

COMING OUT EXPERIENCES OF LESBIAN AND GAY YOUTH AND THEIR
PARENTS: A QUALITATIVE STUDY IN TURKEY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
OZYEGIN UNIVERSITY

BY
Zeynep E. MATER

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

JULY 2021

Copyright © 2021 by Zeynep E. Mater

Dedication

This study is dedicated to those who have felt alone, felt broken beyond repair, and been abused just because being who they are. This is for you to know that you are not wrong, you are not alone, and you deserve and are worthy of love and acceptance.



Abstract

This study is aimed to explore deeply the experiences of lesbian and gay youth in coming out process. Ten families from Turkey who participated included mothers and lesbian/gay youth ranging in ages of 21 to 33. In participants of youth, three of them define themselves as lesbian, and rest defines as gay. Thematic analysis using Family Systems Theory as a base is used to analyse 20 interviews. Seven themes (numbers) and 13 subthemes (letters) have emerged from thematic analysis of coming out experiences of gay youth and parents as following: 1) youth's acceptance of self as a process, 1a) experiencing confusion and isolation in coming out to oneself, 1b) motivation to come out: the burden of being closeted, 2) suspicion prior to coming out, 2a) youth suspicion of family's suspicion, 2b) suspicion of parents, 3) youth's worries about the anticipated negative reactions, 3a) using the opportunity of the context to come out, 4) family adjustment 4a) initial reactions, 4b) acceptance as a process, 5) positive effects of coming out, 5a) youth feeling free to be themselves after relieving the burden of being closeted, 5b) better relationships in family after coming out, 6) social & cultural effects, 6a) social cultural effects being a hump for both parents and youth, 6b) lack of reliable sources and being uninformed as barriers, 6c) social support easing the process for both youth and parents, 7) coming out being a difficult process, 7a) continuing negative effects. Further subthemes of subthemes are explained in the results section with quotes from participants. Themes and subthemes are discussed in the framework of Family Systems Theory. Themes overall highlight the characteristics of coming out as a process in the line with other studies in the field. Moreover, clinical implications of the study are discussed.

Keywords: LGBT+, coming out, Turkey, family systems.

Özet

Bu çalışma, kendini eşcinsel olarak tanımlayan gençlerin açılma sürecindeki deneyimlerini derinlemesine araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Türkiye’den 10 aile ile yapılan bu çalışmada anneler ve yaşları 21 ile 33 arasında değişen lezbiyen ve gey gençler yer almaktadır. Katılan gençlerin üçü kendini lezbiyen, geri kalanı ise gey olarak tanımlamaktadır. Aile Sistemleri Teorisini temel alan tematik analiz, 20 görüşmeyi analiz etmek için kullanılmıştır. Eşcinsel gençlerin ve ebeveynlerin ortaya çıkan deneyimlerinin tematik analizinden aşağıdaki gibi yedi tema (sayı) ve 13 alt tema (harf) ortaya çıkmıştır: 1) kendini kabul süreci, 1a) kendine açılma sürecinde kafa karışıklığı ve yalnızlık, 1b) açılma motivasyonu: saklanmanın yükü, 2) açılma öncesi şüpheler, 2a) gencin ailenin şüphelendiğinden duyduğu şüphe, 2b) ebeveynlerin şüphesi, 3) gencin beklenen olumsuz tepkilerden endişe duyması, 3a) bağlamı açılma fırsatı olarak kullanma, 4) ailenin uyumlanma süreci 4a) ilk tepkiler, 4b) bir süreç olarak kabullenme, 5) açılmanın olumlu etkileri, 5a) gençlerin saklanmanın yükünü hafiflettikten sonra kendilerini özgür hissetmeleri, 5b) açıldıktan sonra ailede daha iyi ilişkiler, 6) sosyal ve kültürel etkiler, 6a) sosyal kültürel etkilerin hem ebeveynler hem de gençler için bir kambur olması, 6b) güvenilir kaynakların olmaması ve bilgi sahibi olmamanın engel teşkil etmesi, 6c) hem gençler hem de ebeveynler için süreci sosyal desteğin kolaylaştırması, 7) açılmanın zor bir süreç olması, 7a) açılmanın olumsuz etkilerinin devam etmesi. Alt temaların diğer alt temaları, katılımcılardan alınan alıntılarla sonuçlar bölümünde açıklanmıştır. Temalar ve alt temalar Aile Sistemleri Kuramı çerçevesinde ele alınmaktadır. Temalar genel olarak alandaki diğer çalışmalarla örtüşen şekilde açılma deneyimlerini süreç olma özelliğini vurgulamaktadır. Ayrıca, çalışmanın klinik sonuçları ve limitasyonları tartışılmıştır.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank to my dissertation chair and my teacher Asst. Prof. Fehime Senem Zeytinoğlu Saydam. She was so supportive and kind through whole process. She was there for me when I needed, and provided a safe environment for me. I am so grateful to have the chance to work with her. Thank you for being you, Senem hocam.

I am grateful for my dissertation committee: Asst. Prof. Münevver Selenga Gürmen and Asst. Prof. Alev Çavdar Sideris. They have been so kind and generously supportive in the process. Also, I am so grateful for the participants in this study who have opened their hearts and shared their difficult experiences sincerely.

I would like to thank to my family, for their love and support. To my dearest friend, Melis Yüceer, for being there in every single mental breakdown and beautifully accompanying me with compassion. To my cat, for comforting me in difficult times with his fluffy belly and purring.

Table of Contents

Dedication	2
Abstract	3
Özet	4
Acknowledgments.....	5
List of Tables	10
Chapter I.....	12
Coming Out Experiences of Lesbian and Gay Youth and Their Parents: A Qualitative Study in Turkey	12
Definition	12
History of Coming out Research.....	13
Factors Influencing Coming Out in Youth.....	16
Parental Reactions	19
Grief.....	19
Guilt.....	20
Individual Characteristics	21
Family System	22
Society and Culture	23
After the Initial Disclosure	24
Parental Acceptance	25
Relief in Youth.	26
Suicidality.....	27

Turkey	28
Values.	31
Legal Issues.	32
Chapter II	33
Theoretical Perspective: Family Systems Theory.....	33
This study.....	36
Chapter III.....	37
Methodology	37
Participants.....	37
Apparatus and Measures	37
Procedures	38
Chapter IV.....	40
Results.....	40
Demographics.....	40
Themes & Subthemes.....	45
1.Acceptance of Self as a Process.	46
1.1. Youth Experiencing Confusion and Isolation in Coming Out to Oneself	46
1.2. Motivation to Come Out: The Burden of Being Closeted.	47
2.Suspicion Prior to Coming out	48
2.1. Youth’s Suspicion of Family’s Suspicion Prior to Coming out.	48
2.2. Suspicion of Parents Prior to Coming out.....	49

3.Youth Worrying About Anticipated Negative Expectations About the Outcome	50
3.1. Youth Using the Opportunity of the Context to Come Out Prior to Initial Talk. ..	52
4.Family Adjustment.	54
4.1. Initial Reactions.	54
4.1.1. Experiencing Negative Emotions.	54
4.1.1.1. Parents Initially Being Surprised.	54
4.1.1.2. Worries in Both Parents and Youth.	55
4.1.1.3. Sadness in Both Parents and Youth.	57
4.1.1.3.1. Parents' Grief.	59
4.1.1.4. Parents' Observed Anger.	59
4.1.1.5. Parents' Efforts of Holding Negative Feelings in.	60
4.1.2. Efforts of Managing The Crisis in The Family System.	61
4.1.2.1. Youth's Observation of Parents' Denial.	61
4.1.2.2. Parents' Hope of Changing Youth's Sexual Orientation.	62
4.1.2.3. Parents' Misattribution of Youth's Sexual Orientation.	63
4.1.2.4. Non-supporting Attitude of Family Being a Barrier.	65
4.1.2.4.1. Fathers' Negative Attitudes Being a Barrier for Youth.	66
4.2.Acceptance as a Process.....	67
4.2.1. Youth's Efforts of Explaining Themselves in Searching for Acceptance.	68
4.2.2. Increasing Familial Acceptance in Time.	69
4.2.2.1. Parents' Increased Awareness and Information about Sexual Orientations After Coming out.	71

4.2.3. Parents' Motivation for Acceptance: My Child.	72
4.2.3.1. Acceptance as an Obligation that Comes with Being a Parent.....	73
4.2.3.2. Supporting the Youth and Respecting Their Autonomy.	74
4.2.3.3. Caring about Youth's Wellbeing.	75
5. Positive Impact of Coming Out	76
5.1. Youth Feeling Free to Be Themselves with Relieving the Burden of Being Closeted.....	76
5.1.1. Shielding Effect of Families' Acceptance on Youth to Be Themselves	77
5.2. Better Relationships in Family After Coming out.	78
6. Social & Cultural Effects.....	80
6.1. Social and Cultural Values Being a Hump for Both Youth and Parents.	80
6.1.1. Stereotypes Being a Barrier.....	81
6.1.1.1. Divergence of Gender Performance & Stereotypes Accounts for Being Bullied.	82
6.1.2. Distressing effect of Homophobia & Heteronormativity in Turkey.	83
6.1.2.1. Fighting for Existence in a Homophobic Society.....	86
6.1.2.2. Parents Being Reluctant about Coming out to Their Social Circle.	87
6.2. Lack of Reliable Sources and Being Uninformed as Barriers in Process.....	88
6.3. Social Support Easing the Process for Both Youth and Parents.	89
7. Coming out Being a Difficult Process.....	90
7.1. Continuing Negative Effects of Coming Out.....	92
Chapter V	93

Discussion	93
Clinical Implications.	112
Limitations	114
Future Research.....	115
Appendices A Demographic Form	116
Appendices B Informed Consent	118
Appendices C Interview Questions.....	120
References.....	122

List of Tables

Table 1. Demographics of Participants from Youth.....	41
---	----

Table 2. Demographics of Parents.....	43
---------------------------------------	----

Table 3. Qualities of First Disclosure.....	44
---	----



Chapter I

Coming Out Experiences of Lesbian and Gay Youth and Their Parents: A Qualitative Study in Turkey

It has been a taboo to talk about sexuality in families, and when parents learn about children's sexuality it becomes a serious source of stress for families. While sexuality is that much a taboo in Turkey, it is expected that coming out as a lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning... (LGBT+) individual to family will shake the family system. Breakthrough changes in the family system in coming out process are fundamental aspects that is underemphasised in the literature. (Baptist & Allen, 2008)

This study aims to explore deeply the coming out experiences of lesbian and gay youth and their parents in Turkey. In this study, history of coming out research including the factors effecting youth disclosure, parental reactions to coming out, the effects of disclosure and studies based on Turkey is reviewed. Under the parental reactions section, guilt, grief, individual characteristics, family system, and society and culture is held; while in after the coming out section, parental acceptance, relief in youth, and suicidality are included. Since the background of this study is family systems theory; it is explained in a section in detail. Method section is composed of participants, apparatus and measures, and procedures of the study. In the results section, emerging themes are reported. Lastly, the clinical implications that the study holds and a discussion of results are provided in the discussion section.

Definition

Coming out can be defined as the experiences of accepting and disclosing one's own non-heterosexual identity to family, friends, and/or other communities (Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019; Guittar, 2013). Harry (1993) adds the concept of "being out" to the literature

which includes the process of constantly deciding on to disclose sexual identity. He suggests that the term coming out does not include all aspects of the experiences of LGBT++ individuals. For example, the information of non-heterosexual identity might be known by others but one might still not have disclosed to them his/her/their sexual identity; or the family may pretend like the divulging never happened and reject to process the experiences. In this study, the experiences of coming out is explored as the term supposes that there is a disclosure of sexual identity to the social environment. In the following section, review of the coming out research is provided.

History of Coming out Research

Starting with the removal of homosexuality from Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM) by American Psychological Association (APA) in 1974, the literature of coming out has begun to form (Bayer, 1981). It starts in the late 70's with studies that mostly emphasized developmental stages and linearity, and included mostly lesbian and gay experiences (Cass, 1979; D'Augelli, 1994; Troiden, 1989). Cass (1979) states that homosexual identity development has five stages: confusion, tolerance, acceptance, pride, and synthesis. In later years, 1988, Troiden (1988) has brought the concept of progressing not as linear but spiral that can be up and down through the stages. In the line, in another early model, D'augelli (1994) described the stages as "exiting heterosexual identity, developing a personal gay identity, social gay identity, being a gay offspring, a gay intimacy status, entering gay community". Differently from other early coming out models, he emphasized developmental plasticity and individual differences adding the concept of family into his model with the identity of being a gay/lesbian child. In D'Augelli's (1994) early model, "personal subjectivities and actions, sociocultural connections, and interactive intimacies" are effected by and effect each other in the process of identity development (p. 319). He states that the

personal differences like meaning making and behaviour patterns affect the identity formation process (D'Augelli, 1994). Moreover, in a broader context, he added the concept of interactive intimacies that include the immediate environment of the person such as peers, family, parents, and partnerships; while sociocultural connections are social traditions, policies, laws, and cultural notions that influence the process of identities (D'Augelli, 1994). D'Augelli (1994) model is different from the other early models in the sense that it considers the broader context by including the effect of culture and immediate environment of the individual.

These early models vary in terms of stages; however, they have several common themes as Eliason and Schope's (2007) comprehensive stage models review reveals (p. 3). These common themes include feeling that one does not fit in social norms, forming identity, needing to divulge to family/friends/communities, pride, and identity synthesis. Feelings of differentness is attributed to comparison of one's self and the social norms in all stage models; however, reasons for the differentness vary through the models such as gender roles, same sex attractions, or sexual fantasies. Also, it is common for the stage models that the formation of identity starts with poor psychological adjustment and develops into an identity with self-acceptance; in a sense the individual grows up into a psychologically well-adjusted person from an immature and unhealthy one in the coming out process. Since individual grows into a healthy person with the coming out process according to the stage models; it is common for these models that the person needs to disclose and be open in order to have a better psychological adjustment. Moreover, the stage models argue a phase of pride that is characterised by the acts to assert one's sexual identity which was previously hidden and subjected to discretisation by the societal norms. Last common theme of the stage models that Eliason and Schope (2007) described is the identity synthesis which is the highest stage. LGBT+ individuals need to integrate their sexual orientation into their personality, so that the

sexual identity has equal importance as the other aspects of personality have. In the identity synthesis/integration stage, the rage against the heterosexual societal norms is diminished and there is a better psychological balance. (Eliason & Schope, 2007)

However, these early models of coming out that are subjected above has been critiqued of being rigid, and having a stable stance towards a process that involves so many variables. They suggest there are key stages that individuals go through in the process of coming out and they need to be completed in order to be a healthy, whole self. These early models propose a “final queer subject” when one completes the stages as Klein et al. (2014) mention in their critiques. Klein et al. (2014) revealed that coming out is not a gradual transition in which a fully formed queer person is born and is necessary and desired. People are not supposed to complete some stages in order to be a fully formed identity of a queer individual. Rather, coming out is a dynamic complex process. (Klein et al., 2014)

In the line with the early models, a relatively new study examining 258 stories from 130 participants has focused on coming out with typologies (Manning, 2015). Manning (2015) offers 7 types of coming out conversations: “pre-planned, emergent, coaxed, confrontational, educational/activist, and mediated conversations” (p. 122). Pre-planned conversations occur when individual decides to reveal sexual identity, and plans the conversation before the disclosure. Emergent conversations are the second most common type of the coming out conversations, they occur in everyday talk when one trusts the person next to them and feels safe. For example, the coming out conversation can emerge when a straight person reveals attraction towards them. Another type is confrontational conversations. This is the most chaotic and hostile type of the coming out conversations. It can occur for instance when parents come across a gay porn in the website history, where there is evidence, parents confront, and a chaotic communication comes out. It includes feelings of betrayal, fear, confusion, and powerlessness. Coaxed conversations happens when

the other person gives a hint that s/he is aware of their sexual orientation, and usually it is the other person that starts the conversation. These coaxed conversations are found to be more comfortable for the LGBT+ person in which the LGBT+ person holds the decision to disclose or not to disclose their non-heterosexual identity. Moreover, disclosure can involve romantic/sexual conversations in which one reveals sexual identity by offering a sexual intercourse, or asking to go on a date with a same sex person. Besides, people come out for educational/activist purposes. These conversations can be a part of a talk or a panel, in the aim of raising awareness or informing people about LGBT+ issues. Lastly, Manning (2015) describes mediated conversations when the coming out occurs via internet or phone. Coming out conversations are excluded in the literature; therefore, this study fills a gap and can help to enhance communication in coming out dialogues. (Manning, 2015)

In recent studies, a more postmodern approach has been dominant stating that the development of identity is a recurrent process that includes individual variations. Coming out can be conceptualised as continuously managing one's sexual identity. Orne (2011) brought the concept of "strategic outness" which highlights the strategies and motivations of coming out in different contexts. It is suggested that sexual minorities continuously manage their identity depending on the context; and they are never completely out or closeted (Orne, 2011). Similarly, Guittar and Rayburn (2016) emphasized that coming out is not a split process that includes a clear-cut endpoint; rather, the process of coming out is a career in which one has to manage his/her/their sexuality perpetually depending the context. In the next session, factors influencing youth in the coming out process will be presented.

Factors Influencing Coming Out in Youth

Factors that effects youth in coming out process will be explained in this section. There are many factors that shape coming out in LGBT+ youth such as individual history,

motivation, family, societal and cultural background, religion, connection to the LGBT+ community, relationship with the target of disclosure (Ben-Ari, 1995; Gattamorta & Quidley-Rodriguez, 2018; Potoczniak, Crosbie-Burnett, & Saltzburg, 2009). On the individual level, person's political opinions, degree of education, relationship status, and internalised sexual stigma shapes the decision of coming out. Pistella, Salvati, Ioverno, Laghi, and Baiocco (2016) conducted a quantitative study that investigates the predictors of the choice to disclose sexual orientation to family members with 206 Italian lesbian/gay and 85 bisexual adolescents and young adults. They found that there is a greater tendency to come out in participants who are more educated and have less conservative political opinions (Pistella et al., 2016). Since Conley (2011) and Schope (2002) found that low levels of education and having right wing and conservative political opinions are strongly associated with negative reactions to coming out; Pistella et al. (2016) results are consistent with the existing literature. It is also found that being in a stable relationship and having many LGBT+ contacts increase the likelihood to come out to family (Pistella et al., 2016). The authors explain this result with the possibility that it is getting more difficult to hide one's sexual identity if one has a stable relationship, or they get more courage to come out because they might handle the negative results such as rejection or cutting of financial support more adaptively with the emotive or material support of the partner (Pistella et al., 2016). Moreover, as another factor that affects the decision of disclosure, Pistella et al. (2016) investigated internalised sexual stigma, and found that internalised sexual stigma in LGBT+ youth is negatively associated with coming out to family. Surprisingly they found no association between religiosity and coming out in contrast to their hypothesis. They interpret this result as people might abandon Catholic church and manage to integrate their sexuality and religion in some other Christian institution (Pistella et al., 2016). The age of coming out is influenced by both individual and societal factors (Hoffarth & Bogaert, 2017). Hoffarth and Bogaert (2017), in their study with

257 gay men, revealed that increased levels of openness to experience and decreased levels of religiosity predicts an earlier age onset for coming out. It is also suggested that increased masculinity and religiosity is related with the latest age of coming out among gay men (Hoffarth & Bogaert, 2017). In addition to religiosity and openness to experience, it is found that people who are gay and lesbian come out earlier than people who are bisexual or pansexual (Floyd & Stein, 2002). What is more about the age of coming out is that it occurs earlier compared to past cohorts which can be interpreted as the societies show more acceptance towards LGBT+ individuals (Hoffarth & Bogaert, 2017; McCormack, Anderson, & Adams, 2014). Lastly, there can be an effect of traditional gender attitudes on the age of coming out. Studies that investigate the effect of race on coming out have found that traditional family values have a greater influence than the race (Dubé & Savin-Williams, 1999; Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993). They found that in Black, Asian, African-American and Caucasian youth from families which hold traditional values such as the glorification of marriage and emphasis on religion come out later than their counterparts (Dubé & Savin-Williams, 1999; Newman & Muzzonigro, 1993).

Youth come out first to their gay friends, then heterosexual friends, later siblings, and parents, lastly their coworkers (Wong & Tang, 2004). Also, between parents, they decide to disclose their sexual identity to the mothers more, instead of fathers (LaSala, 2010; Rossi, 2010). The reason behind this is explained by youth in LaSala (2010) book “Coming Out Coming Home” as they do not need to show the fathers their true self; because they already have distant relationships with the fathers (LaSala, 2010). His book is based on LaSala’s 25 years of experience as a family therapist, and his qualitative study with 65 families that are analysed using Grounded Theory in the aim of understanding the experiences of families with a lesbian or gay child (LaSala, 2010).

Independently from their individual characteristics, societal values, religion, the people they chose to come out, or the age of come out; it is a difficult phase of life and as LaSala (2010) states home is a “much-needed safe haven” for these kids in these times (p. 8). In the following section, parental reactions to coming out will be explained in the subsections guilt, grief, individual characteristics, family system, and society and culture.

Parental Reactions

In coming out process, parental reactions have ben researched widely. In an early study, Cramer and Roach (1988), in their study that investigates the changes in the relationship of parents and their gay son who disclosed sexual identity, suggested in very broad terms that most LGBT+ individuals’ parents’ first reactions are negative; however, in time, they become more positive and accepting, and had more positive relationship than before In an early work, Sauerman (1984) defined the stages as “shock, denial, guilt, expression of feelings, personal decision making, and true acceptance”. Certainly, shock reactions are primitive and frightens the youth most as they are harsh and wounding verdicts such as “you cannot be my child, I wish you were never born”, or punitive reactions such as kicking the child from home, cutting off the financial support, or beating the child (Savin-Williams, 2001). In the line, it is found that adolescents fear in the process of coming out most that if parents reject them emotionally or physically (Potoczniak et al., 2009). In the next subsection grief will be discussed in terms of a parental reaction to coming out.

Grief. In an early study that is conducted with 402 participants in United States, Robinson, Walters, and Skeen (1989) states that the parents’ reaction is similar with Kubler-Ross’s (1969) five grief stages: “denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance”. When considered in the context, parents’ going through the grief stages are related with their experiences of loss of the heterosexual ideals for their children (LaSala, 2010). For example,

they have been thinking that their son will get married and they will have a daughter in law; so they mourn for their plans and expectations about the youth (LaSala, 2010). Besides, they experience a new stage in their life that they need to adapt: being a parent of a LGBT+ child (D'amico, Julien, Tremblay, & Chartrand, 2015). On the other hand, Savin-Williams (2001,b) proposes that even though the grief stages can be useful in conceptualising and initial parental reactions involve guilt and anger; there is little empirical evidence that they are broadly relevant, suggesting that the harsh shock reactions are frequently used in the literature but they are applicable for only a minority since most of the youth do not experience harsh reactions like getting beaten up. In the following subsection, guilt will be held as a parental reaction to coming out.

Guilt. Many parents after the youth coming out experience guilt (D'amico et al., 2015; LaSala, 2010). They may perceive that it is their fault that the child is not “normal”, they blame themselves about their parenting, and try to find a reason. Some mothers who have gay sons thought that they were not good mothers therefore their sons lost interest in women (LaSala, 2010). Mothers' self-blame is also fed by psychiatrists before 1970 when homosexuality was thought to be an issue of overly close mother and a cold father, a result of “pathological parenting” (LaSala, 2010). Besides this intensive guilt, parents experience fear about their children might suffer from social biases related with homosexuality and experience bullying; they have concerns about the child's safety (D'amico et al., 2015). Homosexual stigma makes these concerns valid; it discredits and disparages individuals who do not fit in heterosexuality and construct these individuals as worthless compared to heterosexuals (LaSala, 2010).

A comprehensive review that includes 22 articles from the years between 2000 and 2015 on coming out literature proposes 8 dimensions of parental reactions (Chrisler, 2017). Chrisler (2017) suggests that if the parents suspect about the child's identity before coming

out, they engage in activities that will reduce their uncertainty, they learn about the identity, they engage in cognitive appraisal, and then respond. It is found that parents engage in coping and reappraisal after responding; and they may process it several times by responding, coping, reappraisal, and responding again like a cycle of response, coping and reappraisal. She suggests that even if parents do not suspect before the coming out, they continue the cycle and experience the same phases without needing to reduce their uncertainty. This study highlights the importance of “context” at these various levels. Chrisler (2017) uses Bronfenbrenner’s (1986) ecological systems theory for explaining contextual factors: individual, microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem, and macrosystem. She argues that parent’s reaction to coming out is affected by contextual factors at these various levels as current study proposes and will be explained in depth below.

Individual Characteristics. Every parent has their own personal characteristic. Parents’ beliefs, attitudes, stereotypes about LGBT+ community, age, and race shape their reaction (Chrisler, 2017). For example, parents that have homophobic beliefs and stigmas about LGBT+ people might react negatively in to child’s coming out (Baptist & Allen, 2008; LaSala, 2010). Moreover, parents who get higher education tend to react less negatively to the disclosure (Chrisler, 2017).

Another individual difference that affects the reactions of the parent is gender. Studies have found that mothers are more concerned about youth’s physical/psychological wellbeing; and they have a greater tendency to show acceptance and support than the fathers (Ben-Ari, 1995; Conley, 2011; D’Augelli, 2002; D’Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 1998). In return, it is revealed that youth invest more into their relationship and disclose their sexual identity more with their mothers rather than the fathers (Savin-Williams & Ream, 2003). Furthermore, mothers’ reactions are more influential on the youth outcome, such as self-acceptance of sexual identity, than the fathers’ reactions (D’Augelli, 2003; Elizur & Ziv,

2001; Floyd, Stein, Harter, Allison, & Nye, 1999). Family system will be held in the following subsection.

Family System. Among the contextual factors of parental reactions to disclosure, family structure is one of the most studied factors in the literature of coming out. Parent child relationship in the family has an important part on coming out as distressed relationships predict a more negative response (LaSala, 2010). Furthermore, Willoughby, Malik, and Lindahl (2006) in their study with 72 gay men revealed that gay men who are from families in which there are high family cohesion, high family adaptation, and authoritative parenting style report less negative perceived parental reactions to their disclosure of sexual identity compared with gay man who are from families in which there is disconnection, rigidity, and authoritarian parenting in the family. In the line with Willoughby et al.'s (2006) study, Baiocco, Fontanesi, Santamaria, Ioverno, Baumgartner, and Laghi (2016) found that rigidity (inflexible family relationships that cannot easily adapt to new contexts) and enmeshment in family functioning is associated with perceived negative parental reactions to coming out in adolescents. Moreover, Baiocco et al. (2016) study explores the broader context and reveals that having right wing political opinions and religion are also effective on parental reactions. However, these studies are based on perceived parental reactions which limits the results. They collected data only from youth in order to explore the parental reactions; while the experiences of parents might be different than the youth perceived as LaSala (2010) suggests. LaSala (2010) reveals that youth understandings of parents' reactions are different than what actually parents experienced. In his study, it is found that parents did not reveal their first emotions with the aim of shielding the child, and the youth did not realise how hard it was for the parents. For example, one of the parents struggled so hard with her first emotion (self-blame) when the son came out; while the son has thought she was totally okay. (LaSala, 2010). Therefore, studies with dyadic data are needed more in the literature of coming out

while perceived reactions are also worth to explore. Society and culture in which the family system is placed inside will be discussed.

Society and Culture. Furthermore, the macrosystem, culture has an influence on parent's reactions to coming out. Parents from a culture that has negative stereotypes and rigid heterosexual norms react more negatively (Fields, 2001; LaSala, 2010). In the line, Lee and Lee (2006) revealed in their qualitative study with parents that ecosystemic influences on the coming out process involve religion and societal homophobia. It is also revealed on other studies that parents who are a part of a religious group that have negative attitude towards LGBT+ community tend to react negatively to coming out (Butcher, 2014; LaSala, 2010). Hence, culture is one of the important factors that shape parents' perception of their child's identity (Lee & Lee, 2006). In another study, Merighi and Grimes (2000) revealed that, on 57 African-European, Mexican, Vietnamese-American participants, the coming out process is shaped by conservative/liberal system of the family, besides the parent-child relationship. They reveal that LGB individuals from families who hold traditional family values (conservative families) feel more disconnected and rejected after the coming out (Merighi & Grimes, 2000). In the line, there are more studies that have been conducted on a more comprehensive cultural framework showing how parental reactions are influenced by the cultural understandings about sexual minorities (Aveline, 2006; Fields, 2001; Martin, Hutson, Kazyak, & Scherrer, 2010). In his study with 80 parents who learned their son is gay, Aveline (2006) reveal the retrospective experience after coming out to make sense of their son's behaviours that occurred before the after the coming out. He discusses his results around the cultural interpretations of homosexuality (Aveline, 2006). Moreover, by showing the parental reactions are grounded on the societal values about normalcy, Fields (2001) study reveals the cultural and societal constructions of gender, family and sexuality creates a base for stigma. Besides, Martin, Hutson, Kazyak and Scherrer (2010) explores 29 books from cultural field

and the institutional researches and conducts a content analysis in order to find the suggestions that are given to parents who find out that their child is a LGBT+ on a cultural, societal and historical context. They found 3 broad strategies that are suggested to parents: getting professional help, normalising the LGBT+ sexual identity, and behaving as “good” parents (Martin et al., 2010). In sum, parental reactions are affected by various contextual factors such as individual, family relations, communities, and culture (Chrisler, 2017). As explained above, Chrisler’s (2017) review is important in the sense that it adopts a systemic point of view to parental reactions to coming out and makes a comprehensive review of the literature of parental reactions. Although it is a wide ranged analysis, the theoretical framework needs to be empirically tested.

The process after the initial disclosure will be held in the following section.

After the Initial Disclosure

The process after the initial coming out is another aspect to explore in coming out experiences. This section will review the effect of coming out including parental acceptance, the relief in youth, and suicidality.

After the initial coming out conversation, there can be second, third, fourth... coming out in the process (Denes & Afifi, 2014). Denes and Afifi (2014) conducted their study on experiences after first coming out with 104 participants; and ¼ of their participants had a second coming out. It is revealed that the participants who needed a second coming out perceived that their parents are in denial, were not satisfied with their relationship with their parents after the first coming out experience, and feels like the first coming out was not successful (Denes & Afifi, 2014). Although, not limiting the coming out experiences with the initial disclosure is congruent with the idea of coming out as a process of continual disclosure; the literature focus is on the initial coming out experience. Parental acceptance is

a crucial aspect to consider after initial disclosure, therefore it is discussed as a subsection in detail below.

Parental Acceptance. Disclosure of LGBT+ individuals' sexual identity with the parents is a difficult process that can complicate parent-child relationships (Denes & Afifi, 2014; LaSala, 2010). Parental acceptance is one of the essentials that the youth needs, especially in the coming out process. It is shown that individuals who have perceived positive parental response had positive sexual identity development which is operationally defined in his study as having a high self-esteem (Savin-Williams, 1989). Moreover, after the disclosure, LGBT+ individuals who lacks perceived parental acceptance of their sexual identity had poorer emotional processing and increased suicidal ideation (D'Augelli & Hershberger, 1993). Family acceptance after coming out reduces the risk of depression, substance abuse, and suicide attempts; and increases youth's self-esteem (Needham & Austin, 2010). Disclosing one's sexual identity as LGBT+ and feeling the acceptance improves psychological adjustment; while parental rejection is detrimental and increases the risk for depression, suicide attempts, substance use (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010). Parental rejection creates identity confusion and internalised negative attitudes towards homosexuality (Ryan, Russell, Huebner, Diaz, & Sanchez, 2010). Furthermore, D'amico, Julien, Tremblay, and Chartrand (2015) conducted a study with 53 parents and their children in order to investigate the effects of parental reactions after the coming out on youth identity development and psychological adjustment. They reveal that the youth who have parents that are supportive of their sexual orientation has more positive identity development and psychological adjustment (D'amico et al. et al., 2015). They measure youth psychological adjustment with scales measuring such as suicidal ideation and psychological distress (D'amico et al., 2015).

Although they can experience parental rejection, youth feel relieved after the disclosure which will be discussed below.

Relief in Youth. LaSala (2010) states that youth relieves after disclosure accompanied with the feelings of appreciation and hope. Possible explanation for this relief in youth is that the reactions they get are not as violent as they expected to be. Before coming out, youth experience depression and anxiety which turns relief and hope after coming out; however, parents start to be depressed and anxious after coming out since they start to mourn for their expectations and worry about child's safety. After the initial disclosure, youth is not aware of the parents' struggle; both because they are relieved and parents hide their feelings. Parents may distance themselves from the youth in order to shield them from their feelings of self-blame and grief. At these times, boundaries which lets the parents distance themselves play an important protecting role in the family; and shield the youth. Besides parents, youth may distance themselves from parents after coming out in order to rebuild the broken boundaries with the disclosure of sexuality and to protect themselves from the possibility of a rejection. After the initial coming out conversation, relationships in the family include: conflict, distance, different perceptions of parents and youth, shielding the youth; and it can be stated that the family boundaries protect both the youth and the parents. (LaSala, 2010)

LaSala (2010) book "Coming out Coming Home" explains the changes in relationships in the family after the coming out in detail (p. 99). Sometimes conflicts emerge in the family from parental disapproval and stress; participants describe these conflicts as painful and angry arguments. Distance is also a part of the family discovery crisis. LaSala (2010) states that some families experience distance rather than openly arguing the situation. One of the parents recall that she was feeling so guilty about how she raised her son, blaming herself for making him gay. She reports that she tried to shield him from these intense feelings; and this was one of the reasons of the distance instead of conflict between her and

the son after the disclosure. Besides, youth can initiate the distance often; because they were hiding themselves so long, now it is easier to hide rather than revealing it. Despite the relief because they are not rejected; youth may feel shame and embarrassment, especially after confrontational disclosures, and initiate the distance in the relationship with their parents. LaSala (2010) states that avoiding and distancing are seeming to be ways for inhibiting the overt conflicts and painful family arguments in a state in which parents are overwhelmed and children' has raw feelings. Lastly, LaSala (2010) reveals that there is a significant discrepancy in the perceptions of youth and the parents about the family relationships after the coming out. Youth recalls a greater distance with parents while parents see no difference in their relationships after disclosure. LaSala (2010) explains these divergent perceptions with the aspect that parents know that their love is unconditional so they perceive the relationship as same, or parents can be denying the distance to reduce their anxiety by engaging in dissonance reduction, or social desirability effect might be playing a role in the parents' statements that reject the distancing after coming out in order not to be seem as bad parents in the eyes of the researcher. Besides, the youth can be seeking for more closeness with the parents after the coming out to be ensure that they are accepted; therefore, they can recall the remaining relationship as more distant.

In the coming out process, with the conflicts and distance in the family relationships, suicidality becomes a serious concern which will be held below.

Suicidality. Suicidality is a serious concern about the LGBT+ youth. In a study conducted with 350 lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults revealed that 42% has suicidal thoughts and 33% has attempted suicide at least once (D'Augelli, Hersherberger, & Pilkington, 2001). These terrifying percentages have also been found in a more comprehensive study that is conducted with 3275 individuals: 13.6% has suicide attempts, 45.2% had suicidal ideation in last year, 9.5% reports that a future attempt is possible (Rimes, Shivakumar, Ussher, Baker, Rahman,

& West, 2018). Moreover, Tamagawa (2018) found in his study, that is conducted with 136 Japanese LGBT participants, youth experience “anxiety, loneliness, feeling down, self-hatred” after coming out (p. 504). He revealed that 1/5 of his 136 participants has thought about suicide, 1/10 move out of their parents’ home after coming out (Tamagawa, 2018). The stigma and discrimination including harassment and negative reactions to disclosure from family towards LGBT+ individuals are found to be significantly associated with suicidality rates (Rimes et al., 2018).

Turkey

Studies about LGBT+ are not common in non-Western societies; there are few studies in Middle East, in Iran, Israel, and Turkey (e.g. Ahmady, 2018; Gross, 2014; Oksal, 2008). Most of the studies about LGBT+ individuals from non-western societies are conducted outside of these countries; usually in the western countries or by Western authors (Gross, 2014). While the first studies about LGBT+ community goes back to 70’s in Western countries, in Iran, the first study has been conducted last year and still not published. Ahmady (2018) conducted the first study inside Iran that investigates the continuous pain and agony of 400 LGBT+ participants using Grounded Theory. There are more studies in Israel, and Turkey is relatively more free, and homosexuality is not a crime in Turkey. This section will review the coming out studies in Turkey including the values and legal system issues about LGBT+ community.

First studies in Turkey about the experiences of LGBT+ has been conducted by Yuzgun (1986, 1987, 1993). He examines the problems of gay people, and covers the experiences of transgender women in Istanbul (Yuzgun 1986; 1987). Later Yuzgun (1993) investigates the police violence against homosexuality in Turkey. These are the pioneering studies on Turkish LGBT+ people that encouraged other researchers and raised public

awareness about non hetero orientations. In his study on police violence, Yuzgun (1993) reveals the forced closure of gay bars, raiding and assaulting gay individuals, taking them away by force, treating them horribly, hating and punishing them in several ways were the acts of police in Turkey against gay people. Accordingly, most of the Turkish population (93%) had negative beliefs and attitudes towards LGBT+ people such as rejecting to have a neighbour who is homosexual in 1990 (Esmer, 2011). However, in the same survey, it declined to 84% in 2011 (Esmer, 2011). Despite the decline in the percentage, there are still no legal protection for LGBT+ individuals in the aim of protecting them against discrimination and violence. Moreover, Cirakoglu (2006) in his study with 334 university students in Turkey examined the attributions to homosexuality, being gay, and being lesbian; and found 4: “disorder, problems, modelling or sensation seeking, and preference” (p. 301). The perceptions of the cause of being lesbian are found to be less problematic than being gay and homosexual (Cirakoglu, 2006). Besides, he found that being gay has been attributed to the most negative causes from his Turkish sample (Cirakoglu, 2006).

Lambdaistanbul Civil Society Initiative for Homosexuals (Lambdaistanbul) (2006), a NGO based in Istanbul, has conducted a pioneering study with 393 participants about the problems of lesbian, gay, and bisexual (LGB) individuals in Turkey. Among the LGB participants, 58% of them are afraid of isolation from their immediate environment and society, 40% of them have coerced themselves to have heterosexual relationships, 83% did not come out to their families, 82% is closeted at school, 88% is hiding their sexual orientation at workplace, 87% have experienced social violence, and 23% experienced physical violence (Lambdaistanbul, 2006). Moreover, Yilmaz and Gocmen (2016) revealed in their study with 139 LGBT individuals from 10 cities of Turkey investigating the discrimination against LGBT individuals at social policies that LGBT people experience direct or indirect discrimination at education, healthcare, and workplace. They conclude that

LGBT citizens are not treated as equally in social policies systematically and in turn, they experience breaches in their social rights such as employment, accommodation, and healthcare (Yilmaz & Gocmen, 2016). Accordingly, it can be expected that LGBT+ individuals have developed strategies to handle heterosexism in Turkey.

Gelgec-Bakacak and Oktem (2014) conducted a qualitative study that investigates the strategies to handle heterosexism in Turkey. They grouped strategies for managing heterosexism into four: for self-acceptance, for sexual stigma, for coming out process, and for openly expressing identity. Facing with society's feminine and masculine ideals, internalisation of heteronormative standards, and comparing self with the heterosexual public image in Turkey; LGBT people need to hold strategies for self-acceptance. First of these strategies for accepting LGBT individuals' selves is defined as denial. Individuals try to convince themselves that they are "normal" and deny their own feelings and attractions so that they can accept themselves as a "normal" person. Secondly, they force themselves to be involved in a heterosexual relationship in order to convince themselves that they follow the norms and rules that society holds such as man should have a sexual or romantic relationship with women. Lastly, they found that LGBT individuals in their study strengthen their religious beliefs and worship more to be a good human being as a strategy to have self-acceptance. Moreover, Gelgec-Bakacak and Oktem (2014) revealed that LGBT individuals use disguise and concealing their sexual identity, avoidance (leaving the place or staying silent when faced with sexual stigma), giving vague answers, and being the most successful in order to handle sexual stigma. Gelgec-Bakacak and Oktem (2014) also revealed managing strategies specific to the coming out process: waiting till the right time that the person is ready to hear comes, and making hints before the disclosure. Lastly, LGBT individuals holds strategies when they openly express their sexual identity: they use political stance and

activism, embracing and emphasising the “other” identities. (Gelgec-Bakacak & Oktem, 2014)

In the following subsections, the values that Turkish society holds and the legal issues that LGBT+ individuals face will be explained.

Values. Turkish society holds up values that encourages heterosexism and discrimination towards LGBT+ individuals. Family which consists of traditional values that brings forward the male hegemony is a crucial unit in Turkish society. Machismo and familism are the core elements in Turkey, especially in the Middle and Eastern parts of the country, which cement all kinds of violence against LGBT+ people (Kandiyoti, 1995; 2003). Familism puts family unit forward and gives it a greater importance than the individual; while machismo socially emphasizes the gender role of the male in the family (Gattamorta, 2017).

In terms of the patriarchal family values, Turkey is similar to Latin America and Middle Eastern societies (Yilmaz & Gocmen, 2016). In a qualitative study that was conducted with Hispanic LGBT+ youth found that familism and machismo are the main elements in Hispanic society that impacts the social biases and attitudes towards LGBT+ individuals (Gattamorta, 2017). In Turkey, no study has been conducted on these specific values and LGBT+; however, it is convenient that one interprets familism and machismo in Turkish society impact LGBT+ people. These values feed heterosexism in which non-conforming sexual orientations are seen as a threat to a pure ideal family order (Oktem, 2008). Although negative attitudes declined in the past decades as mentioned above, heterosexism is still a concern for Turkish LGBT+ people as patriarchal conservative values still exist in the family system (Oksal, 2008).

A study conducted with 116 Turkish participants found gender differences in familial attitudes (Oksal, 2008). Oksal (2008) examined the family members and found that fathers

had more negative attitudes towards gay men while mothers had similar attitudes towards both lesbians and gays. Besides, she revealed that the female offsprings in the family were more negative towards lesbians (Oksal, 2008). This study is also important in terms of value transmission in Turkish families; since she found that there is a significant difference between parents and daughters' values towards LGBT+, while no significant difference has been found between parents and sons (Oksal, 2008). Oksal (2008) explains this difference with daughters' increased tolerance for minority groups due to perceiving themselves as a minority in a family structure that is dominated by males, and experiencing gender discrimination.

Moreover, Turkish society mostly holds Islamic values that consider any sexual orientation rather than heterosexuality as a sin. Sarac (2015) revealed that increased levels of religiosity predict increased negative attitudes towards LGBT+ community in Turkey. Besides, Gelbal and Duyan (2006) have found similar results. Their study is a more comprehensive one since it explores multiple determinants of the attitudes towards LGBT+ (Gelbal & Duyan, 2006). They found that besides decreased values of religiosity; having an active sexual life, holding liberal values, and having a contact with a LGBT+ individual are associated with less negative attitudes in their study on university students in Turkey (Gelbal & Duyan, 2006). In the line with Gelbal and Duyan's (2006) study, Sakalli and Ugurlu (2003) have also found that having a lesbian contact makes a significant difference in attitudes. Regarding these values, legal system is another issue for LGBT+ individuals in Turkey which will be discussed below.

Legal Issues. Despite the fact that homosexuality is not a crime in Turkey; social atmosphere regarding LGBT+ is determined dominantly by traditional family values (Yilmaz, 2002). These traditional family values, machismo, and familism are embedded in the state ideology; therefore, they put barriers on LGBT+ people's civil rights such as forming non-

governmental organisations (NGO's) (Gelgec-Bakacak & Oktem, 2014). It has been problematic and difficult to form NGO's regarding LGBT+ individuals; since there is a threat to be shut down by the state (Gelgec-Bakacak & Oktem, 2014). The argument that the state uses in the way of closing LGBT+ NGO's is that they are violating public morality and not conforming to the traditional Turkish family structure. Moreover, pride marches are forbidden since 2014 in many cities of Turkey. The government of Turkey is formed by the Justice and Development Party which is known for its Islamic ties since 2001. As mentioned above, in Islamic values, homosexuality is a sin; therefore, it is not surprising that the LGBT+ individual's civil rights are limited and they lack legal support and protection under this government. In March 2010, the minister who is responsible from women and family issues has stated that homosexuality is a "sickness" and a "biological disorder" in her speech.

Democratisation plays an important role in the steps towards legal protection of LGBT+ community. Opposition Republican People's Party has offered a legislative proposal that is prepared with KAOS GL, the biggest LGBT+ NGO in Turkey, in 2015. This legislation proposal offered changes in the laws so that the LGBT+ people are protected under the law against discrimination. Although this proposal has been rejected, it is an important step in the visibility of LGBT+. It is found that younger family members have less negative attitudes towards homosexuality (Oksal, 2008).

Chapter II

Theoretical Perspective: Family Systems Theory

Coming out is a complex process that is affected and affects various factors at several levels; therefore, this paper uses the Family Systems Theory in which the problem is seen in its context and not seen only as intrapersonal experiences. Bowen (1978), who is the pioneer

in developing Systems Theory, conceptualises the family as an emotional system that has a structure and mechanisms. The anxiety that arise in the system is rooted from too close or too distant relationships and is affected by external stressors and the important themes for the family. Differentiation and fusion are the core elements in the theory which describe too much closeness or distance. Differentiation is a process in which the individual grows away from the family of origin while keeping emotional and physical contact; on the other hand, fusion is identified with too much closeness and feeling intensely responsible for other's actions. (Bowen, 1978). Parental reactions to coming out might be related to this intense feeling of liability about the child's actions; since it is revealed that parents experience guilt following the disclosure (D'amico et al., 2015; LaSala, 2010). Bowen (1978) states that a total differentiation cannot be reached, since it is a lifelong process in which one is with the family members, but do not become them. A healthy differentiation reduces the anxiety in the family system (Bowen, 1978).

Moreover, family systems theory puts the term triangulation out. Triangulation occurs when the anxiety in a dyadic relationship is calmed by a third party (Minuchin, 1974). Triangulation is not always an issue, it is functional; however, if the conflicts do not resolve in another way and the partners focus on the third party as the problem while forgetting the essential conflict, it becomes problematic. Triangulation is associated with differentiation closely; triangles are more likely to happen if there is enmeshment in the relationships (Bowen, 1978). For example, in many families there is a triangle in which the father communicates with the child through mother. LaSala (2010) states that only 26 of his participants have informed their fathers directly about their sexual orientation, while the rest of the participants' mothers have talked to the fathers. Depending upon a third party about such a key information is an example of emotional triangulation in the LGBT+ families. (LaSala, 2010)

Family Systems Theory suggests that the problem is not in the individual, but in the whole family system while it is influenced by the broader context (Bowen, 1978). About the broader context that influences the individual and the family system, Bronfenbrenner's (1986) Ecological Systems Theory explains the interconnected components of system. At the microsystem, the immediate environment, individual's family, school, and peers are included (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). A LGBT+ individual is affected by his/her/their family's attitude in the coming out process; and/or experiencing bullying at school affects the psychosocial adjustment in the process of disclosure of sexual orientation and identity (Bontempo & D'Augelli, 2002; LaSala, 2010). The mesosystem is a combination of the effects of two microsystems (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). For example, LGBT+ homeless youth are more prone to be abused at home; and they have low high school completion rates (Bidell, 2013a). There can be an interaction between abuse at home and low school completion among sexual minority homeless youth (Bidell, 2013a). On the broader level, exosystem includes the public policies and regional and national legislation in which the individual lives (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). The legislation and limiting the LGBT+ support groups at schools can be an example of the influence of exosystem on individuals (Bidell, 2014). The macrosystem represents cultural and societal norms, values, attitudes, beliefs, economy, politics (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). It is the broadest system that affects all other systems (Bronfenbrenner, 1986). A great example of how macrosystem influences the meso and exo systems is that the heteronormativity that is compatible with one's cultural and societal values, norms and beliefs directly influences his/her/their familial reactions to coming out, school support groups, public policies etc. (Bidell, 2014; LaSala, 2010).

This study

In this study, the coming out experiences of lesbian and gay individuals and their parents were explored in depth by using family systems theory with thematic content analysis. This study was qualitative; since qualitative methods allow participants, especially who are disadvantageous in terms of social justice, to “have a voice” and speak out their experiences (LaSala, 2003). Accordingly, this study helps self-identified lesbian and gay individuals and their families in Turkey to get strengthened and gain insight. Besides, since studies about LGBT+ community are not common in non-western societies, this study fills a gap in the literature by exploring the coming out experiences in Turkey, a non-western society.

In this study, coming out experiences of only gay and lesbian individuals were explored because of the differences in the coming out process of transgender and bisexual youth. Despite many similarities exist in the process of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender individuals; it is suggested that the bisexual and transgender individuals may have different experiences than the bisexual and transgender people (Scherrer, Kazyak, & Schimitz, 2015; Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019). Familial reactions to an offspring’s bisexuality is shaped by the cultural representation of bisexuality which includes monosexism. Culture constructs bisexuality as a “phase” or some process that can be “turned back to” heterosexuality; therefore, parent’s reactions are milder since they do not have to discard their expectations of heterosexual roles from the offspring. (Scherrer, Kazyak, & Schimitz, 2015) Furthermore, it is suggested that transgender coming out is a distinct process than the lesbian, gay, and bisexual individuals because of the declarations of identity before disclosure occurs in a transition period (Zimman, 2009; Brumbaugh-Johnson & Hull, 2019). Since there is growing evidence about the differences in bisexual and transgender coming out

from lesbian and gay coming out; this study was including only participants who self-identifies as lesbian or gay.

Chapter III

Methodology

Participants

Ten families have participated in the study. In participants from youths, 3 of them are self-identified as lesbian and 7 of them are self-identified as gay. They are aged between 21-33 expanding the proposed age range. For young adults, 18-25 age range was proposed to be chosen in reference to concept of emerging adulthood (Reifman, Arnett, & Colwell, 2007). However, after one year of contacts with nearly 30 LGBTQ+ communities and foundations all over Turkey, there were only 1 participant in the study. In order to include the volunteers of ages 26, 27, 29 and 33, age range has expanded. Rest of the participants are recruited with my personal invitations to my social circle. All of the participants had come out to their parents at least 6 months prior to participation of the study, the ones who came out sooner were excluded. Among the participants, all of the parents were mothers. When the results are saturated and no new themes were emerging, data collection has stopped.

Apparatus and Measures

Informed consent form was delivered to all participants. The form included the purpose and process of the study, confidentiality, and contact information of the researchers. Moreover, demographic information of the participants including the age, socioeconomic status, gender, sexual orientation, education level, relationship status, religiosity is acquired.

The questions in the actual study are based on exploring the coming out experiences of both parents and the youth: how did the youth decided to come out, did the parents suspected before the disclosure happened, youth's expectations and parents' actual feelings... All questions can be found in Appendix A.

Data is analysed with thematic analysis procedures using MAXQDA program that is designed for analysing qualitative and mixed data. The six phases recommended by Rohleder and Lyons (2015) for thematic analysis is followed: Acquainting with the data, creating initial codes, looking for themes, rereading themes, describing and naming themes, generating the report. The first phase is to familiarise with the data which includes reading and re-reading the whole dataset. It is an immersion process to get to know and to engage in analytically with the data. Then, initial codes were generated. Codes are the analytical key ideas in the data that can be descriptive or interpretive. All the data set do not have to be coded, however the parts that are relevant to the research question in the entire dataset were coded. After the initial coding, there was two sets of coding. After the coding is done, the themes were generated which are broader forms of codes. Codes were clustered to generate potential themes. Themes are not overlapped, but they are related to form a coherent analysis. The themes and subthemes were re-read, discussed and decided with dissertation chair. Data were finalised and reported. Memos for all participants are provided by the researcher.

Procedures

Semi-structured online interviews using the applications "Skype" and "Zoom" were conducted with both youth and the parents. Firstly, the participants were given demographic forms and informed consent which can be found in Appendix B and Appendix C; then the interviews were conducted. The child and the parent were interviewed separately. Voice recordings were kept in all interviews unanimously by given pseudonyms; no one rather than

the researchers have access to the recordings. The steps that are explained in the previous section were applied to data.

English language lacks a gender neutral pronoun; therefore, all participants had been asked to indicate their preferred pronoun in order to prevent a gender assumption that may lead to labelling.

Trustworthiness is crucial in qualitative research rather than reliability/validity. The parent and the child were interviewed separately in order to increase trustworthiness. Also, member checking is used for increasing the credibility of the results (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). After the thematic analysis, the results were sent to all of the participants (n=20) via e-mail to check if it matches with their actual experiences. Two weeks after, an additional reminder has been sent. Following this procedure has provided participants the opportunity to give feedback to the researcher; meanwhile providing the researcher the opportunity to increase the credibility of the results of this study. Seven of the twenty participants gave feedback about the themes of the study. Five of the seven who gave feedback have noted that the themes reflect their experiences of coming out process. However, it is also received that the coming out process was not ending with pure relief and pride, rather there are negative effects that still affect the youth. According to the feedback, we have included the subtheme of “Negative Effects of Coming Out” under the “Effects of Coming Out” theme. Moreover, another participant from mothers highlighted that the feeling of “loss” was so intense; therefore, we have included the “Parents’ Grief” subtheme under the “Initial Reactions” theme. Also, one of the parents have stated that the word “acceptance” does not seem to be appropriate for her, instead of “acceptance” she prefers to use “positivity”; therefore, “positivity” has been included in the name of the theme. These themes are explained further in the results section. Moreover, recurrent expert checking was acquired by dissertation chair Asst. Prof. Fehime Senem Zeytinoglu Saydam.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) describe transferability as the applicability of the results of the research to different contexts and/or at different times. I have clearly stated the participants' demographic information and the contexts of the interviews to provide the assessment of transferability of this study. Moreover, along the same line, the family structure in the time of disclosure of sexual identity is clearly described. These will help further researchers to make informed decisions when transferring the results of this study. (Lincoln & Guba, 1985)

Chapter IV

Results

This chapter includes a) demographics, b) themes and subthemes. Twenty participants who including 10 mothers and 10 young adults who identify themselves as homosexual. All participants in this study were given pseudonyms in order to ensure their anonymity. Lastly, themes and subthemes are presented in a timeline of coming out process.

Demographics

I have asked participants about their demographic information including their gender, age, education, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, relationship status, contact with LGBTQI+ community, religion and religious beliefs, and job status. Among 20 Turkish speaking participants, 10 were from youth and 10 were their mothers. Participants from youth included 7 self-identified gay individuals and 3 self-identified lesbian individuals. One of them defined herself as female, 2 defined themselves as non-binary female, and 7 defined as a male. Eight of them reported that they are single, one of them noted that they are in non-monogamous relationships, and one was married for 7 years. The age range of the youth was 21-33. Three of the participants from youth were university students, 4 of them were

graduated from university, 1 was a master student, and 2 had a masters degree. About socioeconomic status, 5 of them defined as middle class, 2 as lower class, 2 as lower middle, and 1 as upper middle. Eight of them were employed, 2 were unemployed, and between unemployed, 1 was looking for a job. Among the youth, 9 reported that they are not religious, while 1 of them noted that they are absolutely religious. Moreover, 4 of them were atheists, 2 does not describe their religion specifically, 1 was agnostic, 1 deist, 1 Muslim, and 1 Sufi. While most of them were not religious, their religion varies widely. Lastly, when asked if they have a contact with LGBTQI+ support groups or foundations, 6 of them responded as they do not have contact, while 4 have contact. To sum up, participants from youth were mostly identifying themselves as middle class gay males who are employed university graduates, are atheist and not religious. These demographic information of youth are reported in Table.1 below.

Table 1. Demographics of Participants from Youth

Gender	Age	Job Status	S.E.S.	Edu	Religion & Religious Beliefs	R/ship Status
Non Bi F	21	Looking for Job	Lower	Uni student	Other, Absolute Religious	Non monogamous
M	23	Employed	Middle	Uni Student	Not religious, atheist	Single
M	29	Employed	Middle	Uni	Nothing Specific, Not religious	Single
F	23	Employed	Lower	Uni	Ateist, Not religious	Single
M	28	Employed	Lower middle	Uni Student	Ateist, Not religious	Single

Non Bi F	22	Unemployed	middle	Uni Student	Agnostic, Not religious	Single
M	26	Employed	middle	M.Sc Student	Deist, Not religious	Single
M	33	Employed	Upper middle	Uni	Muslim, Not religious	Married (7 years)
M	29	Employed	Lower middle	M.Sc	Nothing Specific, Not religious	Single
M	26	Employed	middle	M.Sc	Ateist, Not religious	Single

Among the parents, all of them were heterosexual female mothers. Three of them were married, 4 of them were single, and 3 of them noted that they have partners. Age range of the mothers was 43-63. Mothers reported a variety of education levels: there were 4 primary school, 1 high school, and 5 university graduates. When asked about socioeconomic status, 5 of them defined it as middle class, 1 lower class, 1 lower middle, and 3 upper middle class. Among mothers, 6 were unemployed, and 5 were employed. About their religion and religious beliefs, 6 of them defined themselves as Muslim/Sunni, 1 Muslim/other, 1 deist, 1 faithful, and 1 does not specify her religion. About their religious beliefs, 4 reported that they are moderately religious, 4 not religious, and 2 absolutely religious. Lastly, when asked if

they have contacts with LGBTQI+ support groups and/or foundations, only one of them noted her volunteer work at LISTAG+. These demographic information of parents are reported in Table.2 below.

Table 2. Demographics of Parents

Age	Job Status	S.E.S.	Level of Education	Home town	Religion & religious beliefs	R/ship Status
50	Employed	Lower Middle	University	Istanbul	Deist, Not religious	Partner
63	Unemployed	middle	Primary school	İstanbul	Absolutely religious, Sunni	Married
50	Employed	Middle	University	Antalya	Sunni, Moderately religious	Partner
43	Unemployed	Middle	Primary school	Kars	Muslim, Moderately religious	Married
58	Unemployed	Lower	Primary school	Aydin	Sunni, Moderately religious	Single
57	Employed	Middle	University	Adapazari	Faithful, Not so religious	Partner
62	Unemployed	Upper Middle	University	Adana	Sunni, Not religious	Married
55	Unemployed	Middle	High school	Trabzon	Sunni, Moderately religious	Single
	Employed	Upper Middle	University	Samsun	Nothing Specific, Not religious	Single
55	Unemployed	Upper Middle	Primary school	Balikesir	Sunni, Absolute religious	Single

In addition, the qualities of first disclosure and the age youth first realise their own sexual orientation are reported in Table.3 below. Six of the 10 participants from youth have realised their sexual orientation in adolescence. Three of the youth notes that they realised in childhood, and 1 when they were young adult. Six of them come out to their families at young adulthood, while 4 has come out in adolescence. Eight of them have come out to their mothers first, 1 has come out while both of his parents were together, and 1 to her grandmother. Three of them noted that they were confronted to come out, 2 of these 3 participants were confronted by their siblings, and 1 of them was confronted by his aunt. The rest of the participants, 7 of the 10, reported that they have chosen to disclose by themselves. These have reported in Table.3 below.

Table 3. Qualities of First Disclosure

Age of Realising Sexual Orientation	Age of Coming Out To Parents	First Disclosure	Type Of Disclosure
Adolescence	Young Adulthood	Mother	Self-disclosure
Adolescence	15	Mother	Confrontation: Sibling
Childhood	Young Adulthood	Mother	Confrontation: Sibling
Adolescence	15	Grandmother	Self-disclosure
Childhood	Young Adulthood	Mother	Self-disclosure
Young Adulthood	14	Mother	Self-disclosure
Adolescence	Young Adulthood	Both parents	Self-disclosure
Childhood	16	Mother	Confrontation: Aunt
Adolescence	Young adulthood	Mother	Self-disclosure
Adolescence	Young Adulthood	Mother	Self-disclosure

Themes & Subthemes

Themes and subthemes that emerged from the thematic analysis of 20 interviews.

Themes are presented in a timeline of the coming out process. Themes and subthemes include some common themes for both youth and the mothers, and some themes represent different perspectives of them. Common experiences of both youth and the parents have emerged as these themes: 4.1.2. worries in both parents and youth, 4.1.3. sadness in both parents and youth, 4.2.4. non-supporting attitude of family being a barrier, 4.2.4.1. fathers' negative attitudes being a barrier for youth, 5.2. increasing familial acceptance in time, 6.2. better relationships in family after coming out, 7.1. social and cultural values being a hump for both youth and parents, 7.1.2. distressing effect of homophobia & heteronormativity in turkey, 7.1.2.1. fighting for existence in a homophobic society, 7.2. lack of reliable sources and being uninformed as barriers in process, 7.3. social support easing the process for both youth and parents, and 8. coming out being a difficult process.

Differences in perspectives of parents and youth have also emerged as themes. While youth describes the same experience as parents' denial (4.2.1.), parents describe it as a hope of changing the sexual orientation (4.2.2.). Another difference is that while youth reports their parents' anger in initial times with harsh reactions (4.1.4), mothers did not mention anger or harsh reactions. Moreover, while parents highlighted no negative change in the relationships after coming out while reporting better relationships with youth, youth noted better relationships, and some of the youth noted even worse relationships. These results are further discussed in Chapter IV.

1.Acceptance of Self as a Process.

1.1. Youth Experiencing Confusion and Isolation in Coming Out to Oneself.

Coming out is not just a single event that is concluded with disclosure of sexual orientation, rather it is a process that includes a process of realisation one's own sexual feelings. All participants from youth described their coming out to self process as consisting difficult experiences such as feelings of isolation and confusion. They reported confusion when they realised their sexual feelings as they could not identify these feelings as sexual orientation. They note that these were just feelings rather than an identity when they realised their attraction.

When I asked them about their experiences of coming out to self, Aslı replied by describing it as a process and difficulty naming the feelings as following:

"...there was a before and an after when I first realised. Because there were women that I fell in love with before. I did not know what this is and it was hard to name it."

Ünal also portrayed it as following:

"Thorough middle school, a little bit more in my head, I realised that I was attracted to males, but I did not identify this as a sexual orientation. I was just considering myself as different."

Moreover, feelings of isolation and differentness accompany the coming out to self process. Nine participants from youth noted that they thought like there was something wrong with them, they were not like others, and these lead to feelings of loneliness. Accompanying thoughts were these feelings being temporary and will pass, and they will eventually be attracted to opposite sex.

Doruk described confusion and isolation in coming out to self process as follows:

“ It was a difficult experience because first of all you do not realise what one could not realise what they were experiencing with themselves. I thought like this for a long time: “This is a temporary process. There is something wrong with me. I am the only one who is feeling this way in this world. This will pass, and I will start to be attracted to women. This is a phase because my sexuality is not fully developed yet.”.”

Here, Doruk describes the isolating effect of realising the attraction to same sex. Heteronormativity, eliminating the possibility of one being sexually attracted, prompts to youth to think that these feelings are wrong, and they should not be this way, these feelings are not even real, and they are confused. One participant even reported that he forced himself to be attracted to females for three years in his adolescence. Coming out to self is a difficult process that is identified with confusion and isolation.

1.2. Motivation to Come Out: The Burden of Being Closeted. Keeping the sexual orientation as a secret, creates a burden in youth as 9 of the participants from youths reflected. They explain this burden as feeling like they were lying, hiding something, pretending like they were someone else and not being themselves. The burden of being closeted motivates them to disclose their sexual identity to family and relive the hump as it bothers them.

Onur, for example, portrays the distress of being closeted motivating to come out as:

“There is a lie. It is a lie. Lying and pretending... These have overwhelmed me, and become unbearable. The process of sharing has started for me there.”

Moreover, Berk explains it as follows:

“We were so close and I didn’t want to lie to her anymore. She wanted to know more about my life, and I had to say something, like I had a relationship with someone, with a woman... These lies were bothering me.”

They were feeling like they were pretending to be someone else, wearing a “heteromask”. When families ask about their romantic relationships, they had to lie. Some participants mentioned being cautious about not to be so feminine so that the family do not suspect. They report these lying, hiding, and pretending as burdens that needed to be relieved, and they had to take off the mask of heterosexuality.

2.Suspicion Prior to Coming out

I have asked both parents and youth about their suspicions prior to coming out. Parents were asked about if they suspected or realised youth’s sexual orientation before youth has come out to them. Six of the mothers have reported that they have suspected priorly. Moreover, youth was asked about their suspicions about their parents’ suspicions and 8 of them have reported they think the family was aware of their sexual orientation. In 2 of the families, youth’s and parents’ answers were mismatched: youth thought the family has suspected, but parents report that they did not. For the rest of the families, youth and parents’ answers are matching.

2.1. Youth’s Suspicion of Family’s Suspicion Prior to Coming out. Eight of the young participants have reported that they think the family has suspected before.

Aslı states that she thinks her mother was aware since she has come out to herself:

“I have known it for a long time, so has my mother. I think she has known it since the beginning.”

Ünal noted that he thought his mother has suspected of his sexual orientation not just as a mother, but also as a person who lives in the same house for years. He thought she was aware, but did not asked directly to him. He portrays it as following:

“When we were living in same house, I sensed that she knew something but couldn’t ask, or didn’t want to question it. I don’t know. I have always thought that she knew it. As a person who lives in the same house, one would sense that. Maybe I hid it so well because I thought she understood. Maybe she really didn’t suspect. I don’t know. But I got the vibe that she was suspected and didn’t really want to question it.”

Four of the participants have reported specifically that family has suspected because they do not conform with the heteronormative stereotypes of society like having a relationship, toys that they preferred when they were children, or simply having a feminine/masculine performance.

Yağız explains it as following:

“Maybe it’s a cliché, or a stereotype but I used to like playing with dolls, I didn’t like playing football, she observed these. And now, I love decorating my home, so she put me in stereotypes directly. That’s true at some point, but she suspected, observed from these stereotypes.”

Here, Yağız states that his mother has suspected from him non-conforming to these stereotypes as a child. He reported that they talked about this with his parents and she confirms his point.

2.2. Suspicion of Parents Prior to Coming out. Parents were asked if they have suspected their child’s sexual orientation before coming out process. Six of them have stated that they have suspected and was aware at some point. In the line with what youth noted,

mothers highlighted that they suspected from youth's non-stereotypical performance such as toy preference as a child, having a heterosexual relationship, or their relationships with peers.

Birsen describes her suspicions from her child not having a heterosexual relationship as follows:

"Maybe I knew it unconsciously since she was in middle school. She is a pretty, smart girl, she didn't have any boyfriend. Maybe this has prepared me deep down inside."

Another mother, Defne, reports that she had suspected since he was a child from his toy preference:

"When he was growing up, I observed that he was not interested in football, and he wanted to be away from his male friends. I could understand something, I could feel it years and years ago."

Playing football is considered as a sport for boys in the society, and Defne was suspicious of her child's sexual orientation because he did not match these stereotypes.

Moreover, Ayşe noted that she realised but could not attribute this as her child being homosexual. She describes it in this way:

"Of course I have realised. I had suspected deep down inside when she was so into her teacher. But one can never attribute something like this to her child."

3.Youth Worrying About Anticipated Negative Expectations About the Outcome

Eight of the 10 participants from youths reported that they expected negative reactions from their families. Youth noted that they were not expecting their families to be okay with their sexual orientation, or to accept them. Expectations of negative reactions from family creates anxiety and fear of rejection.

Deniz explains her anticipation of negative reactions from her mother in this way:

“I was not expecting her to be okay with this, because I know her mind-set and the era she has grown up. So I was pretty sure that she will react bad. Before I tell her, I was afraid that she won’t listen etc. I started to cry and told her “I know you will react negatively!”. ”

As Deniz was, Birce was sure that she would not get a relieving reaction from her mother:

“I had something in my mind that I wanted my mother to tell me, but I was so sure that I wasn’t going to get it. ”

İlker illustrates the fear, as he was sounding his family up time to time and getting negative reactions:

“Honestly, I was afraid. I remember sounding them out. There was news about a man who run away with an older man and got murdered by his family. I was reading this newspaper out loud and say something like “Did you see what they have done?!”. My mother said “They did a good job.” in order to protect me back then. I remember sounding them up like this and getting frightened. My family is not okay with this, I remember realising this. ”

Here, İlker explains his mother’s reaction as her efforts of protecting him from possible violence that he might face because she was suspicious of his sexual orientation. He thinks that she tried to tell him if he is gay, maybe he would give up and become heterosexual after hearing this from his mother. İlker did not choose to disclose his sexual orientation because of his fear of these given and/or anticipated negative reactions, but he was confronted to do so by his siblings.

Onat was also worried about coming out to his mother as he portrays as follows:

“I have a cousin who is older than me and openly gay. Visibility of a gay person, a subject in our family is there for a long time. Even though he was accepted, I was still anxious about telling my mother.”

Even though youth have expected negative reactions overall, the burden of being closeted was so heavy, as reported above, that they have decided to come out.

Another effort that youth spend on having a better coming out experience is to plan the initial coming out. Youth have planned how to come out because of their fear of rejection. Nine of the ten participants from youths underlined that they have made preparations to disclose their sexual identity in a better way. They stated that they have sounded their family out prior to coming out to find out their attitude towards LGBT+ individuals. Also, they underline that they have initiated a couple of times to disclose their sexual orientation to family; however, they could not because it was so hard to share. Youth also mentioned that the idea of coming out was on their mind and they were planning it.

Birce reflects it as this way:

“That day, I called her right away without thinking. Because I could not do it if I think too much about how to tell her.”

3.1. Youth Using the Opportunity of the Context to Come Out Prior to Initial Talk. Eight of the youth have highlighted that they used the opportunity of the context such as the topic brought up prior to initial coming out talk, and feeling safe with the family to come out at that context. These initial talks have a spontaneity element with an instant decision to disclose related with the burden of hiding, since they were considering to open up for a while before but did not decide when. Youth’s efforts of catching an opportunity are means of creating a space to get a better reaction from the family.

Yağız describes his use of opportunity of the topic and spontaneity as follows:

“I have always wanted to share this with my family, but I have waited a while. One day my parents were telling me how important an open communication and not suppressing the feelings are, suddenly I have used the open door and told them. Because when they told me how nice it is not to suppress emotions, I thought they have realised something. And showed me that whatever it is that I’m holding in, I can share with them. When I felt this safe space there, I have disclosed.”

Here, Yağız reflects not only using the opportunity of the topic, but also a feeling that it is safe enough to come out considering his parents’ attitude regarding holding in.

Berk highlights that he disclosed in a demonstration of the documentary of Listag, My Child, in which families of LGBTQ+ individuals telling their stories. He states he considered this documentary as an opportunity and continues as follows:

“It was spontaneous, there was a demonstration of the documentary “My Child”, and I thought I shouldn’t miss this opportunity.”

Moreover, Ünal noted that he could hide his sexual orientation and deny it when he was confronted, however he decided at that second to come out. He describes the reason as follows:

“I thought now that this happened, this opportunity may never come again. I may not be able to open the discussion again. Now that this subject is opened this way, I will tell her.”

All of these have an element of spontaneity, and also youth’s efforts to create and/or use the context as an opportunity for acceptance prior to initial coming out talk.

4. Family Adjustment.

This theme consists of family adjustment phase in response to coming out. The themes included are: 4.1. initial reactions, 4.1.1. experiencing negative emotions, 4.1.1.1. parents initially being surprised, 4.1.1.2. worries in both parents and youth, 4.1.1.3. sadness in both parents and youth, 4.1.1.4. parents' observed anger, 4.1.1.5. parents' efforts of holding negative feelings in, 4.1.2. initial non-acceptance, 4.1.2.1. youth's observation of parents' denial, 4.1.2.2. parents' hope of changing youth's sexual orientation, 4.1.2.3. parents' misattribution of youth's sexual orientation, 4.1.2.4. non-supporting attitude of family being a barrier, 4.1.2.4.1. fathers' negative attitudes being a barrier for youth.

4.1. Initial Reactions.

4.1.1. Experiencing Negative Emotions.

4.1.1.1. Parents Initially Being Surprised. When I asked parents about their feelings in the process, 10 of 10 parents have highlighted a state of being surprised and shocked in the initial disclosure, even though six of them have reported being suspected priorly.

Ülkü portrays a state of shock that froze her. She reported that she did not suspect priorly. She describes that state as follows:

"I was petrified. I was frozen. I said "Really?". He said "yes, mom...". I was petrified at that moment. I was in a state of shock, you could see that on my face."

Furthermore, Oya reports as following:

"It was not a situation that has no solution, I did not feel an extreme desperation. But it was shocking, that would be a better word. Shocking."

Another parent, Beste, noted crying with the effect of shock:

“He says “Mom, you cried that day.”. I might have cried. I might have cried with that shock thing. I really don’t remember that day. ...That feeling of emptiness... The way it happened suddenly...”

As Beste reports here that she can not remember that day; 5 of the mothers reported that they can not remember the initial disclosure talk clearly, possibly related with the shock. One of the parents even portrayed a different scene than her daughter. Furthermore, these parents stated that they think their child would remember the talk better, and/or would tell a different story.

4.1.1.2. Worries in Both Parents and Youth. Both parents and youth have noted worrying, as it emerged as a common theme. Six of the young participants reported that they were worried as an effect of observed negative reactions from family after initial disclosure. They report fear and anxiety about their future relationships with their family.

Aslı describes her feelings with the negative reaction from her mother as follows:

“I was afraid. I was anxious. I felt worthless when I came out to my mother.”

As Aslı was reporting fear of rejection; in that vein, Birce was worried about if she has to spend effort for the rest of her life for her family to accept her:

“I was thinking about if I’m going to live like this for the rest of my life. By trying to get their acceptance...”

Here, she describes her worries about if she will ever going to get her family’s acceptance with a tone of anger in it.

Another participant from youth, Ünal, highlighted his anxious thoughts about his relationship with his mother in the initial phases as follows:

“I even thought at some point like this: “Are we going to cut off with each other? Is this going to be like this from now on? It’s not going easy.””

Furthermore, 5 of the parents reported that they think the youth had a fear of rejection after initial disclosure when I asked them about what they think their child might have been feeling. This reflects that some of the parents were aware of youth's state of mind and feelings at some degree. For example; Defne portrays her observations of her son's feelings as following:

"He was so terrified, so afraid. Probably he felt this as a perverted thing. I remember he was crying. He might have felt that he won't be accepted, will be rejected, isolated."

Youth highlighted their worries in initial times as exemplified above. Along the same line, eight out of ten mothers stated that they were worried about youth's wellbeing. They feared that their child will be alienated, bullied, and/or be subjected to violence in the society because of their sexual identity.

İlay portrays her worries about her son as follows:

"I was worried about his future, about his life. I was trying to change him for him not to get hurt. ...I worried about his wellbeing, for him not to suffer, be isolated... I have always thought that."

Here, İlay explains the reason why she tried to change his sexual orientation to heterosexual. She was so worried about his life, she thought it might be a good idea to subject him to conversion therapy. However, conversion therapy hurt him worse, even caused suicidal thought as he mentions and will be reported further in the following sections. İlay reports that she regrets this decision because he suffered so much.

Another mother, Ayşe, notes her initial fears as following:

"I was afraid for her, she will get negative reactions, will be alienated. She was already an introvert. She will have difficulties in the society."

Besides parents reporting that they had worries, youth observed their worries too. Seven participants from youth have noted that they think their family was afraid. For example Onat portrays his mother's fears as following:

"She had anxiety disorder at that time too. She thought that I will have so many struggles... She was like "Never tell this to anyone! Never disclose yourself! Never tell your father about this!" ... She said these thing for a long time. She was afraid that bad things will happen to me because of this situation."

Here, Onat explains that her mother was so afraid for his wellbeing that she did not want him to come out to anyone, want him to be closeted, in order to keep him safe.

4.1.1.3. Sadness in Both Parents and Youth. Sadness has emerged as an another common initial feeling in thematic analysis in the coming out process for both youth and parents. Nine of the ten mothers describes feelings of sadness in the initial times of process.

Ülkü, for example, experienced sadness so intense that she had difficulty describing the intensity:

"That moment was so bad... so bad... I cannot describe the feeling at that moment, it was so hard, so miserable, I cannot tell. It was like my world has collapsed... It was too hard for me. I am thinking that moment now, it is too bad. I hope something like that moment never happens again."

Yeliz reports a feeling of sadness that is caused by the burden of being closeted on her child. She explains it as follows:

"When I think this through, I felt sad. I was sorry about the pressure and stress that he might have been experiencing in order to keep this as a secret till now. ...he said he was 13-14 when he realised. For all those years, keeping these feelings as a secrets must be so hard for him. I was so sorry for his difficult times."

Similar to parents' worries, youth has observed parents' sadness too. Eight of them noted that their families have felt sorry in the process. For instance, a participant from youth, Berk, explains his mother's tears in the initial disclosure as follows:

"We both shed tears, but her tears were rising out of sadness. That's why I started crying. She has a right though; she has been raised like this. She was looking sorry when she first heard of it."

Berk noted that observing his mother's sadness has led sadness also in him. Including Berk, six of the ten participants from youth highlighted their feelings of sadness about their families' reactions following the initial coming out. İlker, for instance, describes this sadness as following:

"At that time, I was not loved by my family, I had lost my God. I had had a mental breakdown. I did not have anything to hold on to, I was just waiting for the right moment to die. "One day I will say this is the day, and I will die." I have felt many times that the day has come, but I did not do it not to hurt my mother and my sister."

İlker explains his sorrow with losses he experienced such as his religion and family's support. He mentions this depressed state has deepened with conversion therapy which is based on the belief that one has a disgusting, damaged self that needs to be fixed. He explains that it was a devastating disappointment to realise his family would not be there for him.

Besides youth reporting their sadness, when I asked parents what might youth has been feeling, six of the ten of the parents stated that they observed youth's sadness. For example, Derya, replied as follows:

"She was sad, she cried. Her hands were all sweaty, she rubbed her hands. Maybe she was ashamed, maybe she did not expect me to react like this. She was sad."

In initial phases of coming out, both youth and parents were feeling sad, and both of them observed each other's sadness.

4.1.1.3.1. Parents' Grief. Furthermore, 2 of the parents report that they experienced an intense feeling of loss and grief. Ülkü describes her experience as resembling the feeling when she heard of her husband's death:

"My husband passed away. I mean, I felt something like the feeling at that moment, I was going through an emotional breakdown like that. I experienced a feeling of loss."

Similarly, Olcay explains that she experienced it as a loss of a loved one too. She mentions that she was diagnosed with depression after initial disclosure. She describes her deep state of sadness as follows:

"I have experienced it like death, like a loss. My child has died. Everything was black and white. I was in depression for 8 months. I had psychotherapy. I took 5 pills a day for eight months."

4.1.1.4. Parents' Observed Anger. Seven of the participants from youth have noted that they observed their parents reacting negatively in the initial phases after the disclosure. They were told to leave the house, or that they are sick and need treatment. Youth thought that their parents perceived their sexual orientation as a curse. They report that the initial disclosures were accompanied by highly charged arguments with families.

Deniz reflects the initial argument as following:

"She started to pray... We argued for like an hour or two by yelling at each other and crying. She said she will make me see a psychiatrist. I told her it is not something like that, she said you have hormonal problems, that is why. I was so tired because of all the yelling and crying..."

Here, Deniz's explanation underlines her mother's efforts on changing her sexual orientation as this is the previous theme that parents highlighted. The initial argument was exhausting for Deniz.

Doruk describes that his mother told him to move out in initial disclosure as following:

“My mother didn’t like this situation at all. She said “Okay if you have this kind of orientation, move out and live with the person who you are with”. I was 16.”

Furthermore, Onat was experiencing harsh reactions even four years after the initial confrontation. He describes these initial phases as “dark and terrifying” and continues:

“She was resisting so much at first. I was making my hair; I was buying colourful t-shirts. She was saying “What is this, why is this even necessary, why do you even care this much?” ... These were aggressive, and making me uncomfortable. This was 4 years after coming out.”

As explained in the previous themes, these initial negative reactions were leading worry and sadness in youth. While seven participants from youth report that there were initial negative reactions from their family; only four of the mothers noted that they have reacted negatively.

4.1.1.5. Parents’ Efforts of Holding Negative Feelings in. Eight of the mothers have cleared that they were trying to not to react negatively to youth; even though they were experiencing the negative emotions such as sadness, shock, and worries as explained in previous subtheme. They reported that they spent effort on holding these in, in order to not to hurt their children.

Oya reports that she had a hard time related to her religious beliefs, and describes her efforts to hold it as follows:

“Earlier on, even though I definitely hold these in; it cut me to the bone. I prayed a lot. I prayed for him to be relieved, to find the right direction, to have good things happen. But I absolutely did not reflect these on my son.”

Another mother, Derya, also reflects her sadness and efforts not to react negatively as below:

“I was thinking about this and feeling sad. But I did not tell her anything. In any ways... I did not tell her anything afterwards. I did not react negatively.”

Ülkü was also one of the parents that reported her efforts of keeping her feelings. She describes:

“I blamed myself. I tried to hold these in, but there was a storm to be breaking within my heart.”

As explained above, parents were experiencing sadness, worries, and shock; while they were spending efforts on not to reflect these on their children and hurt them. Despite, youth reports that they were aware of their parents' sadness and worries, and were feared of rejection. Also despite these efforts of parents, youth noted that they perceived initial non-acceptance from parents as the following subtheme reveals.

4.1.2. Efforts of Managing The Crisis in The Family System.

4.1.2.1. Youth's Observation of Parents' Denial. Seven of the ten participants from youth portray an initial denial in their parents. They noted it was an elephant in the room, and their parents ignored the subject and pretended like the disclosure never happened.

Ilker explains his family was in denial for years after initial confrontation as following:

“They cried, and they refused to believe by assuming things that are not actually real. They denied as long as they can. This topic has never been talked at home.”

Parallely, Deniz describes her mother's denial in the initial disclosure day:

“I said “mom, we talked about this an hour ago, you cannot pretend like it didn’t happen! You know it now, you know it!” and she said “Stop talking, I don’t want to hear!””

Moreover, another participant from youth, Aslı explains her mother’s denial was expanded to her childhood. She notes that when she was a child, she told her mother about her feelings towards her teacher who is a woman, and her mother did not believe. She describes as following:

“When I was eleven, I was telling her I was in love with a woman, who was my teacher. My mother did not want to accept this. She said this was not love. The psychologist that she made me meet with told her that I might be a lesbian. My mother did not let me see that person again, and told me that this was nonsense.”

Denial of parents required three of these participants from youth to come out multiple times to their parents as youth reports. As explained with quotes, youth reported their experience of their parents’ denial; however, only four of the parents noted that they were initially denying the situation. Rather, parents highlight that they were hoping that this might change as described in the next section.

4.1.2.2. Parents’ Hope of Changing Youth’s Sexual Orientation. Seven out of ten mothers have reported that in the initial phases after disclosure they had the hope of changing youth’s sexual orientation. They report that they wanted and hoped their children to be a heterosexual in order for them to not to get hurt. Some report that with the hope of a change, they have tried to find a solution to change youth’s sexual orientation such as seeking mental health professionals’ support after the disclosure, or a figure that they thought could be a role model when they were children.

İlay described her experience of seeking conversion therapy as follows:

“What if he can be like this, what can we do about this, we looked for a solution...

One always questions if her son can change, if he can be otherwise with psychological treatment.”

Moreover, Derya explains as following:

“No one, not any mother, would want her child to be gay. No one would... What I wanted to change is for her not to get hurt, because she is so emotional.”

Ayşe states that in the initial times, she hoped that this is a temporary process:

“I have always thought that she will fall in love with a man. I thought she is consciously directing herself this way and will change.”

As exemplified above, parents report that they spend effort with the hope of changing youth's sexual orientation; while youth describe this as denial. To spend effort to change it, or hoping that it could change, one needs to accept the existence of the situation. In that sense, there is a difference in youth and mothers' reports.

4.1.2.3. Parents' Misattribution of Youth's Sexual Orientation. Six participants from youth and seven from mothers have reported that parents had been confused about sexual orientation in initial phases as it emerged as a common theme. Parents highlighted that they have been questioning the reason behind sexual orientation, that they have thought whether it is a genetic, hormonal problem, or it is caused by the family structure. Along the same line, youth has noticed their confusion. They reported that their parents could not comprehend the concept of homosexuality, and had a lot of questions in their minds. Hence, they had to explain and inform the family as it is explained in the following themes.

İlker explains his family's misconceptualised assumptions as following:

Here, İlker reflects that his sister and mother thought that homosexuality equals to transsexuality; and transsexuality equals being a sex worker. Including İlker, four participants from youth have highlighted that their parents had misconceptualised assumptions about

gender and sexual orientation, that they had dichotomous heteronormative thinking like either one could be a female who is into males, or can be a male who is into females. There was no possibility that males can be attracted to males in their minds, youth states. This is further discussed in the discussing session.

Moreover, Onat describes his mother's thoughts on homosexuality in the initial phases as follows:

"My gay cousin is a kidney patient. And my mother was thinking homosexuality is a physiological and hormonal thing, and my cousin is gay because he is a kidney patient. I didn't have that kind of an illness, so how could it be? Like "This boy does not have any illnesses" ... I think she had problems in conceptualising homosexuality in her mind. And she told me that she did have."

Onat was right about his mother's thoughts as they have discussed it later. Along with the line, seven of the ten mothers reflects that they have been questioning the reason behind homosexuality in the initial times.

For example, İlay describes her reasoning as follows:

"Because he was raised with women. I was reading stuff like being a role model. That's why I wanted his elementary school teacher to be a man as a male role model to be in contact with him one to one. His father was working too much back then, he was not home, so there was no male role model for him. This was what I was thinking."

Here, İlay describes giving the answer to her questions about the reason behind homosexuality as the lack of a male role model when he was a child.

Moreover, another mother, Defne, reflected her confusion and lack of information as following:

“You can understand the logic behind many things, but this... Why my child is like this? Why, why? Is it genetic? Does his father have this? How should I react? I didn’t know all this.”

Both mothers and youth highlighted that there was a lot of confusion and questions in parents’ minds as explained above.

4.1.2.4. Non-supporting Attitude of Family Being a Barrier. Both youth and mothers noted that negative reactions from the extended and nuclear family members have negative effect on the coming out process. Nine of the ten mothers, and seven of the ten participants from youth have reflected non-supporting attitude of family became a barrier in the process such as confronting youth to come out, making offensive jokes about homosexuality, or reacting negatively which created a distance in family relationships, or need for hiding because of non-supportive attitude.

For example, Ülkü reflects her fear that her children will fall apart because of the fight they had after the initial confrontation as following:

“The things that worried me the most were his brother realising this, and them being at the odds. I would tolerate that, I am okay with that, I am an understanding mother, but his brother... He is a lad. So how he reacted worried me the most.”

In Ülkü’s case, her son confronted her other son who identifies as gay to come out; and this created anxiety in her about their relationships as siblings.

Another participant whose son is confronted by his sibling was İlay. She describes her experience as follows:

“At first, his sisters came and told me about this. They have talked before. But I did not react as harsh as they did. Back then, my daughter told me that “This is the worst thing that can happen to a person, other than loss of a child.””

One of the nuclear family members stating that her son being gay is the worst thing that could be compared to death have traumatising effects on both İlay and her son as he also underlined that sentence of his sister.

Furthermore, one of the participants from youth, Birce describes her aunt's attitude making the coming out process difficult with a tone of anger towards her:

"My aunt didn't really take this well. This was one of the difficulties in the process. I used to see her a lot, go to her home and spend time with her. But now she can look me in the eye and tell me that she is homophobic. I am shocked by that because I wouldn't look at her face and tell her that I hate her existence."

As explained above, non-supportive attitude of family members create distress and become barriers for both youth and parents.

4.1.2.4.1. Fathers' Negative Attitudes Being a Barrier for Youth. Seven of the ten participants from youth and five of the ten mothers have highlighted fathers' negative attitudes have been a barrier for youth. Four of the participants from youth have reported that they did not come out to their fathers because of their negative attitudes. Others stated that they have been feeling isolated in their relationships with their father.

For example, Deniz has been feeling isolated from her family because of her father's attitudes and mind-set. She describes it as follows:

"My family is very oppressive and old-fashioned especially my father. I still live in the house that he was born and raised, and it's in a suburb neighbourhood. And growing up in a neighbourhood like this... I have always known that I am different from them. Even if I was heterosexual, I would feel isolated. I think being gay has just made it clear earlier."

Along the same line, Deniz's mother reports as follows:

“The one who judged her first was her father. He was telling stuff. I have divorced from him. He is telling her not to go public looking like this. He is making her upset. She cries a lot.”

Deniz and her mother describe the negative effect of her father’s attitudes towards her not conforming with the stereotypes, although it is not the reason they are divorced.

Moreover, Ünal reflects the effect of his father’s attitudes on him in this way:

“I don’t know if I could come out if my father was alive. He was an alcoholic, was violent towards my mother... I guess he would kill her one day. I think if my father was alive, I wouldn’t be in the place where I am now. This father figure has always affected me so much. I don’t like the things cliché hetero men likes. In that sense, I was like a step son. I was getting distant from my father because he had the stereotypes in this head, he couldn’t put me in those, so he wouldn’t communicate with me.”

Here, Ünal describes his father’s attitudes’ negative influences on him such as feelings of isolation related to him not conforming the stereotypes. He believes that he would not be able to come out if his father was still alive.

Fathers’ attitudes were a barrier for youth as they reported. These attitudes towards gender stereotypes create feelings of isolation in youth, and discourage them from sharing who they are with their fathers.

4.2. Acceptance as a Process

Throughout the interviews, acceptance being a process that takes time and efforts has emerged as a common theme as both parents and youth have highlighted. Youth’s search for acceptance, families’ increased acceptance in time, parents’ motivation of acceptance have emerged as subthemes.

4.2.1. Youth's Efforts of Explaining Themselves in Searching for Acceptance.

Youth have spent effort to have a better coming out experience such as planning the initial talk, using the context priority, and try to explain themselves for searching acceptance from their parents. Eight of the ten participants from youths reported that they tried to explain themselves to their family in searching for acceptance.

Doruk illustrates his passive activism of informing his family, creating some awareness, and breaking down their prejudices with the aim of getting family's approval and acceptance. He reflects this process of explaining himself in searching for approval as following:

"For years and years of fighting... I can say that I had engaged in passive activism. Constantly I had tried to explain homosexuality to them: that I don't have a bad life, that it is not as they thought, that I don't wear makeup... In their head, a male, a superior human being, cannot act like a woman, an inferior human being. I think this is the source of homophobia in society. I had given them the message that I am not like a woman and they should not be sad. This was a negative effect of coming out. Years and years of efforts to prove myself, changing their opinions, searching for acceptance and approval."

Another participant, Ünal, portrays his efforts of explaining his mother that he is still the same person. He explains the efforts to re-draw the frame for himself in her mind in order to preserve the relationship and approval:

"She said 'The frame in my mind for you has just broken.', and this really hurt me. I said 'I am still the same person, and you are still the same. Nothing has changed about me. Things we share will continue as it was. I am not a different person because of the way I feel.'"

Moreover, youth noted that they tried to inform the family about homosexuality such as this not being neither a sickness nor their fault. Motivation of informing the family was mentioned as to prevent further wounds that could be created by misinformation. Informing them would decrease such a possibility and create a base for their acceptance.

Onur, for example, explains his motivation to inform his mother and satisfying her curiosity as aiming to have a better coming out experience without hurting and getting hurt, and without obscurities:

“I have preferred to tell her this way. It wasn’t like “Mom, I am gay, know this.”. It wasn’t that, no. It was like this: “Mom, I feel this way, this is a situation like this and this...” by explaining the concept of homosexuality. My mother is an elementary school graduate, but her perception is so wide, she is open-minded. So, I tried to provide her the information to make this a better disclosure, for both of us to not to get hurt, and not to have obscurities.”

4.2.2. Increasing Familial Acceptance in Time. Increased familial acceptance is one of the common themes that has emerged after thematic analysis. Nine of the ten participants from youth have highlighted that families have accepted and become more tolerant about youth’s sexual orientation in time. Youth reports that it has become a subject that can be talked about and become normalised.

For example, Onur reflects his relationships becoming a topic that he can share with his mother:

“I have become able to share with my mother the special relationships that any straight individual can share with their family.”

Moreover, İlker states his family becoming more tolerant and flexible in time towards his sexual identity as following:

“Towards the age of 19, they started to be more flexible, this situation has started to be accepted more...”

As both İlker and Onur state, Doruk summarises his family’s acceptance process in a clear timeline in this way:

“From “We do not accept this, nothing like this can happen!”, it has gone towards “Do not do it in front of us.”, and then “Okay, we are okay with this being talked.”. Later, it has changed towards “We are okay with you, we love you.”, and now they accept my husband as he is from family.”

Here, he illustrates the initial non-acceptance, increasing tolerance and flexibility in family, and lastly their full support and acceptance. Youth reports getting better reactions from their families with time.

Increasing familial acceptance in time has emerged as a common theme as both parents and youth reflected. Ten of ten mothers illustrate that they become used to the fact that their child is gay, and now it is normalised in their lives. They report that they have become more tolerant, more relax and flexible, as youth has also highlighted with identical words.

One of the mothers, İlay, describes their nuclear family’s increasing acceptance with time as the following:

“Of course, it is sad at first times. But, now we are okay with this. We can talk about everything; we do not make this a problem. ”

Furthermore, when I asked her about the changes in her reactions, Oya, another mother, replied as follows:

“Of course, there is no shock reaction like that moment, I'm looking way more soft right now.”

Nine of the youth and all of the parents report that the acceptance of family has increased as they become more flexible, tolerant, and understanding in time. Not only nuclear family's but also extended family's acceptance has grown. For example, Birsen illustrates it this way:

“It's interesting, actually. My family is homophobic, but they accepted it in time. They have to accept if they want to be with us. Either their opinions or us... They have chosen us.”

Both parents and youth report that families' acceptance has increased with time.

4.2.2.1. Parents' Increased Awareness and Information about Sexual Orientations After Coming out. While their acceptance has been increasing, parents' opinions and awareness have also been changing as it emerged as a subtheme. Seven of the ten mothers highlighted that their awareness and information about sexual orientations and LGBTQ+ community have improved. They report that they have become more aware of the struggles that the youth faces, the definitions and terms, and that they were born this way.

For example, one of the mothers, Ayşe, who has volunteered to work in LISTAG Association (Families and Friends of LGBTIs in Turkey) after her daughter coming out to her. She states that her daughter led her to join one of the meetings of LISTAG, and she has been working there since then. She illustrates her increased awareness and information after her daughter coming out as follows:

“I have learned the extend of the situation, the terms, the concepts... and I use them a lot. I have realised other families' difficulties in life.”

Ayşe notes that after her awareness and information has increased, she volunteered for the association. This increased awareness and information have led Ayşe to fight for her daughter's existence and engage in activism as this has emerged as another theme that will be covered in social and cultural effects section.

Another mother, Birsen, reflects it in this way:

“My awareness has increased; I can say that clearly. I have a perspective now. I am more aware, and I want to do something if I can. My daughter coming out has affected me this way.”

Furthermore, parents' increased awareness and information about sexual orientations have also influenced their perspective of their own sexual orientation. Three of these seven mothers highlighted that they have become aware of their own sexual orientations. For example, Derya reflects it as following:

“I am 43, and I recently realised that I have a sexual orientation.”

Besides realising their own sexuality; they reflect a relief related to increased awareness and information. Olcay illustrates it as following:

“Would I try something like this? No. It's not about trying. The mind leans towards that way. I am a woman who likes men. I don't think of it like “Oh I will try this too.”. It is same for them too. I know, I have learned. After knowing this, I feel like life is good.”

4.2.3. Parents' Motivation for Acceptance: My Child. With the contribution of being informed and increased awareness about sexual orientations, parents report that they accept their children as who they are. They highlight that their motivation for acceptance was coming from their love and caring towards youth. Three subthemes of parents' motivation for acceptance have emerged from thematic analysis. Mothers state that being a parent makes it

an obligation to accept their child, that they support and be there for the youth, and that they care for their wellbeing.

“My Child” is a documentary of LISTAG Association (Families and Friends of LGBTIs in Turkey) in which families of LGBTI+ individuals tell their stories. The quote “My Child” is prompted by this documentary as it summarises the quotes of parents that illustrate their acceptance, love, support, care, and respect towards their children.

4.2.3.1. Acceptance as an Obligation that Comes with Being a Parent. One of the motivation of parents’ acceptance is that it is an obligation because they are parents. Eight of the ten mothers state that being a mother requires acceptance. As it is explained in the previous theme, they report they have been informed that there is nothing they can do to change the sexual orientation of youth; and they feel like they have to accept because they are their children.

For example, Birsen, one of the mothers, describes it as following:

“I look at them and see that they are very happy, then we just have to support them as parents... If my child is happy like this, I am happy too.”

Being a parent comes with an obligation to accept the child in any case, mothers state. Along the same line, one of the mothers, Beste, state that being a parent but especially the sense of motherhood is what makes her easier to accept compared to other family members. She explains it in this way:

“If his brother or father knew, how would they react of course would be different. Because they don't have a sense of motherhood. In my case motherliness is there...”

Furthermore, another mother, Defne illustrates it as following:

“From that point on, what can be done... We realized that we had to live with that. I can't just throw him on the street. There is nothing I can do. He is my soul and blood... One has to stand behind the child that she has brought to this world. Good or bad, he is my child.”

Here, she states that she realised she has to accept this because he is her son, there is nothing to do but to accept.

Mothers describe acceptance as an obligation that comes with being a parent. They report that they cannot reject their child in any case.

4.2.3.2. Supporting the Youth and Respecting Their Autonomy. All of the mothers state that they have been supporting and being there for their children whatever happens. Mothers report that they are proud of their children, and they support and respect their autonomy. This has been highlighted as an important motivation for parents' acceptance.

For example, one of the mothers, Birsen portrays it with tears in her eyes as following:

“Whatever she does, whatever she wants, I support her... It doesn't matter. I am here for my children, whatever they go through, as long as they share with me, good or bad, my hands will be on them.”

Moreover, Ülkü reports that she is proud of her son, and illustrates her support in this way:

“Then I accepted it now, I said this is my child and I am proud of my child. With his work, his success, his nature, his friends... I am proud of them all, I love them very much”

Along the same line, seven of these mothers highlighted that they respect the youth's autonomy while supporting them. As an instance, Yeliz explains her respect for her son in the following:

"I have always thought that this is his life. I help him whatever it is that I can do for him to be happy and healthy; but his relationships are none of my business. This is his private life. It's his private life whether he choose to be married or not, have a partner or not, have children or not... He is my child but I do not own him. That's why it is easy for me to accept."

Here, Yeliz illustrates her respect for her son as a factor that eases her to accept. She also mentions that she prioritizes her child's wellbeing as it is reported in the following subtheme.

4.2.3.3. Caring about Youth's Wellbeing. Seven of the ten mothers note that they prioritise youth's wellbeing. They want their children to be happy and healthy, not to be subjected to violence, not to be rejected or isolated, not to get harm... Some mothers even state that they needed to shield their children more than before coming out in order to protect their wellbeing.

For instance, Birsen illustrates it in this way:

"I might have been increasing the shield around her to protect her. I don't want her to be sad, I don't want her to get discriminated. Because this is not what she deserves. That's why, maybe, I want her to live abroad. She is already having other struggles and I don't want her to experience difficulties in this way too."

Here, Birsen explains that she cares about her daughter's wellbeing, therefore she wants to protect her from getting hurt from society. As societal and cultural effects will be

explained in the following themes, this subtheme of parents' care for youth's wellbeing illustrates that it motivated parents to accept and protect their children.

Along the same line, another mother, Oya, makes it clear that her son's happiness is priority for her regardless of her identification as a religious person and homosexuality is not welcomed in her religion:

"I told him to live the way he is happy."

Moreover, Yeliz explains it as following:

"For us, the health and happiness of our children come first. Everything else is just detail."

5. Positive Impact of Coming Out

5.1. Youth Feeling Free to Be Themselves with Relieving the Burden of Being Closeted. As the burden of being closeted was heavy for youth to carry, they stated that this motivated them to come out. The burden was reported to be consisted of lying, hiding, and not being themselves. After coming out process, all of the participants from youth highlighted that they feel free to be themselves by relieving the burden with coming out. They noted that not pretending like someone else, and not putting the mask of heterosexuality created a relief and a space that they do not have to lie about who they are.

Yağız examples this as following:

"How I interact with people has changed. How I talk myself has changed. I don't think if this is too feminine or not, I speak freely. I don't censor myself anymore, I don't do heteronormative self-censorship. And I feel light, relieved. I even feel it physiologically. When I wake up there is no weight, because there is no secret that I have to hide. I think that's really relieving."

Here, Yağız explains a relief that comes with not hiding who they are and how they live their life. Along the same line, Onur illustrates a feeling of being a hundred percent himself in his life with revealing who really is to his mother and being accepted. He explains it as following:

“The fact that a person expresses this to my family, that is, to his mirrors when he opens his eyes to the world, has caused tremendous positive transformations in me. It was a process where I started being 100% myself in life.”

He continues with tears in his eyes and describes the transformative effect of his mother’s accepting attitude:

“It is her one sentence that was like being presented with the years that I could not live. Because my mother told me that she is fine if I am fine.”

Besides, youth report a relief related to relieving the burden of being closeted. Ünal examples it as following:

“I think positive effect of coming out was feeling more comfortable. Not hiding anything, not lying to my mother have created a relief in me.”

Youth reflect that positive effect of coming out is to feel free to be themselves, and created a relief and a space that they don’t have to lie about who they are.

5.1.1. Shielding Effect of Families’ Acceptance on Youth to Be Themselves. Seven of the ten participants from youth highlight that families’ acceptance has a shielding effect against the negative reactions of society, and create feelings of confidence in their relationships. They state that they feel approved and confident, therefore they do not fear about other people knowing about their sexual orientation.

As an instance, Onat explains that the fear of his family finding out his sexual orientation has been eliminated, and continues:

«Positive effect was to be able to behave more free, living with confidence... When there is a problem elsewhere ... Fear that my family will know about it ... Now I am like " Okay, it wouldn't be a problem because they support me.". This state of self-confidence and my family supporting the way I live my life have relieved me.»

Here, Onat highlights that he is not hesitant about other people finding out his sexual orientation. Besides, Ünal, another participant from youth, examples this effect on his relationships with his extended family. He explains the elimination of his fears towards extended family as following:

"I think I have become fearless especially towards my extended family. Because I know that my mother will support me, back me up. So the fear that people will find out has been eliminated... The fact that my mother knows gives me a feeling of being approved. "My mom is on my side, who are you to judge me? My mother accepts me like that, who are you?" It is something like that for me. "

He highlights feelings of reassurance that accompany his mother's approval. The shielding effect of family's approval is also described by Onur as following:

"Because, what coming out to my mother actually means is that "I have a family who accepts me and I don't care what the rest of the world says."."

5.2. Better Relationships in Family After Coming out. As the previous theme revealed, with youth feeling free to be themselves, better relationships in the family are reported. More honest and close relationships in the family after coming out has been noted by eight participants from youth and nine of the ten parents as it has emerged as a common theme.

For instance, Oya, one of the mothers, reports the increased openness in her relationship with her son after coming out as following:

“That hesitation of his has gone against me, I think he has become more open. He became a child who could speak when he had a problem.”

Moreover, accompanying openness, mothers portray feeling more close to their children and want to support more. Beste illustrates it as follows:

“I have attached to him more than before. I wanted to be there for him more. I wanted to protect him, I wanted to carry him on my back. I really wanted this.”

Youth also reported better relationships after coming out as it has emerged as a common theme. They highlight the trust and safety in their relationships after coming out. For instance, Doruk, portrays it as following:

“We trusted each other more, I have become able to share everything, they have freed me, they behaved more understanding, it has become safer and open.”

Increased trust and security in the family relationships is accompanied by an increase in the sharing, and vice versa. Birce illustrates this in this way:

“Now, my father is telling me about his love life and problems, and I am telling him mine, and I don’t have to lie anymore. And with all these sharing, I think he feels closer to me, because there is nothing to hide.”

As it is explained in the previous themes, initial reactions have included negative feelings and harsh reactions that created initial distress. Participants note that initial distress has been relieved and they turned into better relationships after a long process of spending effort in search for acceptance. In time, relationships in the family has mended and a secure bond has been established as eight of the participants from youth and nine mothers highlighted. As an example, Onat reflects it in this way:

“In the following times, our relationship with my family was repaired and improved over the years.”

6. Social & Cultural Effects

One of the research questions was how the social and cultural values affect coming out process. When I asked about it, 20 of 20 participants reflected the negative effect on coming out process as it has emerged as a common theme for both youth and parents. They noted that social and cultural values were a hump for both that makes the process more difficult, and lack of reliable sources and being uninformed were reported as barriers. On the other hand, they highlighted that social support eased the coming out process for both youth and parents.

6.1. Social and Cultural Values Being a Hump for Both Youth and Parents. Ten of ten participants from youth and ten of ten mothers have reflected that the values of society and culture in Turkey have been a hump for both. These values have been exemplified as heteronormative standards and stereotypes, the disrespect for diversities, and conservative attitudes. Two subthemes have emerged from this theme: Stereotypes being a barrier, and distressing effect of homophobia and heteronormativity.

Youth states that the societal expectations about marriage made it more difficult for their families to accept their sexual orientation. For example, Ünal, explains it in this way:

“In general, expectations, marriage, the boost of heterosexual relationships have made it so difficult. Because it becomes more problematic to explain to family. I think it can be said that this is cultural pressure. ...Psychological violence is really heavy. There is a serious pressure on us. And nowadays, these have grown tremendously.”

Here, he illustrates the difficulty of explaining it to his family because of these social and cultural expectations and pressures. He also reveals the aspect of violence stating how hard it is. Along the same line, mothers report that the sociocultural values were one of the

factors that made them react negatively in the initial phase and created worries for the youth's wellbeing. For example, one of the mothers, İlay, explains it as following:

«We didn't want this, because in societal values, this as a bad thing. In my childhood, there was a homosexual neighbour, everyone used to isolate him. My father too... I was a kid but this has rooted in me as a bad thing.»

Here, İlay reflects that she did not want her son to be gay and tried to change his sexual orientation; because she had witnessed homosexual individuals being isolated and discriminated in the society in her past experiences. Another mother, Yeliz, also mentions the struggles her son might have to face because of the heteronormativity:

“The accepted norm in the world is heterosexuality. Because there is reproduction. I thought about whether he will face struggles in his life.”

Both youth and parents explain the values of society and culture such as marriage ideals, stereotypes, heteronormativity and homophobia being barriers in the coming out process as they have emerged as subthemes. These are all interconnected but not overlapping subthemes, which will be explained further in below.

6.1.1. Stereotypes Being a Barrier. Eight of the ten participants from youth have highlighted the stereotypes, representations, and misattributions as barriers in their coming out process because of the expectations these create in their families and the society in general. As an instance, İlker illustrates it as following:

“It is definitely misunderstandings, stereotypes and representations that make it difficult. Because Bülent Ersoy comes to mind when homosexual is mentioned... All concepts are intertwined. Considering immoralities as a cluster...”

Here, İlker mentions the misconceptions in the society with the example of Bülent Ersoy, who is a famous transsexual artist in Turkey. He states that a transsexual individual is thought as a homosexual and attributes to the misconceptualities about transsexuality and homosexuality in the society.

Furthermore, Onat illustrates the negative effect of stereotypes on his mother's acceptance by creating misattributions. He explains it in the following way:

“Effeminacy, masculinity etc. are problematic subjects like my mom saying “This boy doesn't even have an illness, why is he like this?” ... These social values, social rules have made my process difficult.”

Youth portrays the difficulties stereotypes in the society and culture create in their coming out process by creating misconceptions and misattributions in families. They also illustrate the negative effect of stereotypes on being subjected to violence as it has emerged as another subtheme.

6.1.1.1. Divergence of Gender Performance & Stereotypes Accounts for Being Bullied. Seven of these eight participants from youth highlights that not conforming to stereotypes of the society has accounts for being bullied, abused, and threatened. They report that starting from their childhood, they have been bullied by their peers, or by authorities.

For example, İlker, illustrates being bullied by his peers at the school age as following:

“In elementary school, boys used to kiss me. When I ask why do they kiss me, they used to say «because you are a girl!». They were calling me “fagot”, pushing me down... They used to yell at me saying “Fagot!”, and laugh when I turn around. I have always been bullied.”

İlker was bullied by his peers, and he reports being ashamed of being feminine and ashamed of being bullied because of being feminine. Youth notes that they were constantly warned by their family to change their non-conforming gender performance.

Deniz was another participant from youth who is bullied and still being bullied on social media because of the way she looks. She states it in the following way:

“They say “No men would like you. That’s why you become a lesbian.”. They don’t see me as a person for men to like.”

Furthermore, Aslı was bullied by the authority in her school. She explains her experience in this way:

“In elementary school, the headmaster wanted me in his office, and asked me “Are you a pervert?”.”

Youth note being heard of disgusting adjectives, people telling that this is a sickness, and threatened to tell their family about their non-conforming performance. They are bullied and abused because of the way they look, or the way they perform which do not conform with the social and cultural stereotypes. This divergence between youth’s gender performance and the gender stereotypes of the society accounts for being bullied and abused.

6.1.2. Distressing effect of Homophobia & Heteronormativity in Turkey. As stereotypes in the society has been emerged as one of the humps of social and cultural values for youth; homophobia and heteronormativity in Turkey have been reported to be another barrier for both youth and mothers. Distressing effect of homophobia and heteronormativity has emerged as a common theme as ten of ten parents and nine of the ten participants from youth have been highlighting the misinformation in society, the homophobic speeches and acts, heteronormativity marginalising homosexual relationships... They note the freedom in Western countries relative to Turkey.

For example, Doruk from youth describes the homophobia in the society as following:

“A male, who is a divine being, acting like a woman, who is an inferior being, is not welcomed. I think this is the reason behind homophobia in the society.”

He thinks that patriarchy is the root of the homophobia in society, and this causes LGBTQI+ youth to be bullied, discriminated, and abused. Youth also mentions the distressing effect of heteronormativity in the society. For example, Deniz describes the heteronormativity in society as a factor that delays her identification as a lesbian. She illustrates her experience as following:

“Back then, I thought I was a bisexual or something. It is usually like that; one cannot directly say that she is a lesbian. Because a woman has to like men, it is default. It is default that one likes men, if she is a woman. If a woman realise that she also likes women, she thinks she is a bisexual.”

Here, Deniz explains that she thought she was a bisexual because of the heteronormative standards, and it took a while for her to identify herself as a lesbian. Youth states that these heteronormative standards have been marginalising their sexual identities and relationships which create distress in their coming out process.

Furthermore, Birce reports that the homophobic atmosphere in Turkey makes her worried about her life as she was highlighting the freedom in Western societies relative to Turkey:

“Am I going to get killed when I am outside, am I going to die? Everything is possible.”

Here, she illustrates her fear about being subjected to violence because of the attitudes in society towards her sexual orientation. Along the same line with Birce, parents note that

the atmosphere in Turkey creates a state of unpeacefulness and uneasiness on them too. Oya examples it in this way:

“I pray for him to not to get hurt. Because this is Turkey and everything can happen in any minute.”

They both underline that there is uncertainty about the future of youth in Turkey. This is an everyday phrase that citizens of Turkey use to highlight the uncertainty: “This is Turkey, everything can happen in any minute.”

In addition to youth’s reflections, mothers highlight that this homophobic and heteronormative atmosphere is the root of their worries about their children’s wellbeing as them worrying was a previous theme. For example, one of the mothers, Ayşe reflects her worries about her daughter’s future related to the homophobic society as follows:

“It’s a conservative society. People are disrespectful and very reactive towards diversities. That’s why I am worried about my child’s future.”

Mothers stated that this homophobia and heteronormativity in society affected their reactions to their children’s coming out; and also their perspective towards LGBTIQ+ individuals. Before they have been informed and increased awareness, as explained in previous themes, some of the mothers report to have these homophobic and heteronormative attitudes too. For example, Olcay, explains it in the following:

“I might have said something homophobic, because there are words that are settled in all of us in everyday language.”

As the quotes above illustrate, both mothers and youth state the distressing effect of societal negative attitudes on coming out process by creating worries about future,

6.1.2.1. Fighting for Existence in a Homophobic Society. In time, after getting informed and increased awareness about sexual orientations, and realising the difficulties their children face in the homophobic and heteronormative society, parents reflect that they feel the urge to fight for the youth to exist in the society. Fighting for existence in a homophobic society is one of the subthemes that emerged after thematic analysis as it is a common subtheme that eight mothers and eight participants from youth have reported. Activism of parents and youth takes many forms from engaging in NGO's activities, and informing and trying to raise awareness in their own social circles to parents supporting their children from the bottom of their hearts with biding defiance to society's opinions.

For example, Birsen, one of the mothers illustrates her fight for her daughter's existence in the society as following:

"I want to do it as a parent, if it's going to help someone. I have become more scrutinising, more sharing, if I can do something about it, I want to do it. I have become more reactive. I used to turn around, but now I answer them back. I can say what is on my mind. I want to tell people that this is normal."

Here, she examples her efforts to inform and raise awareness in her social circle. Besides mothers, youth also notes that they engage in activism. As an instance, İlker states that he has been working on creating content to inform people in the following way:

"I don't want anyone to experience the same thing. That's why I am working in this area. I want to create content."

Moreover, since they have been questioning their presence in the society; youth underline the need to be in activism in order to become visible. They fight for their existence in a homophobic society. Along the same line, their efforts to explain themselves to their families and to inform them was a previously reported theme which is a form of activism. For

instance, Doruk describes this experience as a “passive activism that lasted years and years”; and Onur also attributes to this passive activism as following:

“Because every homosexual individual, who accepted themselves, carries this activism inside even if they don’t act out. Like we have to tell people we have to inform people...”

6.1.2.2. Parents Being Reluctant about Coming out to Their Social Circle. As another distressing effect of homophobic and heteronormative society, eight of the ten parents note that they feel hesitant about coming out to their social circle. They illustrate a fear about the reactions they may get, they choose specific people to share and make explanations considering the characteristics about these people. Mothers highlight that it is exhausting to make explanations to people around them; therefore, they report to be reluctant about coming out.

For instance, İlay portrays her fear of getting a negative reaction from her social circle as following:

“I didn’t want to meet anyone, like everyone knew about the situation... What would they say, how would they react, am I going to blurt it out...? These have always made me sad.”

Similarly, Ülkü states her fear of homophobic prejudices that keeps her hesitant about sharing her son’s sexual orientation. She explains it in this way:

“I want to tell people that my son is gay, but I am afraid of people’s prejudices.”

Furthermore, they report that it is hard to make explanations to people because of the homophobic attitudes, and there is a possibility of an argument. As an example, Oya portrays it as following:

“There is only one thing that made the coming out process difficult: I cannot explain these to people around me. I don’t want to argue with them so I don’t want to talk to them about these.”

6.2. Lack of Reliable Sources and Being Uninformed as Barriers in Process.

Lack of reliable sources and being uninformed are reported to be barriers in the coming out process. It has emerged as a common theme as seven of the ten participants from youth and six of the ten mothers. Mothers note that the process would be much easier if they were informed about sexual orientations. They state that the reason behind their hope of changing youth’s sexual orientation, not being helpful to their children in the process was being uninformed.

For example, Defne portrays it as following:

“We were facing something that we knew nothing about. The people that we know were Zeki Müren, Bülent Ersoy etc. We knew no one who is homosexual.”

Here, Defne states that she was misinformed because of the societal representations. She mentions the two famous artists in Turkey, one of them is a transgender female, and the other is a male with a feminine performance. She notes that the only people she knows who is homosexual were them. This illustrates the misconceptions in the society and lack of representations; and the effect of these on parents’ attitudes in coming out process.

Similarly, one of the mothers, Derya reflects that her negative reaction was related to being uninformed, and continues:

“I don’t know maybe they could teach us. There are psychological counsellors at schools. They could. Our reaction is about our ignorance and nothing else.”

Youth also reflects the lack of information and reliable sources being barriers in the coming out process. They state that there were no reliable sources when they were coming out to themselves. As an instance, one of the participants from youth, Deniz underlines it as following:

“Back then, there was no one to inform me about all this stuff.”

This affected not only their process of coming out to themselves; but also their process of coming out to their families. Youth, as mothers do, highlights that it would be much easier if their families were informed or could be informed by reliable and understandable sources. For example, İlker underlines it in this way:

“It would make it much better if there were sources. Sources that I can understand myself, that I can trust, I can get help, with understandable words. It would be much easier... Families have no information at all.”

6.3. Social Support Easing the Process for Both Youth and Parents. The negative effect of social and cultural values has been reported previously. Besides, an easing effect of social support was also reported by both parents and youth. It has emerged as a common theme as 8 of the youth and 9 parents highlighted. Youth underlines the importance of queer community and their chosen family support.

For example, Ünal from youth was with his friends when he was doing the initial coming out talk with his mother. He highlights the easing effect of social support as following:

“My friends being there for me has eased the process.”

Moreover, youth illustrates that their friends have given them comfort and fasten the process of coming out. Yağız examples it as following:

“My friends’ support absolutely. If they were not there, I wouldn’t be able to come out this fast.”

Like youth, parents’ process was also eased by the social support they got as Beste notes it in this way:

“My sister has embraced me. She has sweetened me up. That felt so good, she didn’t even talk, she just stayed there for me.”

A relief in their feelings of isolation has been reported with talking with other people who experienced the same process. Olcay explains it as following:

“I see them in social media. There are people like me. There are people who experienced the same thing as me.”

Moreover, parents report a relief with realising that their children are not alone. For example, Ülkü examples this as following:

“I thought “He is not alone.”. This relieved me.”

7. Coming out Being a Difficult Process.

Both youth and the parents have reflected on the coming out process while answering the questions. This theme is consisted of these reflections including the subtheme of 8.1. continuing negative effects.

Coming out being a difficult process has emerged as a common theme for both youth and the mothers. Seven of the 10 participants from youth and 9 of the 10 mother reported that coming out was a difficult experience that includes negative emotions like sadness and fear. For example, Defne, one of the mothers, portrays it in the following:

“It was bad. It was a bad experience. A devastating experience for a person...”

Moreover, İlay, also a mother, reflects on the process as following:

“I can’t think anything positive about it. I can’t. There was always something sad.”

While both of them note that it was a difficult experience, mothers also realise that coming out was particularly difficult for their children besides themselves as parents. For instance, one of the mothers, Oya notes that it was a difficult experience for her son as following:

“He couldn’t tell us at first, and we couldn’t understand because we didn’t know anything about these subjects and were ignorant. That’s why for a long time, for a couple of years, he was struggling.”

Besides mothers, youth also reflected that coming out was a difficult experience. For example, İlker, one of the participants from youth reported as following:

“It is very difficult... I wouldn’t want to realise that my family is not there for me at that age. I really would want to change that. For a child, this is not something that can be handled. It’s very heavy, that is, something that hits you in the face. My family wasn’t there for me no matter what. I wish I hadn’t seen it at that age. That’s why when I see people trying to come out, I always say something like “Think again. You will see the dirtiest side of the family. Your mother won’t be able to look at you the same way. You’re actually going to have said who you really are, and she’ll think you’re someone else now.” Coming out is a process like this: “You were human, but now something happened to you, you turned into a monkey and we have to cage you and make you human again.”. Especially if the family has such an attitude... I wouldn’t want to experience it at that age. I would like to change this. Maybe when I got a little older...”

Moreover, Ünal, another participant from youth, portrays the coming out process as dramatic and tragic in the initial times:

“It was dramatic. With all those fighting and arguing... It was tragic at first.”

7.1. Continuing Negative Effects of Coming Out. The negative experiences in the coming out process have been explained in the previous themes. This subtheme includes the continuing negative effects of the process. Six participants from youth have noted that negative effects of coming out such as the subject being still an elephant in the room in the family, still having a depressive part inside related with the coming out process, having some incomplete issues about the process, fears related to the past experiences in the coming out process.

For example, Ünal portrays the still continuing negative effects as following:

“Other than that, I feel happy, but there are some incompletenesses, for example. I don't know if it can be called an emotion, but... For example, I just heard about it, a friend of mine came out to his mother 2-3 weeks ago. When my friend told his mother, he called his mother and said that he could talk to my mother. When she called my mother later, she actually experienced the same process, cried over, couldn't accept it, blamed herself etc. etc. But my mother always says, "How successful our children are, they're all in good places.". One thinks about things like “Would I have gone through the same process even if I wasn't successful? Or would it be different?” I don't want to get into a fight with my mother when there are certain settlements because we cannot talk about an event that does not exist. But sometimes she says it like this... This is actually “I wonder if I really didn't have a good job right now, if I couldn't earn, if I was living dependent on my mother, would it be like this? Would

she think the same way? ". This sometimes confuses me. I haven't said anything until now, but I take a deep breath and then shut up. "

Moreover, İlker reports the negative change in his relationship with his family:

"They suppressed this as they suppressed everything else. Our relationship was insincere, and remained insincere. We have become afraid of each other, so they are afraid to ask me something, afraid of the answers they will hear; and I am afraid of their reaction. I still see a lot of the effect of that process. For example, I show a photo and if she laughs, I think, "Do I look feminine, did she see something in the photo?". I still think of such things, but I try to banish them like "Don't be silly, there's no such thing. ". "

Deniz, another participant from youth explains the still an elephant in the room situation as following:

"I think it's accepted now, but she still doesn't act like it's there. "Let it be out of sight, away from me, let's not talk about it much... " kind of attitude my mother has now. "

Chapter V

Discussion

This qualitative analysis has explored the experiences of self-identified lesbian and gay youth and their parents in Turkey. Main research questions were how the social and cultural values effect their coming out experiences, and how the family relationships are influenced by coming out process.

Ten self-identified gay/lesbian youth and their mothers were interviewed with semi structured questions separately. Interview questions were developed based on family systems theory. The data were transcribed and analysed using thematic analysis. Seven themes and seventeen subthemes have emerged from thematic analysis. In this section, themes and subthemes will be discussed in relation to the literature of coming out and the base theory which is Family Systems Theory.

Youth in this study noted that acceptance of self is a process that includes isolation and confusion. With acceptance of self, in time, hiding who they are has become a burden that motivates them to come out. First theme is “acceptance of self as a process” in which youth experiences isolation and confusion, and being closeted becomes a burden for them. Coming out to self is an intrapersonal concept in which one realises and identifies their sexual orientations (Monroe, 2000). Youth’s feelings of isolation and confusion as a subtheme is consistent with the current literature. Youth’s feelings of isolation and confusion as a subtheme is consistent with the current literature. It is noted that when coming out to self, youth has feelings of differentness and their need to hide (Levounis, Drescher, & Barber, 2012). In early models, this isolation and feeling different is attributed to not fitting with the social and cultural norms (Eliason & Schope, 2007). For example, an early model, Cass (1979) notes that youth experience confusion as a stage of their identity formation. Even though in our study, it is not the aim to explain the stages of identity development, Cass’ (1979) study is consistent with our results. Moreover, consistent with the results of our study, Valenti and Campbell (2009) has noted that LGBTQI+ individuals experience loneliness, and feelings of differentness in the process of acceptance of self.

Levounis et al. (2012) also highlighted that youth do not identify themselves as homosexual at first, rather they try to understand their feelings and think “not exclusively

heterosexual” (p.31). Moreover, they also elaborate the self-acceptance as a process. These are also reported by youth in our study, consistent with the literature.

Being closeted has been reported to be a burden on youth. They note that hiding who they really are, pretending like someone else, putting on a “heteromask” has become unbearable and they decide to come out. Lying and hiding had created a huge distress on LGBTQI+ individuals as the stress of being closeted is revealed in the coming out literature consistent with the results of this study (Eliason, Streed, & Henne, 2018).

Both youth and parents had suspicions prior to first disclosure. Youth’s suspicion was about their parents’ suspicion of their sexual orientation, and parents’ suspicion was about youth’s sexual orientation. Second theme was suspicions prior to coming out. Youth has reported that they have suspected that their parents were suspicious about their sexual orientations prior to coming out; and parents have noted that they have suspected. This result contradicts with LaSala (2010) study. LaSala (2010) suggests that youth suspects that their parents suspected but parents report that they did not suspect. In the current study, only two of the families were noted this difference.

Parents noted that they suspected from the plays their children preferred, the relationships with their peers, and not having a romantic relationship. Not conforming with the stereotypes was the main reason to suspect for the parents in the current study. Similar to LaSala (2010)’s findings, it was an elephant in the room before initial disclosure. However, all of the parents have reported being surprised even the ones who reported that they had suspicions prior to coming out talk.

Third theme was youth’s worries about the anticipated negative reactions. Related to these worries, they have planned the initial disclosure, and they have used the opportunity to come out. Youth’s worries were reported in the coming out literature Potoczniak et al.,

(2009) found fear of rejection emotionally and physically was the main emotion of youth. Besides rejection being one of the worries; youth in current study highlights that they feared and worried because their family means so much to them. This result is also consistent with the studies in the literature which points the reason of the worries as a potential weakening in the existing positive relationship with the family (D'Augelli, 1991; D'Augelli & Herschberger, 1993).

Youth using the opportunity of the context to come out has been mentioned in Manning (2015) study as the emergent conversations type of coming out disclosure. He notes that these emergent conversations can occur in everyday talk if the person feels safe enough to disclose. As the youth in this study was mentioning the spontaneity and the feelings of safety when they decide to disclose in the talk; an early study also suggest the disclosure is decided when someone is safe enough to tell (Ponse, 1978).

In the current study, what youth was reflecting is that they were emergent conversations, besides they thought that that moment was an opportunity that may never come again. Youth considering that moment as an opportunity is interpreted in the literature as the desire to more intimacy and honesty in their relationships (Cain, 1991; Nemeyer; 1980; Ponse, 1978). Youth had used the opportunity of the context to disclose their sexual identity in order to get a more positive coming out experience in which they hope to get parental acceptance.

When youth decided to come out, all of the participants in this study who had a self-disclosure, noted that they have disclosed to their mothers. This is also highlighted in the literature for example in LaSala (2010) and Rossi (2010). Moreover, in this study, three of the youth has an experience of coming out that is confrontational. Manning (2015) describes this type of disclosure as the most chaotic one. Along the same line with Manning (2015) study, these three participants of the current study reported the most intense disclosure talk. They,

both parents and the youth, reflected that regarding the process, they what they would like to change is the timing and type of the disclosure. They want to come out in their own time as it also is their right.

Studies in the literature suggest that it is more likely for the youth to come out when they have a romantic relationship (e.g. D'Augelli et al., 2001; Pistella et al., 2016). Unlike these studies, participants of the current study reported that they did not have a romantic relationship when they came out to their families, neither they report the effect of their romantic relationships. This might be because these studies in the literature included participants from youth who self-identify as bisexual. It is suggested that the decision to come out in bisexual youth is more likely to be influenced by existence of a stable same-gendered relationship (Pistella et al., 2016).

Initial reactions have included the subthemes of experiencing negative emotions and initial non acceptance. Experiencing negative emotions was a common subtheme for both youth and parents. Besides, they have reported that they realised the other's negative emotions too. This can be interpreted in the family system as coming out as a reciprocal dynamic process in which parents and youth empathise with each other.

In the coming out process, both youth and the family experience negative emotions (LaSala, 2010). Parents highlighted that they had experienced an initial surprise and shock even though they have been suspected before. In an early study, shock is defined as one of the first stages that parents go through in coming out process (Sauerman, 1984). Parents' initial shock is attributed to be one of the underlying emotions of the initial negative reactions in Savin-Williams' (2001) study; as the parents of the current study reports.

Parents in this study have reported experiencing worries. Along the same line, in other studies, it is found that parents are afraid of their children getting bullied or be subjected to

violence because of the societal biases (D'amico et al., 2015). Mothers have worries because of these social and cultural homophobia and heteronormativity; they report their concerns about their children's future. Social and cultural values affect the coming out process in both individual and interpersonal level as parents also note that their sadness was related to their children's wellbeing.

Both parents and youth experienced worries in the initial coming out process. Youth was worried about their families' reactions; while mothers were worried about youth's wellbeing. Parents report that their fear for their child's wellbeing led their negative reactions; and youth notes these negative reactions led an increase in youth's fear of rejection. Paradoxically, parents' intention of their child not to get hurt, caused more negative feelings in youth.

In studies that are conducted in U.S.A, it is found that parents' worries included their children being diagnosed AIDS (Ben-Ari, 1995). However, it has not emerged as a theme in the current study. This might be related with the date this study was conducted, when there was an outbreak, or youth's sexuality being a taboo that parents even didn't want to bring out the subject.

As initial worries were a common subtheme, youth underlined that they had experienced worries after the initial disclosure related to their families' negative reactions. It is also found in other studies that gay youth fear the parental rejection (Becker-Gorby, 1983; Moses, 1978; Nemeyer, 1980; Potoczniak et al., 2009; Raphael; 1974; Spaulding, 1982). What is also found in the literature but did not in the current study is that youth had fears about their safety (Herek, 1989; Obear, 1991) and/or their financial support (Nemeyer, 1980; Ponse, 1978; Woods & Harbeck, 1991).

Youth has also reported that they have been worrying about their relationships with their families. The stress on family system that is caused by disclosing their sexual identity

made them fear about their positive relationship with their families and jeopardised the support they got from them. From systems theory perspective, it can be interpreted that youth would have more worries if the already existing family balance includes positive relationships; because coming out is a stress that disturbs family balance. Although a review on coming out's effect on family relationships found that positive family relationships make the coming out costlier for the youth (Heatherington, & Lavner, 2008); in the current study, it did not emerge as a specific theme or subtheme from qualitative thematic analysis. However, the youth reported that they have spent efforts to get their families' acceptance.

Youth reported that they have been feeling sorry after the initial reactions of the family as it has emerged as a common subtheme for both parents and the youth. These common themes have shown the importance of hearing out the perspectives of both youth and the parents in order to reach comprehensive and accurate themes that reflect the coming out experiences.

Mothers in the current study reported that they have experienced sadness after the initial disclosure. Their sadness was about their children's future lives, and homosexuality being demonised in the society. The negative feelings after initial coming out was not independent from the societal level influences.

Like studies in the coming out literature like Walters, and Skeen's (1989), the discourses of parents who noted experiencing grief that resembles the loss of a loved one emerged as a subtheme from thematic analysis, under the sadness theme. There were three parents who noted that it resembled the grief after death among nine participants who mentioned sadness. These results are consistent with Walters and Skeen's (1989), and LaSala's (2010) studies; but also what Savin-William (2001,b) suggests. Savin-William (2001,b) suggests that grief is not broadly relevant in explaining the parental reactions, rather it is not applicable to majority of the community as the mothers in this study noted that they

experienced sadness which is a more comprehensive term. We have included grief as a subtheme with the feedbacks we have been given by our participants. These mothers report that they have experienced a deep feeling of loss after the initial disclosure.

Parents' harsh reactions with anger has emerged as a theme in this study, as it did in other studies in the field. For example, Savin-Williams (2001) states that punitive reactions like asking the child to leave the house, cutting of the financial support, or beating the child. In our study, youth noted that they have experienced only being asked to leave the house, not the other experiences that are noted by Savin-Williams (2001).

In addition, youth in this study reported that their families told them that they are sick and need treatment. This is caused by misattributions of homosexuality which has reported as another theme. Families thought that homosexuality can be treated, can be "fixed", because it is caused by hormonal problems, or lack of role models. This lack of information in families has been a barrier in the coming out process.

Youth note that anger and negative reactions of their families have caused them more negative emotions like sadness and fear of rejection. This result is consistent with the literature of coming out. For example, Tamagawa (2018) revealed that after coming out youth experiences "anxiety, loneliness, feeling down, self-hatred" when they face negative reactions (p. 504). Also, higher rates of suicidality among youth after coming out has been reported in the field (D'Augelli et al., 2001; Rimes et al., 2018). However, in our study, only 1 of the participants reported being suicidal after coming out. There might be an effect of this being a retrospective study, participants may not recall these feeling in depth. Also, one can interpret this as the negative reactions and anger of the parents in this study were not as harsh as the literature suggested, which may lead lower suicidality rates in the youth in this study. The participant who noted he was suicidal was the one who experienced the most punitive reactions such as being subjected to conversion therapy. His experience is consistent with the

studies in the field, while rest of the youth did not report being suicidal (D'Augelli et al., 2001; Rimes et al., 2018).

Mothers in current study highlighted that they tried to hold these negative feelings in and not to reflect these on their children. This finding is coherent with the literature of coming out. LaSala (2010) has found that parents spent effort not to reveal their first emotions to “shield” the child, therefore youth did not realise these negative emotions. There is a contradiction at this point that in current study, youth realised how hard it is for their parents; even though the depth of these negative emotions may not be fully reflected on youth.

Moreover, initial non-acceptance has emerged as another theme. In the initial times, families and youth have a hard time adapting the new stage of their lives as D'amico et al., (2015) notes.

Youth reported that they had observed denial in their families in the initial process which is consistent with the results of previous studies. For example, Denes and Afifi (2014) note that youth states that they think their parents were in denial, and that led them to come out more than one time. In our study, three of the ten participants from youth needed to come out second time. Youth mention that it was an elephant in the room for a while after the initial disclosure. It is convenient that one interprets this elephant in the room situation as creating distance with the subject being discussed in order to avoid possible painful conflicts in the family. LaSala (2010) has been reporting this distance in the relationship between the youth and the parents, rather in our study, it is noted that the distance was about avoiding the subject from being discussed.

While youth had observed their parents' attitudes as denial, parents explain these as the hope of changing the sexual orientation. Parents noted that they tried to find a solution to

the perceived problem which is related to their misattribution of sexual orientations. They note that they have tried to change them because they thought they would change somehow. Homosexuality is attributed to having hormonal problems, biological or genetic causes, the family structure, or lack of role models. Families' worries of their children being subjected to violence by society fed their hope and efforts of changing their homosexuality which in turn hurt them more. Mothers realise that their hope of changing the homosexuality of their children hurt them more than they would get hurt by the society because of being homosexual. Their care and love towards their children, being informed and increased awareness led them to accept them as who they are and fight for their existence in the society with them. The effects of society and culture will be discussed further.

From a family stress theory perspective, a system approach, parents' efforts and hopes of changing youth 's sexual orientation may be efforts of maintaining the family system as it is because the disclosure creates distress on family balance. The family system is shaken with the disclosure and tries to maintain the homeostasis (DeVine, 1984). Here, family adaptability and cohesion are important concepts. Family adaptability is defined in Olson's (1989) study as following "the ability of a family system to change its power structure, role relationships and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress" (p.12). The disclosure acts as a developmental stress on families, and families' adaptability predicts outcomes; as Willoughby et al., (2006) found that family adaptability is one the predictors of less negative parental reactions in the initial coming out.

Moreover, these hopes and efforts of changing youth's sexual orientation defined as the bargaining phase in the grieving process (Savin-Williams & Dubé, 1998); or the family adjustment phase (DeVine, 1984). In the current study, youth report that their parents were at first in denial and tried to find ways to change their sexual orientations, and when they understood that it cannot be changed, they told them to keep it as a secret. These can be

interpreted as efforts of managing the crisis on family system in the family adjustment phase (DeVine, 1984).

It is revealed in the studies of coming out literature that parents tend to blame themselves for the youth's sexual orientation and experience guilt (e.g. D'amico et al., 2015; LaSala, 2010). Unlike these studies, in the current study, only three of the ten mothers noted that they have experienced guilt in the coming out process and thought that they have done something wrong when they have been raising their children. Rest of the participants did not think that it is their fault, rather they misattributed homosexuality to family structure and blamed the fathers. They note that they thought it is their nuclear family structure with a dominant mother and a passive father figure that influenced and modelled their children to be homosexual. Or they thought it is because of the distress created in their children by the domestic violence at home that the fathers engaged in. Mothers in the current study, reported that they blamed fathers and the family structure rather than themselves, which is not consistent with the most of the studies in literature of coming out such as D'amico et al.'s (2015) and LaSala's (2010).

Furthermore, in the initial non-acceptance theme, non-supportive attitude of family being a barrier has emerged as a common subtheme. They highlighted the negative attitudes of fathers created feelings of isolation from families in youth. They noted that negative attitudes have been rooted from the social and cultural biases that includes homophobia and heteronormativity. Youth was reluctant to come out to their fathers due to their negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Consistent with these results, many studies have found that mothers are more supportive and accepting than the fathers (Ben-Ari, 1995; Conley, 2011; D'Augelli, 2002; D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 1998).

In the current study, only two of the ten participants from youth have come out to their fathers themselves; five of them noted that they did not disclose their sexual identity to their fathers; and three of them report that their mothers informed fathers. The ones who did not disclose noted that they do not feel close to their fathers because of their negative attitudes towards homosexuality. Along the same line, in Cramer and Roach's (1988) study it is found that youth had more positive relationships with their mothers than the fathers.

Also, mothers informing the fathers about the sexual identity of the youth examples emotional triangulation in the family. Emotional triangulation is an important concept that is not always problematic (Minuchin, 1974). In this case, emotional triangulation might have been useful. The youth would get negative reactions themselves, rather they heard these from their mothers. Vice versa, the fathers would react more negatively if they were faced with the youth. Along the same line, eight of the ten participants from youth did not disclose to their fathers. Between parents, they tend to decide coming out to the mothers, instead of fathers (LaSala, 2010; Rossi, 2010).

As coming out is revealed to be a process in many studies in the literature and in current study, acceptance has also been highlighted as a process by both youth and parents (e.g. Cramer & Roach, 1988; Klein et al., 2014; Manning, 2015; Orne, 2011). Coming out is a dynamic complex process that includes a dynamic complex process of families' acceptance (Klein et al., 2014). Family acceptance is what the youth has been longing for since they have been facing with peer abuse, bullying, and social discrimination. As it is stated before, mothers fear of these potential abuse from society, and try to change the sexual identity which in turn hurt youth more. This is an interactional cycle of coming out. However, youth needs acceptance from their families at first which gives them the strength to face it all and shields the youth. as LaSala (2010) states "home is a needed safe haven" for the LGBTQI+ youth.

Youth reports that they have been spending efforts to explain themselves in search for acceptance of their families. They have been informing the family about the sexual orientations and concepts, trying to explain them that this is neither a sickness nor their fault. These efforts of explaining themselves in turn created awareness and increased parents' information about sexual orientations while contributing to their acceptance and support.

Both youth and parents in this study highlighted families' acceptance of youth's sexual identity has increased in time.

Youth's efforts of explaining themselves that led increased awareness and information in parents contributed their accepting attitudes. With these increased awareness and information, parents are engaging in fight for their children's existence in the society by informing their social circle, and supporting their child.

Besides, parents report that their acceptance comes from being a parent, and caring for the youth's wellbeing. These are reported to be the motivations of parental acceptance and support. Mothers noted that they have accepted the situation because of them being their children. Especially being a mother, they state, requires acceptance of their children, support and care regardless of anything. Along the same line, studies have demonstrated that mothers care more about youth's wellbeing and have more acceptance and support towards youth than the fathers (Ben-Ari, 1995; Conley, 2011; D'Augelli, 2002; D'Augelli, Hershberger, & Pilkington, 1998).

Although coming out is a difficult process that distresses the family homeostasis, both mothers and the youth highlighted that it had positive effects on their family relationships, and created a relief in youth.

One of the positive effects of coming out is reported to be the relief in youth with being free to be themselves, not lying, not hiding, and not pretending to be someone else.

Youth highlighted that they have been feeling free to be themselves in extended family or their not so inner social circle too; because they know that if anything bad happens, they have their mother who will support them. The shielding effect of family acceptance is such an important instance of the needed safe haven. Youth report to be stronger to face the societal and cultural difficulties that they face. Similarly, Hershberger and D'Augelli (1995) have found that family acceptance and support shields the youth's mental health in the face of societal victimisation and harassment. These findings reflect a multifaceted interchange among the individual, the family system, and the society.

From a systemic perspective, as a result of family acceptance, the relief with being a hundred percent themselves in their relationship with the family has led more open and honest relationships that they are accepted as who they are in the family. Along the same line, studies found that family acceptance and support mediate the psychological adjustment after the disclosure (Elizur & Mintzer, 2001; Elizur & Ziv, 2001). They reveal that getting family support and acceptance affects their integration of their sexuality into their identity, the formation of their identity (Elizur & Mintzer, 2001). However, identity stage models that envisions a "final queer subject" who has fully formed their identity are criticised as explained in the literature section.

As a difference in the perspectives of the youth and the parents, while youth reports more honest and open relationships; mothers reported that too and also highlighted that there was no negative change in the relationship or their attitude towards youth. This might be an effect of social desirability; parents being worried about being seen as a bad mother in the sight of the researcher. LaSala (2010) founds the same result and interprets it as an effect of parents' unconditional love. It is suggested that parents are so sure of their unconditional love and acceptance towards their children that they do highlight the relationship as the same as before the coming out.

All of the themes that emerged from thematic analysis of the parents' and youth's coming out experiences, are effected by society and culture which is the broadest system that affects all other systems. Parents' efforts and hope of changing the youth's sexual orientation, their initial negative reactions, their worries and sadness were all related with social and cultural biases. Parents report that they have feared about their children's wellbeing and future; they have tried and hoped for a change in their sexual orientation in order to protect them from harassment and violence. Because the mothers have witnessed isolation and discrimination of homosexuals and even murder.

When I asked them how did they affect the coming out process; all twenty of the participants highlighted that social and cultural values were a hump for both youth and the parents. Stereotypes, homophobia, and heteronormativity have been distressing the family.

Stereotypes such as a male should be masculine, should like playing football and with cars, should be attracted to women, or a female should be feminine, should wear dresses, play with dolls and be friends with girls, and be attracted to men have negative effects on youth; because they note that their gender performance do not fit in these gender stereotypes. Gender performativity is a concept that Butler (1990), a feminist philosopher, has revealed. Salih (2007) explains Butler's (1990) concept of gender performativity as following: "...gender is not something one is, it is something one does, an act, or more precisely, a sequence of acts, a verb rather than a noun, a "doing" rather than a "being"." (p.55). Butler (2006) argues that gender is constructed by society; it is not something that someone born with. In a systemic perspective, youth is born and their gender is constructed in their societal environment, in time they realise that they do not fit in with the role casted on them (Butler (1990) mentions this as "the script"), they feel isolated and confused, and a need to hide it, and this hiding and being closeted becomes a burden on them. Youth noted that before the coming out process, they have been "putting a mask of heterosexuality", and feel like

pretending to be someone else. Their experience relates to Butler's (1990) "script" that is written by society and casted on people as she explains as "a set of repeated acts within a highly rigid regulatory frame" (p.33). This reveals the effect of society and culture as a system on the individual; as the youth in the current study noted.

Moreover, as English language does not include a gender neutral pronoun, it was particularly difficult to write these results. This is a perfect example of how an element of macrosystem, language, forces individuals to identify themselves rather a female or a male. Since the awareness and studies on gender has increased, we are allowed to use they/them for individuals who do not wish to be identified as neither a female nor a male.

Youth highlighted that the divergence of their gender performance and societal gender stereotypes accounts for being bullied, abused, and subjected to harassment. Youth has been bullied among their peers and by authorities at school because they are too masculine or feminine, sexually abused because of their sexual identity. It is also found in other studies that LGBTIQ+ youth is subjected to social abuse and even physical violence and abuse (Lambdaistanbul, 2006; Yilmaz & Gocmen, 2016). However, unlike Yilmaz and Göçmen's (2016) study, the youth participants in the current study did not mention experiencing breaches in their social rights such as employment as seven of them were already employed. It is worth to not that we have no information whether or not they have come out at workplace or not; therefore, the interpretations should be made accordingly.

Moreover, other reported humps of social and cultural values are homophobia and heteronormativity. Both youth and the parents noted that it is distressing to live in a society who hate the existence of homosexual individuals who are marginalised by heteronormative ideals. Oktem (2008) states that heterosexism creates an atmosphere in which non-conforming sexual orientations are seen as a threat to a pure ideal family order; therefore,

they are marginalised, ignored, and rejected. Also, homophobia is found to be related with negative parental reactions (Baptist & Allen, 2008; LaSala, 2010). Along the same line, parents in the current study have reported that their negative initial reactions were caused by societal values which they had internalised. They experienced sadness and shock because they thought that this is a curse; they have tried to find a solution because they thought this is a sickness that can be treated; they have been worrying because they knew how homophobia and heterosexism have negative effects on gay youth. Of course, these should not be interpreted as we are saying parents are allowed to react bad. Youth deserves and needs familial acceptance and support in any case. However, one of the purposes of this study is to parents to have a voice too; since most of the studies on parental reactions are conducted with youth's perspective which is also worth to be explored. Therefore, we collected dyadic data for this study in which we both hear their perspectives of others' experiences and their own experiences.

Most of the studies in both western societies and Turkey have found that religiosity is positively related with the parental negative reactions to coming out (Butcher, 2014; Gelbal & Duyan, 2006; LaSala, 2010; Sarac, 2015). However, in the current study negative effect of religiosity only reported by two participants from youth in the process of acceptance of self. The effect of parents' religiosity is not reported to be an effective factor on parents' negative reactions; although among mothers, four defines themselves as moderately religious, four not religious, and two absolutely religious. Among these two absolutely religious, one of them reacted negatively because of societal values, she notes, and one of them showed initial acceptance although she was experiencing negative emotions related with her religious beliefs. Findings of our study seem to be contradictory since no significant emphasis was made on the effect of religiosity on coming out process by neither mothers nor youth.

The distressing effect of heterosexism and homophobia in the society and culture has led both parents and the youth to fight for their existence. Parents' activism varies from supporting their children from the bottom of their hearts to volunteering in a NGO; while youth's activism varies from the passive activism that last years and years in search for acceptance in the family to creating content about coming out. These various activisms are all reported to be aiming to support the mere existence of LGBTQI+ people in a homophobic society. They highlighted their intentions to inform people and create awareness. From a systemic perspective, it is convenient that one interprets activism as an individual, the smallest system, spending efforts to create change in the broader systems.

Moreover, another distressing effect of the homophobic and heterosexist society is parents' reluctance about coming out to their social circle. Mothers note that they are afraid of the prejudices of the society, are tired of explaining these to people, and do not want to engage in polemics. These are the exact same with what youth reported to experience when they come out to their social circle. Parents are experiencing the same worries with youth before coming out. Muller (1987) proposes the concept of "loving denial" to describe this. "Loving denial" relationship between the parent and child is characterised in which parents stay closeted to people who are not from family, while involving in a positive relationship with the child. It is found that this is the most frequent relationship type among the participants. Other types are "resentful denial" in which parents do not accept child's sexuality, and "loving open" relationships in which parents accepts and come out to their social circles. (Muller, 1987). Current study includes "loving open" and "loving denial" relationships. "Resentful denial" relationships also need to be explored, meaning that parents who are not okay with their child's sexuality did not participate in current study. This is one of the limitations of this study.

Another negative impact of society and culture is reported to be lack of reliable sources and being uninformed by both mothers and the youth. Parents note that they had no information about sexual orientations before coming out. This had a negative impact on the process as it led parents to react more negatively. Youth also realise that their parents were uninformed, so they have tried to explain themselves and inform them in order to have a better coming out experience which includes acceptance of parents. Youth's efforts have contributed to mothers' information and awareness, and eased the way of parental acceptance. Moreover, youth highlights the negative effect of lack of reliable sources in their process of coming out to self. They experienced isolation and confusion because they had no information about what they were experiencing.

Social support is reported to be a factor that eased the process of coming out for both youth and the parents. It relieved parents to know that there are people who experienced the same process as they did, and even if they haven't, presence of family and friends' support reported to ease the process for them. Similarly, youth notes that contact with LGBTQI+ community has become a source of support in the coming out process. They highlight the need of a chosen family in those hard times. Social support is a common factor that eased the process for both parents and youth.

Coming out is a difficult process of life for both parents and youth. The family system is shaken by the disclosure, however there is before and after experiences of the disclosure, therefore coming out is a process that includes influences of many systems such as society and culture, family, and individual system (LaSala, 2010). Both mothers and the youth in this study has reflected that coming out was a difficult experience that includes negative emotions, that shakes the family system and requires efforts to adjust. Consistent with the results of the current study, coming out is reported to be a difficult process for families (Baptist & Allen, 2008; Burnias, 2014; LaSala, 2010). Here, flexibility and adaptability are

important concepts to understand the family experience of coming out. In his study, Burnias (2014) reports that families that are more flexible and adaptable have more positive coming out experiences in which they have the ability to flexibly accept the newly learnt sexual identity of youth. In our study, consistent with Burnias (2014) study, flexible and adaptive families were reporting less continuing negative effects of coming out; although they have also experienced negative experiences, they are less permanent.

As coming out shakes the system, some of the families were in still an adjustment phase, and trying to keep their homeostasis by not discussing the youth's homosexuality. Some participants from youth in this study have reported that their sexual orientations were still an elephant in the room, and they sometimes still experience the fear of rejection that relates to initial coming out process. Coming out is a phase of life that families are having difficulties in adapting to a new stage.

Clinical Implications

This study provides the coming out experiences of both youth and the parents. These narratives of multiple family members serve practitioners to have richer information and be prepared to work for this previously marginalised and underserved population. Moreover, although, in the literature we know the experiences of the youth more directly; the experiences of parents are usually collected from the youth and studied perceived experiences/reactions. This study provides both of their experiences which will lead clinicians to understand the standpoint of the parents. The themes that have arisen in this study can provide more areas of possible interventions and subjects of discussions in the therapy room, and create a more flexible framework for understanding clients' tussles.

The commonalities and differences in the perspectives of parents and the youth would be a source that can raise subjects that needs to be discussed in the therapy room. The

common experiences can be highlighted and the differences can be embraced. Common experiences that emerged in this study are: negative emotions like sadness and fear, the negative effect of non-supportive attitude of family members especially fathers, increased familial acceptance in time, better relationships after coming out, social and cultural values being a hump and their fight for existence in a homophobic society, lack of information and reliable sources, and the easing effect of social support. One of the differences in perspectives is that while youth reports that their parents were angry and initially reacted harshly, parents note that they have been trying to hold their negative feelings in. Another difference is that what youth perceived as denial was reported to be a hope of changing youth's sexual orientation. Although there are differences in the perspectives of youth and mothers, the commonalities in the experiences are unignorably clear.

Both parents and youth highlighted the negative effect of being uninformed. Clinicians should provide more reliable sources that the youth can understand their sexuality. Also, there is a need to inform the families about sexual orientations, since parents noted that it would ease the process if they could go to school counsellors for information. The need to inform families and the youth is very crucial in especially Turkey since there is an extensive amount of misinformation in the society. Three of the families who participated in this study reported that they have been misguided by mental health workers in the coming out process. They have been told that this is a phase, can be changed. One of the families was conversion therapy survivor. It is sad to hear that people open their hearts to them for help and the attitude they see hurts them even more. Clinicians should be very careful about their sentences, about the information they give, sources they use, advices they give.

Clinicians can help the lesbian and gay youth by informing them about the possible experiences of coming out; and make their assessments about the family history very carefully before the coming out has occurred in order to shield the youth from possible risks

as we know some of the LGBT+ youth are left homeless, their financial support has been cut off even though these were not experienced by participants of this study (Savin-Williams, 2001). Clinicians can also help the youth to find social and financial sources outside the family if the risk is high and the youth made the decision to disclose.

This study provides clinicians a clear understanding of coming out experiences of families in Turkey; since there are cultural differences between the Western and Turkish societies, and most of the studies are conducted in Western countries. This study fills the gap in the literature in the sense that it lacks studies on Turkish LGBT+ community; therefore, clinicians in Turkey can serve the families with a clearer insight of the experiences of disclosure.

Limitations

One of the limitations of this study is that it is a retrospective study. Participants may not be recalling the experiences in the process accurately. They may report a less intense scene when they look back from now after processing all those emotions. Moreover, another limitation is that the mothers might have hesitated to report their negative reactions towards the youth in the initial coming out process. This might be an effect of social desirability. They might not want to be seen as “bad parents” in the eyes of the researcher, therefore they have highlighted that they did not intent to hurt their children, that they tried to hold their negative feelings in.

This study is conducted with 10 families, and the parents who volunteered to participate were all mothers. This is another limitation of the current study. We need to hear fathers’ experiences too in order to reach a more accurate conclusion. Moreover, the families who participated in this study, were positive about youth’s sexual orientation. We could not include the families who cut off or rejected the youth after coming out.

Future Research

Further studies are needed in order to comprehend the experiences of coming out clearly. Even though every family system is unique, there are commonalities that clinicians and researchers can find and use. First of all, the experiences of fathers are not being heard of because of various possible reasons. However, it is necessary to hear them out to help them ease the process of coming out for them, the youth, and the family system. It may not be always enough to only explore mothers' experiences to intervene successfully as the findings of this study revealed that fathers' attitude negatively affects the coming out process.

Moreover, it is worth to explore the experiences of parents who do not accept youth's sexual identity and become cut off. We need to understand the reasons and feelings to intervene.

Appendices A - Demographic Form

Demographic Form (Translated from Turkish)

1- Gender:

2- Age:

3- Occupation:

☐ I'm working ☐ I'm not working ☐ I am looking for a job ☐ I am not looking for a job

4- How do you define your socio-economical status?

☐ High class ☐ Upper middle class ☐ Middle class ☐ Low class

5- What is your last graduated school (Please indicate if you are currently a student)

☐ Elementary school ☐ Middle School ☐ High School ☐ University

☐ MSc ☐ Ph.D.

6- How do you define your ethnicity?

7- Please indicate your current religious / spiritual preference:

☐ Muslim, Sunni ☐ Muslim, Alevi ☐ Muslim, Other

☐ Christian, Catholic ☐ Christian, Orthodox ☐ Christian, Protestan ☐ Christian, Other

☐ Jewish ☐ Buddhist ☐ Deist ☐ atheist ☐ No specific answer

☐ Believer but not a member of a particular religion ☐ Other

8- Which of the following options best describes you? Please tick the option that best suits you.

☐ I am not religious / non-believer.

☐ I am somewhat religious / religious.

☐ I am moderately religious/believer.

☐ I am very religious / believer

☐ I am strictly religious / believer

9- How do you define your sexual identity?

9- Your relationship status:.....

10- How long have you been together? (specify as year/month)

11- Do you have any contact with LGBT+ NGOs?

Appendices B Informed Consent

Informed Consent (translated form Turkish form)

Name of the Project: Coming Out Experiences of Lesbian and Gay Youth and Their Parents

Contact info of the Project Manager:

The purpose of the study: This study aims to investigate deeply the coming out experiences of lesbian and gay individuals and their parents in Turkey. Since there are limited studies about LGBT+ community in Turkey, this study will contribute to be a “voice” to lesbian and gay youth and their parents.

Process: Interviews will be conducted with both the youth and the parent separately. The questions aim to better understand the coming out experience of youth, parents and the family. Interviews can take 1 hour approximately. After the interview certain analysis will be conducted and your experience will be summarized under themes and subthemes. They will be sent to you and asked if they are in line with your lived experience. Therefore, your email and mobile phone will be asked. After the interview if you need a counselling session, you can contact Özyeğin University Couple and Family Centre (ÖZÜÇAM) or Bilgi University Psychological Counselling Centre.

Confidentiality: In this research all of the names, personal information, e-mails, and phone numbers, interview documents, notes and recordings will be encrypted with pseudonyms of the participants and will be held in password protected folders and computers. All of the forms will be destroyed after the research process.

Volunteering: The participation to this study is voluntarily. Not to sign this form and not to participate in this research is always accepted. Even you accepted to participate but

then you changed your mind, you can quit any time. This kind of situation will not harm the study. If you have further questions you can contact the researcher via the information above. If you have any further questions for the ethical sides or for any other details of the study, please contact Özyeğin University Ethical Board.

I read the detail of the study called: “Coming Out Experiences of Lesbian and Gay Youth and Their Parents” and my questions were answered. I voluntarily accept to participate in the study. I give permission for my personal information to be collected and analysed as only for the related research named above.

Name, surname

Date

E-mail

Phone

Appendices C Interview Questions

Interview Questions

Questions for Youth:

- 1- When did you recognise your sexual identity?
- 2- When did you disclose your sexual identity to your parents?
- 3- How did you come out?
- 4- To which parent did you come out first?
- 5- What were you experiencing before coming out?
- 6- How do you recall your pre-coming out phase?
- 7- How did you decide to come out (if you decided)?
- 8- What was the first reactions from your parents?
- 9- What were the reactions you expected from your parents?
- 10- What are the changes you experienced about the reactions over time?
- 11- Which emotions do you think your parents experienced after the initial come out?
- 12- What are the changes you realised in your communication with your parents after coming out?
- 13- How do you think the relationships in your family has changed after coming out?
- 14- What was the consequences of coming out for you?
- 15- How were the talks about the disclosure after coming out?
- 16- Which sources you got social support during the coming out phase?

17- Lastly, do you have anything to add?

Questions for the Parent:

- 1- How was your experience before your child came out?
- 2- If you suspected about your child's sexual identity before coming out, how was the experience?
- 3- How was your experience during the initial disclosure?
- 4- What was the initial emotions during the disclosure?
- 5- What changes these emotions get over time?
- 6- What reactions did you give?
- 7- What do you think your child was experiencing?
- 8- What do you think his/her emotions was?
- 9- What are the changes you realise in your communication with your child after coming out?
- 10- How do you think the relationships in your family has changed after coming out?
- 11- What was the consequences of coming out for you?
- 12- How were the talks about the disclosure after coming out?
- 13- Which sources you got social support during the coming out phase?
- 14- Lastly, do you have anything to add?

References

- Ahmady, K. (2018). Research Article LGB in Iran-The Homophobic Law and Social System. Retrieved from: <http://kameelahmady.com/fa/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/The-Homophobic-Law-and-Social-System.docx-final-1.pdf>
- Aveline, D. (2006). "Did I have blinders on or what?" *Journal of Family Issues*, 27(6), 777–802.
- Bayer, R. (1981). *Homosexuality and American Psychiatry: The Politics of Diagnosis*. Basic Books. New York, NY, USA.
- Baptist, J. A., & Allen, K. R. (2008). A family's coming out process: Systemic change and multiple realities. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 30(2), 92-110.
- Becker-Gorby, S. (1983). Identity management in lesbian women (Doctoral dissertation, West Virginia University).
- Ben-Ari, A. (1995). The discovery that an offspring is gay: Parents', gay men's, and lesbians' perspectives. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 30(1), 89–112. doi:10.1300/J082v30n01_05
- Bidell, M. P. (2013a). Is there an emotional cost to completing high school? Ecological factors and psychological distress among LGBT homeless youth. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 1-26. Advanced online publication. doi:10.1080/00918369.2013.842426
- Bidell, M. P. (2014). Ecological factors and psychological distress: Understanding LGBT homeless youth within systemic context. *Coming-out for LGBT*, 82.
- Bontempo, D.E. & D'Augelli, A.R. (2002). Effects of At-School Victimization and Sexual Orientation on Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual Youths' Health Risk Behaviour. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 30, 364-374.

Bowen, M., 1978. *Family Therapy in Clinical Practice*, NY and London, Jason Aronson.

Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77–101. doi: 10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

Bronfenbrenner, U. (1986). Ecology of the family as a context for human development: Research perspective. *Developmental Psychology*, 22, 723–742.

Brumbaugh-Johnson, S. M., & Hull, K. E. (2019). Coming out as transgender: Navigating the social implications of a transgender identity. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 66(8), 1148–1177.

Burnias, M. P. (2014). A qualitative study of familial factors that contribute to a positive coming out process (Doctoral dissertation, Pepperdine University).

Butcher, J. (2014). “But he can’t be gay”: The relationship between masculinity and homophobia in father–son relationships. *Journal of Men’s Studies*, 22, 222–237

Butler, J (1990). *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the subversion of identity*. New York: Routledge.

Butler, J. (2006). Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay in phenomenology and feminist theory (pp. 73-83). Routledge.

Cass, V. C. (1979). Homosexuality identity formation: A theoretical model. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 4(3), 219–235.

Chrisler, A. J. (2017). Understanding parent reactions to coming out as lesbian, gay, or bisexual: A theoretical framework. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 9(2), 165–181. doi:10.1111/jftr.12194

- Cramer, D. W., & Roach, A. J. (1988). Coming Out to Mom and Dad. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 15(3-4), 79–92. doi:10.1300/j082v15n03_04
- Çirakoğlu, O. C. (2006). Perception of homosexuality among Turkish university students: The roles of labels, gender, and prior contact. *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 146(3), 293–305. doi:10.3200/socp.146.3.293-305
- Conley, C. (2011). Learning about a child's gay or lesbian sexual orientation: Parental concerns about societal rejection, loss of loved ones, and child wellbeing. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 58, 1022–1040. doi: 10.1080/00918369.2011.598409
- D'amico., E., Julien, D., Tremblay, N., & Chartrand, E. (2015). Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths coming out to their parents: Parental reactions and youths' outcomes. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 11(5), 411-437.
- D'Augelli, A. R., & Hershberger, S. L. (1993). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth in community settings: Personal challenges and mental health problems. *American Journal of Communication Psychology*, 21, 421–448. doi: 10.1007/BF00942151
- D'Augelli, A. R. (1994). *Identity development and sexual orientation: Toward a model of lesbian, gay, and bisexual development*. In E. J. Trickett, R. J. Watts, & D. Birman (Eds.), *The Jossey-Bass social and behavioral science series. Human diversity: Perspectives on people in context* (pp. 312-333). San Francisco, CA, US: Jossey-Bass.
- D'Augelli, A. R. (2002). Mental health problems among lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths ages 14 to 21. *Clinical Child Psychology and Psychiatry*, 7, 433–456. doi:10.1177/1359104502007003010

- D'Augelli, A. R. (2003). Lesbian and bisexual female youths aged 14 to 21: Developmental challenges and victimization experiences. *Journal of Lesbian Studies*, 7, 9–29.
doi:10.1300/J155v07n04_02
- D'Augelli, A. R., Herschberger, S. L., & Pilkington, N. W. (1998). Lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth and their families: Disclosure of sexual orientation and its consequences. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 68, 361–371. doi:org/10.1037/h0080345
- Devine, I. (1984). Organizational Adaptation to Crisis Conditions and Effects on Organizational Members. In *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 1984, No. 1, pp. 163-167). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.
- Dubé, E. M., & Savin-Williams, R. C. (1999). Sexual identity development among ethnic sexual-minority male youths. *Developmental Psychology*, 35, 1389–1398.
- Eliason, M. J., & Schope, R. (2007). *Shifting sands or solid foundation? Lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender identity formation*. In H. M. Ilan & M. E. Northridge (Eds.), *The health of sexual minorities: Public health perspectives on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender populations* (pp. 3–26). New York, NY: Springer.
- Eliason, M. J., Streed Jr, C., & Henne, M. (2018). Coping with stress as an LGBTQ+ health care professional. *Journal of homosexuality*, 65(5), 561-578.
- Elizur, Y., & Mintzer, A. (2001). A framework for the formation of gay male identity: Processes associated with adult attachment style and support from family and friends. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 30, 143-167. doi: 0004-0002/01/0400-0143
- Elizur, Y., & Ziv, M. (2001). Family support and acceptance, gay male identity, and psychological adjustment: A path model. *Family Process*, 40, 125–140.
doi:10.1111/j.1545-5300.2001.4020100125.x

- Esmer, Y. (2011). 2011 Türkiye Değerler Araştırması [Turkey Values Research]. Bahçeşehir Üniversitesi. Retrieved from: <http://smgconnected.com/2011-turkiyedegerler-arastirmasi>
- Fields, J. (2001). Normal queers: straight parents respond to their Children's "coming out". *Symbolic Interaction*, 24(2), 165-167.
- Floyd, F. J., Stein, T. S., Harter, K. S. M., Allison, A., & Nye, C. L. (1999). Gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths: Separation-individuation, parental attitudes, identity consolidation, and well-being. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 28, 719–739. doi: 10.1023/A:1021691601737
- Floyd, F. J., & Stein, T. S. (2002). Sexual orientation identity formation among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youths: Multiple patterns of milestone experiences. *Journal of Research on Adolescence*, 12, 167–191.
- Gattamorta, K., & Quidley-Rodriguez, N. (2018). Coming Out Experiences of Hispanic Sexual Minority Young Adults in South Florida. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 65(6), 741–765.
- Gelbal, S., & Duyan, V. (2006). Attitudes of university students toward lesbians and gay men in Turkey. *Sex Roles*, 55, 573–579. doi:10.1007/s11199-006-9112-1
- Gelgeç Bakacak, A., & Öktem, P. (2014). Homosexuality in Turkey: Strategies for managing heterosexism. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 61(6), 817-846. doi:10.1080/00918369.2014.870453
- Gross, A. (2014). The politics of LGBT rights in Israel and beyond: Nationality, normativity, and queer politics. *Columbia Human Rights Law Review*, 46(2).

- Guittar, N. A., & Rayburn, R. L. (2016). Coming out: The career management of one's sexuality. *Sexuality & Culture*, 20(2), 336-357.
- Heatherington, L., & Lavner, J. A. (2008). Coming to terms with coming out: Review and recommendations for family systems-focused research. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 22(3), 329-343.
- Herek, G. M. (1989). Hate crimes against lesbians and gay men: Issues for research and policy. *American Psychologist*, 44(6), 948.
- Hershberger, S. L., & D'Augelli, A. R. (1995). The impact of victimization on the mental health and suicidality of lesbian, gay, and bisexual youths. *Developmental Psychology*, 31, 65-74.
- Kandiyoti, D. (1995). *Patterns of patriarchy: Notes for an analysis of male dominance in Turkish society*. In S. Tekeli (Ed.), *Women in modern Turkish society* (pp. 306-319). London, UK: Zed Books.
- Kandiyoti, D. (2003). *Pink card blues: Trouble and strife at the crossroads of gender*. In D. Kandiyoti & A. Saktanber (Eds.), *Fragments of culture: The everyday of modern Turkey* (pp. 277-293). London, UK: Tauris.
- Klein, K., Holtby, A., Cook, K., & Travers, R. (2014). Complicating the Coming Out Narrative: Becoming Oneself in a Heterosexist and Cissexist World. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62(3), 297-326.
- Korkman, Z. K. (2016). Politics of intimacy in Turkey. *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies*, 12(1), 112-121. doi:10.1215/15525864-3422611
- Krippendorff, K. (2018). *Content analysis: An introduction to its methodology*. Sage publications.

Kubler-Ross, E. (1969). *On death and dying*. New York: Macmillan.

Lambdaistanbul Eşcinsel Sivil Toplum Girişimi. [Lambdaistanbul Civil Society Initiative for Homosexuals] (2006). Ne yanlış ne de yalnızız! Bir alan araştırması: Eşcinsel ve biseksüellerin sorunları [We are not wrong, nor lonely! A field study: Problems of homosexuals and bisexuals]. İstanbul: Berdan Matbaacılık.

LaSala, M. (2003), “When interviewing ‘family’: maximising the insider advantage in the qualitative study of lesbians and gay men”, in Meezan, W. and Martin, J.I. (Eds), *Research Methods with Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Populations*, Harrington Park Press, New York, NY.

LaSala, M. C. (2010). *Coming out, coming home: Helping families adjust to a gay or lesbian child*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Lee, M. M., & Lee, R. E. (2006). The voices of accepting and supportive parents of gay sons: Towards an ecosystemic strengths model. *Journal of GLBT Family Studies*, 2, 1–27

Levounis, P., Drescher, J., & Barber, M. E. (Eds.). (2012). *The LGBT casebook*. American Psychiatric Pub.

Lincoln, Y.S., & Guba, E.G. (1985). *Naturalistic inquiry*. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

Manning, J. (2015). Communicating sexual identities: A typology of coming out. *Sexuality & Culture*, 19(1), 122-138. Martin, K. A., Hutson, D. J., Kazyak, E., & Scherrer, K. S. (2010). Advice when children come out: The cultural “tool kits” of parents. *Journal of Family Issues*, 31(7), 960-991.

McCormack, M., Anderson, E., & Adams, A. (2014). Cohort effect on the coming out experiences of bisexual men. *Sociology*, 48(6), 1207.

Merighi, J. R., & Grimes, M. D. (2000). Coming out to families in a multicultural context.

Families in Society, 81(1), 32-41.

Minuchin, S., 1974. *Families & Family Therapy*, Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press.

Monroe, E. J. (2000). Drawing upon the experiences of those who are out: A qualitative study of the coming-out process of gays and lesbians. The University of Iowa.

Moses, A. E. (1978). *Identity management in lesbian women*. Praeger.

Needham, B. L., & Austin, E. L. (2010). Sexual orientation, parental support, and health during the transition to young adulthood. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 39(10), 1189-1198.

Nemeyer, L. (1981). Coming out: identity congruence and the attainment of adult female sexuality.

Newman, B. S., & Muzzonigro, P. G. (1993). The effects of traditional family values on the coming out process of gay male adolescents. *Adolescence*, 28, 213–227.

Obear, K. (1991). Homophobia. Beyond tolerance: Gays, lesbians and bisexuals on campus, 39-66.

Orne, J. (2011). ‘You will always have to “out” yourself’: Reconsidering coming out through strategic outness. *Sexualities*, 14(6), 681-703.

Oksal, A. (2008). Turkish family members’ attitudes toward lesbians and gay men. *Sex Roles*, 58, 514–525. doi:10.1007/s11199-007-9370-6

Oktem, K. (2008). Another struggle: sexual identity politics in unsettled Turkey, Middle East Report Online. Retrieved from:

http://www.merip.org/mero/interventions/oktem_interv.htm

- Olson, D. H. (1989). Family assessment and intervention: The circumplex model of family systems. *Child & Youth Services, 11*(1), 9-48.
- Pistella, J., Salvati, M., Ioverno, S., Laghi, F., & Baiocco, R. (2016). Coming-out to family members and internalized sexual stigma in bisexual, lesbian and gay people. *Journal of Child and Family Studies, 25*(12), 3694-3701.
- Ponse, B. R. (1978). Identities in the lesbian world.
- Potoczniak, D., Crosbie-Burnett, M., & Saltzburg, N. (2009). Experiences regarding coming out to parents among African American, Hispanic, and white gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, and questioning adolescents. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services, 21*(2-3), 189–205.
- Raphael, S. (1974). Coming out: The emergence of the lesbian movement. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland, OH.
- Reifman, A., Arnett, J. J., & Colwell, M. J. (2007). Emerging adulthood: Theory, assessment and application. *Journal of Youth Development, 2*(1), 37-48.
- Rimes, K. A., Shivakumar, S., Ussher, G., Baker, D., Rahman, Q., & West, E. (2018). Psychosocial factors associated with suicide attempts, ideation, and future risk in lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth: The Youth Chances study. *Crisis: The Journal of Crisis Intervention and Suicide Prevention, 40*(2), 83–92
- Rohleder, P., & Lyons, A. C. (Eds.). (2015). *Qualitative research in clinical and health psychology*. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.
- Rossi, N. E. (2010). “Coming out” stories of gay and lesbian young adults. *Journal of Homosexuality, 57*, 1174–1191.

- Ryan, C., Russell, S. T., Huebner, D., Diaz, R., & Sanchez, J. (2010). Family acceptance in adolescence and the health of LGBT young adults. *Journal of Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Nursing*, 23(4), 205-213.
- Sakallı, N., & Uğurlu, O. (2003). The effects of social contact with a lesbian person on the attitude change toward homosexuality in Turkey. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 44(1), 111–119. doi:10.1300/J082v44n01_06
- Salih, S. (2007). On Judith Butler and performativity. *Sexualities and communication in everyday life: A reader*, 55-68.
- Saraç, L. (2015). Relationships between religiosity level and attitudes toward lesbians and gay men among Turkish university students. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62(4), 481–494. doi:10.1080/00918369.2014.983386
- Sauerman, T. H. (1984). *Coming out to your parents*. Federation of Parents et Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Incorporated.
- Savin-Williams, R. C. (1989). Coming out to parents and self-esteem among gay and lesbian youths. *Journal of homosexuality*, 18(1-2), 1-35.
- Savin-Williams, R. C., & Dubé, E. M. (1998). Parental reactions to their child's disclosure of a gay/lesbian identity. *Family relations*, 7-13.
- Savin-Williams, R. C. (2001,a). *Mom, Dad. I'm gay: How families negotiate coming out*. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association
- Savin-Williams, R. C. (2001,b). A critique of research on sexual-minority youths. *Journal of adolescence*, 24(1), 5-13.

- Savin-Williams, R. C., & Ream, G. L. (2003). Sex variation in the disclosure to parents of same-sex attractions. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 17, 429–438. doi:10.1037/0893-3200.17.3.429
- Scherrer, K. S., Kazyak, E., & Schmitz, R. (2015). Getting “bi” in the family: Bisexual people's disclosure experiences. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 77(3), 680-696.
- Schope, R. D. (2002). The decision to tell: Factors influencing the disclosure of sexual orientation by gay men. *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Social Services*, 14(1), 1–22.
- Spaulding, E. C. (1983). *The formation of lesbian identity during the "coming out" process*.
- Stemler, S. (2000). An overview of content analysis. *Practical Assessment, Research, and Evaluation*, 7(1), 17.
- Troiden, R. R. (1989). The formation of homosexual identities. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 17(1–2), 43–74. doi:10.1300/J082v17n01_02
- Willoughby, B. L. B., Malik, N. M., & Lindahl, K. M. (2006). Parental reactions to their sons' sexual orientation disclosures: The roles of family cohesion, adaptability, and parenting style. *Psychology of Men & Masculinity*, 7(1), 14–26.
- Woods, S. E., & Harbeck, K. M. (1992). Living in two worlds: The identity management strategies used by lesbian physical educators. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 22(3-4), 141-166.
- Valenti, M., & Campbell, R. (2009). Working with youth on LGBT issues: Why gay–straight alliance advisors become involved. *Journal of community psychology*, 37(2), 228-248.
- Yilmaz, U. (2002). *Türkiye’de eşcinsellik [Homosexuality in Turkey]*. Istanbul, Turkey: 3rd LGBT Strategy Seminar, August

- Yılmaz, V., & Göçmen, İ. (2016). Denied citizens of turkey: Experiences of discrimination among LGBT individuals in employment, housing and health care. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 23(5), 470–488. doi:10.1111/gwao.12122
- Yüzgün, A. (1986). *Türkiye’de eşcinsellik: Dün-bugün*. Istanbul, Turkey: Hüryüz Yayıncılık.
- Yüzgün, A. (1987). *Mavi hüviyetli kadınlar*. Istanbul, Turkey: Hüryüz Yayıncılık.
- Yüzgün, A. (1993). Homosexuality and police terror in Turkey. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 24(3–4), 159–170.
- Zimman, L. (2009). ‘The other kind of coming out’: Transgender people and the coming out narrative genre. *Gender and Language*, 3(1), 53–80.