

REPRESENTATION OF LONELINESS IN CINEMA FILMS “MY FAVORITE CAKE” MOVIE SAMPLE

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Ejder AŞİT¹ Mehmet ULUÇ² İ. Halil YAŞAR³

ABSTRACT

Loneliness is the condition in which an individual perceives a lack of social connections and is unable to receive the physical and emotional support they need. Cinema’s engagement with this subject through different representations and visuality, and its ability to present the topic to audiences from multiple perspectives, is of significant importance. The depiction of loneliness themes in cinema provides an important perspective for understanding both the inner world of individuals and their position within society. One of the most distinctive features that sets cinema apart from other artistic fields is its ability to convey and examine all that pertains to the visual and auditory realm. In this study, the film “My Favorite Cake”, directed by Maryam Moqadam and Behtash Sanaeaha, was analyzed using the discourse analysis method. The film, chosen as the sample for this research, was selected through purposive sampling, as this method enables the researcher to meet the objectives of the study and to analyze the selected case in depth. The primary focus of this study is the representation of loneliness in cinema, specifically in relation to elderly individuals. Within this context, the modes of representing loneliness, the psychological state of elderly characters, and the transformation of the family as a social institution were evaluated within a cinematographic narrative framework.

Keywords: Loneliness, Iran, Cinema, My Favorite Cake, Discourse

EJDER AŞİT¹

Graduate Student

Harran University

ejderasit@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9499-5291>

MEHMET ULUÇ²

Lecturer Dr.

Harran University

ulucmehmet@harran.edu.tr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3731-070X>

İ. HALİL YAŞAR³

Assoc. Prof. Dr.

Harran University

i.halilyasar@hotmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1480-569X>

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SİNEMA FİMLERİNDE YALNIZLIĞIN TEMSİLİ “EN SEVDİĞİM PASTAM” FİLM ÖRNEKLEMİ

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Ejder AŞİT¹ Mehmet ULUÇ² İ. Halil YAŞAR³

ÖZET

Yalnızlık, kişinin sosyal bağlantılarındaki eksikliğin hissedilmesi ve ihtiyaç duyduğu fiziksel ve duygusal desteği alamaması durumudur. Sinemanın farklı temsiller ve görselliklerle bu konuya eğilmesi ve farklı perspektiflerden konuyu izleyiciye aktarması önem arz etmektedir. Sinemada yalnızlık temalarının işlenmesi bireylerin iç dünyası ve toplum içindeki konumlarını anlama açısından önemli bir perspektif sunmaktadır. Çünkü sinemayı diğer sanatsal faaliyet alanlarından ayıran en önemli özelliklerden biri görsel ve işitsel olana dair her şeyi aktarabilmesi ve inceleme alanına tabi tutabilmesidir. Bu çalışmada Maryam Moqadam ve Behtash Sanaeeha'nın yönetmenliğini üstlendiği “En Sevdüğüm Pastam” filmi söylem analizi yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir. Çalışmada örneklem olarak tercih edilen “En Sevdüğüm Pastam” filmi amaçlı örneklem yöntemi kullanılarak seçilmiştir. Çünkü bu yöntem ile araştırmanın hedeflerine ulaşılabilen ve tercih edilen örneklem derinlemesine analiz edilebilmektedir. Bu çalışmada, sinemada yaşlı bireyler özelinde sunulan yalnızlık temsilleri temel odak noktasını oluşturmaktadır. Bu bağlamda yalnızlığın temsil edilme biçimi, yaşlı bireylerin psikolojik durumu ve bir sosyal yapı olarak ailenin dönüşen yapısı sinematografik bir anlatı çerçevesinde değerlendirilmiştir.

Anahtar Sözcükler: Yalnızlık, İran, Sinema, En Sevdüğüm Pastam, Söylem

EJDER AŞİT¹

Yüksek Lisans Öğrencisi

Harran Üniversitesi

ejderasit@gmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9499-5291>

MEHMET ULUÇ²

Öğr. Gör. Dr.

Harran Üniversitesi

ulucmehmet@harran.edu.tr

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3731-070X>

İ. HALİL YAŞAR³

Doç. Dr.

Harran Üniversitesi

i.halilyasar@hotmail.com

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1480-569X>

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INTRODUCTION

Cinema brings the problems of real life onto the big screen, drawing attention to them, encouraging scientific inquiry, and offering potential solutions. “Considering the fact that cinematic productions are cultural products, it is possible to state that changes occurring in social life also influence cinematic activities” (Uluç & Balcı, 2024, p. 175). From this perspective particularly since the 2000s, the increase in diversity within cinematic productions has contributed to the continued development of research on social issues (Uluç & Kaçar, 2024). Among these issues is the theme of *loneliness* experienced by individuals. Although loneliness may appear to be a psychological condition at first glance, it also carries an existential quality, making it a subject of both philosophy and sociology. This problem, which has been growing alongside modern life, affects individuals and society alike-weakening social bonds and alienating people from both themselves and their environment (Sürgit, 2019). Factors such as the cold, rigid structures of urban architecture, the fast-paced, pleasure-oriented nature of daily life all contribute to this phenomenon. Consequently, this situation has led to a series of individual and societal problems. In this context, cinema’s exploration of loneliness through various narratives is significant, as it presents these experiences from a representational perspective, offering viewers a different outlook. Because the issue of whether an individual perceives themselves as valuable from a social standpoint emerges as an important phenomenon (Söğütlüler & Söğütlüler, 2024). By focusing on the psychological depth of its characters, cinema delves into individuals struggles with loneliness, their social bonds, and the profound effects of loneliness on human psychology. By nature, human beings are social creatures. They feel compelled to establish positive and sustainable relationships with their surroundings. Such relationships not only protect an individual’s mental and emotional health but also enable them to maintain a stable and healthy life. This could also be referred to as the mental and emotional balance of the individual. In particular, sudden crises tend to fuel certain fears and concerns (Erkan, 2025). When this balance is disrupted, people tend to retreat inward, cultivating a hidden way of life marked by silence, contemplation, and disconnection from their environment (Coşkun, 2021). This state diminishes both the physical and mental quality of life. At the same time, as Albert Camus (1997, 2016) suggests, individuals experience a growing sense of alienation from themselves. In the modern era, loneliness

has deepened considerably. People experience this condition at various stages of life, from youth to old age.

Old age is defined as a stage in the human life course during which individuals experience physical, cognitive, social, and cultural changes (Ersin Kalaycı et al., 2015). During this period, individuals' quality of life tends to decline in psychosocial terms, leading to experiences of social isolation and loneliness. Since the onset of industrialization in the 18th century, the status of elderly individuals in society has become increasingly complex. Changes in production relations and the growing demand for human labor have triggered large-scale migration from rural areas to cities. This has led to profound transformations across numerous fields, including the economy, culture, science, art, ideology, and politics. The traditional family structure rooted in collectivist culture has largely been replaced by the nuclear family structure characteristic of modern culture (Yazgaç, 1992). As a result, the issue of elderly individuals unable to adapt to the conditions of urban migration has emerged. One of the main causes of this problem is that urban economies are fundamentally structured around money, and human relationships have become increasingly commercialized (Simmel, 2015, p. 95). Within this context, the modern individual suppresses the human aspects of their identity that lie outside economic relations, exhibiting an indifferent and detached attitude toward both themselves and others. In Byung-Chul Han's (2022) words, the fast-paced rhythm of urban life mentally numbs metropolitan residents. As a remedy, nursing homes have been established to meet the shelter, social, and physical needs of the elderly. For those living outside of such institutions, minimum subsistence assistance programs have been implemented to allow them to maintain a life of dignity (Soysal, 1993). However, in countries with low levels of social welfare, the system often fails to function adequately, exacerbating the problems faced by elderly individuals. Bauman (2011, p. 10) proposes that the solution to this issue lies in "living within society-being accepted, respected, and recognized by others.

Loneliness is a theme that has been explored extensively not only in literature, poetry, painting, music, and theater but also in cinema. In such films, the individual's position within society and their inner world are examined in depth, often framed within the triangle of technology, social media, and the individual. The relationship between the individual, space, and cinema is also critically analyzed. *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Her* (2013), *Cast Away* (2000), *Joker* (2019), *The Martian* (2015), *Room* (2015), *Mustang* (2015), and *The Beasts*

(2022) are just a few examples of such films. *My Favorite Cake* can also be evaluated within this group of productions. The film's distinctiveness lies in how it problematizes loneliness among the elderly, draws attention to the experiences of older individuals in modern society, and presents a struggle aimed at overcoming these issues. In this respect, the film differentiates itself from other works. In this study, *My Favorite Cake* was selected as the research sample through purposive sampling. Discourse analysis was chosen as the method for analyzing the film. Discourse analysis is an effective approach to uncover how the film's characters, events, and spaces create meaning and reflect the power dynamics within the social structure. The significance of *My Favorite Cake* lies in its ability to offer a unique perspective on how elderly individuals are distanced from the respect and value they deserve in society, while also shedding light on the hardships they endure as a result of loneliness.

The literature review reveals that various cinematic analyses have been conducted to examine the issue of loneliness among young, middle-aged, and elderly individuals (Demir, 2022; Ozturk, 2025; Ergün & Mısırlı, 2023; Çalgüner, 2019; Çökerdenoğlu, 2022; Güney, 2025; Kural & Esendemir, 2021; Serttaş, 2018; Yıldırım et al., 2024). These studies have explored topics such as the imagery and problems of the modern individual, the dialectics of loneliness, migration stories, the impact of social media and virtual life on individuals, urban marginality and Aronofsky's works, alienation, technology-themed dystopias, flâneur-like symbols, and intersections of identity and experience. Additionally, although there is a news article with a title similar to that of this study, the article lacks a systematic and scholarly framework (Ceylan, 2025). In the field of health sciences, numerous studies have focused on elderly individuals. Topics such as social isolation and loneliness among the elderly (Akbaş et al., 2020; Baran, 2016), network usage (Kalınkara & Sarı, 2019), social exclusion (Yaylagül et al., 2021), quality of life and life satisfaction (Çam et al., 2018), the use of technology to reduce social isolation (Biçer, 2024), poverty among the elderly in Turkey (Danış, 2009), the prevalence of loneliness among elderly women living in urban areas (İlgaz & Gözüm, 2020), and various intervention studies (Cattan et al., 2005, pp. 41-67; Findlay, 2003) have been examined. Furthermore, studies have been conducted in nursing homes, focusing on the happiness, loneliness, and levels of social support among elderly residents (Akyıl et al., 2018). Issues such as social isolation experiences (Taş & Şaldırdak, 2021) and death anxiety and loneliness during the pandemic

period (Aksakal & Kendirkiran, 2024) have also been addressed. However, in these studies, the theme of loneliness has not been evaluated from a cinematic perspective. The majority of the research consists of field studies, with the findings based on collected data. Therefore, examining this topic from a cinematic standpoint highlights its significance.

1. Loneliness

Loneliness is a subjective experience that individuals may encounter at some point in their lives. It is also a concept related to the perception and feeling of the quality of social relationships. It refers to the emotional state that arises from the inadequacy of an individual's social connections (Coşkun, 2021). It is associated with emotional and psychological conditions such as the feeling of not being understood or feeling isolated from society (Akyıl et al., 2018). While loneliness may sometimes be beneficial for an individual when it is not prolonged by allowing for deep reflection and the development of creative processes, extended periods of loneliness can lead to psychological disorders. This does not necessarily refer to physical solitude, as an individual may also feel lonely in crowded environments. Limited family and friend support in social relationships, traumatic events, psychological conditions, social exclusion, or a sense of being different can all constitute the underlying causes of loneliness. The primary distinction between loneliness and social isolation lies in its subjective nature, as loneliness does not necessarily entail a limitation of real-life connections with others (Cattan et al., 2005b).

In the modern world, although the advancement of technology and the development of mass media have brought people closer together and made them accessible to one another at any moment, they have not led to the emergence of truly deep and fulfilling relationships. Because the expansion of communication opportunities has enabled people to engage in direct or indirect interaction with one another (Yaşar & Uğurhan, 2022). Consequently, this situation has become increasingly problematic, adversely affecting individuals' mental and physical health and causing a decline in their quality of life. Albert Camus (1997), within the framework of the philosophy of Absurdism, emphasizes that in modern society, technology confines individuals to virtual worlds, thereby weakening their physical and emotional bonds. Because advancing technology and the opportunities offered by social media also entail certain risks (Yaşar & Altincik, 2018). While physical loneliness reflects a tangible reality that can be observed, spiritual loneliness

represents a deeper structure that is not always visible from an external perspective. Nevertheless, both forms of loneliness are directly interconnected, and the effects they produce on the individual emerge as fundamental determinants influencing social life.

Loneliness often has a positive impact by motivating individuals, helping to repair vulnerable emotions, and fostering attentiveness to potential dangers (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). However, in older adults, it tends to take a negative course, leading to depression, cognitive decline, anxiety disorders, and other mental health problems (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2015). Factors such as mobility limitations, the death of a spouse, biological and physical health issues, and the reduction of social roles following retirement contribute to this condition (Hawkley & Cacioppo, 2010). The weakening of social bonds can also be added to these factors. Individuals who experience prolonged periods of loneliness face a significantly higher incidence of illnesses such as Alzheimer's disease. It is also important to note that long-term loneliness has the potential to weaken individuals' sense of belonging to the society in which they live and socialize.

Loneliness manifests in individuals in various forms. In emotional or psychological loneliness, individuals may feel isolated and alone even when surrounded by large groups of people. Emotional loneliness, which stems from the absence of deep and meaningful relationships, existential loneliness, which is inherent to the human condition and frequently addressed by researchers, social isolation, in which an individual's actual connections with others are limited, and social loneliness, which occurs when an individual lacks a social environment within their group or community, are among the main types of loneliness (Coşkun, 2021). Social loneliness often involves individuals positioning themselves as excluded from the social structure, largely due to sociological or psychological factors. One of the most influential factors contributing to this condition is sudden changes in individuals' social lives. In this context, loneliness should be understood not only as an individual phenomenon but also as a social one.

1.1. Loneliness and Its Representations in Cinema

Cinema produces meaning by engaging with concepts developed in various disciplines while employing its own narrative possibilities, and it reflects this meaning back to society. One of the most significant of these concepts is loneliness. Through the reflection of social reality on the silver screen, loneliness has become an important theme

in cinema. Drawing on individual realities and life experiences, cinema reinterprets and recontextualizes situations in ways that allow for deeper readings, thereby aiming to facilitate a person's return to self. In this sense, cinema enables individuals to watch their own lives (Çökerdenođlu, 2022).

When examining films with a loneliness theme, it becomes evident that loneliness is conveyed not only at the narrative level but also through the use of visual and auditory elements such as sound, color, lighting, set design, and camera movements. For instance, when a sense of loneliness is to be created through setting, interior spaces, confined areas, quiet locations, or dark environments are often chosen. Similarly, when the feeling of loneliness is to be conveyed through camera movement, this is frequently achieved through the use of long and static shots. In this regard, it is important to recognize that there are many different ways and methods for constructing the theme of loneliness in cinema.

In the 1976 film *Taxi Driver*, directed by Martin Scorsese, Travis's disconnection from society and inability to establish meaningful connections serve as a striking example. Scorsese conveys the depth of this loneliness by removing the character from the frame and shifting the camera's focus to the surrounding environment, using empty corridors to evoke a profound sense of isolation for the audience (*Taksi Őöförü* | Netflix, n.d.). The cinematic portrayal of loneliness can be observed in various ways, such as characters being visually abstracted from the frame, an individual eating or drinking alone at a table, watering a garden, being shown alone in a crowded place, depicting crowded locations as empty to emphasize the smallness of the character within the frame, gazing out of a window, or employing master pans. These techniques illustrate the diverse ways in which loneliness is represented in film.

Loneliness possesses an existential quality. Ingmar Bergman draws attention to this point in his works by portraying elderly individuals who have become isolated and young people disconnected from society and reality. In particular, Bergman's *Persona* highlights themes of inner loneliness and identity crises experienced by individuals (Bergman, 1966). In contemporary cinema, loneliness is also addressed from a postmodern perspective. Director Spike Jonze, in his 2013 film *Her*, explores loneliness through relationships formed with artificial intelligence (*AŐk* [2013] | MUBI, n.d.).

2. Method

In this study, discourse analysis, one of the qualitative research methods, was utilized. Discourse analysis is a method that examines texts, discourses, and their relationship to specific contexts with the aim of revealing their social and cultural meanings (Fairclough, 1995). Discourse serves as the fundamental basis of the intellectual domain (Çoban, 2003, p. 245). Due to the multidisciplinary nature of discourse's theoretical structure, its analysis is required across all fields of sociology and the social sciences (Van Dijk, 2003, p. 19). Discourse analysis represents a sociological approach to research (Kızıldağ, 2023). It consists of three interconnected components: social practice, discursive practice, and text (Fairclough, 2003, pp. 159-160). According to Foucault (2021), discourse functions as a tool that mediates the relationship between knowledge (discursive practices) and power (non-discursive structures). Therefore, general discourse analysis involves examining the ideological and power structures embedded within language.

Discourse analysis became a prominent research method in the West after the 1960s and has since developed into a widely discussed academic field (Çakır, 2014, p. 11). Research in this area has largely focused on the relationship between language and context. It evolved through the analysis of the meanings embedded in poetry and folk narratives belonging to the fields of anthropology, ethnology, and linguistics (Aziz, 2014, p. 150). Today, discourse analysis is considered one of the key methods used in film analysis.

Another method employed in this study is critical discourse analysis. A critical discourse analysis was conducted through the film *My Favorite Cake*, which seeks to depict how elderly individuals attempt to overcome loneliness. In the film, the selection of spaces, the roles of the characters, the implicit and explicit meanings within the dialogues, linguistic structures, and layers of meaning are identified and discussed in relation to their place within the broader social context. Within this framework, analyses concerning loneliness and old age are presented. In particular, the dialogues and personal quests of the characters Mahin and Famarz clearly reflect the experiences of elderly individuals. In the film, the inner tensions experienced by elderly individuals and their efforts to establish social connections in order to overcome loneliness, along with scenes where they show interest in technological developments that promise to alleviate loneliness, serve as thematic elements that reinforce the discursive framework. On the other hand, the film's visual elements also play a significant role in the analysis. The composition of characters in

isolation within crowded spaces, parks and streets, home decorations, kitchen design, gardens, and video calls all contribute to supporting the study. The integration of visual and discursive elements in this way provides an important framework for understanding the challenges faced by elderly individuals in our contemporary era, as well as the profound sense of loneliness they experience.

2.1. Purpose and Significance of the Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the representation of the concept of loneliness in cinema through the specific example of the film *My Favorite Cake*, analyzing its scenes, dialogues, and spatial elements within this framework. The film addresses the efforts of elderly individuals, who, as a result of modern life, find themselves increasingly isolated and detached from society, as they attempt to overcome this problem. This analysis aims to draw attention to elderly individuals who experience similar forms of loneliness in today's world and to contribute to raising awareness of the issue through a cinematic perspective.

The significance of this study lies in the fact that *My Favorite Cake* addresses the concept of loneliness from the perspective of elderly individuals in the context of contemporary society, providing viewers with an opportunity for self-reflection. The film presents the problems faced by elderly individuals through a compelling and impactful narrative. In this regard, the study aims to develop a cinematic perspective on the significance of the challenges experienced by elderly individuals in modern society.

2.2. Sample of the Study

In this study, *My Favorite Cake* was selected from among numerous films in cinema that focus on the theme of loneliness. The film was analyzed using the discourse analysis method, and purposive sampling was applied. This sampling method offers the opportunity to examine the selected example in depth, as it aligns with the objectives and context of the research while supporting the research question (Patton, 2002). It is considered a valuable sampling method for special cases and, in most instances, does not aim to represent the entire population (Neuman, 2020, pp. 431-432). *My Favorite Cake* powerfully depicts the loneliness of elderly individuals as a consequence of modern culture, emphasizing their efforts to overcome this condition. The film portrays how elderly

individuals strive to survive under harsh conditions with the limited resources provided by governments, their struggles with illness due to physical exhaustion, and how their lives turn into repetitive routines under the influence of loneliness. In this context, the film illustrates that, despite all difficulties, elderly individuals remain in search of ways to overcome loneliness. Due to these characteristics, *My Favorite Cake* serves as a meaningful example for understanding the experiences of elderly individuals and is highly relevant to the objectives of this study.

2.3. Scope and Limitations of the Study

Within the scope of this study, *My Favorite Cake* was analyzed in the context of loneliness. The film was evaluated using discourse analysis, focusing on both its linguistic and visual elements within the framework of the loneliness theme. The dialogues, scene construction, and character interactions in the film were analyzed as data that reflect how individuals become isolated in modern societies. This study specifically focused on how the problems experienced by individuals are represented through the film. The primary aim here is to reveal the effects of loneliness on the individual.

However, this study is limited to the analysis of *My Favorite Cake* only. Other films or works that address the theme of loneliness were not included within the scope of this research. This limitation may narrow the study's ability to examine the various reflections of the issue in societies influenced by modern culture. Additionally, the discourse analysis method applied in evaluating the film inherently involves a degree of subjectivity. Therefore, the interpretation of the film may be influenced by the researcher's perspective. These limitations may restrict the generalizability of the study's findings; however, they do not hinder the possibility of conducting a detailed theoretical analysis of the film.

3. Findings

3.1. Film Details and Synopsis of *My Favorite Cake*

My Favorite Cake (2024) is a 97-minute drama, comedy, and romance film, written and directed by Maryam Moqadam and Behtash Sanaeeha, starring Lily Farhadpour and Esmail Mehrabi in the leading roles.

Mahin (Lily Farhadpour) is a 70-year-old woman who lives alone in her home following the death of her husband, while her daughter has married and moved abroad.

She struggles to make ends meet with the modest pension provided by the state. Mahin leads a monotonous life and increasingly feels disconnected from social life, noticing her loneliness deepening day by day. Once a month, she meets with her female friends at small home gatherings. After her most recent meeting with them, she decides to break free from her loneliness and rekindle her romantic life, just as she did in her youth. Although this decision frightens her to some extent, the hopes within her give her the courage to move forward. She begins searching for a suitable man with whom she can open her heart and share her loneliness. One afternoon, at a small local restaurant, she encounters Faramarz (Esmail Mehrabi), a taxi driver. Mahin overhears Faramarz's conversation with a nearby table and realizes that he, too, is lonely. She becomes convinced that Faramarz is the right person to share her loneliness with. Mahin visits his workplace and invites him to her home for a lovely dinner. However, this encounter soon turns into an unpredictable adventure with an uncertain ending.

3.2. Analysis of My Favorite Cake

The Relationship Between Loneliness, the Individual, and Space in the Film



Figure 1-Mahin at the Marketplace



Figure 2-Mahin walking in the park

Throughout the film, loneliness is conveyed to the audience through both the dialogues and the visual frames, supported by the use of ambient sound. In Figure 1, Mahin is shown in a marketplace that resembles a shopping mall, and in Figure 2, she is seen walking in a park, a space where people are generally present in large crowds. Both scenes depict elements of the modern city, highlighting how the individual becomes lost and isolated within these urban structures. The film deliberately evokes a sense of Mahin's loneliness amidst spaces typically associated with social interaction, reinforcing this impression for the viewer.



Figure 3 - Mahin sitting alone at the café



Figure 4 - Mahin at the taxi stand

Similarly, in Figure 3, Mahin is seated alone in a café, designed with clear reflections of modern architecture. The café features a piano, symbolizing high culture, yet Mahin remains isolated within this environment. When the waiter approaches to take her order, Mahin asks for a menu. The waiter points to a QR code on the table, explaining that the menu can only be accessed through it. Mahin, aware that her habits are technologically outdated, requests the classic beverages that cafés used to offer. The waiter responds, “Unfortunately, those were from the old days.” Despite not much time having passed, the rapid pace of technological development and the public’s swift internalization of these changes demonstrate how individuals who cannot adapt are pushed into loneliness. The grand and ostentatious appearance of such spaces does not symbolize places where social life flourishes, but rather serves as indicators of commercial relations. Simmel (2015) emphasizes that these structures should not be viewed merely as physical entities; they offer a lifestyle that transforms individuals emotions, thoughts, and relationships. While such monumental architecture is often perceived as symbolizing freedom, in reality, this sense of freedom produces a void of meaning. People themselves are being reshaped within these environments. Whereas, in the Middle Ages, power was centralized in specific spaces-castles, fortresses, cathedrals, etc.-today, it is diffused throughout society, hidden within these structures, producing disciplined societies and obedient bodies (Foucault, 1992). The relationship that buildings establish with individuals is fundamentally commercial and monetary in nature (Simmel, 2015). In Figure 4, Mahin is seen on the street during the daytime, yet the streets are completely empty. This visual can be interpreted as the result of individuals being integrated into the system from a young age. As life has been constructed upon commercial and monetary relations, individuals have become increasingly distanced from themselves, from others, and from their environment. Consequently, the individual is drawn into a state of natural isolation.



Figure 5 - Mahin having breakfast
alone at the table

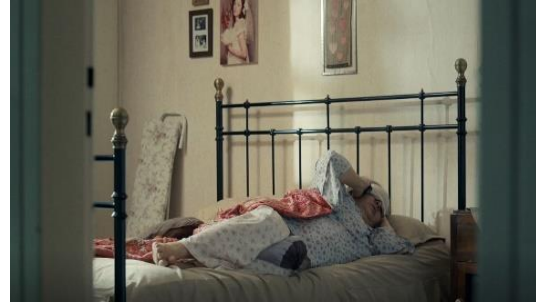


Figure 6 - Mahin's solitude

This isolation is depicted throughout the film in scenes where the main character, Mahin, eats alone at the table (Figure 5), sleeps alone (Figure 6), washes dishes, waters the garden, wanders the streets by herself, or sits alone in the park. The film also utilizes sound design to emphasize the emptiness of the house-amplifying the sounds of cutlery, the clinking of dishes, and other household noises to underscore her solitude. Another visual element that reflects Mahin's isolated life is the presence of protective covers on the furniture, indicating that the house remains largely unused and that Mahin lives alone. Additionally, in a scene reminiscent of Scorsese's *Taxi Driver*, when Mahin finds Faramarz dead in his home, she runs back and forth in a state of desperation. The camera initially follows her but then intentionally removes her from the frame to reveal the surrounding environment, creating a powerful metaphor for deep loneliness. The frame later returns to Mahin, reinforcing the magnitude of her isolation and drawing the audience into this experience.

Elderly Individuals Perceive Themselves as a Burden on Society

With industrialization, the transformation of reproduction and labor relations reshaped the social superstructure. The mass migration from rural areas to cities not only created labor-related problems in production but also gave rise to issues concerning elderly individuals who have lost their physical capacities. The extended families typical of collectivist cultures have largely been replaced by nuclear families due to urban life, while working conditions and the commercial and monetary nature of city life have further encouraged individualism. This process has led to the weakening of family bonds. As a result, attention and care have been concentrated within the nuclear family unit, leaving elderly individuals vulnerable to both physical and emotional loneliness.



Figure 8 - The armchairs are covered to prevent dust accumulation



Figure 9 - Mahin video-calling her daughter

As seen in Figure 8, the armchairs in Mahin's home are covered to prevent dust accumulation, symbolizing her physical loneliness while also indicating that no one visits or inquires about her well-being. In the film's dialogue, Mahin mentions that due to old age, transportation difficulties, and health problems, she and her friends can only gather once a year. The scene shown in Figure 9 expresses her emotional loneliness. During a video call with her daughter, who lives abroad, Mahin tries to engage, but her grandchildren constantly interrupt with questions, and her daughter neglects the conversation with Mahin. Just as Mahin proudly shows the blanket she knitted for her grandchild, the call abruptly ends, leaving her deeply saddened. The combination of physical and emotional loneliness leads elderly individuals to perceive themselves as a burden to those around them. In an interview conducted by Balazs with Louise B., an elderly woman living alone, it was revealed that elderly individuals often refrain from bothering others, see themselves as a burden, and are compelled to live alone due to the distance of their relatives. They experience this period as a hopeless process and avoid imposing themselves on others, while also expressing that, given the current state of healthcare, hospitals serve little purpose beyond merely prolonging life (Balazs, 2015). Although Balazs's example may appear to be an isolated case, it reflects a widespread problem experienced by many elderly individuals. This sense of alienation leads to their withdrawal from life. As a result, they often spend their final days watching television late into the night, watering the garden, knitting, or occupying themselves with tasks like looking into the mirror to recall their youth—all in an effort to find comfort in their remaining time.

Small Gestures and Kind Words Bring Happiness to the Elderly

Mahin goes shopping in preparation for her friends' visit. A dialogue unfolds between her and a grocery store employee:

Store Employee: *Let me do that, I don't want your hands to get hurt. Leave it to me!*

Mahin: *They've already been hurt enough. My hands aren't what they used to be... I've grown old!*

Store Employee: *No, not at all! You look wonderful!*

After hearing these words, Mahin smiles at the employee. Such words bring her happiness. Being noticed and knowing that they are not worthless helps reduce the loneliness of elderly individuals. Additionally, in another scene, Faramarz expresses:

"I've grown old... I've become just another old man. I don't even know when it started... But now, nobody notices me at all."

These words demonstrate that elderly individuals no longer have grand expectations from life; being acknowledged and noticed holds immense value for them (Figure 10).



Figure 10-Faramarz at Mahin's house



Figure 11-Mahin after Faramarz's death

Faramarz's words to Mahin, *"I am not afraid of dying, but I am afraid of dying alone,"* express the deep-seated fears carried by many elderly individuals-the fear of dying in solitude. It reflects the unsettling reality of walking through crowds as though invisible and quietly disappearing from the places where one once left their mark. For Faramarz, the time spent with Mahin represents the most precious moments of his life. Feeling loved, witnessing the seeds of affection bloom in his heart once again, tasting home-cooked meals he had longed for, dancing, and losing himself in the moment with wine-all symbolize his return to life. Mahin shares the same emotions. Therefore, this moment deserves to be

crowned with a cake. Mahin's words, *"I've been waiting for years to bake this cake,"* serve as an expression of the indescribable emotions they are experiencing. The cake, which gives the film its title, symbolizes the end of their loneliness, the rekindling of their love lives, the experience of being noticed, the acts of loving and being loved, and a new beginning. It is the ultimate symbol of happiness. However, on the very night when they finally find joy, Faramarz's sudden death serves as a final message to humanity: Do not delay in making others happy; death waits at the door-it can knock at any moment, and you may be left with regrets over what you failed to do (Figure 11).

Health Conditions as One of the Causes of Loneliness

In the film, one of the main topics discussed by the women gathered at Mahin's house is their health problems and their desire to meet an understanding partner from the opposite sex with whom they can share their lives and end their loneliness. At the table, one of the women says, *"When you get old, every kind of illness shows up. Yesterday the doctor told me that one of my kidneys is almost gone and that I have large polyps in my intestines... I think I have cancer, but you don't believe me."* In response, another friend supports her by saying, *"We all have health problems, but we don't talk about them everywhere."*

According to Victor and Bowling (2012), chronic and long-term health conditions are among the underlying causes of loneliness in elderly individuals. In another scene, Mahin's friends give her a *blood pressure monitor* as a birthday present. When Mahin mentions this gift to her daughter over the phone, her daughter dismisses it as an unnecessary and absurd present. However, at this stage of life-when every illness emerges and the body's immune system weakens-such a gift holds meaningful value for elderly individuals.

Loneliness is a Shared Pain

In his novel *The Stranger*, Camus (2016) illustrates how the protagonist experiences both alienation and loneliness stemming from an absurd reality, yet emphasizes that human suffering is ultimately individual. As a solution, he proposes social solidarity, which reminds individuals of their personal value and universal human dignity. Only through such solidarity can absurdity, alienation, and loneliness be overcome. These emotions are clearly reflected in both the visual framing and the dialogues of the film. The narrative emphasizes the need for genuine and meaningful human relationships, friendships that alleviate

loneliness, and the strengthening of family bonds. Faramarz's longing to be noticed, Mahin's search for someone to end her loneliness, and the portrayal of nuclear families preoccupied only with their immediate circle-implying that they, too, will face the same fate in the future-are all indicators of the need for social solidarity. Although loneliness may appear to be an individual experience, in essence, it is a form of collective suffering.

CONCLUSION

In this study, the phenomenon of loneliness experienced by elderly individuals is addressed from an individual perspective and analyzed through the example of the film *"My Favorite Cake"* using the discourse analysis method. Throughout the film, loneliness is conveyed through both visual and auditory elements. Visually, the theme of loneliness is reinforced by depictions of modern urban designs, while auditorily it is supported through ambient sounds. By employing the technical possibilities of cinema, the film constructs meaning in such a way that the audience perceives the sense of loneliness through the portrayal of solitary individuals. Moreover, industrialization has transformed production relations, accelerating migration from rural to urban areas and leading to profound changes in both individual and societal relationships. Issues such as inner loneliness, the fear of being alone in crowds, identity crises, relational disconnection, artificial friendships, and cultural crises have emerged. With the advent of new media, this condition has evolved into a different form. While the virtual world of social media and artificial intelligence may appear to offer individuals greater freedoms, they have simultaneously generated a new form of loneliness in the psychological sense. Given that human beings are inherently social creatures, the existence of authentic relationships is seen as essential. The demands of a fast-paced work life have contributed to the weakening of both extended and nuclear family ties.

The film as a whole questions the authenticity of relationships and indirectly emphasizes the necessity of reestablishing and restructuring genuine primary social bonds. The phenomenon of loneliness presented in many scenes is not treated merely as an individual issue but as a societal concern that directly or indirectly affects large segments of the population. Although loneliness is portrayed through elderly characters such as Mahin and Faramarz, these figures also embody the broader societal problem of collective loneliness. In this regard, the film underscores that loneliness is not merely a personal

condition but a shared social affliction. Furthermore, the lifestyle practices depicted, particularly those associated with urban living that contribute to the weakening of family ties, should also be interpreted within this framework.

In the context of this film, researchers who wish to conduct different studies may also approach “*My Favorite Cake*” within the framework of the challenges faced by women in theocratic regimes. A review of the existing literature on the film indicates that no such study has yet been conducted, and it is believed that undertaking such research could fill a notable gap in the literature.

Declarations

Ethics Committee Approval: Ethics committee approval is not required for this study.

Publication Ethics: This study was prepared in accordance with the principles outlined in the “Higher Education Institutions Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Directive.” Furthermore, the article has been screened using plagiarism detection software (Turnitin), and no instances of plagiarism were identified.

Author Contribution Rate: Author 1 (Ejder AŞİT): 40%, Author 2 (Mehmet ULUÇ): 30%, Author 3 (İ. Halil YAŞAR): 30%.

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Structured Extended Abstract

Yalnızlık, çağdaş toplumda bireylerin karşı karşıya kaldığı başlıca sorunlardan biridir. Her ne kadar yalnızlık çoğu zaman bireye özgü psikolojik bir durum olarak görünse de, varoluşsal ve toplumsal boyutları nedeniyle felsefi ve sosyolojik incelemelerin de konusu olmaktadır. Modern yaşamla paralel olarak büyüyen bu sorun, hem bireysel hem de toplumsal etkiler üretmekte, sosyal bağları zayıflatmakta ve bireyleri hem kendilerinden hem de çevrelerinden yabancılaştırmaktadır. Yeni kent mimarisinin soğuk ve kişisiz yapısı

ile hız ve haz odaklı yaşam biçimi, bu olgunun ortaya çıkışına önemli ölçüde katkıda bulunmuştur. Sonuç olarak yalnızlık, kişisel ve toplumsal düzeyde bir dizi sorunu tetiklemiştir.

Bu sorunun geniş kapsamı göz önünde bulundurulduğunda, mevcut çalışma özellikle modern çağın en önemli sorun alanlarından birini temsil eden yaşlı bireylerin durumuna odaklanmaktadır. Kolektif kültürün ortadan kalkması, kapitalist ideoloji tarafından şekillendirilen kitle iletişim araçları aracılığıyla kent yaşamının arzu edilen bir yaşam biçimi olarak teşvik edilmesi ve ticari ile parasal ilişkilerin hâkim hale gelmesi, yaşlı bireylerin karşılaştığı zorlukları daha da derinleştirmiş, onların toplumsal konumlarını giderek daha karmaşık hale getirmiştir. Çözüm olarak önerilen huzurevleri ise sorunun kök nedenlerini ele almak yerine, yüzeysel birer çözüm işlevi görmektedir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, yalnızlık kavramının sinemada nasıl temsil edildiğini, özellikle yaşlı bireyler bağlamında, *En Sevdiğim Pastam* filmi üzerinden analiz etmektir. Çalışmada, bu sorun çerçevesinde filmin sahneleri, diyalogları ve mekânsal unsurları incelenmiştir. Film, modern yaşamın bir sonucu olarak giderek yalnızlaşan ve toplumsal açıdan izole hale gelen yaşlı bireylerin, bu durumun üstesinden gelme çabalarını konu edinmektedir.

Research Background & Problem

Yalnızlık olgusu, edebiyat, şiir, resim, müzik ve tiyatro gibi diğer sanat dallarında olduğu gibi sinemanın da geniş biçimde ele aldığı temalardan biridir. Bu tür filmlerde bireyin toplum içindeki konumu ve iç dünyası derinlemesine incelenirken, olaylar çoğu zaman teknoloji, sosyal medya ve birey üçgeninde çerçevelenmektedir. Birey, mekân ve sinema arasındaki ilişki de bu bağlamda araştırılmaktadır. *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Her* (2013), *Cast Away* (2000), *Joker* (2019), *The Martian* (2015), *Room* (2015), *Mustang* (2015) ve *The Beasts* (2022) bu tür filmlere verilebilecek örneklerden yalnızca birkaçıdır. *En Sevdiğim Pastam* da bu sinema eserleri arasında değerlendirilebilir. Bu filmi farklı kılan unsur, yaşlı bireylerin yalnızlığına özgü odaklanması, modern toplumda yaşlıların deneyimlerini öne çıkarması ve onların bu zorlukların üstesinden gelme çabalarını yansıtmasıdır. Bu yönüyle film, benzer temaları işleyen diğer yapımlardan ayrılmaktadır.

Research Methodology

Film analizinde söylem analizi yöntemi tercih edilmiştir. Söylem analizi, karakterlerin, olayların ve mekânın nasıl anlam ürettiğini ve toplumsal yapıya içkin iktidar ilişkilerini nasıl yansıttığını ortaya koymada etkili bir yaklaşımdır. *En Sevdiğim Pastam*, yaşlı bireylerin toplumda hak ettikleri saygı ve değerden uzaklaştırılmalarını vurgulaması ve yalnızlık sonucunda yaşadıkları zorlukları gözler önüne sermesi bakımından özgün bir bakış açısı sunmaktadır.

Buna ek olarak, bu çalışmada eleştirel söylem analizi de kullanılmıştır. *En Sevdiğim Pastam* filmi üzerinde gerçekleştirilen eleştirel söylem analizi, yaşlı bireylerin yalnızlığı aşma çabalarını nasıl tasvir ettiğini ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Filmin mekân seçimleri, karakterlerin rolleri, diyaloglarda yer alan örtük ve açık anlamlar, dilsel yapılar ve anlam katmanları, daha geniş toplumsal bağlamları içinde incelenmiş ve tartışılmıştır.

Research Results

Filmde bireyin toplum içindeki konumu ve iç dünyası derinlemesine incelenirken, olaylar teknoloji, sosyal medya ve birey üçgeninde çerçevelenmektedir. Birey, mekân ve sinema arasındaki ilişki de film boyunca ele alınmaktadır. *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Her* (2013), *Cast Away* (2000), *Joker* (2019), *The Martian* (2015), *Room* (2015), *Mustang* (2015) ve *The Beasts* (2022) bu temaları işleyen filmlere örnek olarak verilebilir. *En Sevdiğim Pastam* da benzer yapımlar arasında değerlendirilebilir. Bu filmi farklı kılan, yaşlı bireyler arasında yalnızlığı sorunlaştırmaya özgü odaklanması, modern toplumdaki deneyimlerine dikkat çekmesi ve bu zorlukların üstesinden gelme çabalarını yansıtmasıdır. Bu bakımdan film, benzer temaları işleyen diğer yapımlardan ayrılmaktadır.

Conclusion & Discussion

Filmde yalnızlık kavramı, sinematografik sahneler ve ortam seslerinin kullanımı aracılığıyla izleyiciye aktarılmaktadır. Modern kentin unsurları arasında kaybolan ve izole olan bireylerin betimlendiği sahnelerde, teknolojik gelişmelerin artan yalnızlığa nasıl katkıda bulunduğu anlatı içinde vurgulanmaktadır. Film, yaşlı bireylerin çoğu zaman kendilerini topluma yük gibi hissettiklerini ortaya koyarken, sanayileşme ve kent yaşamının bireyciliği teşvik ettiğini ve aile bağlarını zayıflattığını öne çıkarmaktadır. Mahin'in yalnızlığı ve umutsuzluğu ayrıntılı bir biçimde işlenmiş, yalnızlık teması çeşitli semboller ve görsel metaforlar aracılığıyla ifade edilmiştir. Film ayrıca mimari mekânlar ile bireyler arasındaki

ticari ve parasal iliŐkinin, izolasyonu beslediĐini ve özgürlük yanılısaması yarattıĐını vurgulamaktadır. Mahin'in yalnızlıkla mücadelesi, görsel unsurlar yoluyla pekiŐtirilerek filmin modern toplumsal yapılara yönelik geniŐ kapsamlı eleŐtirisine katkıda bulunmaktadır.

Çıkar ÇatıŐması/Conflict of Interest

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Yazarların Katkıları/Author Contributions

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