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**PRISON AS A REPRODUCTION FIELD OF FEMININITY: A
STUDY ON THE WOMEN CONVICTS OF THE OPEN PENAL
EXECUTION INSTITUTION IN TURKEY***

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Abstract

When the criminological studies on woman are considered, there are generally studies about "victim" women. However, it can be indicated that feminist perspective has not been pursued sufficiently in these studies. In general, we can remark that criminology has been institutionalized to a great extent as a male-dominated field of knowledge.

One of the most important issues about female criminality is the prison where women are put to "serve their punishment". Within feminist approach and based on the sample of Bozkurt Open Penal Execution Institution for Women, the research investigated construction fields of feminine identity types by questioning the relationship between the feminine experience and living conditions in the prison. 32 women convicts were interviewed using in-depth

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interview. In this way, the aim is to attain knowledge about how women evaluate the living space in the prison and in what degree gender is effective in this evaluation.

As the result of the research, it is seen that prisons that cannot quite be “ascribed to” women are generally matched with “masculinity”. The most important indicator of this fact is the existential practices developed by prisoner women within the traditional fabric of gender. Cultural value and economic function of motherhood brings with the home-centred definition of women’s gender. Due to this internalisation, patterns of motherhood as “a source of ordering power” in the minds of the prisoner women determine not only woman’s relationship with society, immediate surrounding and her partner but also give shape to her children’s relationship with her and the father. For some women, “working in an income-generating job” had an inevitable function in the definition of feminine identity.

For the majority of the women interviewees the society itself is actually an open prison. Beyond being a field where traditional-moral forms of femininity created in social sphere are also constructed, prisons can sometimes function as shelters for women who suffer under family and social pressure. The reason that prison as a restrictive space provides liberation for some women is that in the prison they do not experience the difficulties caused by gender-based understanding dominant in the outside world like family oppression, violence or being labelled.

Key Words: Female criminality, prison, gender, femininity, masculinity

Öz

Kriminoloji alanında kadınlarla ilgili yapılan çalışmalara bakıldığında genellikle “mağdur” kadınlarla ilgili çalışmalara rastlanmaktadır. Ancak bu çalışmalarda feminist bakış açısının yeterince gözetilmediği belirtilebilir. Genel olarak bakıldığında bugüne kadar kriminolojinin, büyük ölçüde erkek egemen bir bilgi alanı olarak kurumsallaşmış olduğunu söyleyebiliriz.

Kadın suçluluğu ile ilgili en önemli konulardan biri kadınların “cezalarını çekmek” üzere kapatıldıkları cezaevleridir. Feminist yaklaşımın gözetildiği bu çalışmada Denizli Bozkurt Kadın Açık Ceza İnfaz Kurumu örneğinden yola çıkılmış, buradaki yaşam koşullarının kadınlık deneyimleri ile ilişkisi sorgulanarak kadınlık kimlik biçimlerinin inşa alanları irdelenmiştir. Derinlemesine görüşme tekniğinin kullanıldığı çalışmada 32 hükümlü kadın ile görüşme yapılmıştır. Bu yolla hükümlü kadınların kendi anlatı ve ifadeleriyle cezaevindeki yaşam ortamını nasıl değerlendirdikleri, bunda toplumsal cinsiyetin ne ölçüde etkili olduğu bilgisine ulaşmak istenmiştir.

Araştırma sonucunda kadınlara pek “yakıştırılmayan” cezaevlerinin genellikle “erkeklik” olgusuyla eşleştirildiği görülmektedir. Cezaevlerindeki kadınların, geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet örgüsü içinden geliştirdikleri var olma pratikleri bunun en önemli göstergesidir. Anneliğin kültürel değeri ve ekonomik işlevi, kadının toplumsal kimliğinin ev merkezli tanımlanmasını beraberinde

getirmiştir. Bu içselleştirme nedeniyle cezaevindeki kadınların düşüncesinde “düzenleyici bir güç kaynağı” olarak annelik örüntüleri, kadının sadece toplumla, yakın çevresi ve eşiyle değil, çocuklarının kendisiyle ve babalarıyla olan ilişkisini de belirlemektedir. Bazı kadınlar için “gelir getirici bir işte çalışmak”, kadınlık kimliğinin tanımlanmasında kaçınılmaz bir işleve sahiptir.

Görüşme yapılan kadınların çoğu için aslında toplumun kendisi bir açık cezaevidir. Cezaevi, toplumsal alanda üretilen geleneksel-ahlaksal kadınlık biçimlerinin inşa edildiği bir alan olmanın da ötesinde bazen aile ve toplumsal baskının ağırlığı altında ezilen kadınlar için bir sığınma alanı olma işlevi de görebilmektedir. Özgürlüğü kısıtlayıcı bir mekân olan cezaevinin bazı kadınlar için özgürleşmeyi sağlamasının nedeni, kadınların dışarıda karşılaştıkları aile baskısı, şiddet, etiketlenme gibi toplumsal cinsiyet kalıplarına dayalı anlayıştan kaynaklanan zorlukları cezaevinde yaşamıyor olmalarıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Kadın suçluluğu, cezaevi, toplumsal cinsiyet, kadınlık, erkeklik.

1. Introduction

When the history of criminology is examined, it is observed that researches concerning sociological aspects of criminal behaviour came to the forefront in the late nineteenth century and in the beginning of the twentieth century. As for today, it can be stated that different approaches concerning crime phenomenon have intensified like postmodernism, critical race theory and feminism nourished by various disciplines (Ritzer 2005). Assumptions in criminology about gender (and the nature of man and woman) gave shape to changes in theories concerning woman and crime (Schwartz 2003). Until 1970s, female criminal behaviours had been attempted to be defined mainly within physiological, psychological and biological differences of women. Since the beginning of 1970s, it is seen that the issue has been treated predominantly in social and cultural dimensions and criminality has been associated with the roles and positions of the women in the society.

When the criminological studies on woman are considered, there are generally studies about “victim” women. However, it can be indicated that feminist perspective has not been pursued sufficiently in these studies. In general, we can remark that criminology has been institutionalized to a great extent as a male-dominated field of knowledge. Feminist studies have made significant criticisms on the traditional theories of criminology by challenging the generalizations of theories developed to unfold male criminality and by underlining the importance of gender ratio in perpetration (Schwartz 2003). The blind spot of traditional theories is their failure to see into the specificity of gender roles (İçli 2002).

The ratio of female criminality over the world is observed to be lower than male criminality (Siegel 2010). However, the ratio of women convicts varies from country to country depending on the differences in the socio-cultural structure (İçli 1993). The

usual respond received about the little consideration given to women in the criminal justice system is their lower ratio in that system. However, this respond fails to give satisfaction in many respects. The number of women, whether as victim or offender, increases in the processes regarding crime. Moreover, politics and practices which have incommensurable impacts on men, effect women as well (Flavin 2001). It is observed in many countries that the number of women increases with the growing prison population. At the same time, that the ratio of female prisoners increases faster than their male counterparts in some countries like England, the United States of America, Mexico, Bolivia, Colombia, Finland, Kenya, New Zealand, Kyrgyzstan, Estonia and Greece is a known fact (Clements-Nolle et al 2009; United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime 2008).

In Turkey there are fieldworks on female criminality which present similar results. Majority of the victims are male and when the relationship between the victim and women at the time of perpetration is considered the victim is slightly a stranger but to a large extent a relative or an acquaintance (Gümüş Ersen 2010; Gürtuna 2009; Topaç 2005; Ortaköylü et al. 2004; İçli 1995). It is also seen that women commit crimes, especially like murder or injury, for their own protection. Women generally do not participate in organized crimes but commit individual crimes (Saygılı and Aliustaoğlu 2009). The small ratio of repeated crime in female criminality and that they are insignificant crimes support this fact (Pelissier et al 2003).

There are expectations in the society concerning how man and woman should act, think and behave. In all societies, innate biological differences are interpreted and evaluated. Thereby, social expectations are developed regarding what activities and behaviours man and woman could perform, which rights and to what degree of power one could or should possess. Even though these expectations vary from society to society or in a society from one social section to other, they are same at the core. This core is the existence of the gender based asymmetry, in other words, the existence of differences and inequalities (Ecevit 2003).

Considering traditional stereotypical opinion, while men are expected to be strong, to maintain a family, to have a certain control and efficiency on the environment, women are expected to be patient and understanding, to keep house and to regulate human relations (Günay and Bener 2011). Women, confined to relationships in immediate surroundings and believed that should be kept away from the dangers of the outside world, may generally suffer troubles about existing in the social sphere. While women's existence in social and especially in public sphere has spread to wider zones together with the social transformations and developments brought by modern times, there are some spaces still defined by masculinity. Prisons are one of the leading spaces.

Within the sample of Denizli Bozkurt Open Penal Execution Institution for Women, this study focuses on forms of perception regarding crime and feminine dimension of women's experience in the prison. In this way, the aim is to attain

knowledge about how women evaluate the living space in the prison and in what degree gender is effective in this evaluation. Additionally, by questioning the relationship between the living conditions in prison and feminine experience, construction fields of feminine identity forms are scrutinized.

2. Method

In the study, which pursued feminist approach, the technique of in-depth interview was used. In the course of research and interviews, as one of the most important elements of feminist approach, attempt to understand in style that is hierarchical, authoritarian and non-leading (Kümbetoğlu 2008), was used. To see the differences and variety, a total of 32 women convicts were selected from each type of crime and in proportion to the distribution of the types of crime in Denizli Bozkurt Open Penal Execution Institution for Women and these women were interviewed in depth at specific intervals. Each interview lasted for 1.5 and 2 hours.

The reason why Denizli Bozkurt Open Penal Execution Institution for Women was chosen is that it is the single open prison for women in Turkey. In the choice of sampling, the guidance of the prison administration was also taken into consideration. Due to the fact that recording devices are not allowed in the penal institutions, notes were taken in the interviews with the women convicts. Interviews were conducted using interview forms prepared to attain knowledge regarding emotions, beliefs, attitudes and experiences of the women.¹

3. Findings and Discussion

According to Ministry of Justice, General Directorate of Prisons and Detention Houses, as from February 2012, there are 130.617 untried and convicted prisoner. 94,6% (123.565) of them are male, 3,6% (4.742) of them are female and 1,8% (2.309) of them are children. Given the total number of untired and convicted women prisoners, while 92,2 (4.374) of them are kept in closed prisons, 7,8% (369) of them are in open penal execution institutions. There are only two open penal execution institutions in Turkey. One of them is Denizli Bozkurt Open Penal Execution Institution for Women where women stay and the other is Sivas Open Penal Execution Institution where men serve their punishments.

As mentioned above, Denizli Bozkurt Open Penal Execution Institution for Women is the only open prison for women in Turkey. Open prisons are institutions where priority is given to employment and vocational training of convicts in their rehabilitation, which have no barriers against escape and no external security personnel, and where supervision and control by institution personnel is considered sufficient for security. Open prisons can be established as open penal execution institution for women or open penal execution institution for juveniles. The sentences of the first-time offenders or those sentenced to imprisonment for two years or less may be executed directly in open penal execution institutions.

¹ Fake names were used in the quotations. None of the interviewees' names were given.

Of convicts in an open penal execution institutions who receive disciplinary punishment except for reprimand and who are issued an arrest warrant for another action or under investigation of a crime with an upper penalty limit no less than seven years or who are under trial without arrest because of such a crime and those who are determined to be inappropriate for working conditions with regard to mental or physical abilities, state of health and age can be sent back to closed prisons with the decision of the administrative board of the institution. (The Law on the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures, Article 14)

One of the most important characteristics of open penal execution institutions is that the convicts can be granted a leave and make as much telephone calls as they like. Convicts in open penal execution institutions and those who are in closed penal execution institutions and who are entitled to be transferred to open penal execution institutions may be granted a leave up to three days excluding the travel time, for a maximum of three times a year, upon a proposal by the highest authority of the institution and with the approval of this proposal by the office of chief public prosecutor, to ensure that they maintain or strengthen their ties with their families and to achieve their adaptation to the outside world (The Law on the Execution of Penalties and Security Measures, Article 95). This case is executed as 7 days for a destination of or above 500 km or 5 days for a destination lower than 500 km.

The open penal execution institution has a different structure with its own dynamics, internal installation, management and architecture. Denizli Bozkurt Open Penal Execution Institution for Women is operated in a structure first designed to be a dormitory. Comprised of three buildings, the institution lies within a walled garden where there are trees, green space, benches and a covered pergola. Convicts are allowed to go out to the garden from 8.00 am till sunset.

3.1. Socio-demographic Characteristics

By March 2012, there are 267 women convicts in Denizli Bozkurt Open Penal Execution Institution for Women which has a capacity of 350 people. Staying in rooms for four to six, some of the convicts get paid to work in textile workshop and some in teashop and kitchen within the administrative building. Since open prisons are known as “work dorm”, many convicts prefer to be transferred to open prisons for work. While working provides a financial support for women, it also functions as a transition period for better and easier adaptation to outside world.

When educational level of women convicts are examined, it is observed that while 33% (87) of them were primary and 13% (34) of them were high school graduates, 9% (25) of them were illiterate; while 7% (20) of them had associate, bachelor or masters degrees, 25% (67) of them were going on their educations in the different degrees (primary, high, faculty) of distance education programs. Regarding the age range, 33% (89) of the women convicts fell into the 31-40 age bracket, 29% (77) were aged between 21-30 and 25% (67) of them were aged between 41-50. When the age range of the 32 women convicts interviewed within the research is examined, 12 of

them were aged between 21-30, 10 were aged between 31-40 and again ten were aged above 41 (Table 1).

Table 1. Age Status of the Interviewed Women Convicts

Age Range	Frequency	%
21-30	12	38
31-40	10	31
41-...	10	31
Total	32	100

Considering the educational level of the interviewed convicts, while 7 convicts had associate, bachelors or masters degree, 6 convicts were primary school graduates and 8 convicts continued open primary and high schools (Table 2).

Table 2. Educational Level of the Interviewed Women Convicts

Educational Level	Frequency	%
Literate	1	3
Illiterate	1	3
Primary dropout	1	3
Primary Graduate	6	19
Elementary Graduate	1	3
High School dropout	2	6
High School Graduate	4	13
Student in Open Primary School	2	6
Student in Open High School	6	19
University student	1	3
University graduate	7	22
Total	32	100

When it comes to the marital status, 17 convicts were married, 9 of them were single and 6 of them were divorced. 25 convicts stated that they had children. 8 convicts had 2, 7 convicts had 1 and 4 convicts had 3 children (Table 3).

Table 3. The Number of the Children of the Interviewed Women Convicts

Number of the Children	Frequency	%
1	7	28
2	8	32
3	4	16
4	1	4
5	3	12
6	2	8
Total	25	100

Women's responds to the questions, "Have you ever worked in a job to earn an income? Do you have a profession?" vary. These responds have been categorized as self-employed, private sector workers and civil servants. Professions like real estate agent, hairdresser, tradesman, tailor, apartment cleaner, project and consulting company owner, music-hall operator have been categorized under "self-employed"; professions like textile worker, waitress, factory worker, masseuse, and accountant have been grouped under "private sector workers". According to this, more than half of the women convicts were self-employed, 10 of them were private sector workers, and 2 of them were civil servants. The remaining two women convicts had never worked (Table 4).

Table 4. Occupational Groups of the Interviewed Women Convicts

Profession	Frequency	%
Self-employed	18	56
Private sector worker	10	31
Civil servant	2	6
Never worked	2	6
Total	32	100

The reasons of conviction of the women were obtained from the records of the prison administrative board. Crime types, indicated in details in the records by referring to the related articles of the Turkish Criminal Code (TCC) numbered 5237, are presented in the table below as they appear in TCC to facilitate understanding (Table 5)

Table 5. Crime Types of the Interviewed Women Convicts

Crime Types	Frequency	%
Manslaughter	10	31
Larceny	4	13
Addictive Drugs	4	13
Fraud	3	9
Restriction of freedom of a person	2	6
Plunder	2	6
Injury	2	6
Embezzlement	1	3
Seizure	1	3
Counterfeiting Money	1	3
Whoredom	1	3
Check Fraud	1	3
Total	32	100

3.2. Open Prison as a Space of (Un)Liberation

Whether the number of the women in prisons is less or more does not change the fact that women exist in prisons. In countries like Turkey where traditional gender patterns exist, while women suffer different problems than their male counterparts, they also try to express themselves and cope with the notion of “guiltiness”. Besieged by the roles and the responsibilities of being mother, wife, housewife, bride, daughter of the house, women also have to deal with the consequences of being women when faced with problems of prison life.

The interviewed women in this research were asked their opinions about “being woman”, especially being woman in prison and in the outside world. Regarding general given responds, even though majority of the women indicated difficulties of being women in prison, it appears interesting that a small number of the women convicts considered the prison as a space of liberation due to family oppression.

It is more difficult to be women in the outside. It is more difficult against the environment, people, the husband or relatives. Outside, there is much more oppression. For instance, in our people, there are always restrictions like “don’t go there, don’t wear this”. A woman told me, “I couldn’t reveal one strand of hair in the outside world. Here I understood I am a woman”. She is liberated here. However, prison is a restricting place (Gülistan, 23).

This case may differ from single women to married women. While married women generally complained about not being able to fulfil the responsibilities of being mother and wife, the singles were distressed as they were not able live their femininity with their bodies and provide financial income. For the women, who stated that being woman in the outside world was harder, the familial and social pressures, rather than prison, were the main reasons for unliberation. For these women, the society itself is an open prison. At the source of social oppression lies the equation of woman's body with the notion of chastity.

It is a little more difficult in the outside. There is the family, so there may be oppression. Limitation, enserfing, chastity guardians, etc. (Naciye, 22).

In addition to this, among the women who thought outside world was harder for women, some indicated the reason as too much oppression against women. The fact that prison, as a restrictive space, signifies liberation for some women provides an ironic situation which tells about the conditions of being women:

I have never felt like a woman in the outside world. I've never had a time to think about it. Immediately I was married. Now I think better. If you are a widow in a place like Gaziantep, you can never go out when you are young. Being woman is difficult (Aksu, 25).

This case is in parallel with other studies in literature. In societies like Turkey where masculine ideology reigns, being deprived of freedom is not generally felt much by the women convicts, and they may not even be aware of this deprivation (Gürtuna 2009). Although in Turkey cultural differences play an important role in the emergence of the prison as "a liberation place", a research conducted in the United States revealed that prisons may be a space women "preferred" as more secure than other spaces (Bradley and Davino 2002).

Women feel better in prisons as they do not suffer family oppression or violence faced in traditional social structure. However, difficulties of the outside world do not change during women convicts' stay in prison, but sometimes may even increase with the entry into prison. The fact that women convicts lack necessary support to cope with the problems of prison life and cannot benefit from monitoring and support systems in the process after the prison may even multiply the difficulties after their release. Some women responded to the issue of "being woman" by perceiving it as "the period after the release". These women thought that being woman in the outside was more difficult than being woman in prison because they believed having a criminal record as a woman is an important obstacle to finding a job.

Outside is harder. It is even harder when woman wants work. They take the easy way out. Prostitution, drugs. They think they can make easy money. Many of those who get out do not grow in wisdom. It is because of other convicts they become friends with. Many already believe that nobody would employ them. In

prison making a living is not difficult, but will be in outside. The single difficulty in prison is being away from the family (Yaprak 26).

A different case related among the issues of being woman is the situation of those who had the experience of the relationship between the committed crime and feminine identity. A woman who had to defend herself as she was attacked by a man reported her case like this:

In prison, I can exist as a woman. When I was a kid I had observed many women. My mother, my aunt. I promised myself that I would never go through their troubles. I told myself that I would never let anyone walk over me. I have always kept myself busy in the prison. My family told me, "You preserved your honour, good for you". I killed a man and was acclaimed. I cannot understand this either. I wonder what they would do if I was raped. Now I think I have an understanding and prescient family. But I really wonder what would happen if I was raped (Asya 35).

Designed to pave the way for re-socialization of the convicts after their release by continuing rehabilitation activities and ensuring security during their stay, prisons will remain as a trouble maker space for women as long as their needs and necessities are ignored. Each condition regarding the situation of the women in the prison should be specially evaluated in parallel with the needs and the necessities of the women. All regulations like rehabilitation programs, health care, security, prison architecture, prison staff, relations with family, pregnancy, childbearing, process of re-adaptation after the release should be configured based on gender and by considering the priorities of the women.

3.3. Forms of Definition of Male-Female Differences in and after Prison

When the women convicts were asked about the problems that men and women confront in the prison, the received answer was that women had more problems compared to men. However, it can also be stated that a small number of women convicts were of different opinion. What is interesting is that those women who put forward that the men faced more problems were from lower socio-economic level and defined the identity of the man by focusing on the function of "working in an income-generating job"

The women convicts who stressed the oppression against women, especially in the closed prisons, thought that men were provided with more opportunities. For them, regulations in the prisons were modelled on men:

The needs of women are different from men. We need initiatives for women. As the number prisons for men are more than for women, rules in the country are designed for them. For instance the clothing: there are four shirts, and a tie. But we cannot use them. Shirt is the most absurd one. We cannot get anything in substitution for four shirts. We have got trousers which again we cannot replace. But a new circular has been issued. I cannot actually understand the

clothing limit either. However, in some prisons the circular may not be put into action. For instance, while I was in Bakırköy the rooms were for two. We were really used to that system. Here, the rooms are for six people and have little usage area. The lockers are very small. We have cosmetics since we are women. We have sheets, books and notebooks and the lockers do not take that load. The rooms are said to be inappropriate for six people and they were designed to be for four (Selcan, 21).

The transportation of sexist discriminative attitude of everyday life into prison creates a more exploitable and unequal situation against the women convicts who have already been disdained and stamped by the family and the social environment:

Women are more oppressed. She has to watch her appearance. We heard that in open prison for men they are allowed to go out for shopping. Here we cannot. But it is normal because here we have women for every crime. Prostitution, theft. The society is influenced too (Sıdıka, 51).

Other studies (Gürtuna 2009) also stress the problem of freedom of dress as mentioned by the participants of this research. Another advantage of male convicts is their market leave:

Men can easily go out for shopping. They can work in the post office or public institutions. Men, how can I put it, are more comfortable. Because there are many differences between men and women. When we take leave unexpected things happen. No place or husband to go, no money. They do different things to earn money. Women are treated differently. Many of the women convicts are cast out by their own families. Most of the friends here who are about to be released have even no place to go (Ayperi, 47).

Even though they are guilty of the same crime, the characterisation of men by women as “free person seeking justice” and perception of the women convicts as “potentially criminal” creatures lay bare the constructive force of gender roles in spatial relations:

Men are a little more comfortable because male guardians refrain from them. Even in prison they can defend their rights. As women, we suffer more. Women cannot defend their rights. Women always step back because they are scared to be at odds with the officer (Derya, 43).

Women also believed that they suffered more in prisons compared to men due to their characteristics like sentimentality and weakness which, they thought, came with motherhood and femininity:

Prison is easier for men. Because women are weaker, their personalities fade quickly. I had had a childhood friend here. She got out. I saw her later, she was like a man, and she had become lesbian. She had three – four lovers. Not every woman can put up with punishment. Women are weak (Aylin, 34).

On the other hand, women who claimed that men had more problems in prisons stressed violence, oppression and financial troubles in male prisons:

Probably male prisons are more violent. As far as we hear, sometimes men cannot tolerate the words and then this turns into a fight. Women are milder. Men have wife and kids to look after. Women can earn some money for men but how much can she? Money is crucially important here. You have nothing if you are penniless (Yaprak, 26).

Actually women are here because of men and men are here because of women. I am here of husband murder. We are more comfortable than men. There they stab when there is fight (Sevda, 37).

Majority of the women convicts asserted that the prison was masculinised. According to this thought, prisons have conditions and atmosphere appropriate to men. Men “are good at serving their sentences in prison than women” and they can overcome difficulties by “seeking their rights”:

Women mainly act with her feelings. Every woman complains. Men have targets while women don't. At best there are ten or less people with target here. All will live off their father's money in pain (Doğuş, 42).

Doubtlessly, internalized gender stereotypes and gendered personal characteristics are influential in consolidation of this understanding. Accordingly, sensibility makes women further weaker in the prison. However, men can stand upright against the relationships and the functioning of the prison system thanks to his logic and power:

They are cleaner, ordered. They don't have empty talk. No gossiping. We have plenty. One should be straight, clear. Both places are very different from each other (Derya, 43).

It is different, I think. Women produce foolish things. Men are cleaner, and their thoughts are brighter. Men think about future. Women think about today and tomorrow. In the prison, I see men more learned than women. Women think about tea, coffee and food. They always ask what is for lunch or dinner. Men do physical exercise. Psychology of women is disturbed (Ceyda 30).

While women stated that they perceived prison as a space that men could deal with they also made negative criticism towards their fellow creatures.

It seems normal to men. Even I think so. I was telling myself what a woman could do to be sent to prison. But they could. Men can do anything but women cannot even go to prison. For a while my mother could not tell anyone. One of the relatives wondered whether I was caught up in prostitution. I am a widow of course; they asked whether I was busted in a hotel. They say, “what on earth they are jailed and we are not”. I consider never to talk to womenfolk again (Derya, 43).

In our society men act comfortably, but women are so restricted. Men can do anything but the opposite sex never lets women alone (Cangül, 29).

Women are prejudged. It is more difficult for women. If only they could provide employment or lend assistance for the convicts after the release. Because they leave you alone after the execution of the punishment. They have to help. You are a human being no matter you are a thief or murderer (Özden, 25).

When anticipations concerning the situations that men and women would encounter after the release are examined, majority of the women opined that women would suffer more compared to men regarding social adaptation. The most important struggle of the women convicts – especially the family cast-outs – is the necessity of finding an income-generating job. The secondary major problem of the cast-out women is housing. For mother women, on the other hand, how to establish a healthier relationship with children becomes more of an issue. The women define themselves as desperate and hopeless against all these problems. To survive bearing the title of “ex-convict” is seen as the basic arena for all women regardless of the socio-economic level:

No one prefers to employ a convict. They are not open up to this. No business leans towards this. There will be exclusion. This problem is almost same for women and men. “What if” questions will remain in our minds (Sakine, 36).

It is hard to find a job when you are out. When we take a leave, they look at you differently. Men also cannot easily find a job. Employment, partner; everything is hard (Sevda, 37).

No one is welcomed after the prison. The society treats you differently. I sometimes tell myself that I am here because I once condemned convicts. I was thinking they were there because they deserved. I would not be positive if an ex-convict had asked for a job from me. But now I am going to go through it. The society is not ready for it; therefore, many people hide this fact even from their closest relatives. Even families cannot tell their kith and kin. Neither my family could; I got raged for this. After the release there emerges a period of stumbling (Afife, 35).

Highlighting that gender based understanding reigns in the society, many women asserted that conditions waiting for women convicts after the prison would be tougher compared to men regardless of education-income levels or marital status:

Man is man. I am talking about my environment. They say “he was in and now out”. The case is not the same with women. “She is in for murder; wonder what she did and was prisoned.” Man could go out when he feels suffocated. He is a man in the end. Not so for a woman. Outside will be difficult, not easy. Maybe more difficult than ever. My grandparents, aunt, uncle, they all have lived in this way for years. I cannot change their habits. No one asks what you want. There is no one caring about what you think, or what you want to do (Aksu, 25).

They deem convicts as ferocious. I also used to think like that. Men are not given too much reaction though. It seems as they were more respected. Men are considered to have got through hard things. Unfortunately, women are believed to have done bad things to be prisoned (Yaprak 26).

As can be understood from the interview notes, socio-cultural values and meanings adhered to the crime may produce different gender based sealing forms. In the traditional societies where the family is centralized in the order of society, women sealed as “felon” encounter more intense negative attitudes and behaviours than men due to cultural expectations included in the established traditional feminine identity. These negative attitudes which can be listed as “contempt, pity, humiliation” may doubtlessly differ according to varieties of social status of women and the quality of the social environment as well. Frequently, the period of re-individualization for the women convicts after the release may also become a process of transformation into an object of collective control instead of process of liberation.

Man is structurally man. He enters the prison and leaves, they say. If you are a woman you are tainted. The prison experience for man is like pride while for woman it is shame. They ask me, “did you kill your husband?”. Woman is marked. Even prosecutors and judges think it is shameful for a woman to be in prison. My family is also ashamed of me. Even the closest ones see me as a virus. It is as if I have something contagious (Doğuş, 42).

Man becomes superior in the prison. He had been in prison, he can do anything. He becomes a lion. But I don't want to think about the women's situation after the release. The prison is not for women. Women should have special executions. She can work for public, clean or collect garbage, but she has to be allowed to stay home at nights. The things that she could give to her children are important (Sevgül, 47).

As can be understood from the opinions of the women convicts, gender differences contain important details regarding crime. Management and designation of prisons by taking gender-specific conditions and qualities into consideration, planning rehabilitation services according to this and pursuing monitoring and social support programs after the release are the primary requirements. In brief, the phenomenon of crime should be evaluated within the context of gender. Reasons of crime, consequences it produces in the social life and environment of the person and experiences lived in the prison give birth to different results for man and woman. Operating of the existing criminal justice system through male perspective by ignoring differences specific to women unfortunately creates complicated problems for the women convicts. As seen in this study, prison can have a consolidating role on social construction of femininity. When woman's conviction is included in the existing subordination of her in the society, this subordination may invite an experience of a multi-layered exclusion and discrimination which surpasses sexual specificities in micro relations.

As will be seen below, some women stated that in the nourishment of subjective feelings related to feminine identity the element of appearance had an important role. For these women, appearance and physical properties (thin body, make up, well-cared hair) provoke the instinct to be admired and let woman taste the pleasure of being woman. However, conditions present in the prisons are far away from providing opportunities for women to express themselves with the aforesaid visual elements:

There is much difference. If here I dress or put on make-up as in the outside world I draw attention. The atmosphere here and outside is very different. I am scared of gossip as I attract too much attention. It is the heel and hair that shows woman. I get discouraged whenever I am dressed to find someone saying "they tell you this or that". You do it to make you feel better. Today, for instance, it is valentine day. I am going to put on make-up just to feel myself better (Gülden, 29).

Being a woman in prison... One is deprived of everything. Dressing, clothing, yearning, compassion. You only see one thing. You are jealous of every woman outside. You cannot wear skirt, robe. You shut your feminine side down in the prison. You are not feminine anymore. Outside, women have got everything of her own. Bed, bath. The women outside do not appreciate anything (Doğuş, 42).

It is very different regarding beauty and care. Dressing style and femininity. You can use your femininity outside. Love words keep you alive. But here the life is routine. Here I hide myself. You hide yourself while dressing. After a while you do not want to look in a mirror anymore (Deniz, 35).

For some women, "working in an income-generating job" had an inevitable function in the definition of feminine identity. These women were the ones who had been working before they committed crime, but now who have to manage with the money provided by their families and feel uncomfortable about it. We can say that many women who work and earn money feel in the same way:

There are many opportunities outside; if you have a profession and if you are in good financial condition it is wonderful. You don't have such chances in the prison. You have money if someone sends you money. You are bound hand and foot. You want to do something but it is impossible. It is very different inside. Being woman in the prison is difficult. For me, it is easier in the outside world. I have got a profession. One will be if the other not. Now you are dependent on the other (Ayper, 47).

Here your family looks after you. How old I am but my family takes care of me. Outside, you do not ask permission to do something. Being woman in the outside world is easier because you have got your liberty. Here you do not even have your id card with you (Sevda, 37).

You are a dependent woman here. You are doing supporting things but do not work. This disturbs my psychology too much. Once we had a fight since they could not even find 100 Turkish Liras. I only suffer about it when I need it too much. But as I can work in the outside I get job offers and accept them. I can spare 25-30 Turkish Liras allowance. I can only compensate my compulsory expenditures. I am often financially troubled (Şadiye, 45).

3.4. Motherhood As the Production Centre of Femininity

When responses given to the question regarding “meaning of being a free woman” are considered, it is observed that traditional belief which indicates that primary duty of woman in the society is “house keeping and child care” is dominant in the cognitive world of the women convicts. Doubtlessly, socio-cultural value of motherhood has great importance in the prevalence of this traditional belief. If institutional process of family is historically examined, Turkish culture can also be defined as “motherhood system” (Ortner and Whitehead, 1982, qtd. by Rosen, 1993:53). Cultural value and economic function of motherhood brings with the home-centred definition of women’s gender. Due to this internalisation, patterns of motherhood as “a source of ordering power” in the minds of the prisoner women determine not only woman’s relationship with society, immediate surrounding and her partner but also give shape to her children’s relationship with her and the father. Moreover, as characteristics labelled as “feminine” like sensibility, understanding, pity are identified with the personality of women, they are also perceived as the “natural” outcomes of motherhood:

I don’t see myself like a woman here. I feel like a woman when I am at home. Fulfilling my responsibilities against my husband, my son and my work makes me feel like a woman. Prison does not suit to women. Responsibilities of women at home are much more than man’s (Cangül 29).

Especially this case is spotted in the women convicts’ commentaries on the mother-children relationship experiences of the prisoner women who have to live with their children in the prison. As obligation to live with children in the prison may cause undesirable troubles concerning the psycho-social development of children, it also means multiplication of the punishment for the woman convicts:

I think conviction is harder for women with children. As a woman, their burden is doubled (Reyhan, 29).

According to some women who mentioned the importance of social reproduction role of the women like motherhood or housekeeping for the continuity of the family, motherhood is serious enough to reevaluate criminal justice system and it deserves privilege:

We are mothers. We should not be here. Our punishment affects all family. But it is not a problem for men. Facilities for children are limited here. We do not have enough toys (Sıdıka, 51).

Women should not be put into prison. Man can stand. They can bear it. But woman cannot. Women are more sensible, they easily get exhausted. With every passing day, I crack up further. After a while you are suffocated (Özden, 25).

Women who defined themselves within home and stated that they were peaceful and comfortable in their home may have various health problems, primarily psychological ones, when their punishment is executed in a closed space like prison:

For me, woman is woman everywhere; in the prison or in the family. Living with family or maternal duty is different. You miss your children. It was beautiful to be at home in the vacation. You do not want that seven days pass by (Sakine, 36).

As a woman, I am a mother before anything else. Here is the single difference of being woman. Woman is woman everywhere. Wherever you are. Here we postpone certain part of our life (Nermin, 47).

The outside world is utterly different. At least I have got my kids. You can feel you are a woman. Here, you are buried alive. You are disregarded. There are many in the prison who are innocent (Aliye, 27).

When it comes to the issue of “being woman in the outside world”, women defined themselves as the one who was responsible for motherhood and for the care of the partner and the house. Women who defined themselves within the house stated that they felt comfortable and peaceful at home. Women who are bereft of children, husband and the peace of the home suffer an intense psychological lack. That “motherhood” is one of the most important issues for the women convicts has also been discussed in other studies (Ferraro&Moe, 2003, Enos, 2001, Gürtuna, 2009).

Conclusion

Majority of women convicts believed that the conditions awaiting them after the release would be more difficult compared to men and talked about the existence of traditional gender-based understanding. While this understanding affirms prison as a pride source of men, it interprets it as a shameful situation for women. The same understanding cannot associate the prison with woman as naive, emotional, maternal and needy entity, however, with great irony it isolates the prisoner women at a stroke by forgetting all these qualities.

The fact that some interviewed women stated that prison is more liberated than the outside world reveals the necessity of the support after the release. The reason that prison as a restrictive space provides liberation for some women is that in the prison they do not experience the difficulties caused by gender-based understanding dominant in the outside world like family oppression, violence or being labelled. In the face of all difficulties of the outside world, unfavourable social conditions that women are exposed to do not change in the prison, and may even increase. This situation makes probable problems that would be encountered after the release further complicated for women who cannot receive any social support concerning methods to cope with these problems.

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