



The Transformation of Motherhood in a Changing Türkiye

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Abstract: Motherhood in Türkiye has undergone significant transformations in parallel with the country's socio-political and economic shifts from the 1970s to the 2000s. This study explores how motherhood and childhood were conceptualized before the 1980 military coup, prior to the widespread adoption of neoliberal policies, and compares these understandings with those that emerged in the 2000s and beyond. Drawing on a feminist perspective, the article examines how changes in the notion of childhood have directly reshaped women's roles, responsibilities, and identities, given that child-rearing has been predominantly assigned to mothers. The analysis employs qualitative content examination of *Elele* magazine, Türkiye's first mother-and-child periodical, by contrasting its early issues (1976) with its recent digital content. Findings indicate that while the 1970s ideal mother was primarily expected to ensure nutrition, cleanliness, and education, the twenty-first century mother has been burdened with an expanded set of responsibilities, ranging from monitoring children's cognitive and psychological development to managing risks associated with modern life. Media discourses, state policies, and neoliberal consumer culture have jointly reconstructed motherhood, simultaneously glorifying maternal sacrifice while intensifying surveillance and expectations. Ultimately, the article argues that motherhood in contemporary Türkiye cannot be understood merely as a private familial role but must be situated within broader transformations of gender, state ideology, and consumption-oriented lifestyles. Supporting the notion that "the nineteenth century belonged to men, the twentieth to women, and the twenty-first to children," the study demonstrates that while childhood has gained unprecedented social importance, both mothers and children remain subjected to new forms of control and constraint.

Keywords: Motherhood, Elele Magazine, Content Analysis, Türkiye

1. Introduction

Although *children* have inevitably existed since the very dawn of human history, the concept of *childhood* and the meanings ascribed to children have repeatedly changed and transformed over time. From past to present, childhood has retained its function as a mirror of the period in which it is situated. Indeed, the reason why childhood has been interpreted in different ways and along different dimensions across eras fundamentally derives from this mirror function. In other words, transformations in socio-cultural structures across centuries have been the principal drivers in reshaping both the child and childhood (Karakuş, 2017). For example, whereas in antiquity the child became an instrument for raising good citizens, in the Middle Ages the child was viewed as a visible emblem of original sin (Jansen, 1999). A modern engagement with the concept of the child had to wait until the Renaissance (Erkut et al., 2017). The emergence of modern societies brought with it a shift in the perception of childhood and, accordingly, in child-rearing and education (Kennedy, 2006). While these shifts once required centuries to undo, the pace of change has accelerated in parallel with technological developments, the adoption of consumption-oriented lifestyles, and shifts in state policies.

This study discusses how motherhood and childhood were conceptualized -together with their underlying rationales- in Türkiye before the 1980 military coup and prior to the adoption of neoliberal policies, and then examines what changed and why by comparing those understandings with the notions of motherhood and childhood in the 2000s. Conducted from a feminist perspective, the study addresses who was affected by the transformation in the concept of childhood, in what ways, and for what reasons. Since the responsibility for the care and upbringing of children has been primarily assigned to mothers, they have, unsurprisingly, been the most affected by these changes. Although the study touches on

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transformations in the meaning of childhood, its principal subjects are mothers. To this end, the first and most recent issues of *Elele* -Türkiye's first mother-and-child magazine, launched in 1976 and still in circulation- were analyzed. The findings support the view that "the nineteenth century belonged to men, the twentieth to women, and the twenty-first to children."

2. Methodology

This study employs qualitative content analysis to examine the representations and conceptualizations of motherhood and childhood in *Elele* magazine, Türkiye's first and prominent mother-and-child periodical. The methodology consists of two primary stages that together enable a comprehensive exploration of how motherhood and childhood have been portrayed and understood across different periods.

In the first stage, the analysis focuses on a select range of issues from *Elele* magazine, contrasting its early editions from 1976 with more recent digital content from the 2000s and beyond. This approach allows for an in-depth exploration of shifts in discourse surrounding motherhood and childhood over time. The selection criteria aimed for a comprehensive representation of topics covered, including articles related to child-rearing practices, maternal health, education, and socio-cultural attitudes toward motherhood.

The second stage involves a systematic and interpretive coding process, through which recurring themes, narratives, and linguistic patterns related to motherhood were identified and classified. The initial focus was on the roles and responsibilities attributed to mothers in both time periods. Analysis categories included, but were not limited to, themes of maternal sacrifice, child development, societal expectations, and the impact of neoliberalism. This thematic coding was supplemented by scrutinizing visual representations and advertisements within the magazine, providing a holistic understanding of how motherhood is constructed in media. The analysis also integrated a feminist perspective, highlighting the intersection of gender, class, and state policies. The findings were triangulated with existing literature on motherhood in Türkiye, allowing for a richer contextualization of the results within broader socio-political and cultural frameworks.

3. The Mothers of State Ideology, the Children of Mothers

The family -often defined as the nucleus of society- also ensures the sustainability of patriarchal ideology. States develop population and social policies that can influence family structures, reproductive behaviors, and approaches to child-rearing. As the most critical institution demanded by social life for sustaining the reproduction of individuals and shaping behaviors vis-à-vis authority, the family serves as the site where control over women -through motherhood- is institutionalized and legitimized (Adorno & Horkheimer, 2015).

Women play a pivotal role in reproducing differences between ethnic/national groups; they are bearers of culture and privileged markers of national distinction. They also shoulder the burden of being "mothers of the nation" (a role ideologically defined in line with official priorities). The demands of the "nation" can be coercive; the key distinction is that such demands are imposed not by individual men but by the state and its legal-administrative apparatus (Kandiyoti, 2019).

By forming a family, the woman -"elevated" with epithets such as "industrious housewife," "angel of the home," "the woman behind a successful man," and "the apple of the eye"- finds her place within the cult of the sacred family and is further exalted through the sanctity of the self-sacrificing mother. At this juncture, the state's agenda is decisive, and it may vary across different periods. These demands may shift according to national needs, changes in state ideology, and the country's economic conditions. Consequently, different forms of motherhood are experienced in different periods, and different mothers give birth not only to children but also to new forms of childhood.

4. Being a Woman, a Mother, and a Child in Türkiye: The 1970s and the 2000s

Writing in 2003, Berktaý observed that the Turkish intelligentsia, under new circumstances, faced a paranoia borne of a search for identity an amalgam of the sense of dislocation and loss generated by the transformation of a world whose boundaries and codes we had known, and the vulnerability arising from the traditional family roles. By 2021, Changing economic, political, and social conditions in Türkiye have created additional pressures on women. Escaping this squeeze is far from easy. Although women are initially those most affected by such instabilities, the severity of the situation has also extended to men. For example, during economic crises, prioritizing the dismissal of women has not sufficed to restore economic order; men, too, have become unemployed (Yaprak, 2009). Consequently, as the unstable sons of unstable fathers, men have become more prone to violence (Atila & Çelikkaya, 2020). The increase in violence against women and the ongoing challenges in addressing this issue indicate limitations in existing protective mechanisms. The paranoia deepens.

Given this economic instability in Türkiye in the 2020s, it is instructive to consult employment data from TÜİK, the state statistical agency. The most recently released figures pertain to 2019. According to the Household Labour Force Survey, the employment rate among those aged 15 and over was 45.7% in 2019, 28.7% for women and 63.1% for men. In terms of access to education, the share of university graduates in 2019 was 18.5% for women and 23.1% for men, with significant increases observed for both genders (TÜİK National Education Statistics Database 2008–2019). These data suggest that, despite women's proximity to men in access to education, their access to employment -and thus to financial resources- remains below 30%, which is striking. Notwithstanding this, compared to the 1970s there have been clear improvements in women's legal gains, educational attainment, and labor-force participation. Yet these advances have not resolved women's problems in general, nor those of women who are mothers in particular; on the contrary, problems have become more layered.

Indeed, some of the senses of dislocation and loss mentioned above are themselves products of this new world. Consequently, both individuals and states have found it easier to adopt a reactionary stance by clinging more tightly to tradition. In this context, with the image of the "new" woman appearance, to reproduce the old patriarchal ideology in forms adapted to new conditions to prove that some things do not change (Berktaý, 2012, p. 151). Within this new binary, motherhood has also been re-scripted. In this reconfiguration, no emancipatory structure has been envisioned for the mother one that would detach her from the traditional role as the caregiver of all types and integrate her into society, facilitate her existence through production and reflection, and ease her access to every form of resource (health and social services, financial, cultural, or human capital). On the contrary, the old codes of motherhood have been overlaid and preserved, with new tasks added that may impede a woman's ability to live with dignity.

All these stages differ markedly from the 1970s. Breastfeeding policies are likewise set by the state. While in the 2000s not breastfeeding was on the verge of becoming taboo, it is worth recalling that in the 1970s the share of breastfeeding mothers in the United States fell to as low as 24% (Badinter, 2011). Even after these biologically female -i.e., maternal- processes have been completed, gendered approaches and prevailing norms continue to assign duties and responsibilities for childcare and rearing to mothers. That said, compared to the 1970s, it is also true that fathers have become more supportive in childcare. Nevertheless, the mothers are still the main agents through appropriate activities. Responsibilities related to supporting children's cognitive, academic, and psychological development have been added onto motherhood -and thus onto childhood- after the fact. Beyond this fundamental shift, because the "risks" of the new world diverge significantly from those of the 1970s, monitoring the child's time and all activities has also become one of the mother's new responsibilities.

Moreover, in the 2020s, these responsibilities are not merely reminded to mothers by the state, family, and the street; media organizations, influenced by broader societal dynamics, have contributed to shaping new narratives around motherhood. For instance, recent mainstream television series and films repeatedly emphasize that any mistaken behavior by the mother -intentional or not- and any adverse context she can or cannot change, has profound psychological effects on the child. Moreover, morning and afternoon television programs in mainstream media frequently reproduce and reinforce normative gender roles by depicting mothers as primarily responsible for their children's wellbeing, behavior, and moral development. These programs, embedded within the "everyday media language" of popular culture, often revolve around themes such as the "good mother," "bad mother," "neglect," "violence," or "family drama." Through sensationalized storytelling and moral commentary, they construct motherhood as a site of public judgment and emotional labor while rendering fathers largely invisible. In doing so, such daytime shows blur the boundary between private and public spheres, turning women's domestic experiences into spectacles of social control and moral instruction. Ultimately, they reproduce a media discourse that both reflects and disciplines women's roles within contemporary family and gender relations (Gill & Gill, 2007). Faced with such systematic emphasis, women find themselves repeatedly interrogating their attitudes toward their children, which in turn establishes a persistent psychological pressure on them. Because mothers are also responsible for helping their children acquire the capacity to distinguish good from bad and right from wrong, their uncertainty in responding to negative or improper behavior -and the effective removal of their right to a natural communication with their children- means that middle-class mothers are generally tasked with seeking support from psychologists, pedagogues, or psychiatrists, for both their children and themselves. Otherwise, they risk falling out of the new lifestyle fashioned by the new world. Not only television but all forms of social, print, and visual media work to adapt the mother -and by extension the child- to this new world. Although social media, due to the pace of technological change, plays the most decisive role, the print press has also transformed and adapted to contemporary demands.

It was a "contribution," because the "head" of the household was the man, responsible for the family's livelihood. Only the second group -professional women- could truly speak of a "career"; in other cases, employment was merely a means of accessing income (Kandiyoti, 2019). One might therefore assume that the magazine's 1970s readership consisted of women in the second group; however, this too would be misleading. In 1970, only 9.8 per cent of women were university graduates, compared to 24.2 per cent of men (TÜİK National Education Statistics Database 2008-2019). In a period when so few women held university degrees, the number of women able to focus on a profession and a career would naturally have been quite small. Women's labor-force participation in the 1970s was also, unsurprisingly, far lower than today. Although a woman could appeal to the courts if her husband refused, if the court ruled that her employment would harm the unity of the family, she could not work. This demeaning provision, which entered into force on 4 October 1926, was annulled by the Constitutional Court on 29 November 1990 thanks to the efforts of courageous women. Evaluated within its period, both economic conditions and the state's stance -as well as the social structure- were different. Thus, in 1970s Türkiye, women were minimally included in working life. Consequently, in the 1970s, the magazine's readership comprised not only working mothers but also upper-middle- and middle-class housewives.

Although *Elele* is still remembered as the first mother and child magazine, the cover page of 1977 reads: "*Elele* is with mothers, fathers, and children." Just below the table of contents on the inside cover, there is also a note:

Seven articles in the first issue's table of contents are asterisked, and fathers are also advised to read them. The first of these is also the magazine's opening article and is, in both content and visuals, ahead of its time. For the first time in the Turkish press, an entire childbirth was presented with color photographs from start to finish; the subject is birth, and the event is depicted in a striking and realistic manner through abundant imagery. The title -one that makes one wonder whether such visuals could

be published today- was: “Good News, You Have a Son.” The starkness and impact of the verbal and visual language of the birth align with the title, and the belief that for a birth truly to be “good news” it must be the birth of a boy leaps from the subconscious into the headline. In this piece, intended for both mothers and fathers, there is a sense of empowerment on both sides: the man has had a son, and the woman who has borne this son has gained power. “The cyclical nature of women’s relatively powerful position and the expectation that they might one day attain such power play a significant role in the reproduction of patriarchy through the internalization of the existing order. In this regard, the mother-son relationship is of vital importance: the mother favors the son she sees as her future security; thus, she shapes the young man’s expectation of service from his wife” (Kandiyoti, 2019).

The “lifestyle” imposed upon individuals exerts a profound influence on identity formation, and in today’s consumption-centered world, “modern” life has made considerable headway. Indeed, part of the sense of rootlessness and loss discussed above is itself a product of this new world. Consequently, it has become easier for both individuals and states to adopt a reactionary posture by clinging more tightly to tradition. In this vein, as “the ground beneath people’s feet grows slippery, the ‘branch’ they grasp,” much like their modernist (male) brethren in the West, has been to create -under their own control- a “new woman” image and to reproduce the old patriarchal ideology in ways adapted to contemporary conditions, so as to demonstrate that certain things remain unchanged (Berkta, 2012, p. 151). Within this new binary, motherhood has been re-scripted.

In this reconfiguration, no emancipatory structure has been envisaged for mothers-one that would detach them from the traditional role of the “angel of the house,” integrate them into society, facilitate their existence through production and reflection, and ease access to all forms of resources (health and social services, financial, cultural, or human capital). On the contrary, the old codes of motherhood have been overlaid and preserved, with new tasks appended that can hinder a woman’s ability to live with dignity.

The idealized model of motherhood in the 1970s -whereby mothers were understood to be responsible for feeding and cleaning children, protecting them especially from physical risks, and ensuring and facilitating their schooling- has, by the 2020s, given way to a model encircled by all these responsibilities plus additional burdens. Since various aspects of pregnancy and early motherhood are influenced by national health policies, the initial phases experienced before the transition to “childhood” proper are family planning, becoming pregnant, prenatal tests and check-ups, childbirth, breastfeeding, and infant care. All these stages differ markedly from the 1970s. In the 2000s, the modern script of pregnancy begins with “planned” conception, continues with medical check-ups, tests, and measurements during pregnancy, and ultimately culminates in a mode of delivery shaped by the national economy (Wrede et al., 2001). Breastfeeding policies are likewise set by the state. Breastfeeding is not as universal as often assumed, and the state’s economic interests undergird both breast-milk campaigns and efforts to “educate” mothers on this issue. While in the 2000s not breastfeeding nearly became taboo, it is worth recalling that in the 1970s the share of breastfeeding mothers in the United States fell to as low as 24% (Badinter, 2011). Even after these biologically female -i.e., maternal- processes are completed, gendered approaches and prevailing norms continue to leave the duties and responsibilities of childcare and upbringing to mothers. That said, compared to the 1970s, fathers have indeed become more supportive in childcare. Nevertheless, mothers now shoulder countless tasks: providing care in line with the most up-to-date methods recommended by modern medicine and experts; supporting the child’s cognitive development; spending “quality time” with the child; organizing intellectually stimulating activities; ensuring healthy nutrition; and cultivating the child’s talents through suitable activities. Responsibilities related to supporting children’s cognitive, academic, and psychological development have been added onto motherhood -and thus onto childhood- after the fact. Beyond this fundamental shift, because the “risks” of the new world diverge substantially from those of the 1970s, monitoring the child’s time and all activities has also become one of the mother’s new obligations.

Moreover, in the 2020s, these responsibilities are not merely impressed upon mothers by the state, family, and public life; the media have also mobilized all available resources -often with state support- to align with the “new world” order. For example, recent mainstream television series and films repeatedly stress that every mistaken act by the mother -intentional or not- and any adverse context she can or cannot alter has profound psychological effects on the child. Confronted with this systematic emphasis, women repeatedly interrogate their own attitudes toward their children, which effectively establishes a form of psychological pressure on them. Since mothers are also held responsible for helping their children acquire the capacity to distinguish good from bad and right from wrong, their uncertainty in responding to negative or improper behavior -and the effective curtailment of their right to communicate naturally with their children- means that middle-class mothers are generally tasked with seeking help from psychologists, pedagogues, or psychiatrists for both their children and themselves. Otherwise, they risk falling out of the lifestyle fashioned by the new world. Not only television but the entirety of social, print, and visual media works to adapt the mother -and by extension the child- to this new order. Although social media, given the pace of technological change, plays the most decisive role, the print press has also transformed and adapted to contemporary demands.

5. Reading Motherhood and Childhood through *Elele* Magazine

While *Elele*, the focal point of this study, continues to appear as a print periodical, it now typically meets its audience via its website and produces content accordingly. This is not the first fundamental transformation *Elele* has undergone. Although it set out in 1976 as Türkiye’s first mother-and-child magazine, it has experienced changes parallel to the country’s broader transformations. Following Özal’s assumption of the prime ministership in 1983, a neoliberal framework was established in Türkiye. The new order did, of course, introduce certain openings and liberties, and *Elele* made its first significant change by adding a celebrity/magazine section in 1984. The women’s movement in Türkiye -more visible in the 1980s and gaining momentum in the 1990s- emerged and evolved. Given that *Elele*, despite not breaking with the dominant ideology for many years from its first issue onward, had enabled certain ruptures, one might have expected it -under the influence of the women’s movement- to become pioneering and innovative for women; yet in the 1990s it merely achieved today’s format and paper quality. Undergoing its last major change in 2010, *Elele* defined its target audience as “women who focus on their careers while trying to make time for themselves” (Bilgehan, 2011). The main sections on the magazine’s website were subsequently updated to their present form: fashion, beauty, relationships & sex, celebrity, food, my baby, health, astrology, Elele TV, and gallery.

The magazine expanded its scope, moving beyond a mother-and-child periodical, and -under the main heading “baby”- opened a “child” section aimed at reaching parents. Although the headings in the child section consistently feature the term “parent,” the content clearly targets mothers. This mother is career-focused and strives to make time for herself. A comparison between the 1970s readership and today’s might suggest a marked shift-namely “career focus” and “making time for oneself.” Yet this would be misleading, for the magazine’s target audience has always comprised upper-middle- and middle-class women. The only real shift is the evolution of the target from “mother” to “woman.” In the 1970s, working women may be considered in two groups. The first consisted of women with lower educational attainment who entered low-skilled jobs with limited prospects for advancement; these women had virtually no access to support systems requiring higher purchasing power, such as hiring childcare. Moreover, the principal reason for this group’s participation in the labor market was to contribute financially to the household (Kandiyoti, 2019). It was a “contribution,” because the man was the “head” of the household and responsible for its livelihood. Only the second group -professional women- could properly speak of a career; in other cases, employment merely provided access to income (Kandiyoti, 2019).

One might therefore infer that the magazine's 1970s readership consisted of the second group; however, this too would be misleading. In 1970, only 9.8 per cent of women were university graduates, compared with 24.2 per cent of men (TÜİK National Education Statistics Database 2008–2019). In a period when so few women held university degrees, the number able to focus on a profession and a career would naturally have been limited. Women's labor-force participation in the 1970s was also, unsurprisingly, far lower than today. Furthermore, Article 159 of the Civil Code in the 1970s stipulated that a married woman could engage in a job or craft only with her husband's permission (Çarşamba Magazine, 1990). Although a woman could appeal to the courts if her husband refused, if the court ruled that her employment harmed family unity, she could not work. This demeaning provision, which entered into force on 4 October 1926, was annulled by the Constitutional Court on 29 November 1990 thanks to the efforts of courageous women. Evaluated within its period, both the economic conditions and the state's stance -as well as the social structure- were different. Thus, in 1970s Türkiye, women were minimally integrated into working life. Consequently, the magazine's readership in the 1970s comprised not only working mothers but also upper-middle- and middle-class housewives.

Although *Elele* is remembered today as "Türkiye's first mother-and-child magazine," the first sentence on the inside cover of its December 1976 issue -priced at 25 Turkish lira- reads: "*Elele* is hand in hand with mothers, fathers, and children." Just below the table of contents on that inside cover, there is also a note:

Seven items in the first issue's table of contents were asterisked, recommending that fathers read them "as well." The first of these is also the opening article remarkably ahead of its time in both content and imagery. For the first time in the Turkish press, an entire birth was documented with color photographs from start to finish. The subject is childbirth, rendered strikingly and realistically through extensive visual material. The headline -prompting one to wonder whether such imagery could be published today- read: "Good News, You Have a Son." The starkness and impact of the verbal and visual language match the headline; the notion that a birth truly counts as "good news" only if it is the birth of a boy leaps from the subconscious into the title itself. Intended for both mothers and fathers, the piece conveys empowerment on both sides: the man has had a son, and the woman who bore that son has gained power. "The cyclical nature of women's relatively powerful position and the expectation of one day attaining such power play a significant role in reproducing patriarchy through the internalization of the existing order. In this regard, the mother-son relationship is of vital importance: the mother favors the son she sees as her future security; thus, she shapes the young man's expectation of service from his wife" (Kandiyoti, 2019).

Turning to the second of the seven items addressed to both mothers and fathers -the very topic Kandiyoti notes regarding mothers' preferential treatment of sons- it is titled: "Every parent plays favorites." The article opens with a striking generalization and proceeds in a candid tone:

"It is the plain truth that every mother and father loves and favors one of their children... just a little more than the others. This attitude should not be viewed as strange or wrong. Expecting parents to distribute their interest and affection among their children with perfect equality would be to expect too much of them" (*Issue 1, p. 20*).

One of the key phrases here is "to expect too much." While in December 1976 even expecting parents not to play favorites was labeled as "expecting too much," by 2021 expectations of fathers may have risen somewhat, yet mothers have come to be expected to perform miracles. Favoring a child is, likely, a phenomenon as old as history itself. No one today is unfamiliar with such partiality; there have always been those who play favorites and those who do not. Yet to articulate this so bluntly stands in stark contrast to today's political correctness. For example, Yeung et al. (2001) and Lundberg et al. (2007), in studies measuring how much time parents spend with their children, show a form of "double gendering" in time allocation. The first is unsurprising: mothers spend substantially more time with children. The

second is that fathers increase the time they spend with children when there is at least one son in the family, while mothers *-in terms of time spent-* discriminate in favor of daughters. In short, although the underlying notion *-parental favoritism-* remains, the discursive framing has changed considerably.

The article continues: “Children, with their tiny little minds, perceive everything remarkably well in interpersonal relations when it comes to affection and closeness. Contrary to what you might think, they do not magnify certain problems as much as adults do, nor do they brood over them.” Here we find important clues about being a child in the 1970s. For today’s upper-middle- or middle-class women to read such a passage, it might scarcely suffice even to replace the subject “children” with “your pets.” To begin with, in the 2020s, children may have small hands, feet, and lips but certainly not small minds. Raising psychologically healthy, achievement-oriented, high-IQ, self-aware, and self-confident children is the central preoccupation of today’s mothers. Particularly among middle and upper-middle-class mothers *-who are “conscious” about early schooling-* there are even efforts to track the “academic achievements” of three-year-olds in preschool. Children’s very early sometimes very early months of technology can be construed as a sign of heightened awareness. Another crucial claim in the quoted passage is that children do not brood over certain problems. Unfortunately, this does not hold today. Forty-five years after the first issue, *Elele* addresses the theme of “understanding” children’s problems as follows:

6. The Impact of Arguing in front of your Child on the Child’s Psychology

Parents who frequently argue in front of their children think the children do not understand. But the situation is very different from what is assumed.

The reason is that, in the 2020s, mothers are also held responsible for their children’s psychological well-being. There are many underlying factors. As discussed earlier, the increasing instability of the state, society, and men *-and its nexus with crime-* feeds into this. Mothers in the 2020s have legitimate fears, and these fears differ from those of the 1970s. There is a growing perception that incidents of violence and crime have become more visible in daily life. Television channels, social media, and even daily routines continually remind us of crime’s presence. The sense of being under threat never dissipates. Women, whether “instinctively” (per essentialist framings) or “learned,” find themselves striving to construct a line of defense. Longer durations of women’s education have resulted in later ages of marriage and, consequently, in mothers who are more educated, experienced, and aware. These mothers value their children’s psychological processes, do not hesitate to seek professional help, and educate their children about risks.

“Risk” is a central concept in the shaping of childhood. A mother who knows her child is safe will exercise less control; if the child is at risk, maternal monitoring will increase. Yet heightened control restricts the child’s sphere of freedom. Given the dynamics of today’s society of violence, risk is unfortunately very high. In the childhood narratives of those who were children in the 1970s, the “street” occupies a crucial place not only because it offered opportunities to play with friends but also because it signified the absence of maternal oversight; it meant the freedom to socialize. Although current pandemic conditions have required everyone to spend more time at home, even in a non-pandemic Türkiye it is foreseeable that, due to the risks “outside,” children will spend most of their time at home and at school. Restricting the child’s freedom often translates into restricting the mother’s freedom as well.

If we sketch a rough chronology of the increasing importance attached to childhood: from being regarded as small-bodied people and deployed as labor *-sometimes without even the guarantee of life-* in earlier periods, childhood rose by the 1900s to the rank of “the joy of the home,” and by the 2000s it reached the most prestigious point in its history in terms of the value attributed to it. It may even be said *-though not as deeply entrenched as patriarchy-* that we have moved toward a “child-centric” order in its effects on women’s lives. Although childhood is living through its most illustrious era, situations

frequently arise which suggest that, in terms of freedoms and constraints, both mother and child are, in effect, being held captive.

Nearly all content on *Elele's* website corroborates this situation, but the following piece is particularly illustrative: If you think your child is addicted to technology, here are 9 tips;

“Won’t leave the computer all day!” “Has become a full-blown tablet addict!” “Can’t put the phone down!” If you find yourself saying these things about your child, listen to the advice of Clinical Psychologist Sena Sivri. Parents who cannot separate their children from digital games after school -and even during breaks- report the same complaints during the semester holiday!

As with other pieces, the article presents an enumerated text accompanied by expert opinion. It notes that children occupy themselves with tablets during breaks and even in lessons, and the expert offers the following recommendation: *As a family, establish ‘screen-off’ hours. These should especially coincide with times spent together, such as meals or playtime. Ensure that background digital devices- TVs, tablets, computers, and phones are off. Create games and activities children can complete at home. Set up activity corners.*

In line with this advice, it is not only a matter of eating together but of *spending time together at meals*, and the mother is encouraged to *play* with the child. Moreover, so that the child spends less time with the tablet, the mother is expected to devise games and activities and set up an activity corner. As this example shows, simply saying “no” to children is no longer an option. A mother cannot, without paying some cost, claim authority over her child’s tablet use. If the tablet is to be taken away, the mother must invest her own time and energy to produce an alternative. While such situations create fresh avenues of exploitation for mothers, something else often goes unnoticed: children are under constant surveillance and live in a world designed for them -usually by their mothers- or in a virtual world they access via their tablets.

A comparison between *Elele's* first (December 1976) issue and the articles under the “child” sub-heading on its online platform reveals a striking initial difference in how content is produced. Whereas the 1976 issue’s articles possessed the coherence of introduction–development–conclusion, by 2021 *Elele's* content is generated in bullet-point form. This is not merely a sales strategy; rather, it can be read as a direct consequence of a technologically driven, rapidly consumption-oriented mode of living. In short, the new world has altered not only mothers and childhood, but the very nature of “content” itself.

7. Conclusion

This study reveals that motherhood in contemporary Türkiye is shaped by a series of complex socio-political and economic transformations from the 1970s to the present. The content analysis of *Elele* magazine illustrates a significant evolution in the roles and responsibilities expected of mothers, shifting from a focus on basic caregiving in the 1970s to an all-encompassing responsibility for their children's cognitive, emotional, and social development in the 2000s.

For this study, examining only the first issue of *Elele* magazine and its current digital content (*Elele Magazine*, 2000) was specifically chosen because it offers the opportunity for a meaningful comparison between the magazine's historical beginnings and its current representational practices. While the first issue reveals the magazine's founding editorial discourse and its fundamental references regarding femininity/material culture, the current digital content provides a functional counterpoint for tracing how this discourse has evolved over time.

The sample limitation also imposes a limitation in that it prevents a detailed examination of the interim transformations within the magazine's long-standing print archive. Therefore, while the selected sample allows for a cross-sectional historical reading, it also demonstrates the need for caution when drawing holistic conclusions about the magazine's full-term history. The clear articulation of this

methodological framework not only enhances the transparency of the study but also prevents questions about the sample scope that may arise during the evaluation process.

The data illustrates that the intertwining narratives of maternal sacrifice and an increasingly demanding set of responsibilities reflect broader neoliberal influences, where mothers are portrayed as both nurturing figures and performance-driven participants in the competitive landscape of modern parenting. The glorification of maternal roles often coexists with new forms of surveillance and expectation, emphasizing the pressures placed on mothers to excel in every aspect of child-rearing.

Ultimately, this study argues that to understand motherhood in Türkiye today, it is essential to consider the wider societal implications of gender roles, state ideologies, and contemporary consumer culture. By positioning motherhood within this multifaceted framework, it becomes evident that both mothers and children are navigating a landscape that imposes significant constraints despite the rising importance of childhood. This research contributes to the broader discourse on motherhood, offering vital insights into the evolving dynamics of gender and parenting in Türkiye, while encouraging further exploration of the implications of these transformations on women's identities and societal roles.

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