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A MUSLIM FEMINIST NGO IN TURKEY: THE CASE HAVLE WOMEN ASSOCIATION

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A MUSLIM FEMINIST NGO IN TURKEY:
THE CASE OF HAVLE WOMEN
ASSOCIATION

A Master's Thesis

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To Ömer and Lokum

A MUSLIM FEMINIST NGO IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF HAVLE WOMEN
ASSOCIATION

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Zeynep ÖNAL

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By Zeynep Önal

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Science.

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ABSTRACT

A MUSLIM FEMINIST NGO IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF HAVLE WOMEN ASSOCIATION

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This thesis focuses on the Islam-based feminist stance of Havle Women's Association (HWA), its intellectual offerings and unique place in Turkey's feminist movement. A newcomer to Turkey's feminist movement, HWA was founded in Istanbul in 2018 and framed itself as "the first Muslim Feminist Women's Association in Turkey". The thesis examines HWA as a case study of Muslim - decolonial feminism in Turkey. By engaging with Islamic feminism and decolonial feminism literature, the study aims to investigate whether HWA produces new feminist direction in Turkey, how does HWA formulate its identity towards authoritarian AKP rule, Western stereotyped feminism, and Sunni-orthodox Islam understanding. I claim that by rejecting AKP's enforced domination about gender roles and political implications, HWA produces an alternative framework for thinking about women's issues from a Qur'an-based perspective. Parallel to this, the NGO also serves as the first and only initiation to the practice of modern and global Muslim feminist conceptualization in

Turkey. Besides, by challenging mainstream women identity formulations, resisting Islam-referenced patriarchy, AKP's hegemonic domination on gender-related matters and modernization and westernization stereotypes in Turkey, HWA produce an alternative perspective for its working area. Under the light of these, this study discusses HWA as a new intellectual direction for Turkey's feminist movement.

Keywords: AKP, decolonial feminism, gender, Muslim feminism

ÖZET

TÜRKİYE’DE MÜSLÜMAN FEMİNİST BİR STK: HAVLE KADIN DERNEĞİ ÖRNEĞİ

Önal, Zeynep

Yüksek Lisans, Siyaset Bilimi ve Kamu Yönetimi

Tez Danışmanı: Prof. Dr. Alev Çınar

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Bu çalışma, Havle Kadın Derneği'nin (HKD) İslam temelli feminist duruşuna, entelektüel önerilerine ve Türkiye feminist hareketi bağlamındaki yerine odaklanmaktadır. Feminist mücadeleye görece yeni katılan Havle, 2018 yılında İstanbul'da kurulmuş olup kendisini “Türkiye'nin ilk Müslüman Feminist Kadın Derneği” olarak tanımlamaktadır. Bu tez kapsamında, Havle Kadın Derneği Türkiye'deki tek Müslüman ve dekolonyal feminizm örneği olarak ele alınmaktadır. Çalışma boyunca, İslami feminizm ve dekolonyal feminizm literatürü temel alınarak, HKD'nin Türkiye'de yeni bir feminist yönelim üretip üretmediğini değerlendirilmektedir. Bu doğrultuda Havle'nin otoriter AKP iktidarına, Batılı ana akım feminizme ve Sünni-Ortodoks İslam anlayışına karşı kendi kimliğini nasıl kurguladığı incelenmektedir. Ayrıca, HKD'nin kadın meselesine Kur'an merkezli bakış açısı üzerinden alternatif bir çerçeve sunduğu iddia edilmektedir. Buna paralel olarak HKD, modern ve küresel Müslüman feminist pratiklerinin Türkiye'deki ilk ve tek örneği olarak dikkat çekmektedir. Havle Türkiye'deki ana akım İslami ve seküler feminizm yorumlarına meydan

okuyarak, İslam temelli ataerkiye, AKP'nin toplumsal cinsiyetle ilgili konulardaki hegemonyasını reddederek ve Türkiye'deki modernleşme- batılılaşma kalıp yargılarına direnerek feminizmi yerelleştirmeyi hedeflemektedir. Tüm bunların ışığında bu çalışma, Havle Kadın Derneği'ni, Türkiye feminist hareket içinde yeni ve alternatif bir yol olarak tartışmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: AKP, dekolonyal feminizm, toplumsal cinsiyet, Müslüman feminizm



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I have a feeling. One day, I will write another acknowledgement part, probably for a PhD thesis. Time will show us how I write that acknowledgement part either in the future or in the parallel universe.

Hope to see you all in the next chapter of my life!

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CHAPTER 1 –

INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I investigate Havle Women Association (HWA) and its Muslim feminist approach to Turkey's socio-political currents and feminist movement. A newcomer to the feminist network, Havle Women Association is the first NGO that introduced and defined itself as both Muslim and feminist in Turkey. The NGO has drawn attention by producing a feminist challenge towards Western epistemic privilege; Islam referenced patriarchy and AKP's domination of women's subjectivity. Within Havle's working area, this thesis aims to reveal the NGO's approach to feminism, Islam and Turkey's political dimensions.

HWA was founded in İstanbul in 2018 by a well-educated and young generation Muslim women group. Although the NGO has been formed and institutionalized independently, it can be seen as a successor of an alternative Muslim women's movement in Turkey. Especially from the early 2010s, Turkey's feminist network witnessed a rising new paradigm by young and educated Muslim women. This paradigm can be described by referring to Islamic reflexes and challenges to the state and religion-based patriarchy. Until Havle, the Women in Mosques Movement (Kadınlar Camilerde Hareketi), Muslims Initiative Against Violence Against Women (Kadına Şiddete Karşı Müslümanlar İnisiyatifi)

and Jam Blog (Reçel Blog) has been founded and contributed to Muslim women's gender conscious revival. These groups have never directly framed themselves as feminists, but their intellectual and activist capacity has prepared the ground for the emergence of Turkey's first Muslim feminist NGO. From 2018 to today, HWA has continued its activities and improved its visibility in Turkey's civil society. The NGO regularly publishes reports, produces content on official social media accounts, arranges various events such as Havle Meetings seminars and conducts research with the financial support of international funding programs. Although the total member number or financial sources are not transparently stated, continuous work shows that HWA has enough financial sources or member power to maintain its activity for five years.

As an NGO and part of a feminist solidarity network, Havle Women Association has introduced Muslim-feminism to Turkey's public sphere. For its Muslim feminist struggle, HWA has concentrated and problematized different dynamics regarding feminist ideology and women's subjectivity. These dynamics can be juxtaposed as a monolithic Western feminist episteme; Islam referenced patriarchy and AKP's assigned hegemonic gender roles. These three factors can be described as the main working area of HWA.

It can be said that HWA has primarily focused on and problematized Eurocentric, the monolithic feminist ideology that standardizes the West's epistemic hegemony on the way of living and thinking. Instead of a hegemonic and monolithic feminist understanding, Havle has emphasized the synergy of different feminisms with pluralist tendencies. Therefore, HWA has challenged

the Western feminist understanding and proposed a local way of feminism or a local model for feminist ideology in Turkey. HWA has constructed and verbalized this intention by introducing the “Localization of Feminism” concept. This concept implies that Havle and its members do not find a meaning of place for their subjectivity within the Western feminist episteme. That’s why, the NGO has proposed “Localization of feminism” ideal, which dismantles Western and hegemonic way of feminism. This concept can be seen as both the roadmap and an ultimate goal for Havle’s feminism. At this point, Havle’s Western feminism problem crosses the decolonial feminism concept’s path and brings the concept and its literature on the table. Decolonial feminism, as an ending point of modernity and decoloniality studies, focuses on and criticizes Western hegemony and superior attribution for the way of living, thinking, and producing. The decolonial feminist thought overweight to finding local and indigenous forms rather than Western epistemic framework. Because of the ideological background and similar argumentation against Western thought, I aim to analyze Havle’s challenge and stance on the mainstream feminist ideology by utilizing decolonial feminism discussions.

The other problematization and essential concentration of HWA is related to hegemonic and authoritarian AKP rule in Turkey. As a dominant political power of the country, political Islamist AKP and President Erdoğan have frequently included women's subjectivity in their political agenda. For 20 years, both Erdoğan and AKP have focused on women's subjectivity and societal identity formulation. The headscarf bans, law amendments about the status of

women, different women images and other related discussions occupied Turkey's social and political agenda for a long time. AKP's anti-feminist, neoliberal and neoconservative discourse has negatively affected the status of women. Especially, with Erdoğan's interpellation to Muslim women, which frame themselves as his unconditional supporter and himself as a responsible person for them, has created new ideal women's imagination in Turkey. At this point, HWA problematizes AKP rule's Muslim women interpellation, anti-feminist discourse and familialization of women politics. In other words, HWA rejects both state-led and Islam-based patriarchy in the AKP case. HWA's AKP opposition illustrates an effective example of how they create a discourse that discloses and dismantles essential codes of the patriarchy in the name of Islam.

Apart from the epistemic criticism and challenge to Western feminism and AKP's hegemonic anti-feminist politics, HWA's foundation, existence and visibility are quite functional to observe the changes and developments in Turkey's feminist movement and socio-political schemes. In Turkey's sociopolitical narrative, Islam and feminism notions have been differentiated from each other and obliged to specific echo rooms. This situation has consolidated and shaped Turkish politics and social dynamics for very long years. Political actors social and cultural institutions have formulated their worldview and discourse in relation to the assigned echo rooms. At this point, HWA and its perspective have been raised as a solid and unignorable resistance to the existing social dynamics. The organization has deconstructed and falsified the embedded social norms for women's subjectivity and its

implications. From different angles, it can be argued that HWA has become the first entity to rethink the existing structure in Turkey's politics and society.

Within this framework, it can be claimed that Havle Women's Association has significance for Turkey's social science circles. As an underrated topic in the literature, HWA has risen as an example to observe different intellectual currents simultaneously. During the thesis, I claim that HWA is the only organization that shows implications for Muslim feminism and decolonial feminism. Also, I consistently underline that Havle contains political underpinnings concerning political Islam and AKP's narrative. It can be argued that the organization brings new interpretations to Turkey's structural norms regarding Islam and the women's movement. Because of all these factors, I found HWA is a very interesting case study to catch new trends and listen to alternative voices to mainstream ways. In this context, I believe Havle is worth to analyze and discuss. Throughout the thesis, I will examine this topic and related material to understand whether Havle produces new feminist direction in Turkey and how does Havle articulates its identity towards authoritarian AKP rule, Western stereotyped feminism, and Sunni-orthodox Islam understanding. These two questions will be employed as the critical research questions for this thesis.

1.1. Methodology

This thesis can be seen as an interpretative social science work for various reasons. Although it is a political science thesis, the other social science disciplines, such as anthropology and sociology, have provided valuable methodological insights for this study. During my research, I have adopted

qualitative research methods, and their functional tools elaborate my research questions. I have mainly applied ethnographic research methods. In line with this, I employed the thick description method, generally used in anthropology like ethnographic research. Also, I frequently used textual analysis to analyze the material as data of the thesis. In the initial planning period of the thesis, I aimed and planned to conduct in-dept interviews with the members of the Havle Women Association; however later, I encountered obstacles and difficulties in accessing the members and doing these interviews. On November-December 2021 I filled out a form created for researchers like me to reach the NGO. Also, I have sent emails, messages, and requests to various members. The communication process took a long time; after I explained my thesis and the scope of research, the contact persons kindly asked for some time to evaluate and discuss my interview request. As a result of this, I was informed that the members, previously, had devoted a long time to these kinds of requests, that's why, for that moment, they slowed down the tempo of interviews. Addition to this justification, I received another answer which states, "*We encourage you to spend as much time with us as you can by participating in Havle Meetings.*" Once I received this message, I thought I could conduct the participant-observer ethnographic research and do in-depth interviews with the members. However, the second lockdown and restrictions because of the pandemic has changed the plans. Havle has cancelled some of the in-person Havle Meetings. Therefore, I could not get an opportunity to meet people and conduct interviews. Also, the online interview option was impossible due to the members' unavailability or unwillingness. At this point, I may claim that there

was a visible unwillingness towards the interview's idea among the Havle's cadre. This situation is justified as the inappropriate analysis experience from the previous discussions in Muslim feminist circles. I had to emphasize this situation here, because the specific factors' existence and absence may imply some clues about the NGO.

In short, I believe the in-depth interviews would enrich this study, but it could not be possible because of various factors. Therefore, I tried different methods to engage, get familiar and observe Havle's organizational dynamics and member motivations. For this reason, I have benefited from the NGO's "Havle School" program. Havle School is the general training-education program which Havle designs with beginner-level readings of feminism, Muslim feminism, and the other related fields. In order to observe the organizational dimensions, motivations and members' general attitude towards the NGO and the topic, I have also participated in this program. In the Havle School program sessions, I have shared my intention, thesis scope and reason to be there in terms of ethnographic research principles. By doing the participant observation, I have aimed to enrich my study's methodological base and cover the in-depth interview deficiency for the data collection period.

In the data collection period, with the internet search and online platforms such as Havle's official website and social media accounts, I have tried to catch up every post, news and development about the NGO. Since Havle has a relatively new and developing association, the information or source about it is

pretty limited. Thus, I have scanned every written and visual content about Havle from 2018, the foundation year of the NGO, to August 2023. Without putting strict time and source limitations on the data collection process, I have aimed to catch and utilize every valid source about Havle on the internet. Havle's sources can be juxtaposed as NGO's official statements, publications, activities such as Women's Day Night Marches, Havle Meetings, Havle School and social media posts. I categorize and analyze the data from the aforementioned sources in relation to this thesis scope. More specifically, I focused on particular notions and themes to catch and figure out how Havle elaborate this thesis interest areas such as gender equality notion, Muslim feminism conceptualization and Westernization paradigm. Addition to NGO's content and publications, the articles, op-eds, news on Havle are also included in the data collection for the thesis. Once the data collection process is completed, I examined the data in relation to three themes which are gender equality, the Istanbul Convention, and international connections. To catch the related and meaningful empirical material, I have employed specific keyword clusters that contain Islamic and feminist notions, concepts such as patriarchy, LGBTI+, Qur'an, God etc. Also, I have focused on Havle's rhetoric and discourse to observe their tendencies and how they deal with the Islam-based patriarchy, AKP and hegemonic Western understanding on a discursive level. Thus, I have tried to explore semantic components and understand its socio-political underpinnings for this thesis's scope.

1.2. Thesis Plan

As highlighted previously, in this thesis, I aim to analyze Hava's feminist stance and offerings in the three conceptual layers: Muslim feminism, decolonial feminism and contemporary Turkish politics. I plan to employ three research chapters within this framework and forge each conceptual base in one research chapter by assigning specific themes. I may juxtapose these research chapters as HWA's Gender Equality Approach and New Muslim Feminist Definition, HWA's Stance on the Istanbul Convention and Alternative Muslim Women Image, The International Connections of HWA and Local Authenticity. In this chapter, I investigate aforementioned conceptual layers and employ the empirical material from the data collection. However, before engaging the research chapters and elaborating on the topic, I will offer an extensive literature review chapter for my research. I believe one of the exciting factors of this study is related to its multilayered character and positionality in terms of the literature clusters. Since I investigate HWA as the case study for Muslim feminism, decolonial feminism and contemporary Turkish political currents, I would like to introduce these relative literature clusters and their intersectionality to the uninformed reader. By doing so, I aim to prepare a solid background and propose a historical context for further discussion and rationality of the case selection. Thus, the thesis's plan will be designed as an introduction, literature review, and three research chapters, including analysis and discussion of the case and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2 –

LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis constructs its focus and research based on two essential literature clusters which are Islamic feminism and decolonial feminism. The case study can be located at the intersection of Islamic feminism, decolonial feminism and contemporary Turkish politics. While this situation makes the thesis unique, it also provides an opportunity to engage in literature which has room and growth potential in academia. Havle Women's Association is a prominent example and representative of Islamic feminism and decolonial feminism for various reasons and aspects in Turkey. In my literature review, I will first focus on the aforementioned literature clusters to prepare the ground for upcoming chapters and understand what HWA offers and how it approaches in terms of Islamic and decolonial feminism in case of Turkey. The research examines HWA and its offerings around three key themes and chapters, which are gender equality approach, stance on Istanbul Convention (European Convention on Combating Violence Against Women) discussions and the international connections. In Chapter I, I will analyze the association's approach and argument about gender equality. While doing this, I will engage Islamic Feminism literature to understand what makes HWA's argument Islamic and how they relate their position with feminism in this regard. Then in chapter II, I will focus on Istanbul Convention discussions as another theme which polarized

Turkey's conservative and secular intelligentsia. While analyzing HWA's reactions and standing point in this chapter, I will benefit from the contemporary Turkish political agenda. In the final chapter, I will focus on the the international connections of the HWA as my third theme to understand how the organization places itself among mainstream feminist currents.

In short, I aim to explore how the NGO frames, perceives, and formulates itself as a social entity and how to respond towards dualities, so-called oxymorons, and clashes. While doing this, I will stand on and benefit from two literature clusters' -decolonial feminism & Islamic feminism- conceptual framework. In this literature review, I will provide extensive background information for my case and related research area, I will show how this study engages in existing literature, then introduce my conceptual framework with its operationalization.

Before starting to investigate the literature clusters for my theoretical and conceptual framework, I would like to mention the similar studies for my research. In my thesis argumentation, I claimed that there are limited number of works which analyze HWA as a new paradigm in the academia. Moreover, I may argue that this study one of the first attempts that analyze the NGO at the intersection of Muslim feminism, decolonial feminism and Turkish political dynamics. That's why, there are not plenty of studies that perfectly match with this thesis's scope. However, it should be noted that both decolonial feminism and Muslim feminism literatures derive its roots from long dated and wide

ranged intellectual works. An extensive information and historical context will be forged in the upcoming subsections of the literature review.

For the similar studies from these literatures, there are various non-Western works which analyze feminism with the pluralist tendency and local dynamics deserves attention. Also, it should be noted that there are also interesting studies on rising Muslim feminist understanding by Turkey's academicians. The ongoing projects imply rising interest for the topic in Turkey's academic circle. In this regard, Sertac Sehlíkoglu's TAKAHAYYUL project and articles on Western reductionist perspective on Muslim women, religious aspirations in the Muslim societies can be taken as an example. Additionally, The Islamic Intellectual Field and Political Theorizing in Turkey project under Prof. Alev Çınar's coordination can be seen as remarkable attempt to engage post-colonialism, decoloniality and Islamic intellectual currents literatures in Turkey. At this point, I would like to note that as a participant of Çınar's project, I have benefitted from this project's intellectual offerings in terms of conceptual tools and theoretical framework.

From the general to specific, there are also some studies that directly focuses on HWA as a new, women lead organization. The studies can be juxtaposed as book chapters and academic articles which published beginning from 2019. These studies and their contribution will be highlighted in the upcoming subsections of literature review.

2.1. The Background Information on Havle Women's Association

As “the first Muslim Feminist Women's Association in Turkey” Havle Women's Association has founded in Istanbul in 2018. (HavleKadın, n.d.) The association was formed by a young Muslim women activist group to show a feminist perspective and reaction against the patriarchal interpretation of Islam. Havle has engaged strong activist and feminist network and endeavor for feminist knowledge production by conducting research, organizing events with subjects of the feminist movement, and publishing comprehensive reports. At this point, I would like to open short parenthesis, because of the HWA's working style, self-introduction, and its women-led feminist organization feature, I have framed this association as NGO. Although there are various namings for these kinds of associations such as CSOs and women lead organization, I would like to follow an NGO definition to standardize the naming.

While Havle formulated its stance, it has also created and adopted a unique notion for their struggle: "locality of feminism". Havle defends the "localization of feminism" notion by claiming that “women's stories, struggles, and solutions to social problems do not always fit into a universal definition of feminism”. (HavleKadın n.d.) During my study, I will obtain HWA's “localization of feminism” concept to elaborate on the association's roadmap and mission. As a newcomer to Turkey's longstanding feminist movement, Havle has exciting features for Turkey's case. Before focusing on what makes Havle important in this conjuncture for the upcoming chapters, I will briefly share the trajectory of

the feminist movement and Muslim women's integration into feminism in Turkey. This quick wrap-up will provide background information for my research.

2.2. Historical Development of Women's Movement in Turkey

Although some may disagree, Turkey has intense background for the women's movement. From the Early Republican Era to the present, women's status in Turkey has experienced various currents and challenges in relation with the conjuncture. For a very long time, the women's movement has been dominated by the founding ideology's Kemalist feminism. Kemalist feminism has centralized Western, modern, and contemporary notions for women's identity formulation process. (Cinar 2005) As a dominant power of the period, Kemalism erased the traces of the Ottoman Empire and Islamic notions while producing a new modern and secular image for women in Turkey. (Eraslan 2016) This state involvement is not special to Turkey's foundational history. As Moghadam (1994, 3) has elaborated "in some historical instances, representations of modernity and national progress include the unveiled, educated, and emancipated modern woman, whereas the woman who is veiled signifies cultural and economic backwardness. In other movements, the search for authenticity, cultural revival, and reproduction of the group seems to be incumbent upon re-veiling and family attachment for women." The author puts that this kind of identity formulations were observed in nation-state building periods. As a result of Kemalist feminism's identity formulation, "in Turkey the civilization was equated with women's emancipation" (Modhadam 1994, 3) It can be said that state-led

women emancipation and its Kemalist feminism has motivated its activity and existence based on modernity, civilization and Westernization ideals.

From the early republican era to the 1980s, the women's movement has been dominated by state feminism which instrumentalizes women in the modernization project. (Tekeli 1992) However, the 1980s has introduced a new paradigm both for social change and the feminist movement. As a bug of Turkish democracy, in 1980, Turkey faced a second military coup in its short republican life. In the post-coup period, the social climate has sharply changed. Military rule and the post-coup constitution has banned social and ideological movement, but this new system has undermined feminist inclinations. Thus, feminism could find a fertile ground to develop. (Arat 1994, Tekeli 1986). During the 1980's, the feminist movement showed effective progress in Turkey as a social movement. The women in Turkey have discovered ways to exist and struggle for their problems and rights. Since the 1990s, feminism has become more visible in various circles such as the academia. Thanks to the translation of mainstream feminist readings to Turkish, feminist scholarship has gathered speed for building feminist literature. (Timisi and Agduk Gevrek 2016) In the meantime, women have adopted different rhetoric and opened new channels to raise their voices and challenge state feminism. At this point, it should be noted that while 1980s feminism is identified with activism and campaigns, 1990s feminism is described with institutionalization and project feminism since various groups focus on their own feminist agenda in this period. (Kocali 2016, Marshall 2008) In the 1990s, we observed an active engagement and important

contribution of Kurdish and Muslim women groups who have different experiences in relation to the intersectionality concept in women's question. (Simga and Goker 2017) It can be said that Muslim women groups who struggled for their rights always existed, but they were not visible enough. At this critical juncture, the headscarf ban has triggered various women and feminist groups, causing high tension, intensive activism and rapprochement for Muslim women who defend their rights and mainstream feminist groups in Turkey. The initial nucleus of Muslim feminism has appeared in this period. For instance, the leading figures such as Konca Kuris have raised voiced and pointed out a ground for Muslim women with feminist reflexes. These Muslim women has empowered and expanded like a roust within Turkey's feminisms. At this point, it should be noted that there was a sharp distinction between secular and religious women groups in Turkey. When the secular versus religious separation has appeared, a parenthesis for its reflections on today's conjuncture should be open. Although there was always a tension among secular and religious groups, the situation has been escalated during the AKP rule. Since 2002, the year AKP came to the power, this tension has raised as one of the most embedded problems in the society. With the dominant rule of AKP and its political Islam, the religious and conservative dimensions gain more importance in the public realm. Gradually the conservative agenda, Islamic discourse and its political underpinnings have turned to the redline in Turkey's socio-political climate. Especially, the secular versus conservative separation has become more visible and used to escalate political polarization by the AKP. It can be said that this kind of social and political polarization was the AKP's essential tool to

consolidate the political power and voter support. In line with the polarization strategy, more strict and bold lines between two sides have drawn. Over the time, AKP and its prominent actors have adopted the women subjectivity as a tool and interfered in to pursue its neoconservative political agenda. Thus, the conservative identities and Muslim image has been monopolized by the AKP for the last 20 years in Turkey. It should be noted that the Islam question has become an important matter in the shaping of Turkey's sociopolitical conjuncture. Besides, women's life and different women identities have also appeared as tools for the political Islam's agenda. At this point, Havle and its Muslim feminist women identity formulation has become an alternative way of existence for the women from the conservative part of the society. Within this framework, I believe the new alternative can weaken the secular vs. conservative polarization by finding new medium to live chosen identities freely and dismantle political Islam's monopolization on women subjectivity. The literature on Muslim feminism and related platforms generally took these organization within its own context. However, in this study I will analyze Havle to reach its political implications and see the major effects on the ideological ground for Turkey. However, for now, I would like to continue to provide the background information about Havle and Muslim feminism's organizational roots in Turkey's women's movement.

It can be claimed that the women's movement in Turkey generally has increased and has been developed by the channels of the platforms. These platforms can be framed as civil society organizations from 1980s. Within

various CSOs and platforms, the several groups which consist of intellectual, educated Muslim women who have gender lenses, although avoiding framing themselves as feminist, have appeared. The leading examples for this situation can be seen as Baskent Kadın Platformu (BKP- *Capital City Women's Platform Association*) from Ankara and Gokkusagi Istanbul Kadın Kuruluslari Platformu (*Rainbow Istanbul Women's Organizations Platform*) from Istanbul. (Unal 2020, Aksoy 2015, Eraslan 2002) These civil society organizations have been founded by intellectual women and have offered a standing point for gender-sensitive issues for long years. (Unal 2020) Many important names of Muslim-feminist knowledge production like Berrin Sonmez and Hidayet Sefkatli Tuksal worked and wrote under these organizations' roof. Although they never call themselves as feminist, Muslim women's organizations have contributed a lot to the development of Muslim feminism notion in Turkey. I can argue that these Muslim women's organizations created an authentic self and their own standing point in front of Turkey's mainstream feminism and hegemonic AKP rule. The literature demonstrates that HWA comes from the same tradition as previous Muslim women CSOs. However, Havle was formed by a totally different generation than the aforementioned CSOs. This statement should not cause a misunderstanding, it is clear that HWA is not a pop-up organization. Turkey's feminist history shows that Muslim women who have concerns on gender equality always followed the agenda in their circle. These women have tried and used various channels to perform their identities. As antecedents of HWA, Kadına Şiddete Karşı Müslüman İnisiyatifi (Muslims Initiative Against Violence Against Women) has been founded in 2013 and embraced by women. In the

meantime, in 2014, Reçel Blog (Jam Blog) started its publications as an example of feminist digital activism. (Nas 2021) The blog has taken huge attention and becomes a ground to share, discuss and elaborate on Muslim women's daily life experiences, feminist struggles and social norms. (Parmaksiz and Oztan 2020) As the last station before Havle, Kadınlar Camilerde Activism (Women in Mosques) has launched in 2017 and turned into an organized movement for the status of women in the public and religious sphere by Muslim women. (Sefkatli Tuksal, 2020) These organizations, efforts and concerns ended up with Havle's foundation in 2018.

Havle's foundation as an association can be seen as an outcome of the specific group's intensive work and effort. This group can be described as roust by young and well-educated Muslim women who think, write and act on specific feminist reflexes. At this point, Reçel Blog (Jam Blog) deserves special attention because of its impact factor. Recel Blog has been founded by limited number of women who have the similar concerns regarding their Muslim identity and experiences in patriarchal inequality in the name of Islam religion. In very short time period, the blog has reached mases of women from religious and secular camps. Reçel Blog has evolved a remarkable ground for Muslim women to challenge the Islam based patriarchy and share daily struggles about assigned roles. Since the core founder group and the discourse are quite similar with Reçel Blog, I may consider HWA and the Reçel Blog within the same group.

I recognize how HWA's group differentiates from previous Muslim women initiations in terms of generation and dedication to the feminist struggle.

Unlike previous examples from the 1990s and early 2000s Muslim women circle, Havle and its cadre has introduced themselves as feminists in addition to their Muslim identities. This identity formulation has been stated by new-generation Muslim women in Havle. That's why, in my study, I will use 'the new generation Muslim feminist women' definition to introduce Havle and its member profile. The studies indicate that in line with the previous organizations, HWA has challenges both with embedded patriarchy in Islam, an authoritarian rule and "anti-feminist discourse" (Unal 2022, 3) of Turkey's ruling party AKP and Western mainstream feminist stereotypes. This shows that Havle challenges different actors and notions at the same time. Further discussion on how Havle resists and deals with the aforementioned factors will be elaborated in the upcoming chapters of my study.

2.3. Islamic Feminism

Islamic feminism concept and its ideological background have importance for this thesis's main subject. The Muslim identity and naturally Islamic narrative on the women's right have constituted one of two standing principles for Havle Women's Association. Since the organization has gathered both Islam and feminist ideology in the same entity, the way or channel Islam and feminism speak and relate each other are interesting points to explore. At this regard, Islamic feminism paradigm and its offerings seem valuable to examine Havle's existential codes and feminist stance within Islamic narrative. Therefore, in this part of the literature review, I will focus on the Islamic feminism concept to

explore how and to what extent Havle engage with this paradigm in the research chapters.

As a concept, Islamic feminism has become visible in the 1990s at the global scene. However, its emergence has dated back to the twentieth century among Muslim societies. (Mojab 2001, Badran 2011, Kynsilehto 2008) Badran (2002) has explained Islamic feminism as “feminist discourse and practice grounded in an Islamic paradigm.” By looking at this quotation, one may assume there is no ambiguity in the definition or essential ground of Islamic feminism. However Islamic feminism, as a concept, does not have an agreed definition among scholars and activists. Despite this ambiguity in the definition, Islamic feminism has straightforward ways to contribute to its notion. The first way proposes the rereading and reinterpretation of Islamic sources like the Qur'an. The second one focus and adopt the specific verses of the Qur'an, which state absolute equality of sexes. The third one aims to contextualize the verses, which is interpreted as a tool to justify male domination and gender inequality. (Ali 2019, Parmaksiz and Oztan 2020) Although the literature on Islamic feminism further discusses these ways, the mainstream approaches can be summarized in three categories.

As a paradigm, Islamic feminism is generally used to "refer to Islamic alternatives to Western feminisms" (Mojab 2001, 130) also, it is highlighted that for Muslim women, Islamic feminism is framed as an indigenous way to reach gender equality and justice in the feminist literature. (Badran 2011, Mojab 2001) As a basic definition, I argue that Islamic feminism is the rejection or denial of

male domination and patriarchy in the Muslim context. Islamic feminism focuses on the embedded patriarchy in Muslim societies and endeavor to reveal the cultural & societal codes which laed to male dominance apart from Islam and Qur'an. From Islamic Feminist scholars' point of view, Qur'an offers incredible ground for producing new insights and attributing great value to rational thinking and questioning its creed. (Sirri 2021) By standing on 'Qur'an ground', Islamic feminists claim that original Islam does not promote patriarchy; in opposition to this, it promotes equality of sexes. (Ali 2012) In order to prove their claim, Islamic feminists are adopting different ways and forming subgroups under Islamic feminism umbrella. Thus, it is seen that Islamic feminism consists of various actor groups namely religious Muslims, secular Muslims and non-Muslims. (Badran 2019) The scholars who work on Islamic feminism can be analyzed and followed in different groups than each other. For instance, while Fatima Mernissi, Nevval el-Saadawi and Nilufer Gole are categorized as 'secular Muslim women', Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, Aziza el-Hibri and Hidayet Sefkatli Tuksal are seen under 'Islamist women group' category. (Guc 2008) These groups adopt different methods to contribute to Islamic feminism's vision and make it more visible both in academia and real-life system. In addition to this categorization as a branch of feminism, there are also various perspectives and roadmaps within Islamic feminism.

Contrary to Badran, some scholars adopt different lenses to analyze capillaries of Islamic feminism. From Zahra Ali's perspective, the divergence among the groups derives from the analysis of Islamic sources like the Qur'an

and Sunnah. By starting this point, Zahra Ali detects and define Islamic feminists under three groups which can be juxtaposed as traditional-reformists, radical-reformists, and liberal reformists. As Zahra Ali (2019) has explained in her Islamic Feminisms book, traditional-reformists claim that there is an equality between men and women on a spiritual axis. However, in terms of rights and duties, traditional-reformists adopt equal distribution rather than an exact equation between men and women by referring to *esit* vs. *denk* debate. As a second group, radical-reformists are manifesting the dismantling existing norms in relation to patriarchy and working to produce an alternative interpretation to overcome male dominance in Islam context. The last group, liberal-reformists perceive Islam as a pure philosophical virtue and believes that male dominance and Islam-referenced patriarchy is result of society's patriarchal interpretation of the Qur'an. The liberal-reformists aim to reveal an egalitarian essence in Islam. At this point, I need to highlight that one of HWA's founding members, Sena Elbasi has claimed that HWA can be seen as close to the liberal reformist side. (Yeşil Düşün 2021) Thus, in line with Havle's semi-official statement by one of the founding members, I will place the association close to liberal-reformist group within Islamic feminism work circle to sense their performance.

Across the world, there are various initiations, like HWA, which think and work on Islam and feminism notions. Zanan Journal and its network in Iran or Sisters in Islam (SIS) group in Malesia can be highlighted as leading initiations for Muslim feminism. At this point, Sisters in Islam (SIS) group deserves special attention. SIS is one of the first Islamic feminist organizations in the 1980s.

Various intellectual and activist women from different layers of society have united to stop the oppression and violence patterns which are justified in the name of Islam. As a small but passionate group, they took the major issues in real life like 'wife-beating' and demonstrated that Qur'an did not tolerate or normalize it. (Badran 2011) SIS has created its Ecole, which characterizes "scholarship-activism" (Badran 2011, p.81) for Islamic feminism area. While they rethink and reproduce embedded oppression in the name of Islam, they also pursued an intensive strategy to reach the society's capillaries to change the status of Malaysian women. (Badran 2011) Following SIS, various organization who work for Islamic feminism has shown similar profiles with it. The scholar-based knowledge production and an effort to reach mass groups in order to change Islam's patriarchal interpretations and embedded codes in the minds. In this regard, I need to open a parenthesis for Havle. HWA's cadre and working mechanism is quite similar with SIS. Like SIS, HWA's works have two layers which are intellectual knowledge production and activism. HWA has special agenda to contribute an Islamic feminism notion and render western feminism local in Turkey. Besides, the organization has an activist vein to reach more people and spread their ideas. Due to this similarity, I will focus Badran's "scholarship-activism" definition for SIS and adopt it to describe Havle's working style.

As a newcomer to the feminist movement, Islamic feminism is still in "the work in progress" (Badran 2008) status. That's why, Islamic feminism is still in the period of formulating its standing point and identity on the global feminist

scene. Some scholars detect that there is a miscommunication and lack of open dialogue between mainstream Western feminism and Islamic feminism. This situation can explain Western feminism's limited knowledge on this movement. It is clear that mainstream Western feminism's depthless perception on 'Muslim women' identity and standardization of Muslim women triggers subjects of Islamic feminism. (Abu-Lughod 2018, Dalaman 2020, Sirri 2021) The reductionist perspective of Eurocentric feminism motivates the subjects of Islamic feminism from different corners of the world. Thus, as a new paradigm, Islamic feminism functions as a kind of resistance mechanism towards the mainstream, Western Feminism, which creates 'Muslim Women' stereotype who expect to be saved and enlightenment from Western actors. In line with this, According to Sirri (2021, 24), "Islamic feminism is an example of the tension between Western colonial power and domination and the indigenous local practices which struggle for self-determination and resist the power of imperial cultural knowledge." By standing on this claim, it can be argued that Islamic feminism is a decolonial paradigm in the current academia. As a new discussion ground, it provides a channel to Muslim women for their subject formation under the western-local dilemma.

There is no doubt that Islamic feminism is seen as an oxymoron by some parts of Muslims and non-Muslims (Hesova 2019). Some scholars ground the oxymoron argumentations by claiming that "Islam and feminism contradict each other because Islam conflicts with women's rights." (Marshall 2008) However, Islamic feminism tackles this perception by "de-essentializes both notions of

Islam and feminism." (Sirri 2021, 124) The growing interest in the literature and the number of social organizations shows that Islamic feminism's 'de-essentialization' method is functional to create a base for their argumentation and reach more people. Zahra Ali indirectly explains the 'de-essentialization' method. According to Ali, Islamic feminism has pursued two strategies for its focus, namely feminism and Islam. For the feminist circle, Muslim feminism challenges the idea that feminism is contrarian to religion and resists the colonial – neocolonial model, which frame and imposes West as the only way to freedom. For the Islamic circle, it challenges and questions the nature and origin of the Islamic law, which is designed by society's patriarchal and sexist perspective.

Before closing the Islamic feminism part of the review, I need to highlight and clarify the literature's application to my thesis. In a nutshell, an Islamic feminism has put effort to explore a feminist worldview and way of living within Islamic narrative by adopting different methods and tools. For various reasons, it is possible to define Havle as an Islamic feminist organization. The literature review has shared the enough information to define and categorize the organization under this paradigm in the upcoming chapters. Since one of two ideological pillars are rising on the Muslim identity, the importance and place of this literature cluster is undeniable for this study. However, a nuance should be underlined in the usage and application of the concept. Although this literature cluster is growing under the 'Islamic feminism' umbrella term, I will not use Islamic or Islamist concepts to refer to Islam based feminist movement and its

subjects. I believe 'Islamic' or 'Islamist' words have strong ideological connotations that relate it to political Islam, and AKP as its shadow in contemporary Turkey. Instead of it, I prefer to use the word 'Muslim' to be able to analyze this paradigm without political underpinnings in Turkey. Thus, the Muslim feminism will be employed to analyze Havle's feminism in the upcoming chapters.

2.4. Decolonial Feminism

From this study's scope, the factor that makes Havle interesting and worth to study are its harmonization of the Islam which is identified in the Global East and the feminism which rises as an ideology from the West. It can be claimed that HWA has reached the medium between Islam and feminism in its body. To reach the medium, the organization has brought a critical perspective for two pillars. The first pillar has appeared as its Muslim identity. This pillar will be elaborated by taking ground from the existing Islamic feminism literature. For the second pillar, the feminist ideology has drawn attention as a Western narrative. Havle's semi-critical perspective on the Western feminism will be analyzed by benefitting from the decoloniality literature. In different words, this study investigates Havle's integration in feminist ideology and localization of feminism ideal by utilizing from the decolonial feminism literature. Also, as a very critical point, HWA's feminist understanding propose a challenge towards the Western monolithic feminist ideology. In other words, the NGO does not compromise the Western epistemic hegemony, instead of it, HWA proposes local and authentic way of feminism. This essential perspective of HWA can be

analyzed and characterized with decolonial feminism literature. As a further step, I argue that Havle is a decolonial feminist organization. Because of these reasons, I will benefit from the existing literature to create a ground for my argumentation. Thus, in this part of the review, I will focus on the decolonial feminism and its supersets in academia.

The concepts of modernity, westernization, coloniality and decoloniality are working and functioning to read the dominant world order in the contemporary age. They all imply, claim, agree, and disagree with various notions. In order to understand decolonial feminism and its importance for this study, first, I need to elaborate on its origin by touching upon the modernity discussion and so on. Decolonial feminism can be seen as one of the arriving points for the modernity debate in post-colonialism literature. Before arriving and engaging decolonial feminism and its reflections in Turkey, I will touch on modernity as a starting point.

As an ideal, modernity is the essential paradigm of the contemporary world. As Rodrigues (2022, 4) has framed from Ballestrin's work, "modernity (and its inherent coloniality) is designed to create a dichotomy between colonizers and colonized." Modernity can be seen as a legitimate ground to reach colonial goals and sustain its status quo which appeals non-western world as inferior. Scholars explained this situation by digging the modernity as a roadmap. According to Rodrigues (2022, 5), "modernity narratively forges itself, a colonial promise of progress and development to peoples that convert to Eurocentric paradigms." The literature shows that coloniality and modernity

cannot be observed separately. For Mignola, “coloniality and modernity are interdependent. There can be no modernity without a coloniality.” (Mignolo 2011) Parallel to this, Mignola has added Westernization to colonization and modernization in his one of latest studies. Both westernization and colonization are seen as ways to expand European dominance. For Mignola the difference between westernization and colonization is their method for the common target. While colonization "refers to control and management, westernization refers to the schooling" as a method. (Mignolo 2019, 315) Modernity, coloniality, and capitalism are seen as various tools to impose Western knowledge production from gender conceptualization to financial principles. (Quijano 2007, Mignolo 2007, Spivak 2015, Manning 2018) As "the invisible and constitutive side of modernity" (Mignola, 451) coloniality discussions have started by Anibal Quijano in late 1970s. Quijano took the attention on the status of global currents in the world and division of power which canonize colonial superiority on every branch of life. Quijano detects this situation and call it as coloniality of power. The concept of 'coloniality of power' exposes the system that feeds and sustains the coloniality and modernization illusion by the West.

As Manning (2018, 313) has put rightly, prominent scholars who work on post-colonialism and decoloniality literature claim that "decolonial theory challenges an ontology of modernity by arguing that the universality of Western ontology is based on the displacement of the actions, ideas and history of ‘the Other’.” According to Yusupova (2023, 684) “decolonial and postcolonial scholarship demonstrates that the rhetoric of modernity was used as a tool to

justify all forms of colonialism since the early 16th century." At this point, Quijano's concept of 'coloniality of knowledge' reveals the embedded structure of Western superiority and dominance on knowledge production, spreading it as normative values to the rest of the world. By erasing alternative knowledge systems (Manning 2018) the coloniality of knowledge creates a monolithic hegemony in the social, cultural and intellectual spheres. At this point, Mignola's (2018, 111) "Coloniality is a decolonial concept. Its main thrust is to illuminate the darker side of the modernity." sentence sheds light on the decayed and corrupt side of modernity and its status quo. As a next point in the timeline, decoloniality aroused from the colonial critic. Mignolo (2018, 145) explains rise of decoloniality his in "On Decoloniality" book. Mignolo claims that "decoloniality emerges out of the need to delink from the narratives and promises of modernity -not to resist, but to re-exist." This explanation is sufficient to see the nature and motivation of decolonial thought. Decoloniality can be seen as an existential objection against the western, hegemonic way of living and thinking. In this regard, Walsh's further discussion on decoloniality can endorse this claim. According to Walsh (2018, 17) "decoloniality seeks to make visible, open up, and advance radically distinct perspectives and positionalities that displace Western rationality as the only framework and possibility of existence, analysis, and thought." Within this framework, preliminary observations shows that HWA can be analyzed under decoloniality concept because of its objection to mainstream order.

Yusupova has put that postcolonial feminist studies which Mohanty and Spivak shape, reveals that gender and sexualities studies are essential part of Western-centered knowledge norm. In other words, gender and feminism notions are dominated by the West-origin knowledge production system. These notions are constructed by focusing only on Anglo-American and Eurocentric perspectives and then applied to every society without the local dynamics and socio-cultural codes. From postcolonial feminist scholars' point of view, the coloniality of knowledge, and Eurocentric gender norms, ignored the local identities and assumed each society as the same entity, by doing so, colonial knowledge production first materialized then employed gender and sexuality notions as a tool of cultural imperialism. This situation is strongly highlighted and explored in Maria Lugones' studies. In these studies, decolonial feminism has emerged and conceptualized. As a new paradigm, "decolonial feminist theory has engaged with debates pertaining to coloniality/modernity and Global South indigenous identity and gender while providing a space for the voices and experiences of silenced, othered women." (Manning 2021, 1204) Over time, decolonial feminism has worked and analyzed by various scholars, but Maria Lugones and her studies deserves special attention. It can be said that Lugones has added a gender layer to the decoloniality debate and created decolonial feminism as a new paradigm in academia. Lugones (2007) elaborate materialization of gender by rethinking and reframing Quijano's 'coloniality of power' concept. From Quijano's pathway, Lugones has invented the 'coloniality of gender' concept and claimed that "colonization imposed European understanding of gender and sex onto the diverse pre-existing gender systems

of the colonized societies, in some which women had occupied leadership positions and owned land. (Yusupova 2023, 685) As Velez (2019, 399) has pointed out, Lugones developed the coloniality of gender concept “to highlight the deep entanglement of the dehumanizing, racializing, and gendering processes of colonization.” In obvious way, Lugones criticizes the idea that gender is a universally fixed normative setting which is designed by the Western approach.

In short, decolonial feminism has emerged as an outcome of gender-sensitive analysis of modernity and coloniality. As a growing body from decolonial thought, decolonial feminism challenge and resist hegemonic, Eurocentric Western feminism. As an ideal, this paradigm endeavors to dismantle the single-dominant feminist discourse and then open a channel to different ways and waves of feminism from various parts of the world. Instead of a dominant and strict feminism understanding, decolonial feminists are wishing and working for more flexible and practicable feminisms which are enriched by various cultures and motifs. At this point, Catherine Walsh has put the plurality concept to explain decolonial feminism's main aim. Walsh has argued that "decolonial feminisms situate and articulate the pluriand intervals of feminisms, understood as spheres not of unification (or uni-versalization) but of pluralism, plurality, and possible interrelation. As such, decolonial feminisms disrupt and transgress the white feminist universal as they pursue insurgencies, standpoints, and propositions of decoloniality and decolonization." (2018, 39) The relevant literature shows that HWA's feminist stance and arguments are perfectly fit a

decolonial feminist definition. Like the other decolonial feminist organizations, Havle also works to dismantle monist hegemonic Western feminism and bring local, Islamic motifs on the table to practice feminism in their own ways. I will adopt “decolonial feminist” concept as a useful adjective to define Havle in my work.

As a decolonial feminist NGO, HWA is not the only entity which tries to formulate and experience an alternative feminism than Western feminism. Various organizations from the Middle East and Africa show great effort to add their own character or local codes to feminism. For instance, Walsh has taken the light the other groups by saying that "Indigenous feminists in both the North and South have questioned in recent years the hetero-patriarchal norms that operate within Indigenous communities and within the contexts and practices of Indigenous organizations and decolonizing struggles." (2018, 40) Walsh's arguments show that similar groups have the same concerns with Havle regarding working area, reactions, and indigeneness. She has framed and introduced those groups in North and South as "indigenous groups". In line with this, I could also frame and call HWA as an indigenous group. However, I prefer not to use it. Although the existing literature is offering a suitable concept for my study, the secondary sources reveal that HWA already has its own conceptualization for this situation. Since HWA has pretend to localization of feminism and work for it as a mission, I can formulate 'localization' concept to refer Havle's unique method and aim among mainstream feminisms. By

standing on this, I call Havle as a 'local organization' to posit HWA in the feminist movement.

Analyzing Turkey under decoloniality literature can open a channel to contradictory discussions. Some may argue that decoloniality literature cannot be used for the Turkey case since the country has never been colonized. However, assuming colonization is an absolute rule of any Western power would be reductionist. Although Turkey has not colonial past, the republic's founding ideology, modernization project and its implications has clearly shown that Turkey has adopted Eurocentric westernization codes to reach the 'contemporary civilization' standards. I believe, Turkey's westernization & modernization project and its underpinnings would provide enough material to engage coloniality and decoloniality discussions. In line with this, Havle's objection to monolithic Western feminism and localization ideal make this organization great case study for decolonial feminism. In other words, Turkey perfectly fits the colonization-modernization dilemma and its discussion since the country has adopted and followed colonial knowledge production. It should be highlighted that Turkey is not the only country in terms of the absence of a colonial past. Russia can be seen as another example for it. As scholars (Mignolo and Tlostanova, and Yusupova) highlighted, Russia was never colonized and in the successful western & Eurocentric modernity club. However, especially since 18th century, Russia has adopted various elements of Western modernity into its economy, political system and cultural life. Thus, colonization and modernization notions are flexible and expansionist; they can be visible in

various forms in different countries. Under these conditions, I believe Turkey is an exciting laboratory case to observe colonial and decolonial dilemmas in the sociopolitical sphere. In this regard, Havle functions to read decolonial connotations in Turkey's contemporary feminist movement.

In short, I have aimed to explain the decoloniality literature and decolonial feminism concept to use in describing Havle's relationality with the West and Western feminism. As the literature has indicated, modernity, Westernization, coloniality and decoloniality are tricky, interbedded, and essential concepts to read contemporary world order. Especially for this thesis, these concepts became much more important due to the context and content of HWA as a social organization. Turkey's modernization project, its implications on woman identity, feminism as the prominent Western ideology and Havle's its own ideals on locality of feminism make this literature invaluable for this thesis. Therefore, I will employ the aforementioned literature's conceptual tools in the upcoming chapters to analyze Havle's international connections and its ideological underpinnings.

Before concluding the literature review chapter, this research's three layers and three grounds for its claims should be noted once again. As highlighted before, instead of adopting mainstream Western feminism, HWA resists it and defend the locality of feminism. Because of this, I analyze Havle under decoloniality and decolonial feminism literature. As a second layer, I observed that HWA produces an alternative framework for thinking about women's issues and Islam based perspective and challenges the Qur'an

patriarchal interpretations. For this reason, I engaged Islamic feminism literature. The third layer has appeared Havle's stance in its own socio-political atmosphere. HWA has appeared as an alternative to traditional secular versus conservative polarization in Turkey. The organization has formed as totally new entity apart from AKP's conservative women image and Turkey's embedded modern, and western women idealization. Thus, I also mentioned Turkey's feminist trajectory and AKP reality in the literature review and opened a channel to elaborate it in the next chapters.

In a nutshell, Havle challenges various dynamics at the same time, and this makes the organization interesting for this study. These factors are juxtaposed as AKP's enforced domination on gender roles and political implications; Islam based patriarchy and embedded sexism in Muslim societies; Western monolithic feminism understanding. Therefore, I take HWA as a representative case to observe a new feminist objection to mainstream currents in politics, Islam and Western knowledge production. While doing this, I engaged decoloniality and Islamic feminism literature to prepare ground and build my argumentation for my thesis. The recent trend in the academia shows that there is a rising interest in decoloniality and Islamic feminism on the global extent. At this point, my thesis can be seen as a humble contribution to growing interest and global literature by adding Turkey's experience with new generation, local Muslim women movement into debate. This thesis can be differentiated from the existing studies on HWA from its inner layers like decoloniality notion. Before concluding this chapter, I need to note that Havle is worth to study since it

provides an opportunity to observe the country's contemporary feminisms, political agenda, and an alternative interpretation to embedded cultural norms in the society at the same time.



CHAPTER 3 –

HWA'S GENDER EQUALITY APPROACH AND NEW MUSLIM FEMINIST DEFINITION

In this chapter, I aim to analyze HWA's identical codes and the scope of feminism in relation to Islam and feminist ideology. I endeavor to explore how Havle combines Islamic and feminist implications in the same body. To do this, I will employ the gender equality theme as a starting point and use Havle's related content on gender equality scope. I will benefit from various statements, social media posts, 8 March placards and publications as the main material of the chapter. I believe the gender equality concept laid down at the base of feminism and is subject to claims which define feminism and Islam as oxymoronic because of sexist treatments of Islamic tradition. Thus, employing gender equality and analyzing the HWA's standing on the slippery slope will provide effective results and explore Havle's reflexes on the Muslim feminism for this study. At the end of the chapter, I argue that Havle has created its medium between feminism and Islam and portray new Muslim feminist definition for Turkey.

Although HWA is relatively new, it has produced various materials for its working area. The research, publications, activities, and social media posts provided rich content for this thesis to understand Havle's perspective on gender equality and related agenda. HWA and its members clarify their mission by declaring that "We fret about producing and spreading discourse from a feminist

perspective against the patriarchal interpretations of the Islam, the social norms surrounding our lives, and the relation of these norms with religious references.” (Keles 2023) The NGO has formulated its discourse concerning two main questions: "How religion is perceived and experienced in this society & how religion is instrumentalized for norm-making and patriarchal power.” (Keles 2023) It should be noted that Havle frequently emphasizes and highlights its belief and attitude on gender equality in its work. Without any hesitation or exception, HWA defends absolute gender equality as the redline.

Some may expect to see a relatively ambiguous attitude toward gender equality notion from HWA due to its Islamic reflexes. However, the empirical material clearly shows that Havle has equally adopted both Muslim and feminist identities in its body. While the NGO has defined itself as “both Muslim and feminist” their discourse shows that they internalized it in practice. Neither Muslim nor feminist identities overweight or dominate each other in its works. Although Islam and feminism can be seen as contradictory notions of each other, Havle has internalized both harmoniously. Moreover to it, Havle promotes feminist ideology and challenges mainstream fallacies which take ground from Islamic culture. As a response to the idea which sees Muslim feminism as an oxymoron, the NGO frame itself as “evidence of the possibility of being both Muslim and feminist”. (Camdereli 2021) However, this atypical identity formulation did not welcome by some actors from conservative or feminist networks. As a representative of the new and reformist paradigm, HWA has faced difficulties in gaining recognition from various actors. One of HWA

members, Sehide Zehra Keles verbalized this situation by "We spent much time explaining to traditionalists that we are Muslims and to some feminists that we are feminists." sentences. (Keles 2023) From this quotation, it can be understood that HWA has put intense effort to introduce its identity both for feminist and Muslim circles. This situation can be analyzed under Zahra Ali's "de-essentialization method". As mentioned in literature review chapter, Ali has argued that Islamic feminism has followed two strategies for its focus namely feminism and Islam. For feminist circle, the method proposes an objection the idea that feminism is opponent to Islam and for the Muslim circle, it challenges an origin of Islamic law in relation to gender inequality. At this point, I observe that HWA's way for argumentation and its discourse perfectly match with Ali's de-essentialization method. Thus, I argue that HWA is using this method to formulate its identity and discourse in the public realm.

As mentioned above, in Havle's Muslim feminist struggle, Islam and feminism are not separate notions within a paradigm. In other words, the association's Muslim feminism is not like a heterogenous and crystalized paradigm. HWA's previous activities, like "How do we connect with faith?" workshop, indicate the effort to find an equilibrium between Islam and feminism. It can be claimed that HWA has actively and jointly employed various notions from Islam and feminism simultaneously. HWA's effort to practice feminism with their Muslim identity resulted in the creation of Muslim feminist synthesis and discourse. To observe this synthesis and discourse, HWA's 8 March, International Women's Day, Night March performances, especially placards, are

rising as exciting examples. Placards are functional tools to give direct and fast messages for social movements. By taking it into consideration, HWA's placards can be seen as powerful symbols to read its standing point and socio-political implications. Thus, I took some of HWA's 8 March placards from different years and employed them to understand how HWA posits itself on gender equality and combines Muslim and feminist identities simultaneously. HWA, as an official institution, experienced its first 8 March night march in 2019.



Figure 1: HWA Members, 8 March 2019

Some of the placards state:
"La Havle!"
"Are you God? Let your family blow!"
"Fitne is in the eyes of men."

3.1. Islamic Rhetoric Against Islam based Patriarchy

As images have indicated, HWA generally consists of veiled young and dynamic women group. The NGO's activity achieve reveal that they arranged

workshops and created a solidarity atmosphere to prepare the placards for March 8. I believe Havle's particular attention to its preparation makes them more critical and symbolic in analyzing HWA's stance. In the 2019 Night March, Havle's placards have centralized the specific notions or concepts derived from Islamic tendencies like the sacredness of family and fitne. It can be said that centralized concepts pose a threat for the status of women in society. The placards' (see image1,2,3) composition shows that Havle problematizes, criticizes, and challenges Islam-based concepts by using an Islamic idiom, "La Havle" which generally indicates that patience is exhausted. This situation implies that HWA recognizes, detects, and criticizes Islam-based cultural patterns, but to change and challenge it, they prefer to adopt Islam's different angles and offerings in terms of rhetoric and intellectual capital. In other words, while HWA problematizes and criticizes Islam-based cultural norms, it produces a counter-stance from Islam's discourse. Thus, Islam and its different offerings can be seen as a reference point of the organization.

At this point, opening a parenthesis to focus on Havle's name selection and meaning might be enlightening to understand the NGO's motivation regarding its Islamic background and Muslim feminist struggle. In the official website, HWA stated, "Havle means "strength". Havle Bint-i Salabe, from whom we took our name, was a Muslim woman who protested the injustice she was subjected to by her husband. Havle inspired the name of the association with her determined stand against injustice." (Havle Kadın 2022) Additionally, HWA has emphasized that according to Islamic narrative, the God did not ignore

Havle Bint-I Salabe's call and sent the first four verses in the surah of Al Mujadilah (The Contention or The Women Who Pleads as commonly translated) to the prophet. This Islamic narrative and anecdote are highlighted on Havle's official website under the "Who we are?" section. I believe Havle employ this narrative to indicate an existing and legitimate feminists struggle in Islam.



Figure 2: HWA members, 8 March 2020

Some of the placards state:

"Are you God? We have a rebellion against masculinities that do not know their place."

"Fitrat is socially constructed."

"We want the nights, the streets, and the mosques too."

After closing the parenthesis, I would like to continue focus on how HWA forges its Muslim feminist discourse. Parallel to the previous fitne concept, 'fitrat'

has been spotlighted in Havle's 2020 Women's Day march. As an Islamic concept, fitrat has been used to claim different natures of men and women. This concept is generally employed to justify unequal standards among men and women due to their so-called nature. It appeals to women as mothers and ignores their individuality or socio-political agenda. Especially for Turkey's conservative circles, fitrat is a functional tool to deprive women's own agenda and force them to stay given roles. Havle criticizes this concept by stating, "fitrat is socially constructed." In addition to conceptual criticism, the NGO has addressed the conservative circles that ignore women's agenda by stating, "We didn't take instruction; we are here by our will." on 8 March 2021. (see image3) This statement can be read as an objection and strong emphasis on women's agency in relation to will.

3.2. God's Order vs. Men's Religion

As another exciting implication in HWA's placards and other empirical material, the organization locates God at the divine status and challenges all kinds of oppression and involvement which shape their lives by frequently asking "Are you God?" question. In other words, HWA's feminism has rejected every interference or involvement apart from God's order. One of HWA's members, Sehide Zehra Keles, indirectly mentioned this situation and highlighted that "we draw the line between men's religion and the god's order." Furthermore, Keles pointed the roots of the issue by underlining that "we say that the perpetrators of what happened to us are patriarchy and men." (Keles 2023) These quotations imply that HWA took the God out of picture. It can be

claimed that while they remain faithful to God's order, they turn against men and patriarchy. The God's order conceptualization might be tricky to see how they differentiate themselves from other Muslims who deny the equality of sexes. Havle has become different with its gender-sensitive and reformist lenses in Islam. According to Sehide Zehra Keles, a member of HWA, the NGO adopted feminist scholar Amina Wadud's "patriarchy is greater than religion" perspective. In her interview, Keles clarify HWA's stance and claims that "Patriarchy is a founding dynamic in society, and religions are not independent of the founding dynamics of the societies they were born into. All religious interpreters are male, and women do not have a say in the field of theology. You must do very intense research to hear the voice of women." This claim implies that according to Muslim feminists, the religion and its interpretation are in the hands of men. This perspective is important to observe Muslim feminist critics of male gaze within the religion. To arrive next step, Keles stated that "the religion is instrumentalized as a tool to sustain patriarchy and advantageous status of males." (Keles 2023) By standing on this claim, the NGO has introduced its perspective by stating that "We oppose the understanding that regards Islamic interpretations on gender issues as being immanent, sacred and unquestionable, and we argue that these interpretations may be open to change according to the needs of individuals, social changes and legal structures." (Havle Kadın 2020) As a goal, Havle defends the elimination of the patriarchal gaze from the Qur'an's reading.

Once the patriarchal lenses are eliminated from Qur'an, the NGO aims to reread and reinterpretation to reach God's just order. (Camdereli 2022) HWA's approach shows that the organization can be categorized as liberal-reformist movement within the scope of Islamic feminism literature. As elaborated in literature review chapter, liberal-reformists aim to uncover an egalitarian essence in Islam and believe that patriarchy derive from societal codes. This perspective and its implications are quite visible and dominant in statements of HWA members like Sena Elbasi who locates the NGO close to liberal-reformists. (Elbasi 2021) Thus, I also underline HWA's liberal-reformist tendency to clarify its stance as Muslim feminist association. For their positioning in Turkey's feminist movement, Havle abstain from seeing as a Muslim alternative to existing feminist organizations. To make clear their position and function, HWA noted that "Havle Women's Association intends to fill a "gap" regarding feminism, especially in Turkey. Rather than being a Muslim feminist version of existing women's organizations, Havle continues to work to expand feminism, incorporating the unique potential for contribution of women who identify as both Muslim and/or feminist." (Havle Kadın Dernegi 2021) These highlights can be interpreted as an expression of being different and authentic entity as a newcomer to the feminist network.

As a feminist NGO, Havle's clash with patriarchy is quite an ordinary situation. However, I believe, HWA's patriarchy criticism deserves attention. It should be noted that HWA's criticism has two layers, so I claim that there is bilayer patriarchy criticism in Havle's works. HWA tackles with both Islam-based

The most remarkable placards state:

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3.3. LGBTI+ Subjectivity

As other sufferers of patriarchy, LGBTI+ subjects and HWA's attitude toward them should be discussed to see the scope of Muslim feminism. In 2022's night march, HWA has used the Qur'an verses which state, "There is no fear for them, and they won't be upset." in their placards. At the same photograph frame, the placard, which is colorized with LGBTI+ pride colors and state "This is my fitrat!" took the attention. The placard implies the nature and the visibility of LGBTI+ individuals. By using the fitrat word, the placard raises a criticism for the anti-LGBTI+ attitude, which gains ground from Qur'an interpretations. This photograph and the cooccurrence of these placards imply a lot about HWA's Muslim feminist character. For the LGBTI+ case, some may expect to see an ambiguous attitude from Havle because of Islamic reflexes. However, Havle specializes to Muslim LGBTI+ subjectivity and aims to produce knowledge on it. At this point, one of the Havle Meetings sessions can be taken as an example. In the "Sexual and Religious Negotiations of LGBT Muslims in Turkey" meeting, HWA members discussed Muslim LGBTI+ subjects around "What are some of how LGBT Muslims negotiate their position as non-normative sexual subjects in a country where Muslims constitute the majority and as religious subjects within predominantly secular LGBTI+ communities?" question. (HavleKadın 2022) Besides, the NGO has frequently declared its support and solidarity with Muslim LGBTI+s and promotes the "LGBTI+ rights are human rights" slogan on its social media accounts. (Havle Kadın 2023)

One of prominent members of HWA, Rumeysa Camdereli has discuss Havle's perspective on Muslim LGBTI+ subjects and its connection with Islam by emphasizing "visibility of different Islams". Camdereli highlight impossibility of monolithic Islam understanding. "We don't propose a real Islam claim. While there are various issues like killing thousands of people or banning schoolgirls education right in the name of Islam, we found the real Islam discussions meaningless." (Camdereli 2023) This perspective implies that HWA internalize an Islam understanding which is open to dialogue and includes socially excluded groups. It should be noted that Havle's visibility perspective is not limited to Muslim LGBTI+ subjects. The NGO frames its essential struggle around possibility and visibility their Muslim Feminist ideal in the public realm. Instead of focusing only on the Qur'an, they heavily work to produce their own discourse and promote their visibility in the public sphere as free subjects. To get back to the main point about LGBTI+'s, I need to clarify HWA's support motivation as promoting Muslim LGBTI+ visibility. Therefore, HWA's solidarity with LGBTI+ groups and recognition of Muslim LGBTI+ subjects got harsh reactions. At this point, the recent lynch attempt should be noted to elaborate these harsh reactions.

In 2022 Pride Month, HWA published a support statement for LGBTI+ visibility and rights. In the aftermath of this statement, the organization has faced harsh social media lynching, threats, and insults. These have continued for months and ended up with unknown attackers raiding HWA's office. Since HWA moved its office short time ago and did not update its new address. The

attackers raided the previous office by disturbing around and posting placards but could not reach the HWA members in person. However, this incident demonstrated the degree of hazard for HWA's insecurity. On January 2023, HWA stated a solidarity call for the feminist and LGBTI+ organizations. The call has reached mass groups, and the association received massive support. As in this case, the other empirical materials imply that solidarity is essential to HWA's feminism. In the self-acquaintance part of the official website' the NGO introduce itself as a "feminist solidarity network." (HavleKadın 2022) Moreover, Havle arranges various events, and workshops to provide experience-sharing network and strengthen solidarity among its members and volunteers. The workshop called 'Muslim Feminists Tell Their Stories: The First Step to Co-production and Struggle', iftar meetings, and arranged unions to celebrate religious festivals can be examples of Havle's solidarity effort.

In short, solidarity is a valuable notion in the feminist struggle. Any women's movement cannot function without feminist solidarity. However, for the HWA case, solidarity became a more vital dimension than ever because of its special focus. Havle is working on the minefield, which consists of uneasy issues and promotes a relatively radical attitude in Turkey's authoritarian atmosphere, which is full of taboos on Islam and feminism. In this climate, the NGO defend both Islam and feminism at the same time and adopt a new discourse that challenges all embedded norms coming from Islam and societal values. As a reaction to their activities and arguments, the NGO has faced several threats, attacks, and physical lynch attempts. Every time, Havle has

responded these attempts by raising a call for solidarity among feminist organizations and continued to follow its agenda. In this regard, it can be said that solidarity is more important than ever for HWA to survive and stay strong in its minefield.



Figure 4: HWA Members, 8 March 2022

Placards state that:
"There is no fear for them; they won't be upset."
"This is my fitrat!"
"Are you God? We have a rebellion against men & masculinities that do not know their place."

One of HWA's primary purposes is building Muslim feminism perspective on the solid ground. To reach this goal, HWA has adopted the 'feminist knowledge production' method and contributes to existing literature by various ways. This method functions in two main ways firstly, the translation of Muslim feminist literature to Turkish and secondly, conducting case studies, research, publishing academic or semi-academic extensive reports to fill the gaps in the

Muslim feminism field. While mentioning Havle's activities, it should be noted that Havle's case selection for research and meetings reveals a pattern in the organization's roadmap. Havle has a special interest in elaborating structural problems, which derive from society's religious perceptions and experienced in daily life. (Camdereli 2021) For instance, in the 'Experiences and Perceptions of Early Marriage in Turkey' project, which consists of an extensive case study, comprehensive outcome report and workshop, HWA has put the early marriage problem under the spotlight and scrutinized religious motivations or justification in the case of early marriage. In this project, the NGO has revealed that religion does not have a direct mission that triggers early marriages. However, it is seen as an open door and provides a basis for legitimacy for early marriages. (Çamdereli 2021) Like this, in 'Women's Religious Belongings and Their Ways to Survive Violence' project, HWA elaborated on religious references between gender-based violence and social norms. In various workshops and Havle Meetings sessions, the association has heavily focused on specific themes like family, religion and social norm dualities, which appeared as problem sources in women's daily life. At this point, I argue that HWA functions very similar to the globally leading Islamic feminist organization, Sisters in Islam group. As a prominent and long-dated organization, SIS has generally focused on the most encountered problems legitimated in the name of Islam. Within this scope, SIS has worked on wife-beating or polygamy. To overcome these and change the embedded norms, SIS produced a feminist perspective and offered reinterpretations of problematic verses. Therefore, I found HWA's employed methodology and case selection filter similar to SIS.

In my research, I have endeavored to understand how HWA engages and contribute to their struggle for Muslim feminism. The empirical material has demonstrated that HWA's working style and contribution can be described as scholarship activism. HWA has followed its agenda by employing both scholarship and activist features. In an activist vein, HWA's active participation in feminist events on the streets or emphasized solidarity with other feminist organizations can be observed as important factors which feed the activist vein. On the other hand, the feminist knowledge production effort, and its aims to build a solid ground for Muslim feminism can be elaborated to see the scholarship function. It can be noted that through case studies, projects, conferences, and publications, HWA has fed the scholarship vein.

It should be emphasized that HWA has create a very extrovert and versatile image in its performance. Especially its strong communication and cooperation with both Western and Eastern actors contribute to the previous claim. For instance, the NGO has active network with various Muslim feminist organizations from the global East and participate prestigious events which are organized by the world's leading Muslim feminist organization MUSAWAH. HWA has utilized from these organizations' networks and ideological ground. Member of HWA Rumeysa Camdereli (2021) noted that "the organization feels close to the other associations in Malesia and Indonesia." In addition to the network with Eastern Muslim organizations, HWA maintain and fund its feminist knowledge production namely case studies and projects, with the financial support of European institutions. For instance, HWA has conducted and published two

research with the financial support of Consulate-General of Netherlands Human Rights Program namely the Early Marriages in Turkey and Family in Turkey: Dreams and Realities. Also, the NGO has prepared the Localization of Feminism project with the financial support of Swedish Consulate. These examples indicate that how Havle is open for dialogue and cooperation for its feminism regardless the partners' origins.

In conclusion, throughout the chapter, I have endeavored to elaborate Havle's identical features and feminist understanding with special interest to its Islamic reflexes. In fact, I mainly aimed to explore how Havle brings Islam and feminism into the same body. For this purpose, I have selected the gender equality theme. Since the gender equality theme is quite functional as a slippery slope for any Muslim feminist entity due to some 'gender inequalities' in Islam and oxymoronic relation claims with the feminism. To explore the boundaries and scope of Havle's Muslim feminism, I have utilized its publications, statements, and even International Women's Day placards. The analysis of the empirical material has indicated that Havle has created its own perspective and discourse for its feminism. The NGO has elaborated almost all subjects and objects of feminism. While its build its feminist argumentation, for the Muslim reflexes the organization has internalized a liberal-reformist attitude towards the Islamic narrative to uncover the egalitarian essence of Quran. To raise its voice and contribute its ideological base, Havle has pursued various strategies from the feminist knowledge production to activism. In the chapter, I elaborated these strategies and framed the organization's working style as scholarship activism.

In short, by taking ground from the analysis of the empirical material, I argued that Havle has introduced new Muslim feminist definition in Turkey.



CHAPTER 4 –

HWA’S STANCE ON THE ISTANBUL CONVENTION AND ALTERNATIVE MUSLIM WOMEN IMAGE

In this chapter, I aim to focus on HWA’s position, function and meaning in relation to the women’s movement and the socio-political atmosphere in Turkey. To analyze what HWA offer and how it contributes to both the feminist movement and Turkey's socio-political agenda, I will employ Istanbul Convention and the related discussion as material. Havle’s position and attitude on the Istanbul Convention discussion and the polarized sides reveal how the organization perceive and reacts to assigned women's identity formulations in Turkey. The chapter mainly elaborates on how Havle shows AKP's hegemonic, enforced gender roles and Erdoğan’s Muslim women interpellation. In this context, I argue that HWA rejects and resists Erdoğan and AKP's women's identity formulation. Instead of internalizing an assigned women's identity formulation, Havle produced an alternative Muslim women's image in Turkey.

4.1. AKP’s Anti-Gender Politics

As mentioned in previous chapters, in the post 2011 period, AKP has adopted strong conservative discourse on gender related matters and imposed it to all layers of state and society. From policy regulations to political rhetoric, AKP’s familization of women and anti-gender strategies became more visible. Continuous comments on the status of women, family conceptualization and

embedded mansplaining indicate that AKP has formulated its own ideal women image and impose on the society. While modern, secular, and socially extrovert women image was marked as ideal for years, AKP has raised a criticism on this image and draw attention to the unmarked veiled women. In fact, during the initial years, AKP has engaged veiled women to public sphere and make them visible in society. To maintain this visibility and promote conservative, veiled women image, AKP has backed up to specific women organizations like KADEM to impose its ideal woman perspective and make the perspective more visible on different platforms. Over time, AKP's conservative agenda and gender backlash has potentiated and eventually, the party has reached its pick point in its anti-feminist road by introducing possibility of withdrawn from the Istanbul Convention.

4.2. A Critical Juncture in Women's Movement: Istanbul Convention

Istanbul Convention and its abolishment process is one of the most significant issues in Turkey's women's movement for the last decade. The Convention was an outstanding achievement and milestone for the status of women in Turkey. Although it is officially a European convention, Istanbul Convention is prepared, formed, and popularized by the cooperation and extraordinary efforts of Turkey's feminist organizations. The convention was signed first by the governing party AKP in 2011. Istanbul Convention was a sort of armor and warrantor to protect women from domestic violence. However, dating from 2018s, Turkey's far-right actors have put the convention under the spotlight and turned it into the target for their political agenda. AKP, as a

signatory and implementor, has changed its discourse and withdrawn from the convention in 2021. Istanbul Convention, from its creation to abolishment, should be taken as a perfect example to observe Turkey's sociopolitical climate and authoritarian turns. This case especially expresses a lot about AKP's political turns. As a so-called 'conservative democrat' party, AKP, in relation to its neoliberal conservative agenda, has provided ground for women organizations to empower the status of women. To demonstrate itself in front of European institutions and Turkey's sociopolitical actors, AKP has implemented new regulations for women and pursued a democratic and women-friendly image. (Cosar and Yegenoglu 2011) Istanbul Convention can be seen as a product of this period. However, with the AKP's authoritarian turn and democratic backsliding in the country, AKP has revealed its anti-feminist discourse. (Esen and Gumuscu 2016) From its chairman Erdogan to an ordinary party member, AKP has adopted harsh discourse which ignores women's existence in the public sphere. With the withdrawn decision, AKP has reached the pick point regarding the misogynist political attitude.

The debate on Istanbul Convention has started by far-right parties and Islamic institutions in Turkey. The radical actors and groups first problematized then demonized the convention due to its regulations like alimony payment or the principle of women's statement in the cases. While AKP has systemically increased its authoritarian tone on domestication and familialization of women (Nas 2016), the far-right actors have gradually become more visible with their traditional and conservative references and "the convention endangers families,

family notion and promote homosexuality” claims. In parallel to the anti-feminist policies, a considerable part of AKP has also adopted the demonization rhetoric toward the convention. This situation has ended up with solid polarization among the supporters and antis of the convention. The polarization has even appeared among AKP's internal institutions and actors. Therefore, the Istanbul Convention debate polarized two camps of the country and created disagreement within the government party AKP. For instance, AKP's prominent women MPs Ozlem Zengin and Canan Kalsin have objected to the withdrawn discussions. Also, KADEM, a women's organization with an organic link with AKP, has taken a different stand than AKP elites and emphasized the importance of the Istanbul Convention. This intragroup clash ended with harsh criticism and lynch threats to KADEM and the prominent women's party members. These objections indicate that Istanbul Convention is unrelated to any religious issue, and the only hidden aim for its abolishment is suppressing women more by removing women's vent holes from the system. In short and the broader scope, Turkey's political parties and civil society organizations have divided for the case of the Istanbul Convention. While the supporters of the convention have made a great effort to empower and protect the status of women, the antis formulate women like houseplants who do not have any place and ground apart from their corner at home. Because of all these factors, Istanbul Convention turned sort of an indicator or turnsole to detect any organization's perspective and vision on gender. At this point, I found Istanbul Convention functional to elaborate HWA's stance between far-right Islamist and

pro-women actors. In this way, I will detect how Havle posits itself and have a function in Turkey's context.

4.3. HWA's Positionality in Istanbul Convention Debates

From the first days of the debates regarding withdrawing from the Convention, HWA has declared its view on this issue. On the second year of the withdrawal, HWA continues to produce content and emphasize the importance of the convention. With banners and publications that state, "Istanbul Convention is Ours" and "Istanbul Convention keeps you alive" in its official accounts, HWA rejects AKP's withdrawal decision. Starting from the beginning of this conflict, to raise awareness and form public opinion about Istanbul Convention, Havle regularly produced content and spread them on social media networks. The banners, detailed posts and extensive explanations, which elaborate why Istanbul Convention is critical for women, took a considerable part of HWA's social media activity. When the posts are analyzed, it has appeared that Havle generally focuses on the fallacies of the convention. It should be noted that, during the smear campaign on the convention, far-right and conservative actors have generated fallacies and employed rhetorical tricks about the convention and convinced conservative people. Thus, the fallacies have occupied a place in people's minds and manipulated their perspectives. These fallacies can be summarized as the "Istanbul Convention destroys the family notion and legitimize LGBT in Turkey". At this point, it can be emphasized that HWA has addressed the fallacies one by one and produced various content to explain the reality and dismantle established biases. Also, to disprove the

general thesis from the opponents, HWA has shared some assessments from its research. For instance, one of these is emphasized in an interview. Camdereli (2020) have put that “Contrary to the claims, the AKP electorate does not say what the government imposes, neither about alimony, nor about early marriage, nor about the abolition of the Istanbul Convention, which we are talking about now. Lies are being told. This is why the researches are important.” This particular interest and effort indicate that HWA has noticed and worked against the manipulation on conservative circles. I believe HWA was able to notice this confusion in the conservative circles since it comes from a similar background. At this point, it should be noted that this situation does not mean HWA feel sympathy for the opponents of the convention. This implies that HWA has lenses to evaluate and understand the codes and agenda of conservative or Islamic circles. The real reason behind the dismantling of fallacies that generally affect conservative circles can be explained by Havle’s target group. As Çamdereli (2019) put it, "conservatives are the target group of all works of HWA." This can be interpreted as HWA perceiving and framing itself as representing the Muslim feminist women movement to the rest of the conservative groups in Turkey. In short, since HWA and its members come from conservative or Islamic circles and have a special mission to reach conservatives, the NGO mind to clarify all kinds of fallacies about the Istanbul Convention and right-based feminism in conservative circles.

Istanbul Convention discussion is essential for Turkey's feminist movement, but reading how Havle posits itself in Turkey's socio-political

conjuncture is also very symbolic and functional. As an independent organization, Havle does not link itself with any political or social entity. Apart from the strong emphasis on its Muslim and feminist identity, Havle abstains from the conservative label or other socio-political adjectives. In parallel, Havle formulates and displays a relatively new political stance and women's identity in Turkey. Until today, Turkey has experienced two significant women idealization, identity formulation projects by the republican modernization project and AKP's neoliberal, conservative oppression. HWA has formulated and performed its identity independent of these two idealization forms. The NGO shows two-sided opposition and challenges Turkey's mainstream idealization forms for women. The first challenge emerged in relation to the early Republican period's women's identity formation. As mentioned, the founding fathers have promoted modern, secular and extrovert women's image. Within the country's modernization project, this image is settled as a goal for women and boosted by Kemalist feminism. However, this standardization does not bring emancipation for the women in Turkey. (Arat 2000, Kandiyoti 1987) Veiled women or women who have Islamic reflexes are left out of the picture and ignored. From the early republican era to today, this perspective became a structured and hegemonic norm for Turkey's ideal women's image. In some cases, this hegemonic perspective uncovered its oppressive character on the veiled women and caused to traumatic incidences like the headscarf ban regulation in universities and public institutions. Undoubtedly, Kemalist feminism's idealization has restricted veiled women's freedom within society for a very long time. In today's conjuncture, HWA has framed itself as evidence of the possibility of being

Muslim, veiled, well-educated and open-minded women. The NGO puts distance on veiled or Muslim women stereotype, which is generated and caricatured by founding ideology.

On the other side the second major women idealization is produced as a counter-hegemonic attitude by AKP. From its initial years, AKP has challenged and reframed the embedded norms and regulations on veiled women. The party has integrated veiled Muslim women's image into public institutions and spheres. The reformist perspective was militated in favor of the status of women. By this attitude, AKP is highly appreciated and received massive support from conservative circles, especially conservative women voters. In the meantime, the party had stable and normal relations with other women's organizations. However, over time, AKP has reshaped its policies and shown authoritarian tendencies and conservative agenda. While the party and elites, with its institutionalized discourse, interfered in women's subjectivity, it proposed the familialization of women strategy. AKP has idealized and approved women as conservative and domestic mothers or housewives. (Akyuz 2018) Despite the rising authoritarianism and anti-gender policies that restrict and intervene women subjectivity, AKP has continued consolidating its female supporters. Mass women voter groups and civil society organizations like KADEM have stand by AKP because of its contribution to conservative women's visibility. At this point, HWA has built quite a different profile than the other Muslim women and its organizations.

The empirical material shows that HWA builds effective political opposition to AKP. It can be argued that contrary to other Muslim women's groups and organizations, HWA does not feel indebted to AKP because of its initial process. The NGO does not ignore AKP's conservative patriarchy and misogynist policies. While AKP sacralizes specific concepts like family and motherhood, Havle resisted it by stating, "Are you God? Let your family blow!" reactions. As another aspect of AKP's women formulation, AKP's and Turkey's President Erdoğan's rhetoric and political instruments deserve attention. In this regard, the headscarf issue and the veiled women question can be given as an example. Over the years, Erdoğan has instrumentalized and utilized this question and its subjects to consolidate his power in conservative circles. By promoting his famous saying "My veiled sisters", Erdoğan framed himself as a responsible actor for this issue. Erdoğan not only frames himself as an alpha male but also reconfigures the veiled women image. In fact, Erdoğan interpellated veiled women as weak, familial and subordinated subjects for him. At this point, HWA has formulated its identity and alienated itself from this illustration. Camdereli, on behalf of Havle, has declared that "We are not the sisters that the government calls "our headscarved sisters". Feminism requires not to be anyone's "sister" anyway."

Parallel to Camdereli, another member of HWA Zeynep Duygu (2021) has also put that "The governing party thinks that "we are losing our women" however we are not your women. We are not from those women who are created as second sex. When we reject their discourse (*refers to the*

materialization of headscarf by AKP), we also bereave of their tools and argumentation as a subject of the rights.” These statements deserve attention to see how Havle raised its voice and emphasized its free subjectivity than AKP and Erdoğan’s imagination. Parallel to this, it should be noted that Havle has constantly objected to AKP’s roadmap, which consists of patriarchal and neoconservative policies. Havle has evaluated and criticized social reality in AKP’s Turkey by obtaining critical lenses. The NGO deeply worked and analyzed AKP’s effect on gender-related matters. In this sense, one of the Havle Meetings sessions can be taken as an example to illustrate this claim. A Havle Meeting session titled “Social Policy Contradictions in AKP Turkey: Observations on Femininity, Poverty, and Religiosity from the ‘Opposite’ Public” elaborated on the experiences of Muslim feminist social workers within the AKP’s social policy framework. In short, Havle’s placards, research areas and statements indicate that HWA does not adopt AKP’s women formulation. Moreover, Havle challenges AKP’s sacred notions like family and enhances its own identity or persona. In other words, as both a Muslim and feminist entity, HWA built an opponent stance and formed a counter stance towards AKP’s counter-hegemonic women idealization. This opposition claims about Havle can be confirmed and found in its discourse. Member of HWA, Rûmeysa Çamdereli (2019), describes the Muslim feminist women movement as an "opponent movement". According to Çamdereli, 'being an opponent' can be a characteristic feature of Havle and ideological current. This claim is illustrated by the Muslim women's movement's opponent attitude over time. From the headscarf question to AKP's anti-gender implications, Muslim women exist through oppositional

tendency or reflexes to power. It should be noted that HWA internalizes this profile. As a new generation Muslim feminist movement, Havle's activist reflexes, ideological ground and motivation to be an opposition is discussed by Çamdereli. Çamdereli (2019) have stated that "Muslim feminist movement represents an opposition to the government's practices in different areas because the social transformation which the government creates in the name of the conservatization threaten us."

As a civil society organization, Havle highlights its responsibility to criticize government policies. From social policies to elections, HWA has expressed its views and critics on Turkey's political conjuncture. By engaging on gender and religion aspects, HWA involves the daily politics and share its reactions. The latest Turkish political elections can be seen as fertile ground to observe HWA's activity and engagement with politics. Throughout the election process, HWA and its members, on behalf of HWA, have shared its opinions on the parties' discussion topics. In various op-eds and interviews, it is seen that HWA has centralized the status of women and discussed the parties' performance on critical issues like Istanbul Convention (and its reflection in Turkish Penal Code Act. No 6284). HWA's statements and official interviews on Turkish politics have appeared on various online platforms. This visibility and interviews indicate that Havle is becoming a visible actor at the intersection of Turkey's gender and political context. It can be noted that Havle's projects and case studies also enable the organization to speak about politics from a gender and religious aspect. For instance, in April 2023, the NGO arranged "The

Women's Table: What Do Religious Women Expect from Politics?" event and brought 100 religious women and ten women politicians from different parties. In this event, HWA has provided ground to discuss religious women's expectations, concerns and hopes about the post-election era. As an outcome of the event, HWA has published a report to reach politicians and contribute to religious women's visibility.

In the conclusion of the chapter, it should be reemphasized that HWA has resisted two mainstream women's identity formation ways in Turkey. For the first formation, the organization has challenged republican ideology's ideal women's image by performing and promoting its religious identity in the public sphere without hesitation. For the second domestic formation, although the group that formed HWA experienced Republican ideology's discriminative policies in the early 2000s, they did not internalize AKP's counter-hegemonic women formulation, which is created against the Republican ideology. Havle has rejected AKP's enforced domination of neoconservative political implications and gender roles. Instead of adopting AKP's ideal women formula, it condemns its main components like family and patriarchal borders. In addition to the rejection policy, Havle has pursued an opponent attitude against AKP's patriarchal and authoritarian roadmap. By doing this, Havle has eroded AKP's illusion and discourse on the axis of religious identity, republican ideology and patriarchy. By this way, HWA has located itself differently from Islamic and secular women interpretations in Turkey. As an equally Muslim and feminist NGO, Havle has formulated a new identity and produced an alternative framework for thinking

and acting about women's issues in Turkey. Furthermore, since Havle is the first Muslim feminist entity in Turkey, it opened new channels for feminist struggle. Havle's existence and discourse may contribute to Turkey's rich feminist movement.



CHAPTER 5 –

THE INTERNATIONAL CONNECTIONS OF HWA AND LOCAL AUTHENTICITY

In this chapter, I aim to analyze HWA's authentic identity and the positionality among mainstream feminist currents. I endeavor to elaborate how Havle frames itself and offer perspective on mainstream Western feminist discourse and feminist practices in Turkey. I will adopt HWA's international connections, networking practices and collaborations as the chapter's material. By employing these materials, I aim to explore how Havle connect and dialogue with mainstream feminist understandings. In parallel, I work on how Havle forms itself between the mainstream -Western- feminist ideology and the local codes. In a nutshell, I analyze what Havle adopt or refuses from the existing feminist paradigms and reframe itself as a new organization. This analysis reveals Havle's perspective on the local and global feminist currents and these currents' ideological roots, like Westernization and modernity. Within this scope, I investigate how Havle produces local authenticity within its Localization of Feminism ideal. Throughout the chapter, I emphasize that Havle has an international solid network from the East and the West simultaneously. Especially Havle's connection and dialogue with the Western institutions at the organizations and intellectual capital level deserves special attention. Havle's collaborations and involvement in international funding programs demonstrate that the organization established a strong relationship with Western institutions.

Undoubtedly, as a feminist organization, HWA has taken a part of its existential ground from the feminist ideology. However, on the other hand, I argue that HWA has adopted a critical lens towards mainstream Western feminist ideology and problematizes a reductionist attitude in the mainstream feminist narrative. The reductionist attitude refers to the mainstream current approach which frames Muslim women as prisoners waiting for enlightenment and emancipation from the West or feminism. Contrary to this attitude, HWA has rejected the singular, monolithic feminism and advocated the feminisms with plural tendency. HWA has internalized its Muslim and feminist identity without hesitation and dismantled the assigned Muslim women image in the eyes of Western reductionist feminist understanding. Within this context, I argue that Havle gathers Muslim identity, societal codes and feminist ideology simultaneously and produces a locally authentic feminist perspective. This situation can be explained by the organization's Localization of Feminism ideal.

5.1. Localization of Feminism Ideal

The extensive analysis of Havle's activities, publications and public statements indicates that the organization has something to say in relation to mainstream feminist ideology. Since the NGO is relatively new, there is an effort to embrace itself on the ideological spectrum for feminism and work for the base of its position. In this regard, the most important and remarkable point is rising as the Localization of Feminism notion for Havle. The Localization of Feminism can be framed as an umbrella term to express HWA's strategy, extensive project, and ultimate goal. Hence, the term is critical to understand and show

HWA's approach or organizational identity. As a concept, the Localization of Feminism has appeared in Havle's first and biggest international conference. On December 2020, HWA arranged The Localization of Feminism Conference and throwed 300 women for two days, hosted various scholars on the organization's interest areas like Islamic feminism, women's movement in Turkey, and local women movements in the different parts of the world. For two days, HWA and conferees tackled different layers of the aforementioned areas. Following the conference, the NGO published an extensive booklet and shared the articles, keynotes, and outputs about the conference. In the introduction part of the booklet, Havle explained its purpose for the conference by stating that "we aimed to look at how we include feminism in our lives, how we converse and fight with it." (Havle Kadın Derneği 2021, 2) This quotation can be interpreted to understand why Havle named the conference Localization of Feminism. However, its understanding and approach to the term is already highlighted in the booklet. For Havle "Locality is not limited to villages, neighborhoods and not even to a homeland. What is local to us is sometimes a street, a country, sometimes inside a home and even our bodies." (Havle Kadın Derneği 2021, 2) In fact, the localization of feminism may be intended to make feminism and women's struggle more tangible for women. To do this, it is taking feminism from an abstract ground, engaging it to more familiar concerns and making it noticeable in daily life. Havle has created and centralized the localization of feminism approach and underlined "We defend locality of feminism" statements on social media platforms and publications. However, the organization does not provide comprehensive definition or conceptualization for the term. For instance,

while the NGO sometimes frames this concept as 'localization of feminism', it sometimes uses the expression 'locality of feminism'. This situation causes ambiguity about its conceptualization and operationalization. While locality of feminism refers to an existing local feminism, localization give another message like rendering 'feminism' local. To overcome this ambiguity, the original version of the term (instead of the transition) should be noted. In Turkish, the native language of HWA, the concept is framed as localization of feminism (feminizmin yerellesmesi). Thus, I will analyze the concept with this articulation. Besides, to elaborate on this approach's roots and political implications, I will introduce various statements as supportive materials.

On different platforms, HWA has introduced its localization of feminism concept and open channels to practice it. As the most essential and clear statement for the term, HWA has explained in its official website in these words "We also defend the locality of feminism based on the view that women's stories, struggles, and solutions to social problems do not always fit into a universal definition of feminism. While fighting against patriarchy and gender inequality, we also see that women's desires and expectations from life are shaped within the network of social relations to which they are subject." (Havle Kadin n.d.) By this expression, it can be argued that HWA has introduced different experiences and reflections about feminism. Instead of referring to the one and singular feminist narrative, the NGO emphasize feminisms with pluralist tension. In other words, HWA underlines the objection to monolithic feminist envisagement. Hence, it can be claimed that Havle does not directly copy and

paste the mainstream Western feminist ideology. Within the exact quotation's framework, it should also be noted that the organization aim to include the country or society-specific dynamics of feminist envisagement. When we consider Turkey's sociopolitical fault lines and Havle's Muslim identity, it can be claimed that HWA brings all dimensions together and produces local, authentic feminist movement. In other words, to reach feminism which is sensitive and inclusive for different stories other than in Europe, HWA endeavors to introduce Islam, feminism, Turkey's social codes and embedded social patriarchy into the discussion. Since any social movement or ideology cannot be taken into place without its social codes. HWA may reach its local feminism aim in this way.

This ideal and effort can be observed in the other proposals of the Havle. According to HWA's prominent member Rûmeysa Çamdereli (2020), "to reach all women, the women who are in the women platforms should build more inclusive language." For Çamdereli, this inclusive language is possible with localization. At this point, it should be reemphasized that, localization is both a tool and a goal for Havle. Overall, it can be said that HWA endeavor to engage the nonmainstream subjects and issues into feminism. All these imply that the organization has a belief in reaching functional feminism, which is not assigned a specific group of women or not limited to the echo rooms. As mentioned before, this situation can also be interpreted as introducing and including local or country-specific issues or values into the feminist agenda. For instance, HWA's traditional bairam celebration event with its members and volunteers can be taken as an example. The bairam celebration and coming together is seen as a

way of expression for practising traditional values and religious duties and acting or cherishing feminist solidarity shoulder to shoulder. These events reflect how Havle formulate and practices its organizational identity in the big picture. As a Muslim feminist organization, Havle has mixed the local, religious, and country-specific components at the same pot. By doing this, Havle has produced and performed an authentic and atypical feminist struggle. Instead of adopting the Western- bordered feminism, HWA has aimed to break the circle, leave the echo rooms, and expand feminism to the untouched subjects and objects. At this point, the NGO is differentiated from the other feminist organizations in the homeplace of feminism, the West.

5.2. Producing Local Authenticity

It can be argued that HWA harmonizes the Western ideological ground and local-religious values at the same time. More specifically, Havle's working method can be explained as adding Islamic reflexes into feminism and adjusting Western feminism to Turkey's socio-cultural codes via Muslim feminism conceptualization. While doing this, it can be claimed that HWA does not directly adjust or adopt the Western mainstream feminist narrative. Furthermore, Havle's discourse includes a critical tension towards the West's reductionist feminist approach to the rest of the world, especially the Global East. More specifically, Havle challenges Eurocentric Western feminism which tries to emancipate and save Muslim women from Islam's captivity. Also, at this point, Havle rejects a monolithic feminist understanding and advocates pluralism for the struggle. By looking at all these discursive underpinnings, I can argue that Havle raises a

critical perspective and reject the reductionist attitude of Eurocentric Western feminism. At this point, a crucial nuance should be highlighted, HWA criticize the Western feminism and its reductionist attitude by staying the borders of the feminism. This situation can be read from Camdereli's statement on the Muslim feminisms. Camdereli have put that "If Muslim women need such a naming because they can't find the answer to their needs, and if they do this by accepting the concept without going outside of feminism, this is an achievement." (Ari 2020) By looking this sentence, it is possible to say that HWA does not violate the borders of feminism, it provides its critical lenses, introduce its rhetoric and evaluate all these dimensions as an achievement for feminist ideology.

To overcome the mainstream narration of Western feminism and introduce Muslim women's various realities, Havle has applied various ways. The NGO has arranged social media events with institutions like Amnesty Turkey and called for articles, published blog posts, and translated several sources to Turkish or English. All these tasks are framed as the 'feminist knowledge production' by the NGO. In this context, feminist knowledge production can be interpreted as providing a ground and strengthening effort for their stance and its argumentative base against the reductionist narrative. In light of this, the empirical material and discursive implications show that Havle's argumentation and position contain decolonial tendencies and attitudes towards hegemonic Western feminism. Therefore, it should be noted that Havle can be analyzed and framed as a decolonial feminist organization.

Since Turkey, and naturally Havle, does not have a colonial past, some may disagree with the decolonial feminist claim for the NGO. However, the common denominator for HWA and decolonial feminism should be reemphasized as the rejection or challenge to monolithic and hegemonic Western episteme regarding feminism. Also as a footnote, it should be noted that a decolonial attitude can extend beyond country-specific experience. Since decolonial approach criticizes the monolithic and hegemonic Western way of life and thought, any organization or perspective that focuses on the same question can be evaluated under the decolonial thought criteria. Within this framework, it can be said that Havle has raised a critical stance and approach towards the Western monolithic – universal feminism understanding. Besides, the organization proposed plurality and feminisms concerning different experiences and societies by looking at its own dynamics. Therefore, it is one more time can be analyzed as a decolonial reaction to the global feminist currents. However, this decolonial reaction cannot be materialized by only the global feminist currents. Similarly, the organization has some offerings and contributions about the reflections of this case in Turkey.

As a reflection or extension of Western thinking, Turkey's founding - republican ideology is also facing the challenge of Havle. The NGO and its members' general profile do not fit with the Republican ideology's women imagination and feminist narrative. While the ideology assigned women modern, well-educated, and secular features in relation to Westernization goal, leaved religious identity and related notions out of the picture. Furthermore, the

ideology is not content with the discursive level, and intervened in women's daily life to implement its narrative. With headscarf bans and related regulations in the public sphere, the founding ideology has marked and left HWA-style women out of the picture. In light of these, HWA's discourse, rising activism and even its existence is already powerful symbols which imply the resistance and challenge the founding ideology. This situation can be observed in HWA members' statements. For instance, according to one of HWA members Zeynep Duygu (2021) "There are Muslim women who does not fit the modern woman, enlightened (*aydin*) woman image in Turkey. There is a political rhetoric that produce this categorization, we are dismantling this rhetoric. Instead of it, the new discourse should be produced for this area." It can be argued that the political insecurity and discomfort with the modernization project has been quite visible for the Havle. I consider this situation quite interesting not just for Turkish politics but also for decolonial feminism. Even in this nation-micro level case, the decolonial feminist tendencies can be observed in relation to Eurocentric, hegemonic women and feminist narrative. Instead of taking form to fit the hegemonic and desirable modern image, HWA gives up neither its religious identity nor feminist belonging. Moreover, the organization and its members perform and live their existence like the most prominent evidence of pluralist and inclusive feminism.

Before the concluding remarks, it should be noted that the localization notion and the decolonial tendencies do not imply excluding non-local actors from their unique feminist narrative. This situation should especially be

underlined for Western actors. Havle's critical perspective on the Eurocentric, Western reductionist attitude does not mean an exclusion of the Western actors in Havle's feminist projection. The feminist solidarity and cooperation effort continue in the parallel line. Moreover, the organization's network and collaborations indicate that HWA is open to working with international actors from the West. Havle's comprehensive case studies and research publications are financially supported by various Western institutions or funding programs such as the Swedish Consulate, Consulate-General of the Netherlands Human Rights Program and Turkey Representative of the Heinrich Böll Stiftung Association. The collaborations and financial supports demonstrate that HWA does not have a skeptical and distant relationship with the Western actors. Hence, it can be argued that HWA's criticism of Eurocentric - monolithic feminism does not aim to escalate the invisible clash and consolidate its stance based on the polarization. Instead of it, this situation shows that HWA endeavors to highlight its ideological stance and reasoning by dismantling the biases and embedded fallacies in its focus area. In this regard, instead of plain battle, HWA struggles with the Western reductionist attitude by showing and proofing the other side of the coin as atypical women's entity.

To conclude, it should be noted one more time, an analysis of Havle's international connections revealed its boundaries, engagement, and formulation of its authentic self in relation to mainstream, hegemonic feminist narration. It can be argued that as a Muslim feminist organization, HWA has semipermeable attitude towards all kinds of conceptualizations, perspectives, and interpretations

for Islamic and Feminist thoughts. Neither mainstream Islamic narrative nor Western Feminist ideology has been directly accepted or internalized by the organization. Especially as an object of the chapter, due to its reductionist tendencies, the Western – hegemonic feminist understanding is criticized by the organization. Instead of monolithic feminism, HWA has raised different feminisms and its possibility or necessity to reach women and experience feminist practices. Havle's criticism of the Western dynamics and pluralist feminism imagination has revealed the decolonial feminist side of the organization in front of the global feminist world. To the Turkish extent, Havle has continued to show similar reflexes to its stance in the global level. The organization did not adopt and internalize the West-oriented-derived women identity formulation. Instead of fitting the ideal women profile, HWA has performed its existence as a challenge and alternative way to be both Muslim and feminist women in Turkey. For the scope of localization and international connections, it can be claimed that HWA is introducing local motifs to mainstream feminist understanding. By doing this, HWA produces local authenticity and brings distant-European feminism into home. Thanks to its authentic self, HWA combines feminist ideology and social codes to reach women and its ideals. This situation can be seen Havle's contribution to the women's movement with its existence and visibility.

CHAPTER 6 –

CONCLUSION

As discussed in the previous chapters, I have centralized the Havle Women Association and investigated its stance, function, role, and offerings for Turkey's strong feminist circle. As a relatively new NGO, HWA has centralized and problematized three main dimensions: the epistemic privilege of monolithic Western feminism, patriarchal interpretations of Sunni-orthodox Islam, and AKP's intervention in women's subjectivity.

By standing on Muslim feminism and decolonial feminism literature, I have argued that the NGO has proposed new Muslim feminism approach and definition to Turkey's socio-political currents. It is possible to claim that HWA has dismantled the perspective that considers the co-existence of Islam and feminism an oxymoron. With the 'equally Muslim and feminist' slogan and its underpinnings or reflections, the NGO has created a totally new persona for Turkish society and feminist network.

As another output of my thesis, I have investigated how HWA has formulated and displayed alternative Muslim women's image in Turkey. Especially, under AKP's dominant Muslim women portray and Erdoğan's intensive interpellation of religious women as his unconditional and permanent supporters, HWA has presented a relatively new Muslim women image which does not fit any mainstream women identity formulations in Turkey. The

mainstream women's identity formations are explained by referring to two dominant paradigms, which are characterized with the early republican period's and AKP rule's women's imaginations. By considering HWA's boundaries and representations, I claimed that the NGO has proposed a rejection against two aforementioned ideal women formulations.

Throughout the study, I have endeavoured to understand HWA's perspective and method regarding its interest area such as monolithic Western feminist narrative. In relation to this, one of the most remarkable outputs have raised as the NGO's localization of the feminism approach or goal. The analysis of empirical material has revealed that HWA aims to dismantle Western epistemic hegemony in feminist ideology. To do this, the NGO has proposed the localization of feminism concept as both a goal and roadmap. It can be said that localization is characterized with adding authentic social and cultural motifs in relation to Islam.

It should be noted that HWA is quite valuable for Turkey's socio-political fault lines. The NGO has immediately engaged the feminist solidarity network with its active participation and intellectual contribution. Fundamentally, HWA has introduced the local-Islamic dynamics to Turkey's feminist network, and by doing so I argue that it has completed the missing part in Turkey's feminist movement. In other words, with the collaboration of the other feminist stakeholders or NGOs, the full circle has been drawn for a feminist network. Therefore, as an essential outcome of the study, I have stated that HWA has brought new dimensions into the table for Turkey's women's movement.

As a young feminist, I always believed that feminism cannot eliminate the social fallacies and leave the echo chambers in Turkey. Although the feminist ideology and gender-conscious lenses are vital for Turkey's social and political problems, these concepts always remain limited to the assigned boundaries, cannot dismantle manipulative discourses, and reach the masses. No doubt that feminism should reach the capillaries of society. However, feminist understanding is estranged and demonized by the patriarchal tensions in Turkey. The ideology is defamiliarized with Turkey's socio-cultural codes because of its Western origin and progressive attitude. At this point, HWA has raised as a counter-example to these kinds of fallacies. Havle's Muslim feminism and localization of feminism ideal can be emphasized as meaningful and helpful contributions to redrawing and expanding feminism's boundaries in Turkey. As one of the essential claims of the thesis, if the organization can reach its primary goals, it may bring feminism into home, render it more local, more familiar, and more accessible for the invisible parts of the society. This would be great achievement for Turkey's socio-political status. Under the lights of these, I aimed to contribute to the literature by proposing an interpretative social science research which discuss the possibility for the co-existence of Islam and feminism and new feminist direction potential in Turkey's intellectual currents. With this intention, I have focused on specific themes and conceptual tools in three research chapters.

In the first research chapter, I aimed to reveal Havle's identical codes and understand how the organization combines Islam and feminism in the same

body with a balance. To understand the balance between Islam and feminism, Havle's way of dealing with two distinct notions, I have analyzed the organization's approach on the gender equality theme. The analysis and close reading of the empirical material has shown that Havle has created its perspective that enable it to be equally Muslim and feminist. From family dynamics to LGBTI+ subjectivity, Havle did not imply any non-feminist reflex. It should be noted that the organization does not make concessions about its feminist identity. More clearly, any Islamic or cultural tendency has caused the contradiction with Havle's feminism. By taking ground from Islamic feminism literature and activist network, Havle has adopted a liberal-reformist attitude towards the gender inequalities in Islam. With liberal-reformist attitude, the organization problematized the embedded patriarchy and male gaze in Quran's interpretation. In this regard, Havle has claimed the egalitarian essence of Quran and advocated firstly the elimination of the patriarchal gaze then the reinterpretation of the holy book. By starting from this ground, HWA has worked to strengthen its Muslim feminism as an ideological base. Thus, the organization has adopted the scholarship-activism method and created various content for Muslim feminist knowledge production.

In addition to its contribution to feminist movement, HWA's roadmap and impact areas were also analyzed in relation to the political conjuncture. As discussed in the second research chapter, Havle has dismantled the structured, mainstream women identity formulations in Turkey. As the country's most dominant and influential political powers, both Early Republican Era's 'founding

fathers' and AKP's competitive authoritarian cadres have intervened in women's subjectivity in relation to the political agenda and formulated ideal women profiles. In the women identity formulation projects, specific notions are marked or left unmarked to consolidate and maintain the hegemonic narrative. While Early Republican Era marked secular and well-educated women image with great interest to Western codes, AKP has centralized unmarked subjects then enforced familialization of women with reference to Sunni-Orthodox Islam. At this duality, HWA has introduced its own identity and made it more visible. HWA's performativity and increasing visibility has shown a new and alternative way apart from two hegemonic, assigned formulations. Also, Havle's 'equally Muslim feminist' attitude and political stance has deprived AKP's the most functional power consolidation tool. For the last 20 years, AKP and Erdoğan has produced an essential part of its political discourse based on the conservatives, especially women, disadvantageous status because of the social perceptions, cultural institutions, and political regulations in the past. Erdoğan and AKP have framed themselves as savior and interpellated Muslim women as their strong supporters. However, Havle has harshly criticised this political rhetoric and narrative. In this way, Havle damages AKP's political monopoly on women subjectivity. By differentiating itself from two hegemonic women identity formulations, Havle has produced an alternative framework to think and perform about women's question in Turkey.

In the third research chapter, the localization of feminism ideal has emerged as the key point for the NGO. The international connections and the

way of dialogue or cooperation with both Western and Muslim organizations have implied that HWA has a strong and positive relationship with its partners. However, it should be noted that the NGO directly internalizes neither mainstream Islamic narrative nor Western monolithic feminist understanding. In this regard, I argue that Havle has added social, cultural, and local codes to mainstream feminist ideology. By this way, HWA has produced local authenticity and a unique self which harmonizes feminism and country-specific dynamics which are characterized with Islamic reflexes to reach more applicable feminism for some parts of the society.

For various reasons, HWA can be seen as an effective case study that include different angles and dynamics for a social science thesis. The organization's ideological–intellectual base, and strong activist tendencies provide rich content to analyze. Within this framework, I argue that Havle create a multi-layered Muslim feminist understanding and social approach for its working area. It can be argued that HWA dismantled the existing structural narratives in Turkey's ideal women images, rejected AKP's women interpellation and political monopolization of Muslim women, and introduce a new Muslim feminist stance with decolonial reflexes in Turkey.

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