When Home is Not Safe: Intimate Partner Violence Help-Seeking Behaviours of Turkish Women

by

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Abstract

This thesis aims to critically examine Turkish women's intimate partner violence (IPV) experiences and how and when women seek help when they experience IPV. It focuses on the type of help-seeking measures women take, including formal assistance (e.g., police) and informal assistance (e.g., family). This study will contextualize Turkish women's IPV help-seeking behaviours within Turkey's cultural and political environment before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Drawing upon critical sociocultural life course theory (LCT), I consider how family life is embedded in historical, cultural, and geographical time and place that shape individuals' 'linked lives.' In-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with 8 women aged 21-38 living in Ankara, Turkey, to understand their experiences. The findings show that Turkish women seek help from their families to protect the privacy of family life and seek formal help as a "last resort." Moreover, the social isolation restrictions and policy changes during the pandemic did not impact IPV help-seeking behaviours.

Keywords: intimate partner violence; help-seeking behaviours; informal help-seeking; formal help-seeking; life course theory; Turkish women

Dedication

Şiddetsiz ve eşit bir dünya için her gün mücadele eden Türk kadınlarına…

To the Turkish women who fight for a world without violence. Thank you for inspiring me to fight for us and never lose hope.

Acknowledgements

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List of Acronyms

COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
DV	Domestic Violence
IPV	Intimate Partner Violence
LCT	Life Course Theory
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
SES	Socioeconomic Status
VAW	Violence Against Women
WHO	World Health Organization

Glossary

Domestic Violence	Domestic violence is a type of VAW and is defined as a pattern of behaviour in any relationship that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner that share the same household.
Economic Violence	Behaviours that include avoiding the woman working if she is working, holding her income, asking the woman to manage the house by giving her a small amount of money, capturing her existing goods, taking the jewelry attached to her during the wedding ceremony, asking bride price and dower.
Formal Help-Seeking	Assistance from professionals or official institutions who have a legitimate and recognized professional role in providing relevant advice, support, and/or treatment, such as police, family court, lawyer, or women's shelters.
Help-Seeking Behaviour	The active and problem-focused planned behaviour, which relies on external assistance from other people, such as lawyers, police, or friends/family. Help-seeking refers to communicating with others to obtain assistance in terms of understanding, advice, information, treatment, and general support in response to a problem or distressing experience.
Informal Help-Seeking	Assistance from informal social networks, such as friends and/or family and is comprised of sources of help that have a personal rather than a professional relationship with the help-seeker.
Intimate Partner Violence	Refers to behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, physiological abuse, and controlling behaviours.
Physical Violence	An act attempting to cause, or resulting in, pain and/or physical injury.
Psychological Violence	Also known as emotional abuse is any intentional conduct that seriously impairs another person's psychological integrity through coercion or threats.
Sexual Violence	Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, or other act directed against a person's sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting.

| Violence Against Women | Any act of gender-based violence that results in or is likely to result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life. |

Chapter 1.   Introduction

1.1. Background Information

Violence against women (VAW) is a significant global public health problem and a violation of women's human rights. It is linked to systemic structural and cultural factors that oppress and subordinate women (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Wathen & McKeown, 2010; World Health Organization, 2021). VAW also adversely affects women's physical, mental, sexual, and reproductive health and well-being and negatively impacts all sectors of society (Akar et al., 2010; Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu et al., 2012). According to Merry (2016), VAW can be broadly defined as any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to, result in physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty occurring in public or private life. In Turkey, the issue of VAW gained worldwide significance during the 1970s and began to be openly discussed during the mid-1980s. Indeed, VAW was first brought to the public agenda in Turkey by the feminist movement with the "Stop Violence" campaign in March 1987. In 1998, the "Law No.4320: The Protection of Family" was passed to combat VAW. In March 2011, Turkey was the first country to ratify the Istanbul Convention.[1] In March 2012, Law No.6284, "Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women," was established, resulting from women's resistance in Turkey and the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights (Güvenç et al., 2014).

Domestic violence (DV) is a type of VAW. It is defined as a pattern of behaviour in any relationship used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner that shares the same household (United Nations, 2023). This includes physical, sexual, emotional, economic, or psychological abuse or threats of actions that influence another person, such as behaviours that frighten, intimidate, terrorize, manipulate, hurt, humiliate, blame, injure, or wound someone (United Nations, 2023; Hosli et al., 2022). Although everyone can be a victim of DV, intimate partner violence (IPV) is still the most widespread and far-reaching form of VAW. This research focuses on various kinds of violence (e.g.,

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[1] Istanbul Convention is the first comprehensive and legally binding document recognizing VAW as a violation of women's human rights and a form of discrimination against women.

psychological, physical, economic, and sexual) experienced by women from their current or ex-intimate partners, commonly referred to as IPV (Güvenç et al., 2014).

IPV refers to behaviour by an intimate partner or ex-partner that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including physical aggression, sexual coercion, physiological abuse, and controlling behaviours (Güvenç et al., 2014). Internationally, IPV is a public health crisis that affects women of all ages, ethnicities, socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds, and in rural and urban settings (Ruiz et al., 2022). Worldwide, almost one-third (27%) of women aged 15-49 years who have been in a relationship report being subjected to physical and/or sexual violence by their intimate partner (Akar et al., 2010; Hosli et al., 2022; World Health Organization; 2021). Yet, while the Turkish State publicly recognizes IPV, Gül (2013) argues that IPV is still seen as a private matter. Historically, IPV was expected to be kept hidden behind closed doors and within the family. Resultantly, many married women experiencing violence quietly accepted or tolerated their partners' assaults (Tekkaş-Kerman & Betrus, 2020). Given the lack of social recognition and alternatives, Turkish women may hesitate to seek help when they first experience IPV.

Although there is no clearly agreed definition of help-seeking, it is generally defined as active and problem-focused planned behaviour that relies on external assistance from other people, such as lawyers, police, or friends/family (Rickwood & Thomas, 2012). Help-seeking refers to communicating with others to obtain assistance in terms of understanding, advice, information, treatment, and general support in response to a problem or distressing experience (ibid). There are two main types of help-seeking: formal and informal. Formal help-seeking is assistance from professionals or official institutions who have a legitimate and recognized professional role in providing relevant advice, support, and/or treatment, such as police, family court, lawyer, or women's shelters (ibid). Informal help-seeking is assistance from informal social networks, such as friends and/or family, and is comprised of sources of help that have a personal rather than a professional relationship with the help-seeker (Rickwood & Thomas, 2012; Keskin & Karaman, 2020).

However, formal and informal help-seeking behaviours of women are often hindered by factors such as geographic, political, cultural, economic, or structural response barriers when women are involved in abusive or violent relationships (e.g., see Chapter 2.2). Barriers are contextual and, therefore, may be unique to individual women

depending upon their situation. For example, formal help-seeking barriers can include the perception that there will be a lack of enforcement of restraining or protective orders. Other external constraints can include a lack of transportation that limit women's access to healthcare, a lack of awareness of available resources, or weak access to professional and community resources. Informal help-seeking barriers can include fear of bringing stigma or being ashamed to tell anyone about their violent experiences due to cultural norms that legitimize and normalize violence within intimate relationships (Domenech del Rio & Sirvent Garcia del Valle, 2019; Gündüz et al., 2021; Lysova & Straus, 2021; McCleary-Sills et al., 2016; Ruiz et al., 2022).

Based on preliminary research by Bradbury-Jones and Isham (2020), it is argued that IPV likely increased during the COVID-19 pandemic due to social isolation restrictions, such as closing schools and businesses, forced lockdowns, and curfews. These social isolation restrictions also restricted women's access to formal and informal help-seeking measures such as the police, hospitals, lawyers, friends, or family (Bradbury-Jones & Isham, 2020). With the first COVID-19 case reported on March 11, 2020, in Turkey, legal lockdowns were placed. However, unlike Italy or Germany, Turkey never went on full lockdowns. The most prolonged lockdown only lasted 18 days. First, the schools were closed, and hospitals were required to focus on COVID-19 patients. A total curfew became effective on March 22 for people over 65 whose immune system is compromised due to chronic diseases. On April 13, the Turkish government announced curfews on the weekends. In the summer of 2020, Turkey opened its borders and eased the restrictions. However, in October 2020, Turkey reintroduced the restrictions and curfews for people 65 and over and 20 years and younger. Although vaccines became available, it was not enough to stop the spread of the infection. In March 2021, with the increasing cases, Turkey decided to reimpose lockdowns and restrictions. In March 2022, with the increase in vaccines, Turkey eased its lockdown and social isolation restrictions (Büyükbayrak, 2022).

With social isolation restrictions, the Turkish government reviewed the existing laws on VAW and implemented new laws during the pandemic to increase victims' access to formal help. The Turkish government reviewed Law No. 6284: "Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women" in such a way that it posed no threats to the health of victims and perpetrators due to the pandemic, for example, testing for COVID-19 and following all the safety measures (e.g., stay-away orders) (Yenilmez, 2020). Even

after the reevaluation, the law still protects victims of violence and the adoption of urgent measures to stop those who commit violence. Moreover, in May 2022, the Turkish Parliament passed a new bill on VAW to increase the formal help-seeking measures for women who experienced IPV during the pandemic. The new law supports heftier sentences for perpetrators and helps and supports VAW victims by offering free legal counseling from lawyers or the police (Daily Sabah, 2022). Thus, this research emphasizes the need to critically examine and better understand Turkish women's formal and informal help-seeking behaviours in Turkey before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2. Specific Knowledge Gaps

In terms of our current knowledge of IPV, systemic deep-rooted cultural and historical factors have made it difficult to study and know more about IPV and women's help-seeking behaviours (Merry, 2016). In this section, I will highlight the specific knowledge gaps regarding women's IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours and how they have been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. I will further discuss these themes in Chapter 2.2.

Global studies consistently find that women are at higher risk of experiencing IPV if they are young or old/elderly, have lower levels of education, have low socioeconomic status (SES), have a past family history of exposure to violence, marital discord or dissatisfaction, controlling behaviours from their partners, community norms that privilege or ascribe higher status to men and lower status to women, low levels of women's access to paid employment and low level of gender equality (Akar et al., 2013; Ergöçmen et al., 2013; Flicker et al., 2011; Gutman et al., 2017; Kocacık et al., 2007; Tran et al., 2016; Gündüz et al., 2021). However, the literature fails to emphasize how specific cultural context(s) play a mediating factor in the IPV experiences of women and help-seeking behaviours. Reliance on numerical representations can be problematic due to methodological issues (e.g., under-reporting). Statistical summaries also mask the lived experiences of those who experience violence and gloss over historical, political, and cultural contexts (Merry, 2016). Moreover, the literature overlooks women's fear, injury, and experiences caused by IPV (Merry, 2016). Therefore, my research will explore the cultural and sociodemographic factors and barriers, such as being young, having low

levels of education, or having a history of family violence, that influence Turkish women's IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours.

Keskin and Karaman (2020) also argue that most studies on IPV only focus on its causes and how women react when subjected to violence. They do not focus on formal and informal help-seeking behaviours and how and when women decide to seek help. Women who seek help from formal institutions such as women's shelters might pay heftier prices in terms of personal safety for having dared to leave in the first place. Women are most at risk when they leave abusive relationships, such that their abusive partner can stalk or threaten them with their life (Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu, 2012). This added vulnerability is why it is important to understand the alternative help-seeking behaviours women choose, such as seeking informal help from their families (Keskin & Karaman, 2020; Toktaş & Diner, 2015; Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu et al., 2012).

The historical, cultural, and familial contexts play an important role in women's IPV experiences in relation to how and when women decide to seek help. Merry (2016) suggests that there are limitations to administrative data for IPV. Victims of gender violence often do not call the police, and there is a substantial "dark figure" of hidden, unreported violence (Merry, 2016, p.51). The literature fails to collect information from women who have not publicly disclosed their IPV experiences. Therefore, there is a lack of understanding of women's informal help-seeking and why women prioritize seeking help from their informal support networks (Ansara & Hindin, 2010; Gül, 2013; Keskin & Karaman, 2020). My research will explain why Turkish women prefer to go to their informal support networks for help before going to a formal institution by emphasizing Turkey's historical, sociocultural, and familial contexts.

Another gap in our knowledge, which is also the central focus of this research, is women's IPV experiences and how their help-seeking behaviours have been affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social isolation restrictions, such as forced lockdowns and curfews. The study by Bradbury-Jones and Isham (2020) suggests that VAW increased during the pandemic, and women's informal and formal help-seeking measures were restricted, such as seeking help from the police or family. Even though the evidence showed increased calls to helplines and contacts with services and organizations intended for survivors, Sánchez and colleagues (2020) suggest underreporting was possible. There is also not enough up-to-date data regarding how and why women's help-seeking

behaviours have been restricted and women's IPV experiences during the pandemic (Plasilova et al., 2021). There were challenges associated with collecting data on IPV during a pandemic. For example, collecting face-to-face data or using certain qualitative methods (e.g., focus groups) was not possible, and some women could not access online platforms at all due to their controlling partners (Plasilova et al., 2021). Therefore, my research will present up-to-date data on if, and if so, how Turkish women's IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours have been affected due to the COVID-19 pandemic and social isolation restrictions, such as forced lockdowns and curfews.

1.3. Research Goals and Guiding Questions

As previously noted, there are significant gaps in our knowledge regarding the IPV experiences of women and their formal and informal help-seeking behaviours within cultural and political contexts. Given these important knowledge gaps, this research aims to critically examine Turkish women's IPV experiences and how and when women seek help when they experience IPV. My specific focus is on the type of help-seeking measures women take, including formal assistance, such as legal counseling or women's shelters, and informal assistance (which tends to be prioritized), such as seeking help from families or friends. I will also contextualize their IPV help-seeking behaviours within Turkey's cultural and political environment before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

My overarching research question is: How and when do Turkish women seek help when they experience IPV? Specifically, what kind of help-seeking measures (i.e., informal or formal) do women use; how and when do Turkish women decide to use formal help-seeking measures, such as lawyers or women's shelters to seek help when they experience IPV; and if, and if so, how did the social isolation restrictions and policy changes during the pandemic affect women's help-seeking behaviours? My research focuses on the time frame between 2018 to 2022 and may, therefore, also uncover if social isolation restrictions and policy changes during the pandemic impacted women's IPV experiences.

1.4. Research Contributions

My research aims to identify and fill the knowledge gaps discussed above (Chapter 1.2) that do not consider women's IPV experiences, their formal and informal help-seeking

behaviours, the political and cultural context of Turkey, and the impact of the pandemic on women's help-seeking behaviours. Changes in policies, such as the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, the reevaluation of Law No. 6284, and the new bill on VAW, may affect the help-seeking behaviours IPV victims use. Furthermore, victimized women can find it difficult to access legal and institutional mechanisms for support because they do not believe that applying to these institutions would be of any help or be expensive (Adibelli et al., 2021). Overall, my research will provide timely and up-to-date data on IPV help-seeking behaviours of Turkish women before and during the pandemic, such as women's informal family networks, legal counseling from lawyers and/or women's shelters, by empowering/uplifting Turkish women's voices in relation to their IPV experiences.

The findings from this research will also raise awareness about women's rights, various help-seeking behaviours and help to empower women's statuses. Thus, this research will inform women about primary prevention programs and policies to support women living with violence. Women will become aware of the resources around them and how they can seek help from various organizations and institutions. I also hope to mobilize knowledge by organizing community meetings to share my findings and create awareness of VAW. Moreover, I aim to raise awareness to prevent and reduce VAW through community-engaged initiatives such as coffee meet-ups, group/community meetings, and VAW seminars with non-profit women's organizations.

As Anna Tsing (2015) states, survival is not only about staying alive but it also a form of collaboration. We all need each other and need to work collectively to survive. Thus, it is imperative that we need to work together to eliminate prejudices, customs, and harmful gender stereotypes in society. We must show coordinated efforts to create awareness regarding VAW and take action to prevent new cases of abuse. Understanding the value of collaboration and co-created work and how it helps victims to stay safe is important in preventing VAW. In this way, my research/findings will help to create a more holistic and human-centred understanding of VAW that can inspire individuals, institutions, communities, and organizations to work more closely together to help reduce and prevent VAW.

1.5. Overview and Structure of Thesis

This thesis consists of five chapters. In the following chapter (chapter two), I present the Life Course Theoretical Perspective (Elder, 1978; 1985; Mitchell, 2004) as my guiding conceptual framework for my research. I then move to my literature review encompassing five main themes: Policy Shifts in Turkey; Formal Help-Seeking Measures; Informal Help Seeking Measures; The Influence of Religion in Turkey and Women's Help-Seeking Behaviours; Violence Against Women during the Pandemic. The third chapter covers my methodology, including a discussion of the study design, sample description, the challenges faced during recruitment, and data collection and analysis. The interview guide is also presented, along with the topic areas and how they help address guiding questions. I finalize this chapter with a statement on positionality and a review of the ethical issues and considerations. In the fourth chapter, I summarize the main study findings based on the interview data and discuss and analyze my interview findings. These interview findings are presented according to four emergent areas: Women's Linked Lives and IPV Experiences; Informal Help-Seeking Behaviours; Formal Help-Seeking Behaviours; and What Changed in Women's Help-Seeking Behaviours during the COVID-19 Pandemic? Finally, I conclude my thesis (chapter five) by summarizing the key findings my study limitations, outlining the need for future research, and offering practical recommendations for policy and service providers.

Chapter 2.　Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

In this chapter, I first present my guiding conceptual lens, life course theory (LCT), and why I specifically chose LCT compared to other theories on IPV. LCT has a strong sociological foundation that seeks to critically examine and understand family life as embedded in relative historical, sociocultural, and geographical time and place, including the multiple social processes and resources that shape people's 'linked lives' (Elder, 1985; Mitchell, 2021). I finalize this section using a critical understanding of women's agency to clarify women's hesitation between informal and formal help-seeking behaviours. The literature review, which consists of the five main themes mentioned above, is covered in the second-half of this chapter.

2.1.　Theoretical/Conceptual Framing

In this section I will begin by presenting a comprehensive coverage of existing theories used to study IPV against women. I will finalize this section by defining and explaining the significance of the critical sociocultural LCT for my research.

In psychology, violence is commonly studied by focusing on a pepetrator's pathology and emphasizing the individual's characteristics, behaviours, and personality structures. However, this model oversimplifies the behaviour and ignores the complex interplay of macro (e.g., political context) and micro (e.g., interfamilial relations) social structures that perpetuate VAW (Mandara, 2003; Mitchell, 2021). Since intimate relationships and intertwining roles, behaviours, and emotions are complex, it is important to examine violence as a social process between intimate partners instead of solely focusing on the individual characteristics and behaviours of men or women (Lysova, 2016).

The classical theories from the 1950s and 1960s, in general, do not focus on social contexts or circumstances, life courses, or intergenerational relations. They also do not emphasize how macro and micro-level social structures constantly interact and contribute to IPV prevalence (Hutchison, 2005; Mitchell, 2021). For example, structural functionalist theory was rooted in biological sex differences and supported the gendered division of labor. However, the structural functionalist theory is very conservative does not focus on

the significance of macro-level structures on IPV, such as government policies that add additional ideological barriers for IPV victims (Parsons et al., 1956; Mitchell, 2021). Conflict theory focuses on the inequality and power relationships between partners, the unequal access to resources, and the inequalities within larger structures such as family systems, class, or the economy. However, social conflict theories overlook the micro-family structures and do not consider women's individual experiences, abuse histories, different political and cultural contexts, or social locations (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Chafetz, 1981; Hall-Sanchez, 2016; Mitchell, 2021). Yet, the social construction and symbolic interactionist theories help to understand the microstructures, such as interactions between family members that contribute to IPV (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Blumer, 1969; Dun & Williams, 2005; Macmillan & Gartner, 1999; Mead, 1934; Mitchell, 2021). Social exchange theory analyzes family life and the decision-making process regarding costs and benefits and is mainly used to explain why women do not leave abusive relationships and the underlying reasons behind women staying in or underreporting IPV incidents (Mitchell, 2021; Kreager et al., 2013; Rank & LeCroy, 1983). However, social constructionist, symbolic interactionist, and social exchange theorists underplay the significant impact of macro structures' contribution to IPV, such as how political, economic, and cultural contexts impact interfamilial relationships and women's individual experiences in IPV (Mitchell, 2021; Okeke-Ihejirika et al., 2020; Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016).

Contemporary theorists emphasize the importance of using feminist perspectives (e.g., see Collins & Bilge, 2016; 2020; Crenshaw; 2017) as well as an ecological perspective. These perspectives highlight the need to situation women's experiences within a set of nested structures. From this vantage point, violence is conceptualized as the outcome of individual, interpersonal relationships, the community, and society (Bengston, 2005; Mitchell, 2021; World Health Organization, 2021). The ecological framework includes macro structures such as the patriarchal society, meso structures such as social networks and community, and microstructures like age or relationship history (Bengston, 2005; Mitchell, 2021). The ecological life course perspective combines social structures with institutional practices and focuses on how they impact individual acts and behaviors. Contemporary theorists explore the underlying reasons behind VAW by focusing on social injustices, gender inequalities, various familial structures, and political and cultural contexts of society (Abraham & Tastsoglou, 2016; Benebo et al., 2018; Tekkaş-Kerman & Betrus, 2020; Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). This framework illustrates

that a single factor is neither sufficient nor necessary for partner violence to occur (Benebo et al., 2018). Indeed, WHO (2021), uses a socio-ecological framework of risk factors associated with IPV and takes into account the various nested environments from the micro to the macro that include factors occurring at the individual, family, community, and wider society levels. For example, laws and policies established to prevent VAW that interact with each other to increase or reduce risk of IPV against women to establish a universal framework to study IPV.

Contemporary theorists also consider the life course approach to be a valuable theoretical lens due to its consideration of biography and history and the intersections between biography and history within a larger social structure (Bengston et al., 2005; Hutchison, 2005; Mitchell, 2021). The LCT is a multidisciplinary approach that seeks to understand multiple factors that shape people's lives. A life course is defined as "a sequence of socially defined events and roles that the individual enacts over time" (Giele & Elder, 1998, p.22; Mitchell, 2021). LCT makes strong connections between individuals' lives and the historical and socioeconomic context and how these forces influence individuals and examine how social and historical factors intersect with personal biography and development (Mills, 1959).

LCT has been used to study to emphasize women's IPV experiences and how different stages over the life course influence these experiences, including the trajectories, transitions, and turning points; to examine the intersections between structural/contextual factors, women's IPV experiences, and perpetration of violence; to understand women's childhood experiences of family violence, consequences of experiencing or witnessing family violence and the effect of the timing and continuity of family violence over the life course; and to uncover women's experiences with multiple types of violence (Hing et al., 2021; Tenkorang & Owusu, 2018; Williams, 2003). My research will use the critical sociocultural life course perspective to answer how macro level structures (e.g., policy changes) intersect with micro level structures (e.g., family relations) and influence women's IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours.

As Mitchell (2021) suggests, the lifespan of individuals and their families is shaped by society's historical, cultural, and political contexts and geographical locations, such as class, status, age, gender, and race. I included the life histories of women by asking them for in-depth information on their childhood and family life leading up to their current

situation, as well as questions related to their age, social class, linked lives, and other resources. In this study, I consider all the fundamental characteristics of the life course approach, which are sociohistorical and geographical location, timing of lives, heterogeneity or variability, "linked lives" and social ties to others, how the past shapes the future, and human agency and personal control. The abovementioned fundamental characteristics can shape an individual's perceptions and choices regarding help-seeking measures.

The LCT assumes that an individual's developmental path is determined and transformed by social and historical conditions and geographical locations of individuals, such as geopolitical events, economic cycles, and social and cultural ideologies (Elder, 1978; 1985). I highlight the sociohistorical and geographical conditions of individuals and include the socioeconomic conditions of women and the religious and cultural contexts of Turkey to answer how and when Turkish women seek help when they experience IPV. I focus on the policy changes within the past ten years that impacted women's help-seeking behaviours and the help they received from formal institutions such as the police to answer how and when women seek help specifically from formal institutions.

The LCT also focuses on the timing of lives, including individual, generational, and historical times. In my research, I specifically focus on the individual and historical timings of Turkish women to answer how did Turkey's religious and cultural context influence women's help-seeking behaviours; and how did the restrictions during the pandemic, such as mandatory quarantine impacted women's help-seeking behaviours? Individual time refers to the chronological age and how it influences individuals' positions, roles, and rights based on culturally shared age definitions, such as the proper age to get married or have children (Elder 1985; Mitchell 2021). Historical time refers to societal and large-scale changes and how these influence individuals and their families, such as how the pandemic impacted family structures or if the pandemic impacted women's help-seeking measures (ibid), which will be further discussed in Chapter 4.

Additionally, LCT emphasizes the life trajectories of individuals, which is a long-term pathway with age-graded development patterns in major social institutions such as education or family. The LCT highlights how the trajectories and transitions are socially organized and typically result in a change in status, social identity, and role involvement (Elder, 1985; Mitchell, 2021). Thus, I highlight how some age-graded transitions violated

the normative social timetables and resulted in status and role changes in women's lives. For example, becoming a wife or a mom younger than expected by marrying at 16 by religious wedding ceremonies, having children younger than expected, or terminating education to get married. Mitchell (2021) also argues that adapting to life course change can vary with available resources or supports, such as having enough financial, cultural, or social capital. That is why I included women's experiences with IPV and their help-seeking behaviours when they could not seek help due to economic hardships, did not have high levels of education, did not know how or where to apply, and did not receive enough support from their families or relatives to seek help.

Another fundamental characteristic of the life course is the notion of "linked lives" and social ties that suggest individual experiences are linked through the family and its networks. Family members play a strong role in coordinating each other's lives regarding life planning or the timing of life events (Elder, 1985; Mitchell, 2021). This can lead to tensions or conflicts when individual goals differ, such as the force of marriage or termination of education. The opportunities and conditions individuals have can significantly shape their later outcomes. Indeed, the timing of key life events or 'turning points' occurring earlier can also create a chain reaction of experiences for individuals and their families. Thus, I included women's linked lives and IPV experiences and discussed how dropping out of school, early marriage, and witnessing or experiencing DV earlier in life can lead to long-term hardships and perpetuate a cycle of family violence.

The last characteristic that the life course focuses on is human agency and personal control (Elder, 1978; 1985). According to LCT, individuals are active agents who mediate the effect of social structure, make decisions, and set goals that shape social structure (Emirbayer & Mische, 2022). However, it is important to recognize that women's agency is shaped and influenced by historical, social, political, economic, and cultural conditions and the ability to make specific choices depends on opportunities and constraints (Elder, 1985; Emirbayer & Mische, 2022; Mitchell, 2021). The agency is a temporally embedded process of social engagement, informed by the past and oriented toward the future and present. For example, women who experience violence in childhood are more likely to internalize and normalize IPV (Ergöçmen et al., 2013).

LCT also explores how personal conceptions about the past and future are transformed at key moments of transition and/or crisis (Emirbayer & Mische, 2022).

However, possible future trajectories of action, structures of thought, and action may be creatively designed in relation to interactions, culture, and women's hopes, fears, and desires for the future and used in problem-solving. Women constantly make practical and normative judgments among possible alternative trajectories of action in response to the emerging demands, dilemmas, and ambiguities of present situations. For example, women maintain agent stances by actively pursuing safety for themselves and their children when they experience IPV by staying in an abusive relationship to protect their children's safety and might hesitate to seek formal help when they first experience violence (Emirbayer & Mische, 2022; Dunn & Williams, 2005).

The agency is social, relational, and conscious and involves social interaction. In this study, I acknowledge that women are active agents of their lives and emphasize how women make improvisational decisions based on changing situations that demand reconstruction according to their past experiences and for the future (Emirbayer & Mische, 2022). For example, seeking help to end IPV and protect themselves and their children. However, I also recognize the sociocultural and institutional barriers and family linkages that play a role in women's help-seeking behaviours.

2.2. Literature Review

In this section, I present a review of international/Turkish literature that is organized according to the major principles of a critical LCT framework, It starts with the broader macro contexts (e.g., historical/political contexts) and then moves to the more micro level areas (e.g., family/individual level) on IPV. This literature is divided into five areas: (1) Policy Shifts in Turkey, (2) Formal Help Seeking Measures, (3) Informal Help Seeking Measures, (4) The Influence of Religion in Turkey and Women's Help-Seeking Behaviours, and (5) Violence Against Women during the Pandemic.

2.2.1. Policy Shifts in Turkey

It is critical to consider the importance of the broader political context of Turkey. Doing so helps to emphasize how an individual's developmental path is shaped and transformed by socio-political and historical events and conditions, as well as geographical locations (Elder, 1985; Mitchell, 2021). This section also focuses on policies that changed

during the pandemic and whether they influenced women's IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours.

Since its establishment in 1923, Turkey has consistently pursued a Westernization policy to become an integral part of Europe. According to Bodur and Arıkan (2021), Turkey's aspiration to join the EU made Turkey open to the influence of the EU in many policy areas, including gender equality. In 2011 Turkey was the first country to ratify the Istanbul Convention (Güneş, 2021). Istanbul Convention is internationally negotiated and aims to reduce VAW and IPV. It is the first comprehensive and legally binding document recognizing VAW as a violation of women's human rights and a form of discrimination against women (Serbest & Köprülü, 2021; Hosli et al., 2022). The Istanbul Convention institutionalized the fight against VAW and their family members, and protective and preventive measures were expanded. For example, it became possible to take immediate measures without seeking evidence and documents, and those who committed violent crimes were immediately sentenced (Keskin & Karaman, 2020; Serbest & Köprülü, 2021; Hosli et al., 2022). Even though most EU member states ratified the Convention, it continues to be open for signature and ratification to members of the Council of Europe or non-members with an invitation of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe. The Istanbul Convention had not been ratified by every European country, and some EU member states (Bulgaria, Czechia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, and Slovakia) rejected the Convention. Furthermore, Poland is planning to withdraw, and Turkey withdrew from the Convention in March 2021, which is an obstacle to creating a universal legal ground to fight VAW across Europe (Güneş, 2021; Hosli et al., 2022). According to Balogh (2020), conservative anti-gender discourses are the major reason for countries to reject or not ratify the Convention. According to this discourse, the Convention includes ambiguous and debatable terms regarding family life and raises ethical questions. Opponents claim that the Convention is not about preventing VAW but about trans and intersex issues, legalizing homosexual marriages, and will eventually disrupt the conservative family life.

Even though Torun and colleagues (2021) argue that the sudden withdrawal of Turkey from the Convention further limited access to support from formal institutions such as police or women's shelters, it is too soon to know the effects of Turkey's withdrawal from the Convention in 2021 on women's access to institutional help. For example, In Denmark, despite the implementation of the Istanbul Convention, in VAW cases, the sentence tends to be moderated when there is a disagreement prior to the violent act, the

aggressor is in an agitated state of mind, and there still is a relationship between the parties. Therefore, IPV is less penalized than in other contexts, such as working at nightlife (Hosli et al., 2022). Moreover, victims are not given enough consideration or protection in some countries. For example, in Malta, 47% of the population believe that women often exaggerate claims of abuse, and it is also believed by 40% that the victim often provoked violent behaviours, which complicates the development of adequate measures and accurate reports of IPV cases due to cultural norms that normalize VAW (Hosli et al., 2022). Thus, it is challenging to establish a causal relationship between Istanbul Convention and the increase in IPV cases in Turkey during the pandemic because of the insufficient time dimension (Keskin & Karaman, 2020; Hosli et al., 2022).

However, during the pandemic, all 27 EU Member States recognized European institutions' call for action regarding the increase in IPV and implemented changes or established new measures to support and protect victims of violence in response to COVID-19. New legislation or amendments were established in Belgium, Czechia, Ireland, Germany, Estonia, Spain, France, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Poland, Portugal, Slovenia, and Slovakia. For example, increased funding for shelters, improving communication and support tools and creating awareness-raising campaigns. Estonia implemented temporary restraining orders, and France sped up the use of electronic bracelets nationally to keep perpetrators away from IPV victims. Although Turkey withdrew from the Convention at the beginning of the pandemic, Turkey reviewed existing laws and implemented new measures to protect the victims of IPV and prevent VAW. After the withdrawal from the Convention, Turkish government reevaluated Law No. 6284, "Protection of the Family and Prevention of Violence Against Women," in such a way that posed no threats to the health of victims and perpetrators due to the pandemic by implementing mandatory COVID-19 testing to continue protecting IPV victims' rights and prevent VAW (Yenilmez, 2020).

In March 2012, 6284 became law resulting from women's resistance in Turkey and the European Court of Human Rights decisions. Women and children who have been subjected to physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence or are in danger of violence can benefit from this law. All decisions made under this law are temporary and are called "injunctions." It usually takes a few days for an injunction to be issued. The decision is sent to the police/gendarmerie for enforcement and is reported to the perpetrator of violence and women as soon as possible. An injunction may be issued for a maximum period of 6 months. However, if the period has expired and violence or the

threat of violence persists, women may reapply and request a new injunction. If women want to divorce the perpetrator or have the perpetrator punished for the violent crime inflicted on them, they need to file a divorce case or a criminal complaint. If women previously filed for divorce or criminal proceedings, this does not prevent them from benefiting from Law No. 6284. Individuals do not have to provide evidence, witnesses, documents, or doctor's reports or pay a fee to apply to be protected under Law No. 6284. Women can benefit from this law if they need a safe place to stay, want to prevent the perpetrator from entering the shared house, or need a temporary restraining order (if women are scared for their safety) due to violence. Women can also request temporary financial assistance under Law No. 6284. Individuals do not have to be divorced to request financial assistance or alimony. They can request it while the divorce is in progress or without filing a divorce (Kadın Dayanışma Vakfı, 2023). According to the Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs, Suleyman Soylu, within the scope of Law No. 6284, 55 thousand 231 incidents occurred in the first 3 months of 2021, and an 8% decrease in incidents was achieved compared to the same period of the previous year. In the first 3 months of 2021, 17 thousand 121 protective measures were given to 18 thousand 37 victims of violence, and 159 thousand 9 preventive measures were given to 53 thousand 447 people who committed violence (Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2021).

Moreover, in May 2022, the Turkish Parliament passed a new bill to increase access to resources and support from formal institutions such as lawyers or the police. The new bill aims to increase opportunities for women to get help from formal institutions by providing them with a lawyer and free legal counsel. The bill will prevent women from continuing to live with their abusive partners and give heftier sentences to perpetrators (Daily Sabah, 2022). My research emphasizes the policy changes and the social isolation restrictions in Turkey and their influence on women's informal and formal help-seeking behaviours.

2.2.2. Formal Help-Seeking Behaviours

Reevaluating Law No. 6284 and the new law passed on May 2022 increased women's opportunities to receive help from formal institutions without experiencing economic hardships. However, ethnic and sociocultural differences, and the available resources and supports can be mediating factors in the type of help-seeking women choose. For example, not knowing where to seek help, fear of escalating violence, or being

financially dependent on a partner can influence women's preferred help-seeking measures (Elder, 1985; Evans & Feder, 2014; Gündüz et al., 2021; McCleary-Sills et al., 2016; Mitchell, 2021). Thus, I included preferred help-seeking measures used by women globally and the various forms of legal and formal help-seeking measures offered to IPV victims in Turkey to emphasize Turkish women's preferred way of seeking formal help.

For example, in Australia, women feel comfortable disclosing to someone about their IPV experiences outside of family and the community because they feel assisted and supported (Ghafournia & Easteal, 2021). Moreover, in the USA, women in higher socioeconomic classes were more likely than women in lower socioeconomic classes to use outpatient mental health services (Flicker et al., 2011; Lockwood et al., 2022). The most used formal services in Spain were mental health services (Sanz-Barbero et al., 2022). According to the study conducted by Ansara and Hindin (2010) on women's help-seeking behaviours in Canada, the most common formal help-seeking measure used by Canadian women was health professionals such as doctors, nurses, or psychologists. Women also mentioned seeking help from shelters and crisis centers when they experienced severe patterns of violence and control. African American and Latina women in the USA were more likely to seek help from the police or shelters, and African American women were more likely to get OPs (orders of protection) (Flicker et al., 2011; Waller et al., 2022). African American women in the USA rely heavily on religious institutions, such as the Black church, for guidance and support (ibid). However, two Australian Muslim women mentioned going to a religious institution for help, and the Imam told them to return to their husbands (Ghafournia & Easteal, 2021; Tonsing & Barn, 2021; Waller et al., 2022).

The most common formal help-seeking measure used by Turkish women has been to go first to the police, and then to lawyers (Gündüz et al., 2021). Similar to women in the UK, Turkish women also call or go to VAW helplines and agencies (Evans & Feder, 2014). For example, there are Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers (ŞÖNİM), that were first established in 2012 and are currently located in all 81 cities of Turkey that provides guidance and counseling to women and children. According to the Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Services (2021), ŞÖNİM supported 856 thousand 703 citizens nationwide, and 702 thousand 734 were women. Based on women's cases, VAW helplines/agencies, police/gendarmerie, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or ŞÖNİM can refer women to legal counseling for issues such as divorce or alimony and women's shelters if they do not have a safe place to stay. However, it is important to

highlight that not all women have access to a phone where they can call the helpline and seek help, have enough funds to travel to a VAW agency or have access to the internet to know where the closest ŞÖNİM center is located (Kadın Dayanışma Vakfı, 2023).

Even though women from various sociodemographic backgrounds experience violence, according to the survey conducted by Gündüz et al. (2021), the majority of women who were residing in women's shelters were young, between the ages of 18-35 and had low levels of education (elementary or middle school). According to the 2022 statistics of the Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Services (2022), Turkey has 149 women's shelters for 42.5 million women, located in all 81 cities. Women between 18-60 years of age who are exposed to violence can benefit from women's shelters for up to 6 months, and women can extend their stay depending on their circumstances, such as not having safe accommodation. Shelters' accommodation capacities are limited by the number of beds, ranging from 20-40 beds per facility. Women's shelters have a capacity of 3624 women and, as of 2022, served 2718 women (Turkish Ministry of Family and Social Services, 2022). Women under 18 or older than 60 are placed in social service organizations appropriate to their situation, such as child-care services or elder care homes (Gündüz et al., 2021). Benefiting from women's shelters has become a legal right for battered women, enabling them to leave their houses and search for solutions against VAW. Women's shelters locations are kept private to protect the safety of women. Shelters are temporary residences with limited-service capacity and hope for those women who do not have any place to go in case of violence (Toktaş & Diner, 2011).

KADES (Women's Emergency Support Notification System) started in 2018, an official phone application offered to users to prevent harmful acts such as violence and harassment that women and children are exposed to. Women can call the police by pressing the button on the application, and the nearest team or patrol would go to the location shared through the application to help women and prevent further violence. According to the Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs (2022), as of March 3, 2022, 3 million 309 thousand 940 people have downloaded the application, and a report was made by 183 thousand 222 women who faced an emergency. The police responded to 56 thousand 788 cases, and electronic bracelets are tracking 563 individuals in 58 cities due to KADES reports (Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2022). Even though, according to 2020 data, there are 56.5 million smartphone users in Turkey, and it is expected to go up to 73% of the general population at the end of 2023, perpetrator-imposed restrictions and continued

surveillance of social media, the internet, and cell phones might have limited the ability of victims to reach out for help electronically or receive information from the government and organizations (Akel et al., 2020; Sabanci Vakfi, 2021; Statista, 2020).

When women are exposed to violence, women's organizations work to combat VAW, such as Mor Çatı (Purple Roof), Women Solidarity Foundation, the Gelincik (Poppy) Project, or ŞÖNİM. The support of such organizations can help in the judicial process, such as complaining, or filing a lawsuit or provide a safe place to stay. For example, Gelincik, the Ankara Bar Association established on April 2011, consists of 45 guidance lawyers and 221 volunteer lawyers who have special training and are experts in their field regarding the violence suffered by women, children, and LGBTQIA+ individuals who are exposed to physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence. Women can also get help from volunteer psychologists and social workers if necessary. VAW organizations/charities can help women determine a legal path, such as benefitting from Law No. 6284, divorce, alimony, compensation, or custody cases, or refer women to women's shelters if they do not have a safe place to stay free of charge. However, women have to physically go to these organizations to apply because they do not have an application platform for legal and security reasons, which creates an additional barrier for women who would like to get free legal counseling but cannot travel due to restrictions from their perpetrators or economic hardships (Gündüz et al., 2021; Kadın Dayanışma Vakfı, 2023). Nonetheless, women can go to the police or call VAW helplines and can be referred to the right women's organizations for shelters or legal counseling. For example, if women need a place to stay, they can be referred to Mor Çatı, or if they need legal counseling, they can be referred to Gelincik Center. This shows the importance of collaboration between institutions to help IPV victims (Toktaş & Diner, 2015).

As mentioned earlier, Turkish women prefer to seek help formally from the police, lawyers, or women's organizations when they experience IPV (Gündüz et al., 2021). However, women use formal institutions as their "last resort." Women cited inadequate numbers of institutions and a lack of belief in such institutions' ability to help them (Domenech del Rio & Sirvent Garcia del Valle, 2019; Ergöçmen et al., 2013; Sanz-Barbero et al., 2022; Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu, 2012). Women who seek help from formal institutions such as women's shelters are often fearful that they might pay a heavier price for having dared to leave, might be publicly shunned from their communities, such as being labeled as the "widow", being scared that their parents will not accept them with their children, or

not having enough monetary funds to move out of their shared house, including having their abusive partner following them (Domenech del Rio & Sirvent Garcia del Valle, 2019; Gündüz et al., 2021; McCleary-Sills et al., 2016; Ruiz et al., 2022; Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu, 2012).

Moreover, according to Keskin and Karaman (2020), the development of the sociocultural region affects the formal help-seeking behavior of women exposed to violence. In a comparative study done by Flicker and colleagues (2011) between White, Latin American, and African American women in the USA, it was found that ethnic minority women of lower economic status were less likely to access services until the situation became unmanageable. Due to the financial barriers, women in lower socioeconomic classes are more likely to live further from service providers and lack insurance, transportation, childcare, and disposable income, as well as the ability to take off work, compared to women in higher socioeconomic classes, factors that make it more difficult for these women to seek help for IPV (Flicker et al., 2011). This aligns with Sanz-Barbaro and colleagues' (2022) findings that suggest adult and older women with a low family socioeconomic level and/or situations where their partner is the main breadwinner make less use of formal support services and file fewer complaints against their aggressors. Therefore, my research will uncover how sociocultural and demographic characteristics influence women's preferred help-seeking measures.

Toktaş and Diner (2015) and Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu (2012) used a holistic and consistent approach to studying VAW in Turkey. They acknowledged that VAW and systematic abuse of women result from many interconnected and intertwined elements. Their in-depth interviews elaborated on the underlying causes of VAW and why/how women seek help. However, only women shelter managers or policymakers were interviewed, hindering IPV victims' experiences and help-seeking behaviours (Toktaş & Diner, 2015). Women's shelters and the police are the most visible form of formal help-seeking behaviours practiced by Turkish women. However, as previously discussed, they are not the only way to seek help. Thus, I will uncover alternative help-seeking measures used by Turkish women, such as informal help-seeking.

2.2.3. Informal Help-Seeking Behaviours

Even though there are various supports offered by legal institutions, based on the sociocultural context of Turkey, there are numerous barriers that limit women's help-seeking behaviours. Thus, I find it important to present a comparative literature review on the informal help-seeking behaviours of women globally to uncover Turkish women's preferred informal help-seeking behaviours and why Turkish women prioritize informal help-seeking.

In Turkey, VAW is considered a private matter. For many years, it was expected to keep what happened in the household within the family (Ergöçmen et al., 2013; Gül, 2013; Wies et al., 2011). Thus, many married women experiencing violence accepted their partners' assaults and did not seek help (Tekkaş-Kerman & Betrus, 2020). However, when women decided to seek help, they preferred to seek help informally rather than formally, and this argument is consistent with the global literature (Ergöçmen et al., 2013). For instance, in Athens, Budapest, London, Östersund, Porto, and Stuttgart, women who experience IPV prioritize their informal help-seeking networks, such as their families or friends (Dias et al., 2020). Turkish women subjected to IPV believe that their experiences with violence cannot be shared with strangers and that such incidents can only be shared with reliable people, such as family and relatives, who can hide information (Ergöçmen et al., 2013; Gül, 2013; Gündüz et al., 2021; Keskin & Karaman, 2020). In Spain, women who sought informal help felt emotionally supported regardless of the severity of the violence experienced (Domenech del Rio & Sirvent Garcia del Valle, 2019). Moreover, in Canada, women talk to at least one informal source, such as a family, friend, or neighbour, about their IPV experiences, and 30% of Canadian women reported discussing their IPV experiences with a coworker (Ansara & Hindin, 2010). However, for example, in Australia, the majority of women who experience IPV do not feel supported by those to whom they disclose informally (Ghafournia & Easteal, 2021).

According to Flicker and colleagues (2011), for informal help-seeking measures, like Turkish women, Latina women in the USA also preferred to seek help from their families. They were less likely than White women in the USA to seek help from friends. When partner abuse occurs in Latino families, family members may say such things as "la ropa sucia se lava en casa" ("the dirty laundry is washed at home"), a cultural saying that identifies the problem of partner abuse as shameful and cannot be shared with strangers

(Flicker et al., 2011; Reina et al., 2014). Family loyalty, reciprocity, and solidarity influence women's perspectives on IPV and help-seeking. A strong sense of family can give Latina victims a sense of belonging, support, and care for husbands, partners, or family members (Reina et al., 2014). Latina women will thus be less likely to discuss their abuse with non-family members for fear of bringing shame to their family and to preserve the family at any cost (Lockwood et al., 2022; Reina et al., 2014). When Latina and African American women in the USA decide to seek help, similar to Turkish women, they prefer to seek help from family instead of friends (Ergöçmen et al., 2013; Flicker et al., 2011; Keskin & Karaman, 2020; Lockwood et al., 2022; Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). However, approximately eight out of every ten Spanish women who experienced physical and/or sexual IPV and/or fear sought support from their friends (Sanz-Barbero et al., 2022).

Disclosure of violence, formally or informally, also varies based on geographical location. For example, in the UK, women do not disclose IPV while they are with the perpetrator. For most women in the UK, disclosure to others only begins after leaving the relationship (Evans & Feder, 2014). However, in Turkey, women disclose their IPV experiences to their informal support networks, specifically to their families, to seek help and do not wait until they leave the relationship because their informal support networks are a way to seek help for Turkish women (Ergöçmen et al., 2013). The study conducted by Evans and Feder (2014) shows that women in the UK remained in abusive and controlling relationships for many years with little access to support. Similar to the women in the UK, Turkish women also justified not seeking formal help or leaving their partner sooner by prioritizing their role as a mother who needed to keep the family together. However, there were different underlying reasons why women decided to stay even though they sought help informally. For instance, not believing seeking help will make a difference, seeing IPV as a part of the marriage, not knowing where to seek help, gender norms that legitimize and normalize violence within intimate relationships, fear of escalation of violence, bringing stigma and being ashamed to tell anyone about their violent experiences. These reasons illustrate the powerful impact of social, economic, and cultural dynamics in preventing women from seeking help (Evans & Feder, 2014; Flicker et al., 2011; Gül, 2013; Gündüz et al., 2021; Keskin & Karaman, 2020; Lysova & Straus, 2021; McCleary-Sills et al., 2016; Reina et al., 2014; Sanz-Barbero et al., 2022).

2.2.4. The Influence of Religion in Turkey and Women's Help-Seeking Behaviours

Individuals' life trajectories are a long-term pathway with age-graded development patterns in major social institutions (Elder, 1985; Mitchell, 2021). This section will highlight how major social institutions such as Diyanet (The Directorate of Religious Affairs) play a role in age-graded development and transitions and women's help-seeking behaviours. I also uncover how some age-graded transitions violate the normative social timetables, such as getting married under 18 by religious ceremonies.

According to the survey conducted by Diyanet, 99.2% of Turkey's population is Muslim which plays a vital role in shaping Turkish society (Diyanet, 2014). Diyanet references authentic religious knowledge in Turkey with the decisions it takes, the opinions it publishes, and the fatwas it gives. Fatwa services aim to provide religious counseling by considering the fundamental sources of knowledge and methodology of Islam, historical experience, and current demands and needs (Maritato, 2020). Maritato's (2020) ethnographic observation in Turkey focused on Diyanet's policies toward women over the past 20 years. In the early 2000s, the goal of Diyanet was to strengthen the conservative values stressing the ideal strong and healthy Turkish family as the best agent of social protection. In 2013, Diyanet started to increase the number of female preachers to give families religious counseling and also moral support for women and families (Maritato, 2020; Öcal, 2014). In 2002, Diyanet collaborated with the Ministry of Family and Social Policies that allowed religious officers (including female preachers) to provide services in women's shelters since the most asked questions received by the female preachers were on family life, specifically problems with husbands, such as acts of violence such as physical or economic, divorce, and alcoholism. However, based on the interviews conducted by Maritato (2020), it was suggested that women living in shelters request a psychologist, no matter their religion, instead of a female preacher.

Female preachers in the shelters propagated the government's ideology of creating a conservative family life in Turkey. Diyanet organized seminars for family consultation, which included topics such as communication within the family, the management of emotions in family relations, family school, marriage preparation school, and discipline within the family: relations with the in-laws (Maritato, 2020). In 2016, Diyanet announced "gold rules" for a happy and peaceful family during the seminars, such as the

spouse should not immediately respond to the other's unexpected reactions, do not put any individualistic choice before the family's shared values, which also supports Diyanet's efforts to protect the family rather than women as individuals (ibid.). However, according to Maritato (2020), Diyanet's only goal should be to provide moral support and religious counseling by respecting women's privacy residing in women's shelters and opposing any false beliefs, especially those who abuse religion to justify violence. My findings will expand on the influence of religious beliefs on women's help-seeking behaviours in Chapter 4.

Even though religious texts in Islam do not discriminate between the sexes in matters of modesty, in Turkey, the notion of modesty and honour have been traditionally linked to women and sexuality. Since the man was solely responsible for the family's economic needs, the core of modesty and honour have been managed in a patriarchal way. This role has been transferred to women in Turkey as if it does not affect men (Maritato, 2020). The spouses' conflicts are an offense in Islam because it contributes to family disintegration. Spousal conflicts and VAW emerged as one of the most frequent issues in women's questions to Diyanet since women wanted to resolve the conflicts and conserve their family lives. Therefore, female preachers played an important role in shaping IPV victims' experiences (Maritato, 2020).

In 2008, the project "The Role of Religious Officers in the Fight against Violence against Women" was launched. However, in 2011, Diyanet's vision of the issue changed, and the project shifted its focus from "women" to "family." According to Maritato (2020), this was problematic since it inserted women into the broader family frame. Her study argued that once you consider women only within the broader framework of family, there is a risk that women as an individual will disappear. The change of focus from VAW to the protection of family discloses Diyanet's and the government's discourse concerning women's issues. However, on January 10, 2022, the Director of Religious Affairs gave a speech supporting ending VAW and shared the goals of Diyanet in protecting women and combatting VAW, such as organizing seminars and conferences and educating individuals through public sermons on preventing VAW and protecting women's rights (The Directorate of Religious Affairs, 2022).

Religion also plays a role in shaping the institution of marriage. Marriage between a man and a woman is considered a kind of worship in Islam because one avoids being

single by getting married. Together with the mother and the father, children complete the family. It is common for people to perform religious wedding ceremonies before the legal wedding ceremony. Based on the surveys conducted on 60 thousand people in Turkey by Statistics Turkey (TUIK), 84% of Turkish people believe that religious marriages are necessary for couples, and 90% of Turkish people in 2021 conducted religious wedding ceremonies. Religious marriages are rituals performed by the Imam and two witnesses in the belief that partners can marry according to their religious beliefs. Even though a religious ceremony of marriage can only be held by showing proof of a legal wedding ceremony (a family certificate), it is common for people to first conduct a religious ceremony and then the legal ceremony (Bulutlu, 2022). According to Bulutlu (2022), the reasons people conduct religious ceremonies are: not believing that legal marriages are enough; the idea of being able to spend the engagement period more comfortably, in other words protecting the honour of the women; being married under the legal age (18); the idea of having multiple marriages with different women even though monogamy is essential in the Turkish Civil Code, they fulfill their request of having multiple wives through religious weddings; or not accepting some of the consequences of marriage such as financial support, children's responsibility. In Chapter 4, the reasons listed above on why people conduct religious weddings, their impacts on IPV, and women's help-seeking measures will be further discussed.

2.2.5. Violence Against Women during the Pandemic

The LCT also focuses on the timing of lives (Elder, 1985; Mitchell, 2021). This section will specifically focus on the historical timing of Turkish women and how societal and large-scale changes such as the pandemic influenced IPV victims' experiences and help-seeking behaviours.

The studies conducted during the pandemic highlighted various factors involved in the increase of IPV during the pandemic: psychological and economic stress; increased depression and anxiety; potential increases in harmful coping mechanisms, such as excessive alcohol consumption; and isolation (Adıbelli et al., 2021; Gutman et al., 2022). Social isolation and quarantine are effective ways to control infection; however, they increase the vulnerability of women to violence. A survey conducted by Evcili and Demirel (2022) suggested that social distancing and social isolation restrictions limited access to available support options, such as shelters and helplines, and negatively affected the

reporting of IPV. At the beginning of the pandemic, courts were also shut down, preventing women from legally seeking help (Sabancı Vakfı, 2022). Formal institutions such as shelters or informal networks such as relatives enable IPV victims to get the emotional support they need; however, they were no longer accessible during quarantine (Campbell, 2020). Akalın et al. (2021) conducted surveys in different parts of Turkey with 1036 women aged between 18-59 and suggested that social isolation during the pandemic prevented them from social support, such as meeting with family and friends and prevented access to health and safety services for IPV victims.

A study by Bradbury-Jones and Isham (2020) suggests that VAW increased during the pandemic, and women's informal and formal help-seeking measures were restricted, such as seeking help from the police or family. The Italian National Network of Shelters for women subjected to gender-based violence showed that 2867 women contacted 80 shelters from March 2 to April 5, 2020 (Bellizzi et al., 2020). In Brazil, the lockdown policies were established since the onset of COVID-19 and resulted in an increase of approximately 9% in the number of calls made to the helpline to report VAW. Between March 1 and March 16, 2020, 3045 calls were received, and 829 complaints were filed, whereas between March 17 and March 25, 2020, these numbers rose to 3303 and 978, respectively (De Souza Santos et al., 2022). In India, during the 2020 lockdown, reported incidents of IPV increased. The National Commission for Women of India received 2043 complaints in June 2020, the highest figure in eight months (Mitchell & Smith, 2023).

Even though the statistics published by various NGOs and scholars regarding IPV experiences during the pandemic suggest that there is an intense increase in IPV cases, according to a survey conducted by Gündüz et al. (2021), between 11 to 23 March 2021 in 81 cities in Turkey with 450 women who currently reside in women's shelters suggest that during the pandemic, women who were exposed to violence did not experience any difficulties applying or receiving services to formal institutions such as women's shelters, police or hospitals. Furthermore, governments worldwide enacted new policies to increase women's access to formal help-seeking measures and prevent IPV. In the Czech Republic, after the first months of the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, help-seeking services began to work again using alternative means of communication such as online chats, video calls, or telephone crisis lines, often with extended opening hours (Plasilova et al., 2021). The Canadian Government funded $50 million to support shelters and sexual

assault clinics for VAW victims. Shelters for victims were declared essential services so they would remain open during the lockdown (Marye & Atav, 2022).

In Spain, the government kept shelters and urgent care centers open, and hotel rooms were reserved. A Belgian hotel in Brussels was requisitioned to accommodate women who had to leave dangerous homes. Ireland's Department of Justice and Equality allocated funding for community and voluntary organizations to assist social services in addressing VAW. In Brazil, the Secretariat for Women's Policies of the Federal District conducted a media campaign to communicate available services that protect women under threat of VAW during COVID-19 isolation and allowed IPV complaints to be filed online or via emergency telephone numbers. It became possible to upload pictures, videos, audio files, and other evidentiary documents that prove the complaint of DV and other Human Rights violations (Marye & Atav, 2022; De Souza Santos et al., 2022). Moreover, the Chinese government produced online manuals to show how women can protect themselves from VAW during the lockdown, including legal actions. In Croatia and Serbia, courts accommodated and processed IPV cases during lockdown when other prosecutions were paused. The Colombian government issued a decree to guarantee continued access to legal, law enforcement, and judicial proceedings virtually. In South Africa, Heads of Court were authorized to continue essential services during the lockdown, such as processing DV cases (Marye & Atav, 2022).

Turkish government reviewed the existing laws on VAW and implemented new laws during the pandemic to increase VAW victims' access to formal help. The Turkish government reevaluated Law No. 6284 in such a way that it posed no threats to the health of victims and perpetrators due to the pandemic, and in May 2022, the Turkish Parliament passed a new bill on VAW that supported heftier sentences for perpetrators and helps and supports VAW victims by offering free legal counseling from lawyers or the police (Daily Sabah, 2022). Moreover, women residing in the shelters stated that the shelters followed all the safety procedures and supported women (Gündüz et al., 2021). However, 63.6% said they hesitated to apply to women's shelters during the pandemic because they were scared they would get COVID-19. Only 4.5% stated they hesitated to apply because they thought they would not receive enough support due to a lack of staff. When asked if women had any barriers or issues receiving support from the shelters, 89% said they had no issues. Gündüz et al. (2021) argue that in Turkey during the pandemic, women did not

experience any difficulties or barriers while seeking help from formal institutions, and women's safety and privacy were prioritized.

Surveys were primarily used by Adıbelli et al. (2021) to collect data on women who have experienced IPV during the pandemic. These surveys helped to gather large quantities of data and describe the characteristics of different populations of Turkey. However, surveys prevented women from sharing their experiences fully because they feared their abusive partners would see their responses (Adıbelli et al., 2021; Ergöçmen et al., 2013; Toktaş & Diner, 2015). Most data were collected through online platforms during the pandemic, limiting access to women from different socioeconomic levels, and some women were not able to access online platforms due to living with a controlling partner (Adıbelli et al., 2021; Akalın et al., 2022; Plasilova et al., 2021). Thus, the data collected through surveys during the pandemic did not transparently reflect women's IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours. My research addresses this gap by collecting data through in-depth interviews, making it easier to build trust and allowing women to disclose their IPV experiences and how their help-seeking behaviours changed during the pandemic.

Chapter 3.   Methodology

This chapter begins by introducing my research study design. Then, I will describe the sample and recruitment process, including the inclusion and exclusion criteria and the challenges and limitations that I experienced during the recruitment process. The third section of this chapter includes an overview of the interview guide and how it was used to address my research questions and theoretical framework. In the fourth part, I will elaborate on my data collection and data analysis process to generate themes presented on chapter five. The subsequent section will focus on issues related to positionality and reflexivity (e.g., the differences in power and status between the interviewees and myself as interviewer). I will conclude this chapter by discussing the ethics clearance process and the various ethical issues that surfaced, as well as how I resolved them.

3.1. Study Design

My study adopts a critical and qualitative perspective and applies it to this area in response to the numersous limitations of existing studies. Merry (2016) argues that there is an international struggle to quantify and define VAW. UN Statistical Commission (UNSC) developed a set of indicators and guidelines for collecting data on VAW that countries worldwide could use. The UNSC categorizes VAW by type of relationship, type of violence, severity, and frequency of violence. However, the complexity of relationships, women's histories, the interplay of love and kinship, and residence patterns disappear. The UNSC uses objective categories to measure VAW across class, national, and cultural divides, creating a gap between quantitative accounting and the experience of violence (Merry, 2016). Merry (2016) draws on Yakin Erturk's suggestions, a former Turkish special rapporteur on VAW, while criticizing the indicators of VAW. Erturk notes that Europe, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Canada set the model for other countries on expert data on VAW. There is a problem with translation, linguistic or cultural, and comparing violence across cultural differences in conceptions of family and households (Merry, 2016). In this study, I use two indicators of VAW suggested by Erturk: "grave violence" and "social tolerance." Grave violence refers to rape, serious IPV, or sexual harassment, and I specifically focus on serious IPV. Social tolerance focuses on social and cultural contexts that allow VAW to continue by intimate partners. I also included measures of controlling behaviours, such as isolation, intimidation, insult, humiliation, and

women's fear. Moreover, I highlighted Turkey's sociocultural and political context and its influence on Turkish women's informal and formal help-seeking behaviours (Merry, 2016).

Thus, I used a qualitative study design and conducted in-depth semi-structured interviews in this study. Qualitative research is grounded in the lived experiences of people and captures an understanding of people in their environments. Qualitative methodologies focus on designs and procedures to gain authentic and rich accounts (Kirby et al., 2017). Qualitative study design helped me to embrace and understand the complexities and meanings my participants attach to their IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours. Interviews are face-to-face verbal interchange in which the interviewer attempts to elicit information or expressions of opinions or beliefs from the participants (Kirby et al., 2017). I conducted semi-structured interviews, which are one-on-one interactions that follow a set of questions. However, I allowed for variation in my question set based on my participants' answers and allowed them to lead the interview. I followed an interview guide (Appendix D) but only as a prompt or when I needed further insight on topics when my participants did not mention specific topics or themes from the interview guide, such as their husbands' background information. In-depth semi-structured interviews helped me to understand and give women enough time to explain their IPV experiences and their help-seeking behaviours during and after experiencing violence. In total, I conducted interviews with eight women (aged 21-38) that helped me understand the complex interplay of geography, history, policy, and culture in women's lived experiences and their help-seeking behaviours (Yon et al., 2014).

3.2. Sample and Recruitment

Once I received approval from the SFU Research Ethics Board, I emailed the lawyers who worked voluntarily with women who experienced IPV. I asked these lawyers to introduce me to women who sought help from formal institutions, such as from women's shelters, and who have experienced IPV within the past five years. The recruitment process took place between October and November 2022. I used purposeful sampling, a technique widely used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases for the most effective use of limited resources. This involves identifying and selecting individuals or groups knowledgeable about or experienced with a phenomenon of interest. In addition to knowledge and experience, the importance of availability and willingness to participate and the ability to communicate experiences and opinions in an articulate,

expressive, and reflective manner (Palinkas et al., 2015). Using purposeful sampling helped me to receive information-rich cases from women willing to explain their IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours.

I recruited my participants with the help of lawyers working with women who experienced IPV. I first contacted lawyers through email, where I explained my research process and included my interview guide. Subsequently, lawyers contacted me via a phone call to further discuss my inclusion criteria and ask any questions regarding my research. Then, the lawyers contacted women who fit my inclusion criteria and were willing to participate. My inclusion criteria were: women who experienced IPV within the past five years and sought formal help from legal institutions (such as legal counseling, filed for a divorce, or moved to women's shelters). Women also had to be over the age of 18 for legal reasons and I tried to include the experiences of women at different stages of the life course and from different generations. I excluded women who did not experience IPV within the past five years, not formally seek help, were under the age of 18, were still residing with their partners/husbands, and not living in Ankara, Turkey. Recruiting my participants from Ankara, the capital of Turkey, allowed me to find women from various socioeconomic statuses, backgrounds, education levels, and environments, such as rural/urban, which helped me capture women's experiences from different abusive histories and life trajectories.

These lawyers knew potential participants because they were voluntarily working with women on their divorce cases, gave women free legal counseling on how to seek help legally, and inform women regarding their legal rights. Even though my goal was to interview women residing in women's shelters and introduce myself to women by going to women's shelters before conducting interviews, I was only introduced to women one day before the interview date, and the lawyers supervised the first meeting. Since women were vulnerable, their addresses and where they were residing were not disclosed, and I could not meet women outside the designated places determined by lawyers. Even though, my initial inclusion criteria specified that women had to reside in women's shelters, I had to change and interview women that the lawyers approved since not all women agreed to attend the interview. I also agreed to include women residing in a safe place other than the women's shelters, such as their parents, siblings, or relatives' house. One of the other challenges was to bring women to the designated interview place. Since women's addresses were not disclosed, it created an additional barrier to the interview process. It

was challenging to organize a designated trustworthy driver who was already working with women's shelters to pick women up from the places where they were staying and drive them to the designated interview place in a safe manner. To further protect women's privacy and safety, I kept the names of the women's shelters, women's charities that lawyers and IPV victims work with, and the designated interview place strictly confidential and used pseudonyms.

3.3. Overview of the Interview Guide

As previously discussed, my overarching research question is: how do Turkish women seek help when they experience IPV? More specifically, how do they seek help from formal institutions such as women's shelters, police, helplines, or religious institutions; how did Turkey's religious and cultural context influence women's help-seeking behaviours; and how did the restrictions during the pandemic, such as mandatory quarantine impacted women's help-seeking behaviours?

My overarching research question and my guiding life course theoretical lens helped me to formulate my interview questions and guide (Appendix D). The interview guide was divided into six sections. The guide started with the background information of the participants, where I asked questions such as their age, gender, socioeconomic background, occupation, and marital status to understand participants' sociohistorical and geographical locations. The second part of the interview guide included background information about participants' husbands/partners to understand further the family life leading up to the current situation, the impact of linked lives, and participants' social ties. The third part asked questions regarding women's experiences, such as their childhood experiences or traumas, the type, frequency, and severity of violence they experienced, their feelings after, and what they did after they experienced violence to understand their participants' past traumas, linked lives and attitudes towards violence. The fourth section included questions regarding the COVID-19 pandemic to understand the impact of large-scale societal changes and their impact on participants' lives, such as a change in daily habits, change in the type, severity, and frequency of violence, and women's help-seeking behaviours after experiencing violence during the pandemic. The fifth section included questions directly related to help-seeking behaviours of women to understand if women seek help, how they seek help, such as formally by calling hotlines, going to the police, or informally by calling a family member or going to a neighbours house to highlight how

Turkey's culture and religion influence women's help-seeking behaviours. The last section included questions regarding women's shelters. However, this section was changed to help-seeking from formal institutions of women, such as going to a lawyer, women's shelter, or calling helplines for legal advice or support. The questions were aimed at understanding how and when women used formal help-seeking measures if this was a "last resort," and if women found these methods effective.

3.4. Data Collection and Analysis

In-depth interviews allowed me to share women's opinions and detailed experiences about their abusive histories, attitudes toward IPV, gender norms and beliefs, and help-seeking behaviours. I met women in a designated place that the lawyers determined. The interview was divided into two parts. The first part was introducing myself to women, briefly getting to know them, and discussing how their privacy would be protected. A lawyer supervised the first part of the interview. I introduced the research project's goal, reviewed the key concepts and topics mentioned in the interview guide, and reviewed the interview method used and how their confidentiality would be protected. In order to reduce the shortcomings of in-depth interviews, such as triggering trauma or fear of disclosure or shame, I mentioned that their participation is voluntary, and some questions might trigger emotional distress. Women were free to skip any questions they were uncomfortable answering and leave or take a break from the interview. I allowed my participants to be experts, and I adopted a 'learner' role,

According to Mitchell (2021), it is important to build and maintain trust and protect women's confidentiality. Thus, I decided to conduct in-person interviews and I introduced myself to women before conducting the interviews. The first section took 15 to 30 minutes and it was more like a conservation than an interview. We met at the same designated place with women one day after the first part took place. The time of interviews was between 45 minutes and 2 hours. The first interview occurred in December 2022, and the last was in January 2023. Since it was dangerous for women to leave their safe places and come to meet me, I had to limit to interview process to one month. Since the concepts and topics were discussed one day before the interview, I allowed women to start from any topic that they felt comfortable discussing and I asked leading questions if I needed further insight on specific themes. The interviews were audio recorded with the permission of the participants and were conducted and transcribed in Turkish, then translated into

English for data analysis purposes. I only translated the quotes that were deemed clearly important for the findings and analysis.

Table 1. List of Codes, Themes, and Topics

Codes	Themes	Topics
Demographic Factors and Background Information	Intertwined Demographic Factors and Exposure to IPV	Women's Linked Lives and IPV Experiences
Type/Form of Violence		
Severity of Violence		
Demographic Factors and Background Information	Forced Marriages, End of Education, Beginning of Motherhood	
Reasons for Marriage		
Wedding Type		
Age when having the first child		
Termination of Education		
History of Family Violence/Exposure to Violence in Childhood	The Repetitive Pattern of Violence	
Violence from Parents/In-Laws		
Awareness of Violence		
First Time Experiencing Violence	"What Happens in the Family Stays in the Family"	Informal Help-Seeking Behaviours of Turkish Women
Reasons for not Seeking Help		
Preferred Help-Seeking Measure	Saved by the Informal Support Networks	
Number of times seeking help		
Types of Informal Help-Seeking Measures Used		
Injury due to Violence		
Reasons to return to their abusive partners	Informal Support Networks as a Double-Edged Sword	
Reasons for not seeking help		

Reasons for Formal Help-Seeking	Formal Help-Seeking as a "Last Resort"	Formal Help-Seeking Behaviours of Turkish Women
Types of Formal Help-Seeking Measures Used		
Support received from informal networks		
Injury due to Violence		
Religious Beliefs	Lack of Trust in Diyanet as a Formal Help-Seeking Measure	
Reasons for not seeking help from Diyanet		
Types of Formal Help-Seeking Measures Used		
Changes experienced during the pandemic	"Already Trapped at Home"	What Changed in Women's Help-Seeking Behaviours during the Pandemic
The influence of the pandemic on help-seeking measures		
Awareness around changed policies	Changed Policies to Protect Women's Rights and Prevent IPV	
Legal Expectations of Women		

After the transcriptions were completed, I descriptively coded the interviews by assigning a word or phrase summarizing a section of text and creating a codebook (Table 1). I used NVivo 12 to code the interviews and used inductive and iterative coding. I used my interview data to develop codes and then identified themes between codes (Kirby et al., 2017). I generated the themes based on their relative importance and prioritized the dominant themes that emerged during my analysis process. For example, one of my themes, "Formal Help-Seeking as a Last Resort," was one of my dominant themes since it occurred more consistently than my other themes, such as "Economic Violence." I used four main topics following the interview guide, and themes were generated within each topic based on relative importance (Appendix D). While generating the themes, I also considered how they answered my research questions related to literature and LCT. The first topic is *Women's Linked Lives and IPV Experiences*, which generated three themes (*Intertwined Demographic Factors and Exposure to IPV; Forced Marriages, End of Education, Beginning of Motherhood; The Repetitive Pattern of Violence*). These themes

highlight women's background information and various socioeconomic factors such as unemployment, women's risk of being exposed to violence, the role of religion in early marriages, termination of education, and how family structures and linked lives influence women's IPV experiences. The second topic is *Informal Help-Seeking Behaviours of Turkish Women* which includes three themes ("*What Happens in the Family Stays in the Family;" Saved by the Informal Support Networks; Informal Support Networks as a Double-Edged Sword*) to uncover Turkish women's perspectives on help-seeking, the influence of Turkish culture on women's informal help-seeking behaviours, and women's help-seeking attempts. The third topic is *Formal Help-Seeking Behaviours of Turkish Women* which, exposed two themes (*Formal Help-Seeking as a "Last Resort," Lack of Trust in Diyanet as a Formal Help-Seeking Measure)* to demonstrate how women use formal help-seeking as a "last resort," and the role of religious institutions in formal help-seeking. The last topic is *What Changed in Women's Help-Seeking Behaviours during the COVID-19 Pandemic?* which includes two themes ("*Already Trapped at Home;" Changed Policies to Protect Women's Rights and Prevent IPV*) to uncover the change in women's help-seeking behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic and the influence of policy shifts during the pandemic on women's help-seeking behaviours.

3.5. Positionality and Reflexivity

Positionality is understood as one's position in the social hierarchy compared to other groups, potentially limiting or broadening one's understanding of others (Kirby et al., 2017). Throughout my research, I prioritized being reflexive which entails self-critical questioning about how participants' knowledge is generated and how the relation of power operates in the research process. Through reflexivity, I recognized the relations of power in generating knowledge (Kirby et al., 2017).

As a Turkish woman born and raised in Turkey, I wanted to highlight and prioritize the IPV experiences of Turkish women. I am aware of the high rates of IPV women experience in Turkey, which inspired me to research IPV victims' help-seeking behaviours. I wanted to collaborate with women who experienced IPV and help raise awareness on breaking the lifelong cycle of violence. I contacted women from the city I was from, which is the capital of Turkey, Ankara. Kirby et al. (2017) argue that when a researcher shares the same ethnicity as participants, this may increase the willingness of participants to respond. I found it easier to build trust, which increased women's willingness to participate.

It was also easier for me to connect to women during my interviews because we were from the same city, could speak the same language, and had similar ages with some of the women I interviewed. Conducting the study in Ankara also allowed me to reach out to women from different socioeconomic backgrounds. However, it is important to highlight that since Ankara is the capital and has a greater population than other cities in Turkey, there are more opportunities for women to seek help, such as public transportation, NGOs, or police branches, which will be reflected in Chapter 4. However, I acknowledge the difference in socioeconomic statuses and backgrounds between some women I interviewed and myself. For example, my parents supported me and prioritized my education. I was privileged enough to come to Canada to continue my studies without experiencing economic hardships. Kirby et al. (2017) suggest that when researchers and interviewees share similar experiences or backgrounds that include norms of conversation and interaction, interview strategies must also be explicit to avoid interferences and assumptions. Even though women had different socioeconomic backgrounds or education levels, I understood the political, cultural, and religious context of Turkey, which prevented making assumptions regarding women's experiences, such as understanding why it is more common for women to seek informal help such as going to their parent's house instead of seeking help from formal institutions when they first experience violence such as going to the police.

3.6. Ethical Issues and Consideration

At the beginning of every interview, I informed my participants that the SFU Office of Research Ethics approved this study and determined that it was a minimal risk to participants. I used pseudonyms (Turkish flower names) to provide anonymity and protect the confidentiality of the participants and their data. The interviews were audio recorded with the participant's permission, and permission was obtained to transcribe the interviews. After the transcription process was complete, the audio recordings and the name list with participants' pseudonyms were deleted. Participants signed the consent form before starting the interviews (Appendix C). I informed participants that their participation was voluntary; they could skip any questions they did not feel comfortable answering, stop the interview or the audio recording when they did not feel comfortable, or leave the interview at any time. The safety and confidentiality of women were prioritized throughout the interview and transcription process.

IPV victims are considered a vulnerable population, thus, I prioritized protecting the safety of women who volunteered to participate in my study (Kirby et al., 2017). Every woman I interviewed stayed in a safe place and hid from their perpetrators. One of my priorities was to conceal their identities by using pseudonyms and their addresses. Meeting women in a designated safe space determined by the lawyers was important. I respected women's time and privacy by meeting them only two times. The first time was to build trust and introduce my interview questions and themes, and the second time was to conduct the semi-structured interviews. As suggested by the SFU ethics review board, I also provided women with a list of resources to share with other women who might be willing to seek help but need to know how or where. The list included women's shelters in Ankara, legal counseling, VAW helplines, NGO addresses, and phone numbers (Appendix E).

Chapter 4.   Analysis and Discussion of Study Findings

In this chapter, I will summarize and present the main study findings by organizing them according to four main topic areas. The four topics that are presented in this chapter follow the interview guide (Appendix D) and the themes generated within each topic in terms of relative importance based on my data analysis. I will present what my research supports by tying them back to the literature, LCT, and research questions. Under the first topic, I highlight women's IPV experiences and linked lives and emphasize the sociocultural factors and family structures that explain what led to the current situation and how and when women decided to seek help. The second topic area focuses on the informal help-seeking behaviours of Turkish women and includes the cultural context of Turkey and how it plays as a mediating factor in women's help-seeking behaviours. Informal help-seeking behaviours were introduced before the formal help-seeking behaviours of women because women preferred to seek help informally (family, relatives, friends) before formally (police, lawyers, women's shelters). This emphasizes how the cultural context and family structure of Turkey influence women's help-seeking behaviours. For the third topic area, I focus on the formal help-seeking behaviours of Turkish women to answer when, how, and why women decided to seek help formally from the police or lawyers. The last topic emerged from women's help-seeking behaviours during the pandemic to understand if women's help-seeking behaviours changed due to social isolation restrictions. This topic also helped me to uncover any changes in legal expectations of women due to policy shifts during the pandemic.

4.1. Women's Linked Lives and IPV Experiences

Under this topic, I included the life histories of women and their family lives leading up to the current situation, as well as their background information such as age, social class, and linked lives. According to LCT, age-related experiences of individuals and their families are shaped by historical, sociocultural, political context, and personal locations, such as class, status, age, gender, and ethnicity/race (Elder, 1985; Mitchell, 2021). Three themes surfaced under this topic (*Intertwined Demographic Factors and Exposure to IPV; Forced Marriage, End of Education, Beginning of Motherhood; and The Repetitive Pattern of Violence*) and emerged within women's linked lives and IPV experiences. These themes

highlight how women's background and various socioeconomic factors (e.g., unemployment), early marriage, family structures, and linked lives shape their exposure to IPV and their IPV experiences.

4.1.1. Intertwined Demographic Factors and Exposure to IPV

The lifespan of individuals and their families is shaped by sociocultural context and geographical locations, such as class and status (Mitchell, 2021). I included the background information and sociocultural factors of women and their partners (e.g., education levels, status, and occupations) in my analysis to demonstrate the family dynamics and highlight how these factors influence women's exposure to IPV. According to the literature review, women who are young, have lower levels of education, live in rural areas, and are unemployed are at higher risk of experiencing IPV (Akar et al., 2013; Ergöçmen et al., 2013; Flicker et al., 2011; Kocacık et al., 2007; Tran et al., 2016; Gündüz et al., 2021). Moreover, Foren and O'Leary (2008) argue that people with addiction problems, such as alcoholism or gambling, have a history of IPV perpetration. Arteaga et al. (2015) suggest that 33.6% of patients being treated for addiction had a history of IPV perpetration, and women were at higher risk of experiencing IPV.

My research aligns with this literature since all my participants came from middle- or low-income families, were married at a young age (16-20), and five were financially dependent on their partners and had children. Only three of them were employed. Six of my participants had low levels of education (middle or high school), and only one had an undergraduate degree (Table A.1). I could only collect data regarding IPV experiences from two women who attended university since the rest of the women who agreed to attend interviews had lower levels of education. However, the findings show that women's partners were older and had higher education and income levels. Four had high school education, four had undergraduate degrees, and seven were employed (Table A.2). Being financially dependent on their partners increased women's risk of being exposed to psychological and physical violence. Women mentioned that their partners were the breadwinner, and they were financially dependent on them. This allowed their partners to be more controlling, dominant, and assertive. Moreover, my research supports that women's exposure to violence increased when their partners had addiction problems, such as alcohol or gambling (Table A.3):

My husband was an alcoholic and a gambler. He beat me every day, even when I was pregnant. He would spend all his money on alcohol or gambling…he never took care of the house." (Sumbul)

He would come home drunk and beat me because I went to bed before him…He would be so drunk that he would pass out with a cigarette in his hand. I intentionally did not wake him up. I wanted that cigarette to catch fire so we both would die…I could not take it anymore…but I had a daughter." (Nergis)

I also found it necessary to include economic violence as part of women's IPV experiences. Economic abuse can be a powerful tactic in manipulating, dominating, and controlling a person to encourage dependence or abuse them financially. During the interviews, most women mentioned that they were unemployed and financially dependent on their husbands and their husbands were using economic violence to further isolate, manipulate and control women. Akar et al. (2010) suggested that women with low education levels, who are unemployed and are financially dependent on their partners, are more likely to experience IPV through economic abuse. Economic violence behaviours include avoiding the woman working if she is working, holding her income, asking the woman to manage the house by giving her a small amount of money, capturing her existing goods, taking the jewelry attached to her during the wedding ceremony, asking bride price and dower (Akar et al., 2010; Alkan et al., 2021).

It is a tradition in Turkey to buy jewelry for the wedding, such as gold, gold necklaces, or bracelets for the bride, and it is considered women's property. Even though most women were not aware of psychological and sexual violence, six (75%) of my participants mentioned that they experienced economic violence alongside physical and psychological violence. Economic violence was exerted by selling women's wedding jewelry without permission, forcing women to work, not giving enough money to take care of the house, and threatening women by withholding money.

He sold my wedding jewelry and used it to pay rent. But he was working and earned enough money to pay rent… He said I was not working, so I had to contribute. (Manolya)

One day, he beat me because I was not bringing home money. I said I could not do anything, and he said, "You know what you have to do…" he forced me to work as a prostitute. He would take all the money and spend it on alcohol and gambling. He never took care of us or the house…. He also took all my wedding jewelry and lost it all in gambling. (Sumbul)

I asked my husband to give me money for groceries, but he never did… instead he beat me up until my face and head were bleeding… (Zambak)

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Women experience economic violence through their intimate partners if they are financially dependent on them, have low socioeconomic status, and have low levels of education. Men use economic violence to control, dominate, and threaten women. Mitchell (2021) argues that adapting to life course change can vary with available resources or supports, such as having enough financial capital. Notably, my findings show that these victimized women had few options since they were young, had low levels of education, lived in rural areas, and did not have enough financial capital to leave their abusive partners and care for themselves and their children.

4.1.2. Forced Marriages, End of Education, Beginning of Motherhood

Another major theme that emerged was how forced marriages shape women's IPV experiences and family structures, such as women ending their education to become wives or mothers. For this theme, I focus on the individual timings of the lives of Turkish women. Individual time refers to the chronological age and how it influences individuals' positions, roles, and rights based on culturally shared age definitions, such as the proper age to get married or have children (Elder, 1985; Mitchell, 2021). Even though marrying young is a culturally shared age definition in Turkey, the field study conducted by Kocacik et al. (2007) suggests that women who marry at an early age have a higher risk of being exposed to IPV.

As LCT suggests, life trajectories and transitions are socially organized and typically result in a change in status, social identity, and role involvement (Elder, 1985; Mitchell, 2021). My research supports that age-graded transitions that violate the normative social timetables and result in status and role change in women's lives increase women's exposure to IPV. TUIK (2021) suggests that 7.1% of women dropped out of school due to marriage or engagement. Even though only 0.1% mentioned that it was deemed appropriate for women to marry under 18, 24.2% of women were married under the legal age, and 12.5% of women were married through arranged marriages (TUIK, 2021). In this study, some women had to get married younger than the legal and societal expectations (under 18) and became wives and mothers, which caused conflicts because they were unprepared for this transition (Elder, 1985; Mitchell, 2021). Women mentioned that they were married at an early age due to societal and economic pressures. For example, their parents could not take care of them anymore or were scared that people

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would gossip about them and wanted to protect their daughter's "honour" or give them a better future. I will further explain these issues on page 43.

Religious weddings play a vital role in the institution of marriage and family dynamics since three (37.5%) of my participants were married at an early age through religious wedding ceremonies and have experienced violence regularly since the day they got married (Table A.5). However, it is essential to highlight that couples do not only conduct religious wedding ceremonies because they want to be married under the legal age. People conduct religious ceremonies for various reasons, such as not believing that legal marriages are enough to protect the honour of the women or not accepting some of the consequences of marriage, such as financial support or children's responsibility (Bulutlu, 2022). Even though religious wedding ceremonies cannot be held without showing proof of a legal wedding ceremony (a family certificate), it is common for Turkish people first to conduct the religious ceremony than the legal ceremony (Bulutlu, 2022). Since the Turkish state does not recognize religious marriages of Muslims as legal due to how "secularism" was conceived and implemented in Turkey during the founding of Turkey as an unchangeable founding principle of the Republic of Turkey, Muslims of Turkey often marry twice (Atasoy, 2009). However, there is an exception for Turkish citizens of Greek and Armenian Christian backgrounds since they conduct their marriages at their churches, and the Turkish state recognizes them as legal (ibid.).

In Turkey, women can marry legally when they are 17 with their parents' or legal guardians' approval and 16 with the family court's approval. Court only approves the marriage at 16 in extraordinary circumstances, such as pregnancy (Diyanet, 2023). Women who got married at 16 in my study had no extraordinary circumstances that would receive approval from the court. Thus, they preferred to conduct religious weddings in their communities instead of applying to court to get legally married. However, during my interviews, I did not explicitly ask why and how women got religious weddings at 17 instead of having legal marriages with their parents' approval since their families forced underage marriages. Further research should focus on how many women in Turkey conduct informal religious weddings and how this impacts family structures and women's exposure to IPV.

My research findings align with the literature (e.g., Bulutlu, 2022; Ergöçmen et al., 2013; Tekkaş-Kerman & Betrus, 2020) since women were married at a young age, three of them did not consent to marry, had low levels of education or terminated their education,

and were financially dependent on their husbands, which gave more power to their partners to control women and assert their dominance through violence. Three (37.5%) of my participants were married underage through religious wedding ceremonies. Seven (87.5%) of my participants were married between 16 and 20 and six (75%) of them became mothers one or two years after getting married:

> I had my first two kids under the religious wedding, then had three more after getting legally married when I turned 18. (Zambak)

> I got married at 17 and became a mom at 18. I felt like I was just a kid, raising another kid. (Karanfil)

Three (37.5%) of my participants mentioned that they had to drop out of school due to marriage. Nergis mentioned that she only married because her husband promised to support her education. However, after she got pregnant soon after getting married, her husband never allowed her to continue her education because he said she had to be a "mom" now:

> He said if I agreed to marry him, he would pay for my education. Well, that never happened, and I was trapped at home with my daughter and mother-in-law. (Nergis)

> I wanted to get a divorce so I could go to school, but my husband wanted to have kids. He wanted me to become a young mother so I could take care of them. (Sumbul)

Three (37.5%) of my participants, who were from the rural and conservative areas in Ankara, Turkey, mentioned that they were forced to marry due to societal pressures or financial hardships:

> I was forced to marry my husband. It was a small town, and people knew he had a crush on me and convinced my parents by saying, "She will marry one day, let her marry him. He likes her very much." He was stalking me every day, and I was scared of him. I begged my sister's husband to protect me from him. He kept calling our house and disturbing me. My sister's husband got into a fight and stabbed him. He was at the hospital, and my sister's husband was at the jail. They said if I married him, they would not file a complaint, and I already blamed myself for everything, but getting married was never my intention... Then everyone started talking, and my family forced me to marry him to put an end to the gossip.(Nergis)

> I became a financial burden to my family, so they thought the only way to take the burden away was for me to marry." (Karanfil)

> We were just texting with my husband. My mother caught me and said, "You either marry him or never talk to him again. We are living in a small town, and if people find out, they will start talking" I did not want to get married that young…I was not ready but pressured…(Menekse)

As suggested in the interview findings, women who marry early are more likely to drop out of school or have low levels of education, forcing women to become financially dependent on their partners and stay-at-home mothers. Women who were married due to parental or societal pressures mentioned, in nonspecific language, that their partners/husbands protected their "honour" by marrying them or saving their parents from a financial burden, giving the perpetrator the "right" to use violence to assert dominance. Marrying at an early age caused conflicts in women's lives, such as abusive relationships, low self-esteem, termination of education, or financial dependence, since women were not ready for this life transition.

4.1.3. The Repetitive Pattern of Violence

Another key theme that emerged from the interview findings was how the pattern of violence repeats itself throughout generations and is connected to women's and their partners' family structures. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as the intergenerational cycle or transmission of violence (Black et al., 2010). LCT emphasizes how individual experiences are linked through the family and its social networks. Family members are important in coordinating each other's lives regarding individual life decisions and shaping family structures (Elder, 1985; Mitchell, 2021). Furthermore, family histories also influence individuals' life decisions and family relationships. Ergöçmen et al. (2013) argue that witnessing or being exposed to violence in childhood doubles men's probability of using violence and women's exposure to violence. The field study conducted by Akar et al. (2010) suggests that 8.6% of Turkish women with a history of family violence internalize violence, consider beating a natural right of their husbands/partners, and do not see violence as a life cycle. Moreover, women blame themselves for experiencing violence and suggest that their partners/husbands do not know how to solve problems or assert dominance without using violence (Gündüz et al., 2021; Lysova, 2016; McCleary-Sills et al., 2016).

My research findings support the view that family members play a significant role in shaping family structures and experiences. All of my participants mentioned that they and their husbands/partners had a history of family violence. They experienced physical or psychological violence or saw their fathers use violence toward their mothers. Two (25%) of my participants mentioned that they also experienced violence from their in-laws.

I never experienced violence, well, I have seen my father beating my mother from time to time, but he never touched me. But my husband experienced violence growing up from both of his parents. He still does, actually, and gets mad and takes it out on me by beating me up. (Karanfil)

I also experienced psychological violence from my father-in-law. He would always insult me in front of my husband and say, "You have to beat women to discipline them." "Whatever my son does to you, he is right. You will be quiet and do what he says." "Do not worry, my son, we have money. We will find you another wife if she does not obey you. (Manolya)

One of the biggest struggles that I encountered during the interviews was that most women were not aware that they were experiencing certain kinds of violence, such as psychological or sexual (Table A.4). Women could define physical violence but struggled to understand psychological and sexual violence because violence was never discussed in their families. Women mentioned that they only saw and experienced violence but never discussed it. Two (25%) of my participants did not see forced sex as sexual violence but as their husbands' "right."

I was too young and ashamed to tell anyone that I was raped by my husband so many times... I do not think anyone would think it was rape since he was my husband… In my family, we do not talk about that kind of stuff…. It is inappropriate. (Zambak)

He always swears and calls me names before and while beating me, but it just comes with physical violence. He does not only insult me but also my parents. But, I do not consider that as violence. Everyone swears and insults when fighting or mad at each other. (Sumbul)

You know bruises go away, but what he says stays with me, and I feel so useless and not like a woman. He would always insult me by saying, "You think you are a woman?" I lost all my self-confidence during marriage but did not realize that was violence too... (Manolya)

He always forced me to have sex, and I am ashamed to say it but anal sex…I hated it so much, but I knew if I denied he would beat me until I turned purple and had bruises all over my body… I did it because he was my husband but also to not get beaten up later... This happened throughout our marriage. (Menekse)

Two (25%) of my participants saw violence as a life cycle and internalized violence and defended their husbands by blaming their families and how they were brought up.

I know you will not understand when I say this, but sometimes I could understand why he used violence. He also goes through a lot every day and is busy. One day he beat me because I burnt the food, but he was hungry, and I wasted so much food. But, please do not get me wrong, I still do not think anyone deserves to be beaten up that bad because of burnt food. (Manolya)

He did not know any better. That is what he saw growing up. I cannot blame him for everything he did. (Zambak)

Family ties and linked lives influence women's risk of being exposed to violence and men's probability of using violence. Research findings suggest that family members influence individuals' decisions and family structures/relationships. Women suggested that they experienced violence not only from their partners but also from their in-laws and that their in-laws encouraged their partners to use violence. Men exposed to violence growing up were more likely to use violence toward their partners. Similar to Roebuck and colleagues' (2023) findings, most women in my study also had difficulty recognizing violence, normalized violence, and did not see violence as a life cycle. Some women were also unaware that they were experiencing violence because violence was never discussed within their communities or families, which led to a repetitive cycle of family violence.

Women and their partners' background information and IPV experiences are important to understand since it demonstrates what led to the current situation. My research findings support that women with low education levels, who marry early, are financially dependent on their husbands, have partners/husbands with addiction problems, and have a history of family violence are exposed to IPV, and these factors influence women's IPV experiences. Women's sociohistorical and geographical locations and their linked lives and family ties demonstrate why some women experience IPV and how this influences women's help-seeking behaviours.

4.2. Informal Help-Seeking Behaviours of Turkish Women

This topic encompasses how and when Turkish women seek help informally from their family, relatives, or friends when they experience IPV based on the cultural context of Turkey. I decided to introduce the informal help-seeking behaviours of Turkish women before formal help-seeking behaviours because when women decided to seek help, it was common for them to seek help informally, such as from their family, before seeking help formally, such as from lawyers or the police. This topic includes three themes to highlight why women prioritize informal help-seeking measures and do not leave their abusive partners the first time they seek help. The first theme is entitled, "*What Happens in the Family Stays in the Family,*" to emphasize women's perspective on help-seeking in general and how they preserve the privacy of family life and avoid seeking help when they first experience IPV. The second theme is, *Saved by the Informal Support Networks,*

where I explain how and why women prefer to seek help from their informal support networks when they experience IPV and how their families/neighbours help save women from abusive relationships. The last theme is called, *Informal Support Networks as a Double-Edged Sword,* where I uncover women's attempts to leave their abusive relationships and how and when women decide to leave their abusive relationships permanently.

4.2.1. "What Happens in the Family Stays in the Family"

This theme emerged during the interviews when women mentioned that they did not seek help or did not want to leave their partners when they first experienced violence. While the Turkish State publicly recognizes IPV, it is still seen as a private matter. Many married women experiencing violence silently accept their partners' assaults since it is expected to keep what happens in the household within the family (Ergöçmen et al., 2013; Gül, 2013; Gündüz et al., 2021; Keskin & Karaman, 2020; Tekkaş-Kerman & Betrus, 2020). An idiom in Turkish came up during my interviews that recognized how important it is for Turkish women to keep family life private: "Kol kırılır yen içinde kalır" (meaning that arm breaks bone stay inside). Women used this idiom to explain "what happens in the family stays in the family." This justificaition is why women avoided seeking help informally from their relatives/friends or formally from women's shelters or the police in the first place. It also allowed them to avoid explaining their experiences and exposing their family life.

Women's help-seeking behvaiours are influenced by historical, social, political, economic, and cultural conditions. The reason why women do not seek help when they first experience IPV includes seeing IPV as a part of the marriage, gender norms that legitimize and normalize violence within intimate relationships, fear of escalation of violence, and being ashamed to tell anyone about their violent experiences (Aldridge, 2013; Gündüz et al., 2021; Lysova & Straus, 2021; McCleary-Sills et al., 2016). Five (62.5%) of my participants depended financially on their partners, had children, and lived in rural areas. Women in this study implicitly mentioned that they were scared and ashamed to talk to anyone about their violence experiences and lacked the monetary funds to leave and seek help. Thus, they tolerated violence and stayed with their abusive partner for the sake of their children.

Even though 79.3% of Turkish people said marriage must last a lifetime, in 2021, the number of divorced couples were 175 thousand 779 and in 2022, it increased to 180 thousand 954 couples getting divorced and 32.5% of divorces occurred within the first five years of marriage (TUIK, 2022). Even though divorce rates increased in Turkey, most of my participants were concerned about ending their marriages and saw leaving their marriage as giving up or being a failure. Women could not leave their partners because they thought he would change, wanted to protect the institution of marriage, loved their partner, were threatened by their partners, were scared to experience stigma, or did not want to disappoint their families.

> At the end of every fight, he would kick me out of the house. I would just wait for him to sleep or leave the house to get a pack of cigarettes. That was the only way I could re-enter the house. I did not seek help. I did not want anyone to know… They would want me to get a divorce, but I did not want to divorce him. We were only married for two months. It was too soon to decide. (Menekse)

> When I was six months pregnant, my husband beat me and kicked me out of the house. I just waited outside for him to calm down and allow me back in… I cried for hours… It was freezing… I did not go to my parent's house even though it was close… I do not know why but I did not want them to see me like that…I thought I would disappoint them. (Nergis)

> I live in a conservative neighbourhood. I was scared of the gossip and stigma of getting a divorce. I did not want to be labeled as the "widow."(Karanfil)

> I did not tell anyone…I stayed for my kids…I wanted them to grow up with their father, have a family and a father figure…. When I wanted to get a divorce and get alimony, he threatened me and said if I filed a divorce, he would never give me money…I did not know what else to do, so I tried my best to stay because I was financially dependent on him. (Zambak)

In summary, my research findings demonstrate that Turkish women do not seek help when they first experience violence since family life is seen as private. For example, women do not seek help because they are scared that violence will increase, ashamed to tell anyone about their violent experiences, or stay for their children and want to protect the institution of marriage (Gündüz et al., 2021; McCleary-Sills et al., 2016).

4.2.2. Saved by the Informal Support Networks

This theme emerged from women's preferred way of seeking help when they experience IPV. Women prioritize seeking help from their informal support networks, such as their families or relatives, because they want to keep their family lives private and hesitate to seek help from formal institutions. According to Ergöçmen et al. (2013), women

cited inadequate numbers of institutions and a lack of belief in such institutions' ability to help them. Turkish people are much more willing to help their friends and neighbours and are tied to the family (Wies et al., 2011). The first help-seeking behaviour enacted by women was seeking help informally by going to their family or relatives. TUIK (2021) suggests that 43.3% of women got support from their families, 2.3% from their relatives, 6.1% from their siblings, 2.6% from their friends, and 0.3% from their neighbours. Five women (62.5%) mentioned that they sought help from their immediate family members, and only three (37.5%) mentioned that they sought help from their neighbours or friends. Women decided to seek help when they were scared for their or their children's lives or had serious injuries (Figure B.1; Table A.4).

> When I could not take it anymore, I would just go to my parent's house. They always supported me, but I could not leave my daughter. (Nergis)

> I sometimes called my parents to come and pick me up because I was bleeding. (Sumbul)

> He never financially supported our family. I had to ask my parents for money, and they always helped us. (Manolya)

> I only asked once for help from my neighbours. They drove me to the hospital because I was pregnant and my face was bleeding. I got scared for my kid. Otherwise, I would never ask for help…when my husband heard, he beat me even more. (Zambak)

According to the LCT, adapting to life course change can vary with available resources or supports, such as having enough social capital and family members or relatives to seek help when experiencing violence. Individuals' opportunities and conditions can significantly shape their later outcomes (Elder, 1978; 1985; Mitchell, 2021). Women mentioned seeking help from their informal support networks as 'turning points.' Even though most women returned to their abusive relationships, the support from their families or neighbours saved their lives, such as going to the hospital (Table A.6), getting away from their angry partners/husbands, and saving their children. By contacting their informal support networks, women could keep their family lives private and still find ways to protect themselves and their children. My study findings suggest that informal support networks can be positive and negative. It is important to recognize that not all women receive enough support from their informal support networks. They can encourage women to seek formal help and leave their abusive relationships, or they can try to convince women to stay with their abusive partners to "save" their marriage/family and try to normalize women's IPV experiences (Evans & Feder, 2014; Domenech del Rio & Sirvent

Garcia del Valle, 2019). For example, even though some women were saved by their informal support networks, women also mentioned they returned to their abusive partners because they did not receive enough support from their families/relatives and did not know where to go or trusted formal institutions.

4.2.3. Informal Support Networks as a Double-Edged Sword

I decided to include this theme under the informal help-seeking behaviours of women because, during the interviews, women mentioned that even though they sought help informally, they returned to their abusive partners at least once before leaving them completely. As mentioned above, one of the reasons why women returned to their abusive partners after seeking informal help was that they did not receive enough support from their informal support networks. Women mentioned that their family members tried to convince them to stay with their abusive partners/husbands to protect the women's "honour," the institution of marriage and family life, and save them from further stigmatization. Conservative families also used religion to convince women to stay with their abusive partners.

> I sought help from my in-laws and relatives, but they tried to convince me that he changed. I also respected them so much, and I was so young…I could not say no to my elders… What else would I do? (Nergis)
>
> They told me that he promised by the Quran that he would never hit me again. I trusted my relatives. I am religious, you see... I wear a headscarf, and I pray five times a day…So I believe that he changed. But it started all over again. You know, that is when I understood I could never trust him but I did not have any other option…He could do anything if he lied in front of the Quran. (Karanfil)

The findings suggest that women did not seek help the first time they experienced violence due to fear of stigmatization, being ashamed, believing that their partner will change, gender norms that forced women to protect the institution of marriage, not being able to leave due to economic hardships, and staying for their children (Figure B.2). Even when women decided to seek help, they sought informal help from their families, relatives, or neighbours. Since women mentioned, in nonspecific ways, that they are tied to their families and trust and respect them more than formal institutions such as the police, they did not believe they would receive enough support from formal institutions or were unsure where and how to seek help. Thus, they preferred to go to their parents' or siblings' houses when they experienced IPV before seeking help formally.

However, there are complexities of women receiving help from their families. Although friends and family members are cited as the most helpful informal sources of support, they are also cited as the least helpful sources of informal support. When women seek informal support, they may not receive the support they need because potential support providers may normalize violence, blame or ignore them as victims (Evans & Feder, 2014; Domenech del Rio & Sirvent Garcia del Valle, 2019; Sylaska & Edwards, 2014). As mentioned in the earlier section, even though Turkish women prefer to seek help informally from their families, relatives, friends, or neighbours, not every woman gets supported by their informal support networks. Women may not have any other option but to seek help formally from the police, domestic helplines, or lawyers, or never seek any help if they believe that even their informal networks are not helping them which will be further discussed in the next section.

4.3. Formal Help-Seeking Behaviours of Turkish Women

For this topic, I aim to answer the research question of how and when Turkish women decide to use formal help-seeking measures, such as police, lawyers, hospitals, non-profit women's organizations, or women's shelters, to seek help when they experience IPV. This topic includes two themes*; Formal Help-Seeking as a "Last Resort"* and *Lack of Trust in Diyanet as a Formal Help-Seeking Measure* to emphasize the role of formal institutions in Turkish women's IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours and uncover if religious institutions play a role in women's formal help-seeking behaviours.

4.3.1. Formal Help-Seeking as a "Last Resort"

This theme emerged during the interviews when women mentioned seeking help from formal institutions as a "last resort" because they did not have enough financial funds to leave their abusive relationships or did not receive enough support from their informal support networks. In Turkey, it is more common for women to seek help from their family members before going to formal institutions such as the police/gendarmerie, applying to NGOs (e.g., Gelincik Project), or lawyers (Figure B.3). However, Gündüz et al. (2021) argue that women are not worried or scared to apply to formal institutions (58%), such as women's shelters or lawyers. Women are hesitant to seek help from formal institutions due to threats from their perpetrators, scared that the violence would increase once their

partner found out they went to the police (13.6%), scared that they would never see their children again (12.9%), feeling ashamed and scared that they will be blamed or further stigmatized (11.9%), not knowing where to apply (10.3%), scared that their marriage will end (1%), scared to leave their current job, the rumors they heard about formal institutions such as police sending women back home (2.6%). Women were also hesitant to stay at women's shelters because they were concerned that their children would not be allowed or did not know what to do when leaving the shelter (Gündüz et al., 2021; Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu, 2012). Women also mentioned that they did not believe formal institutions would help them or protect their rights. They were scared they would have to continue living with their abusive partners.

Research findings suggest that women seek help from formal institutions such as going to the police, ŞÖNİM, or residing in women's shelters when they are scared for their lives, cannot deal with violence alone, or do not receive enough support from their informal support networks, such as their parents or siblings. Women use formal institutions such as going to the police, lawyers, or women's charities as their "last resort."

> My husband dropped us at my parent's house with my kids and said he could not take care of us anymore… But my dad and brother beat me and insulted me. My dad said, "We did not send you with kids; we cannot take care of you. We do not have enough money. Go back to your husband." I did not have anywhere to go but the police. (Zambak)

> When I went to my parents' house and told my dad I wanted a divorce, he beat me even more for leaving my marriage and family and not obeying my husband. That is how I went to the women's charity and was referred to a women's shelter. (Papatya)

> When I told my parents, they said they do not want to be involved. I had no other option but to come here… I was either going to escape or die. What would you do? (Karanfil)

> I could not go to my parents' house because I was pregnant and newly married. I was scared and ashamed to tell my parents. So I went to my in-law's house, but they rejected me and said they did not want to be involved in our family drama. I felt so alone…so I went to the police. (Sumbul)

> He was always violent throughout our relationship, but I decided to seek help when he shot me in my leg with a gun. I am petrified and paranoid. I need psychological counseling too. I know, I am not okay. (Akasya)

However, not all women who seek help from formal institutions lack informal support. According to Keskin and Karaman (2020), when women shared the violence they experienced from their partners/husbands with their relatives, there was a significant

increase in their formal help-seeking behavior. Family members and close friends of women subjected to violence can encourage women to seek help formally from the police or lawyers (Evans & Feder, 2014; Dias et al., 2020; Domenech del Rio & Sirvent Garcia del Valle, 2019; Keskin & Karaman, 2020). As suggested by the LCT, individuals' opportunities and conditions can significantly shape their later outcomes (Elder, 1978; 1985; Mitchell, 2021). My interview findings align with the literature and show that women who receive enough support from their informal support networks, such as their families, are encouraged to seek formal support to leave their abusive relationships, save their children and break the cycle of violence.

> I came here with my mother…Is it okay if she waits outside? (Akasya)

> I got into a fight with my husband and decided to leave him permanently, even if this meant not getting custody of my child. I started walking towards the police's house I knew from my community. My husband followed me, beat me on the street, and put out his cigarette on my face. My mother, sister, and my uncle-in-law saw that he was dragging me to the house. They went to the police and said he would kill me, but the police told them they needed a letter of permission to enter the house from the public prosecutor. They found a public prosecutor they knew from the community, and he gave them the letter of permission… I was at the house with him. He turned on the volume of the TV and grabbed a knife from the kitchen. He stabbed me once, but the police entered the house and saved me. If my parents did not go to the police, I would not be alive today. That is how I was saved. (Nergis)

> My parents called the police and saved my kids and me... With the support of my parents. I decided to file a divorce. (Manolya)

Women did not seek help when they first experienced violence since family life is considered private in Turkey. When they decided to seek help, they first sought help informally from their informal support networks, such as families or relatives. Women used formal help-seeking networks, such as going to the police or lawyer, as a "last resort" when they were scared for their and their children's lives and could not continue living with violence. Three (37.5%) women mentioned that although they used formal institutions as their "last resort," they had support from their informal support networks. My findings suggest that informal support networks are important in women's formal help-seeking behaviours and it is important to recognize the role of linked lives and family ties in shaping women's help-seeking behaviours. Informal support networks can encourage women to leave their abusive relationships and seek help formally, or they can try to convince women to stay with their abusive partners, and women have no other option but to seek help formally.

4.3.2. Lack of Trust in Diyanet as a Formal Help-Seeking Measure

This theme emerged when some women mentioned being religious or raised in conservative communities. I focus on women's sociohistorical and geographical locations and their cultural and religious ideologies to uncover if formal help was received from religious institutions (Elder, 1978; 1985; Mitchell, 2021). The religious institute of Turkey (Diyanet) plays an essential role in shaping family structures and relationships. Diyanet teaches and guides families about religious values and principles through religious counseling, moral assistance, and helplines (Maritato, 2020). Women preachers especially are important in providing new religious services to families and young people. According to Maritato (2020), VAW was the most frequently asked question on religious counseling services and helplines. However, my research findings did not align with the literature. Although I explicitly asked women who identified as religious if they sought help from Diyanet when they experienced IPV, they did not mention seeking help from Diyanet. They used other formal help-seeking measures such as the police, lawyers, or VAW organizations.

> I heard a women preacher talk about it once…but I never thought about seeking help from Diyanet. I am not sure how they would exactly help….So, no, Diyanet did not even come to my mind when I sought help. (Karanfil)

Karanfil's statement supports Maritato's (2020) findings on Diyanet's vision of family structures. Since Diyanet is more focused on protecting the family than protecting the women as individuals, women in my study mentioned, in nonspecific language that they did not trust Diyanet as a formal help-seeking measure because Diyanet did not offer them a legal pathway like the police, lawyers, or women's organizations does. They thought Diyanet would not protect them or prioritize their safety but instead protect the institution of the family. However, women were aware that when they sought help from the police or lawyers, they could file a complaint and be protected under Law No. 6284 or get a restraining order without having to prove their experiences of violence with evidence.

Before seeking help, most women tried to deal with violence alone because they were scared or ashamed, did not know where to go, or thought the violence would end. However, once they decided to seek help, they sought informal help from their families, relatives, or neighbours. My research aligns with the literature (e.g., Evans & Feder, 2014; Gündüz et al., 2021; Keskin & Karaman, 2020) and suggests that women seek formal help from lawyers, police, ŞÖNİM, or NGOs to be referred to a women's shelter or receive legal

counseling after seeking help from their informal support networks. However, women did not go to Diyanet to seek formal help because they were not aware of how Diyanet would help them legally to leave their abusive relationships, get a divorce, or a restraining order.

4.4. What Changed in Women's Help-Seeking Behaviours during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

In this section I aim to answer my last research question: How did the social isolation restrictions and policy changes during the COVID-19 pandemic affect women's help-seeking behaviours? This topic embraces and generated two pivotal themes; "*Already Trapped at Home*" and *Changed Policies to Protect Women's Rights and Prevent IPV*. These themes uncover how social isolation restrictions and policy changes influenced women's help-seeking behaviours and legal expectations during the pandemic.

4.4.1. "Already Trapped at Home"

This theme highlights how the social isolation restrictions during the pandemic impacted women's daily lives and legal procedures and how they influenced women's help-seeking behaviours. According to Bradbury-Jones & Isham (2020), VAW increased during the COVID-19 pandemic due to social isolation restrictions such as closing schools and businesses, forced lockdowns, and curfews. Adıbelli et al. (2021) argue that victimized women struggled to access legal and institutional mechanisms for support during the pandemic. Furthermore, a survey conducted by Evcili and Demirel (2022) suggested that social distancing and isolation restrictions limited access to available support options, such as shelters and helplines, meeting with family and friends, and prevented access to health and safety services for IPV victims and negatively affected the reporting of IPV. However, the most prolonged lockdown in Turkey only lasted 18 days (Büyükbayrak, 2020). In a survey conducted by Gündüz et al. (2021), only 35% of women mentioned that their social relations were restricted, had disrupted routines, and could not leave the house for days. Nonetheless, 89% of women stated that they did not experience any problems regarding help-seeking. Women residing in women's shelters since the beginning of the pandemic stated that all safety precautions were taken, and women did not have problems receiving services from the shelters, including their children (Gündüz et al., 2021).

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My research findings align with Gündüz et al. (2021) argument and suggest that help-seeking measures of women were not impacted due to the pandemic, and women could seek informal help from their families and formal help from the police, lawyers, or women's shelters. At the beginning of the pandemic, the courts were shut down, but it did not prevent women from legally seeking help; it just slowed the family court processes. For example, divorce cases were processed slower than usual. However, women could seek formal and informal help by going to the police or their parent's house during the pandemic. Women residing at shelters stated that safety restrictions were still enforced. However, while I was conducting the interviews, the impact of the pandemic was less strong than it had been a year ago (2020-2021). Thus, women said they felt safe and did not have barriers to accessing informal and formal help-seeking measures (Gündüz et al., 2021; Marye & Atav, 2022; Plasilova et al., 2021). The police or the NGOs were working by taking all the safety precautions, and the Turkish government initiated programs to increase access to women's formal help-seeking measures, such as the smartphone application KADES or 24/7 helplines (Turkish Ministry of Internal Affairs, 2023).

Even though the courts were shut down at the beginning of the pandemic, two (25%) of my participants mentioned that they could seek help informally and go to their parent's houses if they wanted to during lockdowns. Nergis mentioned that she was staying at a safe place while waiting for her divorce case to finalize during the pandemic. Other than Nergis, six (75%) of my participants were still in the divorce process (December 2022 and January 2023) and mentioned that the courts ran at total capacity and had no delays.

> It slowed my divorce process by a couple of months, but I was not scared since I was already staying in a safe place with my parents. (Nergis)

Only one of my participants mentioned that her daily schedule was impacted during the pandemic. Papatya and her husband were working as teachers, and when the pandemic hit, they had to start working from home, and the stress of being trapped at home during work hours increased the frequency of violence. However, the increased frequency of violence did not prevent Papatya from seeking informal and formal help.

> I wish we never started working from home. He started yelling at me even more and beat me at least once a day… But then I went to my parents' house… when my father also kicked me out of the house, I went to a women's charity… (Papatya)

According to the LCT, historical time refers to societal and large-scale changes and how these influence individuals and their families (Elder, 1985; Mitchell, 2021). The social isolation restrictions during the pandemic impacted the individual and family life of Papatya, and she left her abusive partner and applied to a NGO to seek help.

However, six (75%) of my participants mentioned having no routine changes because they were already socially isolated due to perpetrator-imposed restrictions and continued surveillance. For example, they could not see their families and friends, leave the house without their partners' permission, go to the hospital even if they needed immediate medical intervention (Table A.6), call their parents, or open the curtains/windows and they could only leave the house with their partners. Women mentioned that they could not seek help informally or formally because of their partners' controlling behaviours, not due to social isolation restrictions placed by the government during the pandemic.

> He never allowed me to leave the house. I could not see my parents or call them… He would lock me in the house and take the keys…He would get mad if I opened the curtains or went out to the balcony when he was not at home. (Menekse)

> He was scared if I saw my parents longer than 10 minutes… He was scared that I would tell them everything. He beat me up for hours when I told him I wanted to see my parents. He banned me from going to my parents' house… I could never call my parents to seek help…when he realized I was talking to them, he took my phone and broke it on my head. He threatened me and said if I called them again, I would never see my kids. (Sumbul)

> I wanted to go to the hospital because I was bleeding, but he did not allow me to leave the house…he was scared that I would report him. (Zambak)

> He would hide my phone so I could not call my parents for help. (Manolya)

The study by Adıbelli et al. (2021) highlighted various factors involved in the increase of IPV during the pandemic: psychological and economic stress; potential increases in harmful coping mechanisms, such as alcohol consumption; and isolation. However, most women in my study mentioned that the pandemic did not change stress levels, alcohol consumption, isolation, or economic levels. Their partners were not sharing their salaries or taking care of the house even before the pandemic. Five (62.5%) of my participants were already experiencing economic stress because they were financially dependent on their husbands. Since most of my participants' husbands were self-employed, their financial state was not negatively impacted during the pandemic. I argue that the social isolation restrictions placed during the pandemic did not directly influence

the help-seeking behaviours of Turkish women because six (75%) of my participants were already socially isolated and threatened by their partners, such as being trapped at home, before the pandemic.

As a Turkish woman living in Canada during the pandemic and only following the mass and social media, I thought the pandemic and social isolation restrictions strongly impacted women's help-seeking behaviours. However, after talking to women, I realized that they either did not choose to seek help or preferred seeking help from their parents before going to formal institutions. When women decided to seek help from formal institutions, they did not experience any barriers. They felt safe and protected by formal institutions, such as lawyers, family courts, or women's shelters. The only challenge stated by one of my participants is the slowing down of the divorce cases, which did not last longer than two months.

4.4.2. Changed Policies to Protect Women's Rights and Prevent IPV

For this last theme, I show how the policy shifts that were placed during the pandemic, such as the withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, the reevaluation of Law No. 6284, and the new law placed in May 2022, impacted women's formal help-seeking behaviours. The Istanbul Convention institutionalized the fight against VAW and their family members, and protective and preventive measures were expanded. Taking immediate measures without seeking evidence and documents became possible, and those who committed violent crimes were immediately sentenced (Keskin & Karaman, 2020). However, Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention in March 2021 (Güneş, 2021). After the withdrawal from the Convention, Turkish government reevaluated Law No. 6284 in such a way that posed no threats to the health of the victims and perpetrators due to the pandemic, such as taking safety measures and implementing COVID-19 testing (Yenilmez, 2020). However, the law still protects victims of violence and the adoption of urgent measures to stop those who commit violence. Women and children who have been subjected to physical, sexual, psychological, and economic violence or are in danger of violence can benefit from this law immediately without showing evidence In addition to Law No. 6284, on January 2023, women were given the right to keep their addresses and identities confidential if they needed medical attention or needed to register their children at a school near their shelters in all the cities of Turkey (Kadın Dayanışma Vakfı, 2023). On May 2022, the Turkish Parliament passed a new bill to increase opportunities for

women to get help from formal institutions by providing them with a lawyer and free legal counseling. The bill prevents women from continuing to live with their abusive partners and gives heftier sentences to perpetrators (Daily Sabah, 2022).

My research findings demonstrate that Law No. 6284 and the new law passed on May 2022 are widely used by Turkish women as a formal help-seeking measure. Although Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention, women did not mention any advantages or disadvantages regarding the Convention, and my findings could not suggest a connection between the Convention and women's formal help-seeking behaviours. However, women mentioned that Law No. 6284 protected themselves and their children's rights and prevented their perpetrators from stalking them, selling their furniture, or continue using violence against them or their children (Kadın Dayanışma Vakfı, 2023). Women mentioned that they learned about Law No. 6284 or the opportunity for legal counseling from other help-seeking networks such as families/friends, lawyers, police, or women's charities. Under Law No. 6284, two (25%) of my participants' partners were not allowed to enter their shared house or sell any furniture/the house during the divorce process. Three (37.5%) women's identities and addresses were protected and kept confidential, and five (62.5%) of them were protected from abusive partners by restraining orders (Table A.7). Women also mentioned benefitting from the new law that provides them with a lawyer and free legal counseling.

> When I was at my parents' house, he sold all our house furniture without my permission… I was scared that he would do it again. (Sumbul)
>
> I am currently protected under the law no. 6284 because I have been receiving death threats from my husband. (Manolya)
>
> I did not have money to hire a lawyer or pay money to file a divorce. I got free legal counseling and filed a divorce with the help of my lawyer. (Zambak)

The policy shifts during the pandemic, such as the reevaluation of Law No. 6284 and the new law passed on May 2022, did not restrict women's access to formal help-seeking measures, such as the police or lawyers, but instead increased women's access to formal help-seeking measures. Law No. 6284 protected women from their abusive partners and women's rights. Women could conceal their identities and addresses and get an immediate restraining order to prevent their abusive partners from stalking or using violence against them. Six (75%) of my participants were in the divorce process and sought free legal counseling from lawyers. The policy shifts regarding Law No. 6284 and

the new law passed in May 2022 helped women to file for a divorce, get free legal counseling, and protect their rights.

As made clear in my findings, the interplay between Turkish women's IPV experiences and their help-seeking behaviours are complex and nuanced. These complexities are shown through how intertwining demographic factors, age graded transitions that violate normative social timetables, and intergenerational cycles of violence increase women's exposure to IPV. This leads to how women's IPV experiences and available help-seeking resources shape the type of help-seeking measures women prefer to take or not. Recognizing these complexities is integral in the efforts to raise Turkish women's awareness around help-seeking behaviours and take action to increase available help-seeking resources.

Chapter 5.   Conclusion

In this final chapter, I will summarize the main study findings. I will also discuss my study limitations and outline some implications for future research. The chapter will conclude by offering some practical recommendations for policy reform and service providers.

5.1. Summary of Study Findings

This study focused on the IPV experiences of Turkish women, how and when they seek informal (e.g., families) and formal help (e.g., police), and the changes in women's help-seeking behaviours before and during the COVID-19 pandemic. Micro and macro factors influence women's experiences of IPV and help-seeking behaviours, such as family relationship structures or the larger communities where women live (World Health Organization, 2021). Drawing from a guiding critical socio-cultural life course perspective, my findings show how intertwined socio-demographic factors, women's resources , and their socio-cultural contexts shape their exposure to IPV. For example, women in this study who were young, married at an early age, had low education levels, had a family history of exposure to violence, and were financially dependent on their partners were exposed to IPV. According to the findings, women avoided seeking help informally from their family/friends or formally from women's shelters or the police when they first experienced IPV to keep their family lives private. However, when women decided to seek help, they preferred seeking help informally from their family or relatives because they lacked belief in formal institutions' ability to help them or did not know where to seek help. Women used formal help-seeking measures as a "last resort," such as going to the police, lawyers, or women's shelters when they were scared for their lives or could not deal with violence alone. However, linked lives and family ties play a role in shaping women's formal help-seeking behaviours. Women's informal support networks, such as family/friends, could be helpful or unhelpful. Informal support networks were encouraging for some women to leave their abusive relationships and seek formal help; however, there were also unsupportive networks, and women did not have any other option but to seek formal help.

My findings also suggest that women's help-seeking measures were not impacted due to the pandemic (e.g., social isolation restrictions) because most women mentioned that they were already socially isolated and threatened by their partners, such as being trapped at home due to perpetrator-imposed restrictions and continued surveillance. During the pandemic, women could seek informal help from their families and formal help from the police, lawyers, or women's shelters. Moreover, the policy changes, such as the reevaluation of Law No. 6284 and the new law on free legal counseling, increased women's access to formal help-seeking measures.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research

Due to the time frame of this study, I had a small sample size of 8 women, and most of the women who agreed to be in this study had low levels of education. Therefore, my study findings cannot be generalized to the rest of the Turkish population. As Akar et al. (2010) state, women with higher education keep their IPV experiences private. Future research should be conducted with a larger sample size that focuses on Turkish women's help-seeking behaviours when they experience IPV and include women with various levels of education and from differing socio-economic locations. Furthermore, my study lacks data from different cities and regionale locals in Turkey. The women who participated in my study were from the rural areas of Ankara, Turkey. Future research should focus on IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours of different populations and communities.

As suggested by Roebuck and colleagues (2023), research on IPV also generally focuses on female victims. However, it is important to acknowledge that both men and women can perpetrate and experience IPV. In this study, I only interviewed women IPV victims and focused on their experiences and help-seeking behaviours. I did not include violence against men, male IPV victims' experiences, and their preferred help-seeking measures. Future research should focus on a comparative approach to understanding IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours of all genders to protect and prevent violence against all genders (Roebuck et al., 2023). It is also important to study violence against the LGBTQIA+ community. According to Gutman and colleagues (et al. 2017), LGBTQIA+ older adults are more likely to live alone, less likely to be partnered, less likely to have children, and have higher rates of loneliness and isolation, which are the common risk factors for elder abuse. Future research should focus on violence against the LGBTQIA+ community and elder abuse in the LGBTQIA+ community.

The women I interviewed were between the ages of 21 and 38, and I could not focus on IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours of older aged women during the pandemic. The study conducted by Sanz-Barbero and colleagues (2022) suggests a decrease in the use of help-seeking measures as age increases. Older women may experience different barriers to seeking help due to ill health or dependency on the perpetrator for care or income (Pathak et al., 2018). Future research should focus on women's help-seeking behaviours and how they change as they age. Furthermore, Gutman et al. (2022) highlight the potential for a higher prevalence of elder abuse during disasters. Further research is still necessary to demonstrate whether experiencing verbal and/or physical conflict is a predictor or proxy of current or future elder abuse across disaster types (ibid.).

Even though studies continue to be conducted on the pandemic, there needs to be more research to understand the impacts of the pandemic on women's IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours, especially seeking help from formal institutions, such as women's shelters and family courts. In this study, I focused on the general timeframe of the COVID-19 pandemic and did not separate it into different phases of the pandemic. I did not focus on how different phases impacted women's experiences with IPV and help-seeking behaviours. This study was conducted within two years and did not suggest comparative or longitudinal data regarding how women's IPV experiences and help-seeking behaviours changed after the pandemic. Future research should focus on a comparative and longitudinal investigation of the relationship between the incidence of the COVID-19 pandemic and IPV and the possible mediators of their relationship.

5.3. Practical Recommendations

The key finding from my study provides some important practical implications and recommendations for improved practice/policy. The findings should alarm policymakers and encourage them to create programs, seminars, and conferences. These endeavours are needed to raise awareness regarding the formal help-seeking measures available to women, such as helplines, women's charities that help VAW victims, information regarding women's shelters and that they do not have to leave their children, and also educate women on their rights. The findings should encourage policymakers or service providers to initiate and create community meetings in different cities in Turkey. Community meetings will be helpful in spreading knowledge about preventing VAW, supporting and

empowering women's rights, and increase the number of formal help-seeking outlets. For example, there may be a need to increase the number of women's shelters in every city in Turkey so that women do not struggle to find a shelter near their houses. Women's shelters should also increase education and training programs, such as literacy courses, psychological and legal counseling, and guidance, or help women find jobs. It is also important to include VAW training/seminars in the early education curriculum to raise awareness early on, such as courses or drama classes focusing on empowering women's rights, help-seeking measures such as police, lawyers, or women's shelters, and moving forward to prevent VAW. It is important to educate children, their parents, and people working at formal institutions such as the police/gendarmerie.

Future policymakers and service providers should focus on a holistic and human-centered understanding of VAW and work collaboratively with individuals, institutions, communities, and organizations, such as women's shelters, NGOs, police/gendarmerie, and schools. Overall, we require significant social and systemic change and massive collective efforts to protect women from violence. For these changes to occur, women's individual complexities must be taken into account to empower women's rights and agency in relation to their IPV experiences.

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Appendix A. Findings Tables

Table A.1. Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Pseudonyms	Age	Marital Status	Number of Children	Age of First Marriage	Education Level	Employment Status
Menekse	21	In divorce process	0	18	High School	Unemployed
Zambak	35	In divorce process	5	17	Middle School	Seasonal Worker
Sumbul	31	In divorce process	3	16	Middle School	Unemployed
Manolya	27	In divorce process	2	18	High School	Unemployed
Nergis	24	Divorced	1	19	Middle School	Unemployed
Akasya	22	Never married	0	-	Undergraduate	Student
Karanfil	38	In divorce process	2	17	High School	Employed
Papatya	32	In divorce process	0	20	Undergraduate	Employed

Table A.2. Demographic Characteristics of Participants' Partners

Psedynoms	Age	Education Level	Employment Status
Menekse's husband	25	High School	Employed (security officer)
Zambak's husband	45	High School	Seasonal Worker
Sumbul's husband	40	High School	Unemployed
Manolya's husband	35	Undergraduate	Self-employed
Nergis's husband	28	Undergraduate	Self-employed
Akasya's ex-boyfriend	25	Undergraduate	Employed
Karanfil's husband	44	High School	Self-employed
Papatya's husband	35	Undergraduate	Employed (teacher)

Table A.3. Addictions of Participants' Partners (if they had any)

Addictions of the Perpetrator	Number	%
Alcoholic	3	37.5
Gambling Addiction	2	25
Substance abuse	0	0
Not stated	3	37.5

Table A.4. Form of Violence Experienced by Participants

Form of Violence	# of particpants	% of participants
Psychological (verbal insults, humiliation, intimidation, threat, restraint)	8	100
Physical (beating, punching, slapping, kicking, throwing objects)	8	100
Economic violence (not giving money, confection of money/belongings, forced labour)	6	75
Harassment, rape, sexual assault	3	37.5
Knife or firearm	2	25
Stalking (physically, phone or social media)	3	37.5

Table A.5. Severity of Violence

Severity of Violence	# of participants
Regularly	8
Twice a week	0
Once a week	0
Intermittent	0
First time	0

Table A.6. Injury due to Violence

Injury due to Violence	# of participants	
	Medical Attn.	No medical
No Injury	0	0
Mild Injury	1	3
Severe injury	2	2

Table A.7. Legal Expectations of Women

| Legal Expectations	# of particpants
Restraining/protection order (Law no.6284)	5
Divorce	6
Alimony	5
Compensation	7
Custody of the child	5
Changing/concealing identity and other related information and documents	3
Preventing the perpetrator from entering or selling the house	2
Moving into a new house/safe space/shelter	8
Change of workplace	0

Appendix B. Findings Figures
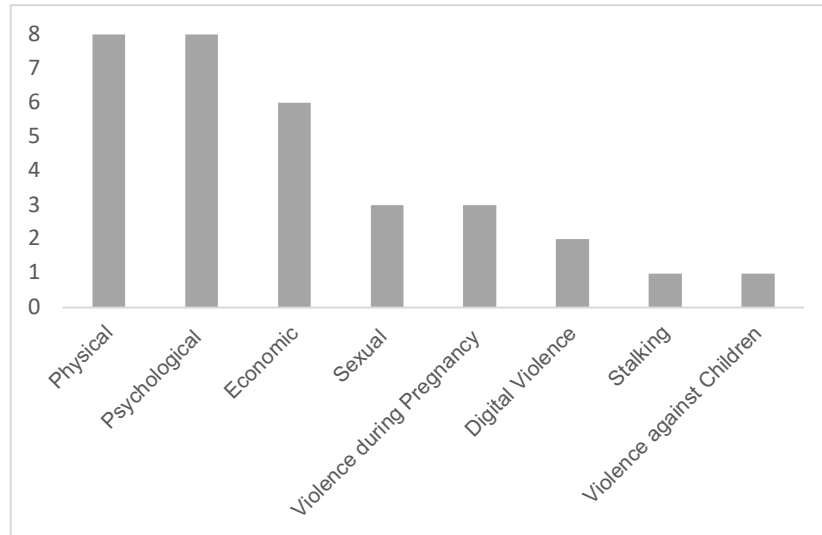
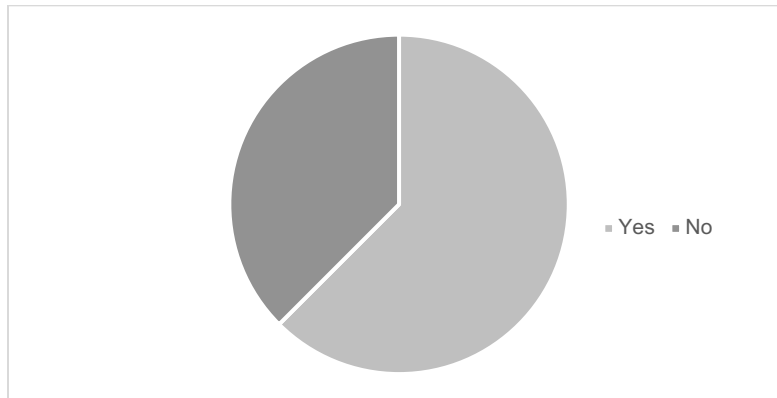**Figure B.1. Frequency of Types of Violence Experienced by Participants**
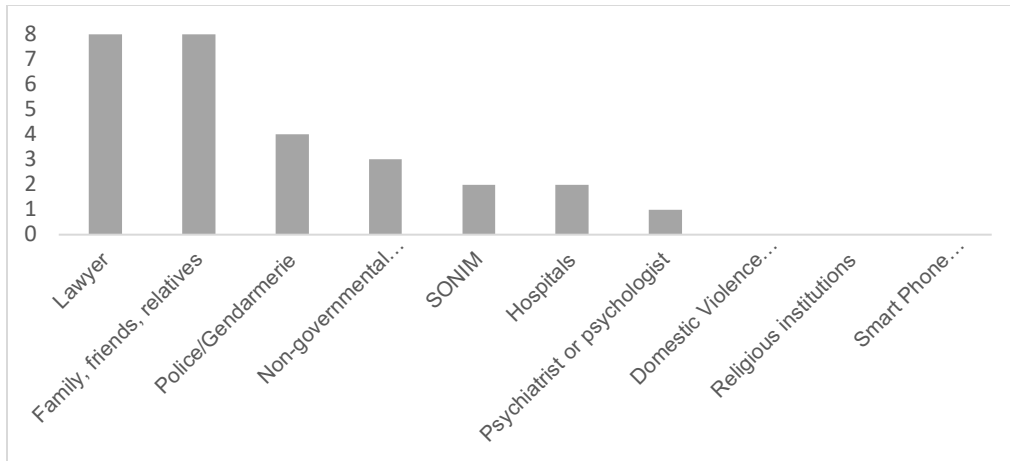

Figure B.2. First Time Seeking Formal Help?

Figure B.3. Help-Seeking Measures

Appendix C. Consent Form

Study name: When Home is Not Safe: Intimate Partner Violence Help-Seeking
Behaviours of Turkish Women
Study number:
Department or Faculty: Sociology and Anthropology
Student Lead:
Student Lead Email:
Student Lead Phone Number:
Principal Investigator:
Principal Investigator Email:

Invitation and Study Procedure

The purpose of this study is to examine the help-seeking behaviours of Turkish women
who experienced intimate partner violence in recent years. This study aims to answer how
do Turkish women seek help when they experience intimate partner violence. You are
being invited to take part in this research study because we are looking recruit Turkish
women who are currently residing in women's shelters and who have experienced intimate
partner violence. We want to learn more about the help-seeking behaviours intimate
partner violence victims took in recent years. This study will help us learn more about
Turkish women's recent help-seeking behaviours. We are inviting women like you who
have experienced intimate partner violence, sought help and came to shelters to help us.
We are doing this study to learn more about recent help-seeking measures of Turkish
women who have experienced intimate partner violence to uncover if social isolation
restrictions and policy changes during the pandemic impacted intimate partner violence
help-seeking behvaiours.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is voluntary. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If
you decide to participate, you may still choose to withdraw from the study at any time
without any negative consequences to the education, employment, or other services to
which you are entitled or are presently receiving.

To withdraw please contact the Student Lead directly:

Study Procedures

If you say 'Yes,' here is how we will do the study:
We will ask you about your background information, background information about your
husband/partner, your experiences with violence, your experiences during the pandemic,
your helpseeking behaviours.
We will ask you to participate in an in-depth in-person interview that will be conducted in
two sessions.
The first part will take around 30 minutes and be more like a conversation for you to get
to know the Student Lead, to understand the research goals and the topics/questions that
will be discussed, understand how your confidentiality will be protected, you will have time
to ask questions regarding the second part of the interview and the research, and if you
agree to participate we will schedule the second part of the interview. The first part of the

interview will take place in a private room in the shelter. The second part of the interview will take place wherever you feel comfortable and safe. The second part of the interview will be a semi-structured interview that will take around 1-2 hours. At the beginning of the interview, we will remind you the research goals, will go over the interview questions, confidentiality and privacy protocols. Then we will start the semi-structured interview. The questions may seem sensitive or personal and you do not have to answer any question if you do not want to.

Since the interview will be in-person, the research team will abide by the latest health guidelines provided by the Canadian and Turkish government in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic. The SFU research study team members are fully vaccinated, to mitigate the risk of COVID exposure during the in-person research activities.

The interviews will take place in Turkey and be audio recorded. The recoding will be available to Student Lead and Principal Investigator and then transcribed. After this is finished the thesis will be written on the findings from the interview. The recordings will be held for up to five years on student lead's personal computer, encrypted, and password protected. Your name will remain confidential, using a pseudonym, and your individual answers will not be linked with your name or department in any reports of data.

To protect your privacy, interviews will be transcribed, coded, and analyzed by the student lead. A list linking the participants' names and pseudonyms will be kept until the transcription process is complete. Once complete, this list will be deleted. The participants' identities will remain confidential unless they explicitly state otherwise. The recordings will be held for up to five years on student lead's personal computer, encrypted and password protected. Participants' names will remain confidential, using a pseudonym, and their answers will not be linked with your name or department in any reports of data. Files will be transferred and stored on SFU Vault. All electronic copies of participants' data, including interview audio recordings and transcripts, will be stored on SFU Vault.

Potential Risks of the Study

Based on the sensitivity of the topic, there will be potentially upsetting questions and they may trigger emotional distress. You are free to not answer any questions during the interview or stop the interview at any time. You are welcome to withdraw from the study at any time before the transcription process is complete.

Potential benefits of the Study

There are no foreseeable benefits to you participating in this study. However, in the future others may benefit from what is learned in this study.

Confidentiality

Your confidentiality will be respected. Your name will remain confidential, using a pseudonym, and your individual answers will not be linked with your name or department in any reports of data. Your identity will remain confidential, unless otherwise stated by you, to ensure there are no potential risks to your participation in this study.

All study data will be stored in student lead's personal computer, which will be encrypted, and password protected.

Study results

       This study and its results will be used for the completion of a thesis in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Simon Fraser University. Future publications, conference presentations, and/or knowledge outputs maybe created by or under the direction of the student lead. Interviews will be transcribed, coded, and analyzed by the student lead. A list linking your name and pseudonym will be kept until the transcription process is complete. Once complete, this list will be deleted. Your identity will remain confidential unless you explicitly state otherwise.

Contact for Complaints or Concerns

If you have any concerns about your rights as a research participant and/or your experiences while participating in this study, please contact the Director, SFU Office of Research Ethics.

Participant Consent

Taking part in this study is entirely up to you. You have the right to refuse to participate in this study. If you decide to take part and later change your mind, you can withdraw from the study at any time without giving a reason and without any negative impact. If the study results are published in outputs operated by other parties, it is not usually possible to withdraw your data, however, it will not be identifiable.

- Your signature below indicates that you have received a copy of this Consent Form for your own records.
- Your signature indicates that you consent to participate in this study.
- You do not waive any of your legal rights by participating in this study.

Participant Name :
Participant Signature :
Date (yyyy/mm/dd) :

Appendix D. Interview Guide

<u>**PART 1:**</u> The first part will give participants time to familiarize themselves with the questions and think about their responses. The part will be more like a conversation instead of an interview.

Activity	Questions	Time
Introduction	**Meeting with the participant:** Introducing myself, getting to know the participant, and discussing how the participants' privacy will be protected. **Introducing the goal of the research and explaining the key concepts:** The research aims to understand how women's help-seeking behaviours shifted during the pandemic. I aim to understand how social isolation restrictions changed women's help-seeking behaviours. How did women get help during the forced lockdowns when they could not leave the house compared to pre-pandemic times when they could go outside to seek help? **Discussing the topics that will be discussed**: The topics discussed during the interview will be women and their partner's/husband's background information, the impacts of the pandemic, experiences with violence, and women's help-seeking behaviours. **Reviewing interview method**: Semi-structured in-depth interviews will last around 1-2 hours. The interview will consist of semi-structured questions and how the participants' **confidentiality** will be protected.	20 min
Open Dialogue	Allowing participants to ask any questions regarding the research or the interview process	10 min
Closure	Scheduling the second part of the interview (determining a time/place)	5 min

PART 2: The second part is when I will be conducting a semi-structured in-depth interview and gathering my data. Participation is voluntary, and participants are allowed to skip any question they do not feel comfortable sharing.

Activity	Questions	Time
Introduction	- Reminding participants of the goal of the research - Going over the interview structure and the general topics - Going over confidentiality and privacy protocols	10 min

Semi-Structured Topics & Open Dialogue	1. **Background Information (participant)**: to understand participants' sociohistorical and geographical location
	
	   1.1. Age? Gender? Place of Residence? Education level? Occupation? Substance Abuse? How many people live in your household? Children? Marital status (married, single, in a relationship but not married, common-law)?
	
	2. **Background Information and Questions about Women's Husband/Partner**: to understand the impact of linked lives and participants' social ties
	
	   2.1. Age? Occupation? Education level? Substance Abuse?
	   2.2. Can you tell me about your partner? How did you meet? How long have you been together/married (current or former partner)? What is he like? What does he like to do?
	
	3. **Women's Experiences**: to understand women's past traumas, linked lives, and attitudes towards violence
	
	   3.1. Have you ever experienced physical violence in the last 12 months/lifetime?
	      3.1.1. Have you ever witnessed partner violence or experienced childhood violence?
	   3.2. What type of violence do you experience (bruises, injuries, low self-esteem, not talking, fear, controlling behaviours, economic, isolation, intimidation, financial pressure, humiliation, insult, effect on well-being)?
	   3.3. How often do you experience violence (frequency of violence)
		60 min

	3.4. How would you define the severity of violence you are experiencing?	
	3.4.1. Moderate (did not result in bruises, cuts, broken bones, or medical treatment) or Severe (did result in bruises, cuts, broken bones, or medical treatment)	
	3.4.2. Are some times worse than others?	
	3.5. How do you feel after experiencing violence?	
	3.5.1. How do violence impact your physical/psychological well-being?	
	3.5.2. Why do you think you experience violence?	
	3.6. What do you do after you experience violence?	
	4. COVID-19 Pandemic: to understand the impact of large-scale societal changes and their impact on individual's lives	
	4.1. Can you explain your daily schedule/habits? How did your daily schedule/habits change during the pandemic?	
	4.1.1. Did social isolation restrictions such as forced lockdowns, and curfews impact your daily schedule/habits?	
	4.2. How did your husband's/partner's daily schedule/habits change (working from home, unemployment)?	
	4.3. Do you think the severity, frequency, or types of violence you experience changed during the last two years (from the beginning of the pandemic)?	
	4.3.1. Has it gotten worse with the pandemic? Is there a difference in why your partner used violence during the pandemic?	
	4.4. What did you do after you experienced violence during the pandemic (went to neighbour's house, called the police/helpline, went to a shelter)	
	5. Help-Seeking Behaviours: to understand the change in help-seeking behaviours (pre-pandemic vs. during the pandemic)	
	5.1. When did you first seek help?	
	5.2. Have you ever told anyone about the violence you experience?	
	5.2.1. Do you get support from the people you talk to?	
	5.3. Where do you usually get help?	

	5.3.1. Do you seek help from outside (neighbour, shelter, police) or inside (helpline, internet)
	 5.4. What did you do during the pandemic during curfews?
	    5.4.1. Did you call someone to get help or text? Did you use the internet or social media?
	 5.5. Did your help-seeking method change during the pandemic?
	    5.5.1. Did you call any helplines, relatives, friends, or family members? Could you go out or have to stay inside?
	    5.5.2. Could you get the help or the support you need?
	
	 6. Formal Help-Seeking and Legal Expectations: to understand how and when women used formal help-seeking measures such as women's shelters, police to seek help and legal expectations of women
	
	 6.1. When did you decide to seek help formally (from lawyers, police, women's shelters)
	    6.1.1. Was formal help-seeking your first choice or last?
	       6.1.1.1. If last, how did you seek help before this?
	       6.1.1.2. Why didn't you seek help formally before from the police or women's shelters?
	 6.2. Do you think formal help-seeking measures are effective in helping women?
	 6.3. What are your legal expectations? Are you protected under any law, such as law no.6284 or free legal counselling?		

Closure	Debriefing, closing comments, clarify any questions, possibility for follow-up, process for participant checking	10 min	

Appendix E. Local Resources and Services

Organizations under the Ministry of Family and Social Policies:

1.Centers for Counseling Support

To receive counseling support on violence, you can apply to the Provincial and District Directorates of the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services by phone or in person and get information about your nearest Social Service Center, Violence Prevention and Monitoring Center (ŞÖNİM) and other relevant counseling centers.

2.Women Guest Houses

The addresses and contact information of women's guesthouses affiliated to the Ministry of Family, Labor and Social Services are not open due to confidentiality. You can reach the necessary information by calling the ALO 183 Hotline and the Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers (ŞÖNİM) listed below. You can also go to the nearest police station in emergency situations where you have safety concerns and request to be placed in a women's shelter. Law enforcement officers are responsible for placing you in a safe home.

3. Alo 183 Family, Women, Children and Disabled Social Counseling Line

You can access information on the nearest Social Service Center, Family Counseling Center, Violence Prevention and Monitoring Center (ŞÖNİM) and women's guesthouses by calling ALO 183, which provides free service 24/7.

4. Violence Prevention and Monitoring Centers (ŞÖNİM)

ANKARA ŞÖNİM

Telephone: (0312) 348 36 86 Address: Anafartalar Cad. No: 66 Ulus, Ankara

Women's Advice Centers and Legal Aid Services:

You can request assistance and receive legal counseling support from the women's rights units of bar associations in many provinces.

Bar Women's Rights Center Hotline 444 26 18

Institutions that can be reached 24/7:

ALO 183 Family, Women, Children and Disabled Social Counseling Line

ALO 155 Police Help

ALO 156 Gendarmerie Help

ALO 112 Emergency Medical Helpline

ALO 157 Victims of Human Trafficking Emergency Assistance and Notification Line

Domestic Violence Emergency Hotline: (0212) 656 96 96 and (0549) 656 96 96

Ankara Metropolitan Municipality Support Line - 0312 507 37 60 and 0549 248 64 86

Gelincik Line - 444 43 06 - 444 43 06

IBB Support Line - 444 80 86

KAMER Foundation 0530 664 44 10

Purple Salkım Women's Solidarity Association (Bursa) 0531 033 88 44

Lifeline 444 82 85

Women's Guesthouses and Shelters:

Women's shelters aim to provide shelter and protection to all women who have been subjected to domestic violence, to support women in building a new life for themselves in solidarity with other women, to provide guidance to relevant institutions, and to ensure that women gain awareness of their rights against violence and gain self-confidence. Shelters provide social, psychological and legal support to women and their children who have been subjected to violence and help them build a new life free from violence. According to the July 2020 statement of the Ministry of Family and Social Services, there are 145 women's "guesthouses" across the country, including 110 women's "guesthouses" in 81 provinces affiliated to the Ministry of Family and Social Services, 2 women's guesthouses affiliated to the Directorate General of Migration Management, and 1 women's "guesthouse" affiliated to a non-governmental organization, with a total capacity of 3,482 beds. If you need to stay in a women's shelter, you can apply to the Violence Prevention and Monitoring Center (ŞÖNİM) in your province, the Provincial or District Directorates of the Ministry of Family and Social Services, police stations/gendarmerie commands, women's counseling centers and/or other relevant service units of municipalities and women's organizations.

Independent or Municipal Women's Counseling and Solidarity Centers:

In addition to independent women's counseling and solidarity centers run by women's organizations, many municipalities have opened and are opening counseling centers for women in recent years. Taking into account all forms of discrimination against women, economic, social and political exclusion, the centers run by women's organizations in particular aim to create an environment where women can come together to realize their demands and opinions regarding their own needs, receive legal and psychological counseling support against domestic and non-domestic violence, and stand in solidarity with each other.

ANKARA:

Ankara ALO GELINCIK Hotline: (0312) 444 43 06

Ankara Association of Women with Disabilities (EN-KAD): (0312) 362 31 50

E-mail: engellikadindernegi@gmail.com

Women's Solidarity Foundation: (0312) 430 40 05 and 432 07 82, www.kadindayanismavakfi.org.tr

E-mail: kadindv@yahoo.com.tr

Yenimahalle Municipality Women's Counseling Center: (0312) 332 08 71 and 335 22 96

Çankaya Municipality Women's Counseling Center: (0312) 458 89 00, Ext.: 1154

Organizations Supporting Refugee Migrant Women:

UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR): 444 48 68, (0312) 409 70 00

Support to Life Association: (0800) 670 10 10, **E-mail:** bilgi@hayatadestek.org

Human Resources Development Foundation (HRDF): (0212) 562 50 62

E-mail: ikgv@ikgv.org

Solidarity Foundation for Women (KADAV): (0545) 220 10 22

E-Mail: info@kadav.org.tr

Mavi Kalem Social Assistance and Solidarity Association: (0212) 635 38 35,

E-mail: mavikalem@mavikalem.org

Association for Solidarity with Asylum Seekers and Migrants (SGDD-ASAM): (0312) 212 60 12

E-mail: info@sgdd-asam.org

Yuva Association: (0216) 325 00 44

E-mail: yuva@yuva.org.tr