	freelancer	women's rights and environmental activism	Physical/Online
25	Selcan	32	Consultant	Istanbul	freelancer	feminist knowledge production, blogging	Online
26	Serpil	33	Lawyer	Istanbul	in organization	LGBTI+ and women's rights	Physical/Online
27	Yasemin	32	Researcher	Istanbul	freelancer	women's rights advocacy	Online
28	Yeliz	28	Teacher	Istanbul	in organization	girls' education	Physical
29	Yonca	36	Researcher	Istanbul	in organization	gender based violence	Physical/Online
30	Zeynep	54	Editor	Istanbul	in organization	women's political representation	Physical