

THE EXPERIENCES OF NONCUSTODIAL FATHERS AFTER DIVORCE AND CUSTODY:
A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY ABOUT PARENTAL ALIENATION

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SEZERCAN UÇAR

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Özyeğin University
Graduate School of Social Sciences

The thesis of Sezercan Uçar,
has been approved by:

Asst. Prof. Selenga Gürmen
Jury Member
(Thesis Advisor)

Asst. Prof. Sevgi Usta
Jury Member

Asst. Prof. Yudum Söylemez
Jury Member
(External Member)

May/2022

DEDICATION

To those who can hold tight and listen to their inner child, despite the chaos of the world.

To myself.

ABSTRACT

Parental alienation is one of the outcomes that divorced families may experience during and after the divorce process. In parental alienation, the child is consciously alienated from the targeted parent by the targeting one by using different strategies and manipulations. By using family systems theory as the fundamental framework, the current study explores the experiences of noncustodial fathers in the context of parental alienation after the divorce and custody processes from a multidisciplinary lens. Seven fathers, who scored higher on the Rowland Parental Alienation Scale than the average score of the sampling pool that is consisted of noncustodial fathers, were purposefully selected. Parental alienation experiences of fathers were clustered by using interpretative phenomenological analysis, and it yielded six group experiential themes: “Ways of parental alienation”, “Fathers’ psychological outcomes”, “Father-child relationship outcomes”, “Experiences with professional services”, “Gender-based inequality”, and “Ways to light up darkness”, and a total 24 subthemes. Current study findings are discussed in the context of the family systems theory, existing literature around divorce and parental alienation, strengths, limitations, future research directions, and clinical and legal implications.

Keywords: parental alienation, divorce, noncustodial fathers, interpretative phenomenological analysis

ÖZET

Ebeveyn yabancılaşması, boşanmış ailelerin boşanma sürecinde ve sonrasında yaşayabileceği sonuçlardan biridir. Ebeveyn yabancılaşmasında çocuk, hedef gösteren ebeveyn tarafından farklı stratejiler ve manipülasyonlar kullanılarak bilinçli olarak hedef gösterilen ebeveyne karşı yabancılaştırılır. Aile sistemleri teorisini temel çerçeve olarak kullanan bu çalışma, çocuğunun velayeti olmayan babaların boşanma ve velayet süreçlerinden sonra ebeveyn yabancılaşması bağlamında deneyimlerini multidisipliner bir lensle araştırmaktadır. Velayeti olmayan babalardan oluşan bir örneklem havuzunun Rowland Ebeveyn Yabancılaşma Ölçeği'ndeki ortalama puanından daha yüksek puan alan yedi baba amaçlı örnekleme yapılarak seçilmiştir. Yorumlayıcı olgubilim analizi kullanılarak babaların ebeveyn yabancılaşma deneyimleri “Ebeveyn yabancılaşmasının yolları”, “Babaların psikolojik çıktıları”, “Baba-çocuk ilişkisi çıktıları”, “Profesyonel servislerle deneyimler”, “Cinsiyet temelli eşitsizlik” ve “Karanlığı aydınlatmanın yolları” olmak üzere altı ana tema ve toplamda 24 alt tema altında kümelendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın bulguları; aile sistemleri teorisi, boşanma ve ebeveyn yabancılaşması etrafındaki mevcut literatür, güçlü yönler, kısıtlı kaldığı noktalar, gelecekteki araştırmalar için öneriler ve klinik ve yasal uygulamalar bağlamında tartışılmaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: ebeveyn yabancılaşması, boşanma, velayeti olmayan babalar, yorumlayıcı olgubilim analizi

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

“When a parent turns a child against the other parent, they are really turning a child against themselves.”

- Dr. Amy J. L. Baker

1.1 General Introduction

One of the most influential sociologists, Karl Marx, coined a ground-breaking theory called the “*Theory of Alienation*” in 1844. Marx’s approach explains the term alienation as “the separation or detachment of beings or things that are or have been naturally united together.” (Shah, 2015, p.48). In other words, feelings of estrangement towards other things or people may be identified as alienation. People may alienate, or be alienated, from close contacts, such as friends, siblings, and even their parent(s). Alienating, or being alienated, from a parent is called *parental alienation syndrome* (Gardner, 1985), or *parental alienation*, in the literature.

Parental alienation can be defined as “parental behaviors that signal to the child that it is not acceptable to have a loving relationship with his other parent.” (Baker & Verrocchio, 2015, p.3048). In parental alienation, a child is consciously alienated from a targeted parent by a targeting one by using different strategies and manipulations, such as criticizing the targeted parent to the child, trying to control the child’s contact and communication with the targeted parent, and so on (Baker & Verrocchio, 2015). Those behaviors may be related to several problems in children’s, targeted parents’, and targeting parents’ current and future lives. Thus, parental alienation is a situation in which all the involved main actors are affected negatively.

Parental alienation may happen in both intact and nonintact families (Siracusano et al., 2016). In intact (i.e., nondivorced) families, a mild form of parental alienation, named the

coalition formation (Minuchin, 1974), in which a parent builds up an alliance with a child against the other one, may be observed. The main difference between coalition formation and parental alienation is that, in coalition formation, a child can conserve the emotional connection with the targeted parent when s/he is in a coalition with the targeting one. On the other hand, in parental alienation, the child is emotionally detached from the targeted parent by exposing the targeting parent's manipulations and strategies.

The research found that those behaviors and tactics are more common in nonintact (i.e., divorced) families than intact family systems (Baker & Verrocchio, 2015; Hands & Warshak, 2011). Insulting the targeted parent with belittling names, intervening and preventing the targeted parent's visitations, and rewarding the child's disrespectful behaviors against the targeted parent are some of the examples that may be commonly observed during and after the process of divorce and custody in nonintact families (Gardner, 1992; Junco López et al., 2014; Lee-Maturana et al., 2018). Those behaviors are considered as parental alienation tactics used by targeting parents and are observed more in divorced family systems.

Due to the fact that the custody of a child is one of the heated discussion topics that couples with children experience in the divorce process, parental alienation is seen in nonintact families more. Siracusano and colleagues (2016) explored that parental alienation tactics are more used in sole custody situations. It may be understood that giving child custody to only one parent after divorce may increase the chances of experiencing parental alienation in that family system.

In the parental alienation literature, targeted (i.e., alienated) parents are usually fathers because they are the noncustodial parental figures in most of the cases, and targeting parents are usually the custodial mothers (Bruch, 2001; Lee-Maturana et al., 2020; Tavares et al., 2020; Tavares et al., 2021). Consistent with the literature, in Turkey, a country with no joint

custody in law, most cases result in the custody of a child being given to the mother.

According to the Turkish Institute of Statistics (2022), only 23.9% of 165.937 child custody cases favor fathers in 2021 in Turkey. The court verdict usually puts fathers outside the family system after the divorce. Thus, some problems in the functioning of that divorced family system may be observed, such as targeting noncustodial fathers by parental alienation.

There is single systematic empirical evidence of parental alienation in Turkey that was published in a peer-reviewed journal (Torun et al., 2021). Previous literature gathered mixed data from targeted noncustodial parents (mostly fathers) in Turkey to understand their experience of parental alienation and their opinions about legal and mental health services in the process of divorce (Torun et al., 2021). The study aimed to understand noncustodial parents' parental alienation experiences from a quantitative lens. Perspectives about legal and mental health services covered a tiny part of the research, and researchers tried to explore that part with some open-ended self-report questions at the end of the survey. However, to understand all those experiences of noncustodial fathers in the divorce process from the parental alienation framework, an in-depth, purely qualitative exploration may enrich the knowledge about the concept.

Based on the literature, it can be concluded that parental alienation is not only occurred because of the parents and/or children themselves but also because of the involvement of several different systems. Extended family members, friends, new partners, teachers, neighbors may be involved either by the targeting parent to alienate the child from the targeted parent (Gardner, 1992), or by themselves. Moreover, since parental alienation is more commonly observed in divorced families and sole custody contexts, the judicial system of the state, and the legal and mental health services received by divorcing couples and their children in divorce and custody processes can also have an impact on parental alienation. Thus, parental alienation may be interpreted as a systemic phenomenon because it affects and

is affected by different levels of systems at the same time from the *family systems theory* (Bowen, 1978) point of view.

The current study aims to contribute to the literature by creating a qualitative research design that approaches parental alienation as a systemic issue and asking the central question of “*In the context of parental alienation, what are the experiences of noncustodial fathers after divorce and custody?*”. The experiences of fathers are explored around five main aspects: (1) the process of divorce and custody, (2) the father-child relationship and parental alienation, (3) perspectives about legal and mental health services that the state and professionals provide, (4) interactions with larger systems, and (5) coping strategies.

The current study’s findings theoretically and practically contribute to the fields of psychology and law. Firstly, data collected and integrated from Turkey can contribute to the universal understanding of the parental alienation concept. Moreover, taking a systemic and multidisciplinary stance on the parental alienation concept in the present study may contribute to the knowledge of couple and family therapists, legal service professionals, and policymakers. Since parental alienation is relatively a new concept, there is no specific guideline for directing professionals on how to identify and work on parental alienation in the field in Turkey. The current study enriches the understanding of parental alienation. It may break new paths for couple and family therapists and legal professionals to develop guidelines for working with parental alienation by reaching in-depth explorations of the experiences of noncustodial fathers.

1.2 Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

In order to start exploring the parental alienation experiences of noncustodial fathers, it is necessary to draw a framework by integrating some theories and concepts in the field first. The current study takes the family systems theory lens as a foundation. Then, it

approaches the process of divorce and custody, and parental alienation concepts from that point of view integratively.

1.2.1 Family Systems Theory

Family therapy puts *family systems theory* (Bowen, 1978) at its center. Like *ecological systems theory* (Bronfenbrenner, 1977), family system theory supports that individuals' behaviors can be understood in their relationships. Nevertheless, different from ecological system theory, this model is applied to families, couples, and individuals, not only for understanding the child's behavior.

The theory posits that families are comprised of different subsystems, including spousal, parental, and sibling (Minuchin, 1974). There are husband-wife, mother-child, father-child, and mother-father subsystems in a classic heterosexual mother, father, and child family. Moreover, systems theory points out that all parts of the family system are interrelated to and interdependent from each other (Bowen, 1978; Minuchin, 1974). Consequently, problems in one subsystem (e.g., spousal subsystem) can affect and be affected by other subsystems (e.g., mother-child or father-child dyads).

The theory also includes how external systems such as courts, politics, and larger societal and cultural values affect the individual family members and the family system. According to Carter and McGoldrick (2005), individuals' lives and experiences must be examined in both the family and more extensive cultural contexts, with their past and ongoing characteristics that evolve through time. That examination may also help to understand how they change over time. The family systems theory examines individuals by looking from five different systems levels: (1) individual, (2) immediate family, (3) extended family, (4) community (e.g., colleagues, friends), and (5) larger society (e.g., politics, economy, culture). Thus, from the systemic perspective, individuals' behaviors are shaped by the interactions of interrelated and interdependent systems in which an individual lives. In

other words, people shape (and are shaped by) their relationships from closer ones, like the family, to further ones, such as the government.

Systemic perspective asserts that every change, whether it is a positive (e.g., the birth of a child, marriage) or a negative change (e.g., death of a loved one, divorce, conflictual political climate), creates stress by two types of stressors: horizontal and vertical (Carter & McGoldrick, 2005). Vertical stressors cumulatively bring past and present from all the layers of systems (e.g., violence at the level of the immediate family system). Whereas horizontal stressors are time-based continuing stressors that can be developmental and predictable (e.g., family life cycle transitions), unpredictable (e.g., accidents, divorce), or historical (e.g., war). Those stressors influence a family system's homeostasis and stability (Gehart, 2013). After every change, individuals and families may return to their old homeostasis or create a new one.

As a developmental and predictable horizontal stressor, families face changes and transitions throughout the *family life cycle* (Duvall, 1962; Haley, 1973) while interacting with the other systems. Transitioning into the usual flow of the family life cycle brings stress organically to the family system. According to Carter and McGoldrick (1989), the family life cycle starts with leaving home as a single adult. After getting emotional and financial freedom by differentiation, meeting with a romantic partner and getting married to him/her is the second stage. Having young children and being in a family with adolescents are the upcoming stages after marriage. Later, when the children become emerging adults, they start their own family life cycle. The first-generation family members (i.e., mother and father) accept their children's differentiation and children's own family life cycles. Lastly, the last stage of the family life cycle deals with becoming elderly and new generational roles in later life.

Although each step of the family life cycle is structured and determined, there is no rule that every family system will follow all these steps (Gladding, 2018). Some family systems may prefer to follow alternative pathways rather than following the usual flow of the family life cycle. For instance, a couple can choose not to get married, or a married couple can prefer not to have kids. Different from those, a married couple may also decide to end their spousal relationship and go separate ways.

Divorce is one of the alternative developmental pathways that some families may follow different than usual family life cycle stages (Thornton, 1985; Gladding, 2018). Since the current study mainly investigates fathers' experiences who follow that alternative pathway, it takes family systems theory as a basis. Furthermore, the present study looks at the effects of parental alienation on noncustodial fathers at the individual level and explores the mutual impacts of interrelated systems (i.e., from the immediate family level to the larger society level) involved in the context of divorce, custody, and parental alienation.

1.2.2 The Process of Divorce and Custody

Over the last few years, the trends in crude divorce rates in the world has been differing between countries. In the USA, both the crude marriage and crude divorce rates have been decreasing steadily since 2016. When it is looked at the most updated statistics, in 2020, the crude marriage rate was 5.1 per thousand, and the crude divorce rate was 2.3 per thousand in the USA (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022). However, in some countries, although the trend in crude marriage rates is unclear, an increase in the crude divorce rates are observed as well. For instance, the crude divorce rate has been gradually increasing in Turkey since 2016, except for 2020 due to the fact that trials could not be carried out for a certain period of time due to the pandemic. Recent statistics from Turkey indicate that, the crude marriage rate was 6.68 per thousand, and the crude divorce rate was 2.07 per thousand in 2021 (Turkish Institute of Statistics, 2022).

In the past, people in the world were more inclined to evaluate divorce as detrimental to the family system by breaking up and destroying it (Burchinal, 1964). However, divorce as a developmental continuity is a more common point of view in today's world (Ahrons, 2007) if family members handle this change in the family system healthily and functionally. Thus, the way the family system handles and adapts to divorce may affect the consequences and outcomes of divorce.

Based on family systems theory, divorce is an unpredictable horizontal stressor in the family system because it is hard to expect in the usual family life cycle flow. Divorce may significantly affect the homeostasis of the whole immediate family. It may be hard to find new homeostasis for the changing system by the distress that the parents and the children experience. Hence, when the divorce process is highly conflictual, some problems in the functioning of the family system may be observed, such as parental alienation in divorcing couples with children.

According to a retrospective study that looked for reasons for divorce from divorce court cases files in Turkey (Coşkun & Sarlak, 2020), several reasons can lead a couple to decide to get divorced. Researchers found that the most common reasons for divorce are: high conflict, psychological violence, financial problems, nonmarital relationships, and substance abuse. Thus, it can be understood that factors that may predict getting divorced are from some problems that are experienced in individual and spousal subsystems.

In the divorce process, if the divorced couple has a child, a lawsuit is filed for the child's custody simultaneously with the divorce case. Depending on how much the divorcing couple is agreed on a custodial agreement beforehand, the process of divorce and custody cases are determined. Family court can decide on two types of custody situations based on taking care of parents' and children's testimonies and interests: sole custody or joint custody. Most custodial parents are the mother in sole custody cases in the field. For instance, in the

case of Turkey, according to the Turkish Institute of Statistics (2022), 76.1% of 165.937 child custody cases favor mothers in 2021.

When it is looked at some countries' laws and legal practices (e.g., the United States, Sweden), there are two types of joint custody: joint physical custody and joint legal custody. *Joint physical custody* can be defined as, following a divorce or separation, a parental care adjustment in which the children reside with each parent pretty evenly (Steinbach & Augustijn, 2021). On the other hand, *joint legal custody* is the official right to make choices concerning the lives of children, regardless of where they reside (Seltzer, 1998).

In both shared custody agreements, one parent is a primary custodial parent. Based on the definitions, the main difference between joint physical custody and joint legal custody is that if the court decides on joint legal custody, the living home of the child is not legally bound. On the other hand, if the court verdict results in joint physical custody, it is only about spending an equal or mutually agreed on amount of time living with both parents. However, giving child custody to one parent may have some outcomes (Bergström et al., 2021), and parental alienation is one of them (Siracusano et al., 2016).

1.2.3 Parental Alienation

Parental alienation is a relatively new concept in family therapy and family law. The terminology was first conceptualized and introduced to the literature as *parental alienation syndrome* in 1985 by an American child psychiatrist, Richard A. Gardner. It is a child's mental condition in which one parent targets the other one, and the child is on the same side with the targeting parent with no valid reasons in the process of separation or divorce (Gardner, 1985).

The most significant indicator of parental alienation syndrome is that there should be no legitimate ground for a child to reject the targeted parent. That is a differential criterion for parental alienation syndrome because if there is a valid justification (e.g., neglect, abuse) for

the rejection of the other parent, “estrangement” is the name given to those cases (Garber, 2011). Therefore, to talk about parental alienation syndrome in a child, three fundamental criteria should be checked: (1) there should not be any legitimate reasons for a child to reject the targeted parent, (2) one parent should target the other one, and (3) the child should be on the same side with the targeting parent.

The researchers and professionals have discussed the interchangeable use of “parental alienation syndrome” and “parental alienation” terms for a long time, and no conclusion has been reached. However, one of the common perspectives defends the idea that parental alienation is the strategies and behaviors of a targeting parent for alienating a child, and parental alienation syndrome is the mental consequence of those behaviors in the child (Lorandos & Bernet, 2013). As a result, instead of parental alienation syndrome, the term “*parental alienation*” is used in the current study since the main focus is the experiences of alienated noncustodial fathers.

Based on the common point of view, parental alienation is “a parent’s purposeful campaign of vilification characterized by anger, resistant and inconsistent compliance with court orders, conscious or unconscious denigration of the child’s other parent, and interference with the other parent/child relationship.” (Darnall, 2010, pp. 5-6). In other words, to talk about parental alienation, the parent should target the other one wittingly by dispraising the other parent and intervening in the other parent’s relationship with the child by using some alienating strategies such as insulting the other parent with belittling names (Gardner, 1992), or interrogating the child after visitations (Junco López et al., 2014).

From the family systems theory lens, parental alienation is a systemic phenomenon. First, based on the definition and the common tactics of parental alienation, it triangulates three main actors: (1) alienating (i.e., targeting) parent, (2) alienated (i.e., targeted) parent, and (3) the child. Since those three parties are interrelated within a family system, parental

alienation influences parties individually, dyadically, and as a unit. Secondly, targeting parents may use extended family and community systems (e.g., friends) for parental alienation (Junco López et al., 2014). Moreover, since parental alienation is observed in divorced families, it is also affected by the legal context. Hence, to understand the parental alienation concept in the framework of the present study, Turkey's legal and social context should also be understood and taken into consideration since all of the participants were from Turkey.

1.3 Legal and Social Context of Turkey

Child custody is regulated under the Turkish Civil Code (i.e., TCC) No. 4721 in Turkish Law (Resmî Gazete, 2001). As a rule, the child is under the custody of his/her mother and father by nature until s/he is 18 years old. According to TCC, Art. 336 (Resmî Gazete, 2001); as long as the marriage continues, both parents assert the child's custody together. In cases of divorce, based on TCC, Art. 182; custody of a child is given to only one of the spouses by a judge (Resmî Gazete, 2001). To put this matter differently, there is only sole custody in Turkish law. In the divorce process, the court gives custody to one parent only, regardless of the type of the divorce (consensual vs. contested). The noncustodial parent is limited to visitation rights that the court arranges. Both custodial and noncustodial parents must obey the court's verdict about the visitation rights, a right to a personal relationship with the child, and the right of contact with the child.

In 2010, the right of contact with the child was accepted as an independent right by The Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, Art. 41/III (Resmî Gazete, 1982). Thus, the child has rights to sustain contact with both parents, and both parents have equal rights of contact with their children after divorce. However, the execution of the right might turn against the best interests of a child if parents have any conflict. To elaborate, until 2021, if one of the parents did not want to obey the court's decision and prevented the visitation right, the other parent

had the right to take the child, like a property, by the execution office according to the Debt Enforcement and Bankruptcy Code No. 2004, Art. 25 (Resmî Gazete, 1932). With enforcement by a bailiff accompanied by a lawyer and a social worker or a pedagogue, the child was taken from the home and given to the other parent. It may be inferred that the article and its implementation were highly traumatizing for children, noncustodial parents, and custodial parents.

The new updates in the law and regulations do not diminish the previous implementation's possible negative impacts on children and family systems. According to the Department of Executive Affairs (2021), the change in the Debt Enforcement and Bankruptcy Code regarding child delivery and establishment of a personal relationship with children, taking children with enforcement by a bailiff has been removed for the good interest of them. Instead, with the new law, child delivery procedures will now be carried out in "*child delivery centers*" accompanied by experts. Nonetheless, it is not officially applied in every city in Turkey since the new implementation is in its trial process.

In Turkey, although it is so difficult for the noncustodial parent to maintain a personal relationship with the child after the divorce, neither joint legal custody nor joint physical custody is placed in it. There has been a debate among professionals about the implementation of joint custody, and there are two perspectives on the topic in Turkey (Kayahan, 2021). One group of professionals thinks that joint custody can be advantageous for the child by helping to sustain contact and communication with the parents, but the other group of people defends the idea that it can be harmful by damaging the stability in a child's life. That divergence between the opinions can be observed in practice as well.

Even though the law does not implement joint custody, the Court of Cassation has started to give decisions that the parents can have joint legal custody of the child after the divorce, regarding the recognition of international agreements (Kurt, 2018). If both parties

agree on having joint custody and if it is believed that the decision of joint custody will be in the child's best interests, some judges may give equal legal rights to the parents on their children. However, since Turkish law favors sole custody, joint custody is not a common verdict in custody cases.

Most parents may experience some struggles with the changes they face after getting divorced (Amato, 2014), but there is a lack of professional supporting structure for parents after divorce in Turkey. Although the courts have the right to refer divorcing couples and children to psychological counseling (e.g., couple therapy, family therapy, or individual therapy) with an injunction, it can be observed that this referral is not made much in practice. However, compared to the past, it has become more common in the field to refer families or couples to start psychotherapy in the process of divorce, and legal regulations have been initiated to use conflict resolution in the divorce process.

At the larger societal level, Turkish culture has impacts on the definition of parental roles in a family. In a traditional Turkish family, mothers are responsible for daily chores and childcare, and fathers are responsible for providing financial security to their wives and children (Poyrazlı, 2003). Thus, it can be understood that cultural stereotypes about parental roles align with the gender stereotypes in Turkey. On the other hand, in a modern Turkish family, both mothers' and fathers' roles has started to change over the last years. In the new generation of parenting, it is now seen that both parties are responsible for both childcare and the economic income of the household (Kuzucu, 2011). As a result, the cultural impact on parental and gender roles has diminished at the societal level, but there are still some cultural gender stereotypes about the parental roles, such as mother should be the one who has to give the warmth and affection; whereas a father should give the discipline to a child by being cold and distant (Kuzucu, 2011).

Those cultural stereotypes may sometimes lead to major problems such as violence against women or femicide. According to Laws Turkey (2022), the law to protect family and prevent violence against women accepted and started to be implemented on March 2012 under the Law No. 6284. This law has been designed and accepted after Turkey signed Istanbul Convention in 2011 under the roof of the Council of Europe. It has been signed by all the European countries and Turkey. Since international agreements have the equal force in the hierarchy of law based on the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey, it is a law that is applied directly like a law, due to the rule in the constitution 6284. This law mainly protects violence against women and children, and it takes women's statements as essential. Thus, on paper, this law aims to protect women's rights in all areas of life. However, according to Will Stop Femicides Platform of Turkey (2022), there has been an increase in the rates of femicide and violence against women since 2012, and it is uncontrollably increasing year by year. As a result, it can be inferred that although 6284 is a law that protects best interests of women and children, the application of it is enigmatic.

When it is looked at the fathers from the social context, although there are some cultural stereotypes about the role of fathers in a family being passive and distant (Kuzucu, 2011), there are some civil organization movements that can be observed in the population of noncustodial fathers, who want to regain and sustain their parental rights in their children's lives. For instance, there is a platform in Turkey, named "Divorced Victim Fathers Platform" (Boşanmış Mağdur Babalar Platformu, n.d.). The group consists of noncustodial fathers who socially support each other via Facebook. Another actively working group of noncustodial fathers is gathering together under the roof of the "Fatherless Children Childless Fathers Association" (Babasız Bırakılan Çocuklar Çocuksuz Babalar Derneği, n.d.). This association has been actively working for almost six years. It helps fathers in the divorce and custody processes with the guidance of other fathers who went through the same processes by giving

legal and social support. Both those groups of fathers want their divorce, custody, and parental alienation experiences and their needs to be heard by the authorities and the state. However, their actions have not been heard or acknowledged by the legal and formal authorities yet.

1.4 Literature Review

1.4.1 Literature Around the Outcomes of Divorce

Before looking at the parental alienation literature in-depth, it is important to look at the literature on the outcomes of divorce first. Since parental alienation occurs mostly in nonintact families, and since the main focus of the current study is the experiences of noncustodial fathers, a brief look at the divorce literature may help build a base for understanding parental alienation literature. Because of that reason, outcomes of divorce are reviewed from children's, parents', and families' aspects for the current study.

1.4.1.1 Child outcomes of divorce.

Divorce might negatively impact the immediate family system as a whole and every member of it individually. The divorce literature majorly has been focused on child outcomes of divorce. According to two review articles by Amato (2000, 2014), divorce may impact children psychologically, emotionally, and socially. Some examples of those adverse outcomes due to divorce are: anxiety, depression, substance abuse, decreased academic performance, weight loss, risky sexual behaviors, and so on (Amato, 2014).

Specifically, experiencing some mental health problems is possible since divorce can be stressful in some families. Children whose parents' divorce process was highly conflictual may show higher risks of experiencing posttraumatic stress disorder (i.e., PTSD) symptoms (van der Wal et al., 2018). According to another study (Lange et al., 2021), in high-conflict divorced families, parental conflict and a child's experience of posttraumatic stress are positively related to each other. Thus, distress brought by a conflict between parents in

divorce can predict a child's possibility of experiencing traumatic stress or being diagnosed with PTSD.

Psychological outcomes of divorce on children may be controlled by the type of custodial agreement and the pattern of co-parenting after divorce. A study (Flouri, 2006) found a negative association between the frequency of contact with the noncustodial parent and a child's emotional symptoms. The research also showed that if one of the parents of a child becomes distant from the immediate family system after the divorce and custody, this may lead children to experience negative emotions such as sadness and anger.

Additionally, a cross-sectional study by Bergström and colleagues (2021) showed that an increase in a child's mental health problems is related to habitation with one parent only. Interestingly, the study also explored that low co-parenting quality is significantly more associated with mental health problems in intact families and shared physical custody arrangements than in children who solely live with one parent (Bergström et al., 2021). As a result, although both the custody type and the quality of co-parenting may be related to children's mental health problems, the co-parenting quality plays a more significant role in preventing children from experiencing psychological outcomes of divorce.

1.4.1.2 Parental and familial outcomes of divorce.

Divorce may also impact parents individually, the parental subsystem as a unit, and the immediate and extended family systems as a consequence. A systematic literature review of the outcomes of the divorce in mothers and fathers shows that people who get divorced may experience mental health problems and distress during and after the divorce process (Amato, 2014). When it is looked at the impacts of divorce on parents at the individual level, it is seen that divorced people are less happy, more depressed, more socially isolated, and show more mental health problems than married ones (Amato, 2014). Thus, both parties may be affected by the concept of divorce negatively.

Divorce's impact may also be observed on the sustainability and formation of co-parenting. However, the form in which co-parenting may evolve after divorce is uncertain and variable. In other words, it can differ from couple to couple. For instance, a recent study (Rejaän et al., 2022) revealed four distinct post-divorce co-parenting patterns: cooperative, negatively engaged, negatively disengaged, and average. The study's results suggested that divorced parents may employ one of those co-parenting patterns. However, the most difficult one is cooperative co-parenting since the divorce process may increase the conflict between those two actors. It may be difficult for them to communicate with their children regularly. Hence, it may be inferred that the co-parenting pattern mostly moves in a negative direction after divorce.

Additionally, when it is looked at the immediate family system's outcomes of divorce, boundaries and subsystems are reorganized with the process itself (Emery, 2011). This structure reorganization may be associated with the sole custody situation in the post-divorce life. For example, a study found that noncustodial parents experience some difficulties maintaining personal contact with their children after divorce because of the custodial agreement decisions (Vogt Yuan, 2014). Furthermore, according to Amato's extensive review on divorce (2014), fathers experience distress due to the loss of daily contact with their children after divorce since noncustodial parents are mostly fathers worldwide. As a result, it may be inferred that in sole custody cases, the physical contact of the parent who is not holding the child's custody decreases after separation.

On the other hand, that situation may lead the custodial parents to take the role of only parent and might block the possibility of co-parenting after divorce (Leopold & Kalmijn, 2016). If the results of these studies are connected with Emery's ideas (2011), restructuring the immediate family system is usually done by moving the noncustodial parent away from the family system and placing parental responsibility on the custodial parent's shoulders.

Moreover, fathers' involvement is negatively associated with interparental conflict and positively with the mothers' involvement (Flouri, 2006). It means that if the divorced couple is a high-conflict couple, then fathers are more intended to become distant from the immediate family system.

Even though divorce mainly concerns parents, children, and their immediate family system, relationships with external family members are also affected. According to a current study (Gürmen et al., 2020), divorced people are more emotionally close to their own family than their former spouse's family members, and extended family members can be one of the social support systems for divorced individuals with children. As a result, although divorce may have some negative reflections on extended family systems by creating physical and emotional gaps between the former partner's family and the individual themselves; it may also strengthen the relationship between an individual and their own family members and may play a role as social support in coping with the negative parental outcomes of divorce.

Hence, based on the literature around the outcomes of divorce, it is clear that divorce may have negative individual psychological outcomes for both parents regardless of who the custodial parent is. Moreover, it also may affect the co-parenting pattern and post-divorce relationship between those two actors. However, there can also be some specific divorce outcomes related to the custody and high conflict, such as parental alienation.

1.4.2 Literature Around Parental Alienation

Parental alienation literature is a relatively new and growing field of research. To date in the world, most of the empirical studies about parental alienation have been conducted in the United States (e.g., Aloia & Strutzenberg, 2019; Bow et al., 2009; Hands & Warshak, 2011; Harman et al., 2020), Australia (e.g., Balmer et al., 2017; Lee-Maturana et al., 2020), European countries (e.g., Baker & Verrocchio, 2015; Bantekas, 2016; Junco López et al., 2014; Tavares et al., 2020; Tavares et al., 2021), or in a Westernized cross-cultural setting

(Poustie et al., 2018). For the current study, those studies about parental alienation are reviewed and clustered under seven categories: tactics, predictors, child outcomes, targeted parent outcomes, familial outcomes, legal and mental health services, and targeted parents' coping strategies.

1.4.2.1 Parental alienation tactics.

The existing literature shows that there are various strategies and tactics employed by alienating parents. From the literature, it can be understood that parental alienating behaviors, or parental alienation tactics, can be categorized under two categories: (a) alienating behaviors that are expressed to children (e.g., brainwashing, interrogation after visitation), and (b) alienating behaviors that are shown towards the targeted parent (e.g., intervention or prevention to visitation schedule). Not giving information to the targeted parent about the child, reinforcing the child's disrespectful behaviors against the targeted parent, interrogating the child after visitations, parental denigration, making alliances with other people for alienation (e.g., extended family members), withholding information about the child, and making decisions about the child without letting the targeted parent know are other common tactics that are observed in parental alienation cases regardless of the targeting parent's gender (Ellis & Boyan, 2010; Junco López et al., 2014; Lee-Maturana et al., 2018; Rand, 1997).

The gender of the targeting parent plays an important role in what kind of parental strategies are used (Gardner, 1992; Harman et al., 2020). For instance, according to Gardner (1992), there is a difference between the alienation tactics that mothers and fathers use. Mothers are more inclined to insult the fathers with belittling names, complain about the low financial support of the father, intervene or prevent the father's visitation schedule, and get rid of all the items about the father in the house that may remind the father to the child.

Another study (Harman et al., 2020) found that mothers use more indirect parental alienating strategies than fathers. Badmouthing the targeted parent to a child, turning friends and family members against the targeted parents, and yelling at the targeted parent in front of the child are examples of indirect parental alienating tactics used by targeting mothers. On the other hand, the study also found that fathers use both direct and indirect parental alienating strategies at similar levels (Harman et al., 2020). Different from what mothers employ in targeting, fathers also block parenting time and contact with the child and send malicious messages to the targeted parent more than mothers.

From the perspective of targeted parents, the most common parental alienation tactic used by targeting parents is emotional manipulation (Poustie et al., 2018). Under the umbrella of emotional manipulation; brainwashing, demanding loyalty from the child, and eliciting fear and guilt in the child can be considered as significantly reported parental alienation tactics that the targeted parents observe. In addition, targeted parents also declared that alienating parents alienate their children by encouraging alliance, disrupting communication, and erasing the targeted parent from the child's life (Poustie et al., 2018). As it can be understood from this study, there is symmetry between the tactics used by the targeting parents for parental alienation and the perception of the targeted parents about the tactics.

As it can be inferred from the types of parental alienation strategies, parental alienation influences all the main actors involved (i.e., the mother, the father, the child) via the triangulation process. The triangulation comes from creating an alliance between the targeting parent and the child by using several parental alienation strategies. However, studies that looked for targeted parents' perspectives on existing parental alienation strategies (Junco López et al., 2014; Lee-Maturana et al., 2021a) also found that extended family members are either alienators or contributors to parental alienation from the targeted parents' perspective.

To sum up, parental alienation mainly includes the child and the parents. Nonetheless, it also may include extended family and community systems in the context of used parental alienation tactics (Harman et al., 2020; Lee-Maturana et al., 2021a; Poustie et al., 2018). Therefore, parental alienation's outcomes can be seen at both individual and familial levels. However, before looking at the outcomes of parental alienation, predictors of this concept should be examined first.

1.4.2.1 Predictors of parental alienation.

In the literature, no research study directly examines the predictors of parental alienation. Nevertheless, some of the studies' findings contribute to the understanding of what may predict parental alienation. For instance, parental alienating behaviors are more common in divorced family systems than in nondivorced ones (Baker & Verrocchio, 2015; Hands & Warshak, 2011). Studies that have compared intact and nonintact families in the context of parental alienation experiences found that parental alienation tactics are used more frequently, and adverse effects of parental alienation are more seen in divorced families. Hence, the parents' divorce may be the first predictor of parental alienation.

As parental alienation is observed more in divorced families, the type of custodial agreement also may predict parental alienation. One research study (Siracusano et al., 2016) found that parental alienation is more common in sole custody agreements than in joint custody agreements after divorce. Specifically, according to another study (Junco López et al., 2014), children are more likely to be alienated by their custodial parents than by their noncustodial ones. Based on the literature, it may be inferred that having the sole custodial agreement may be significantly related to who will be the targeted parent. Also, giving child custody to only one parent after divorce may increase the chances of experiencing parental alienation.

Exposure to high parental conflict is a significant predictor of divorce outcomes for children (Pruett et al., 2003). Since parental alienation is one of the outcomes of divorce, high parental conflict may predict parental alienation after divorce. Moreover, the gender of the targeting parent may be another predictor of parental alienation. In most of the studies with heterosexual parents (Baker & Verrocchio, 2015; Tavares et al., 2020; Tavares et al., 2021; Torun et al., 2021), the targeting parents are mostly mothers, and targeted parents are primarily fathers. Specifically, in a study, mothers reported more use of parental alienation tactics than fathers (Harman et al., 2020).

Based on the literature, it can be said that experiencing divorce, type of custody agreement, and presence of high parental conflict may predict parental alienation in a family system. On the other hand, the gender of a parent may also be a predictor of parental alienation cases, but the relation is unclear (Lee-Maturana et al., 2018). To put this matter differently, since most of the custodial parents are mothers in sole custody agreements, and since noncustodial parents are mostly on the target in parental alienation cases, it may be possible that the mothers target the noncustodial fathers by the nature of the legal context. Because of that reason, cautious steps should be taken when making gender-based predictions in the context of parental alienation.

1.4.2.3 Child outcomes of parental alienation.

The parental alienation literature, just like the literature on divorce, has been mainly focused on child outcomes of the parental alienation syndrome. Being alienated from a parent has both short-term and long-term adverse psychological and emotional outcomes in children's lives. According to an extensive systematic review (Miralles et al., 2021), children experiencing parental alienation syndrome show symptoms of depression, anxiety, and sleep disorders during childhood and adolescence. Moreover, children can also experience anger, guilt, decreased academic performance, suicidal ideation, and some problems in their social

relationships during childhood and adolescence because of the syndrome (Sher, 2015; Stoner-Moskowitz, 1998).

A more recent study investigated the negative psychological impacts of parental alienation syndrome during childhood, and they found that “a child who experiences his parent as not accepting his relationship with the other parent experiences himself as psychologically maltreated regardless of the otherwise loving parenting that the parent engages in.” (Baker & Verrocchio, 2015, p.3054). To put this matter differently, being exposed to parental alienation syndrome may lead a child to think that s/he is experiencing psychological maltreatment, which may relate to the child’s symptoms and problems.

Garber (2011) believed that an alienated child is an adultified child. By this statement, Garber pointed out that a child that is exposed to parental alienation strategies may become an ally, a friend of the targeting parent. Just like *enmeshment* (Minuchin, 1974) in structural family therapy, the boundaries between an adultified child and a targeting parent are nearly invisible. Also, according to Garber (2011), an alienated child is also a parentified child, meaning that a child may take the role of a parent in the family system and take care of the targeting parent. In both cases, the alienated child becomes closer to the targeting parent and becomes distant from the targeted parent in the family system.

Parental alienation syndrome’s psychological outcomes on children may also be observed in later stages of life based on six areas: low self-esteem, lack of trust in themselves and others, drug-alcohol problems, depression, alienation from their children, and getting divorced (Baker, 2005, 2006; Baker & Ben-Ami, 2011). It may be inferred that although children are affected during childhood by the syndrome, long-term detrimental psychological outcomes are also observed. Similar to that, experiencing parental alienation syndrome in childhood is also associated with showing anxiety symptoms, a higher risk of psychopathology, lower self-sufficiency, parental relationship difficulties, insecure

attachment, lower life quality, and feelings of loss, abandonment, and guilt in adulthood (Baker & Ben-Ami, 2011; Ben-Ami & Baker, 2012; Godbout & Parent, 2012).

Specifically, one of the empirical studies (Aloia & Strutzenberg, 2019) found that parental alienation from a male caregiver (i.e., a father) in childhood is related to feeling fearful about communicating with the alienated parent in adulthood, mediated by the self-esteem level of the child. It means that the children, who were alienated from their fathers, may experience some difficult emotions while communicating with their fathers in the later stages of life. Since parental alienation syndrome may lower the level of children's self-esteem (Baker, 2005), the mediator role of self-esteem is substantial.

This inclusive quantitative study (Aloia & Strutzenberg, 2019) reached an important conclusion that changed the common point of view in the parental alienation literature. Intervening in the communication between the child and the targeted parent creates an emotional gap between the targeting parent and the child, leading to parent-child communication apprehension in adulthood. Before this study, it was believed that the alienated child becomes emotionally closer to the targeting parent (Gardner, 1992). However, after Aloia and Strutzenberg's work (2019), it is now clear that being exposed to parental alienation strategies in childhood not only affects the relationship with the targeted parent but also affects the relationship with the targeting parent negatively by increasing the feelings of fear in the parent-child communication.

Based on the literature, it can be said that parental alienation in a divorced family system may have permanent psychological damage on children. As it can be seen, there is a congruence between the short-term and long-term outcomes of parental alienation on children. Regardless of a child's age, experiencing parental alienation syndrome in any developmental time period is associated with psychological maltreatment (Verrocchio et al., 2018). Nonetheless, looking at this systemic and triangulated problem from one angle is not

enough to draw clear conclusions about its impacts on the family system. Targeted parent and familial outcomes of parental alienation should also be taken into account.

1.4.2.4 Targeted parent outcomes of parental alienation.

According to a systematic literature review (Lee-Maturana et al., 2018), targeted parent outcomes of parental alienation have been studied from psychological, emotional, behavioral, and physical aspects in the studies. Most of the targeted parents reported that they have been exposed to parental alienation tactics by the targeting parents. Moreover, frustration, feelings of despair, and isolation are the common emotional and psychological outcomes of parental alienation from the targeted parents' perspectives (Lee-Maturana et al., 2018).

According to a qualitative study (Tavares et al., 2021) that explored targeted parents' experiences in the context of parental alienation in-depth, parental alienation has both physical and emotional outcomes. Weight loss, illnesses, nightmares, and physical fatigue are the reported physical reactions that targeted parents gave in the context of parental alienation. On the other hand, helplessness, guilt, despair, anger, and feeling of injustice are some of the found common subthemes that the parents emotionally experience.

Likewise, according to Poustie and her colleagues (2018), feeling of loneliness and social isolation with the loss of meaning in life are two subthemes under mental health concerns that targeted parents experience in the context of parental alienation. In other words, parental alienation is an isolating experience for the targeted parent by putting him/her to the outside of the family system and sometimes to the outside of extended family and community systems. Also, another research found that targeted parents may experience emotional (e.g., depression, no feelings of joy, feeling guilt) and behavioral problems (e.g., suicide attempts, sleep problems) because of being alienated from their children (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020).

In a study that compared the experiences of targeted parents with parents from the community, it was found that parents who experience parental alienation are less satisfied with and are more inclined to believe that the world is not fair (Tavares et al., 2020). The belief in an unjust world is a new aspect of parental alienation. According to Tavares and her colleagues (2020), depression, belief in an unjust world, and a child's behavior associated with parental alienation negatively affect targeted parents' satisfaction with life. Consequently, it may be inferred that suicidal thoughts and behaviors observed in targeted parents (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020) may be related to a belief that the world is unfair and unjust.

Although most of the parental alienation tactics are directed at children, parents that are on the target are also affected by parental alienation negatively. As it is seen in the literature, targeted parents may experience emotional and physical outcomes of parental alienation. Those impacts on individual actors may also have some reflections on the familial level.

1.4.2.5 Familial outcomes of parental alienation.

Targeted parents may experience difficulties in parenting after divorce because of feeling excluded from the immediate family system (Tavares et al., 2021). Additionally, difficulties in practicing parenting may affect the parent-child relationship by losing contact, routines, and rituals in some cases. Research has shown that parental alienation may break up the parental subsystem by taking out the targeted parents and place parenting responsibilities on the shoulders of the targeting ones.

Differently, Rowen and Emery's studies (2014, 2018) have been indicated that parental denigration, a specific parental alienation tactic in which one parent defames the other parent, does not only create emotional withdrawal from the targeted parent but also creates an emotional gap between the child and the targeting parent. That is, parental

alienation may also negatively influence the relationship between the children and both parents. However, it is shown that parental alienation affects the immediate family system by changing the dynamics between the subsystems and creating emotional gaps.

When it is looked at the outcomes of parental alienation in the extended family system, in a study (Lee-Maturana et al., 2021a), most of the targeted parents in the sample reported that their children are both alienated from them and the relatives of the targeted parent. It means that parental alienation is not an emotional detachment from the targeted parent, but it is also becoming distant from targeting parents' family of origin and other relatives. For instance, according to Tavares and colleagues (2021), some targeted parents and their families may experience difficulties accepting that the children are alienated from their family system. Thus, parental alienation has several outcomes on larger systems involved in the process of divorce and custody, such as extended family. However, there are also other actors from larger systems that are involved in the process of parental alienation, like professional services.

1.4.2.6 Legal and mental health services and parental alienation.

Legal services are necessarily involved in and influence parental alienation processes since it occurs mainly in divorced families and sole custody cases. On the other hand, mental health professionals can also be a part of parental alienation cases, but there is no rule that they will be included in every case in practice. However, studies about the professionals in the context of parental alienation have always considered legal and mental health services together.

Bow and his colleagues (2009) explored how parental alienation is experienced by legal and mental health professionals in practice in the United States. The study demonstrated that from legal professionals' point of view, the presence of brainwashing parent is the most common characteristic that helps them to assess parental alienation. Moreover, interview with

the targeted parent, interview with the targeting parent, interview with child(ren), observation of child(ren) and targeted parent, and observation of child(ren) and targeting parent are evaluated by the legal and mental health professionals as the most advantageous assessment procedures for parental alienation in custody cases (Bow et al., 2009). It means that, in order to understand whether parental alienation happens in a case, interaction with the main actors that are actively involved (i.e., parents and children) helps legal and mental health professionals.

Although the research showed that mental health and legal professionals were aware of parental alienation, those professionals reported themselves as unsatisfied with the empirical support of the concept (Bow et al., 2009). Nonetheless, this has been the only empirical research done with professionals to date in the context of parental alienation. Because of that reason, it is hard to draw clear conclusions about the current perspectives of legal and mental health professionals on parental alienation currently.

From targeted parents' perspectives, existing literature has shown that they have been not satisfied with the legal and mental health services that are provided during the process of divorce and custody (Poustie et al., 2018; Tavares et al., 2021; Torun et al., 2021; Vassiliou & Cartwright, 2001). Specifically, dissatisfaction with legal and mental health services and child support agencies is one of the six themes identified as hallmarks of targeted parent perspective on parental alienation (Poustie et al., 2018). Targeted parents think that the sustained system in the United States is slow, ineffective, uncaring, financially burdening, and contributing to parental alienation in families. Based on the research findings, it may be inferred that those professionals' provided services do not fully understand and embrace the targeted parents' needs in parental alienation cases.

1.4.2.7 Coping strategies of targeted parents in parental alienation.

Targeted parents use similar and several strategies to cope with the adverse effects of parental alienation on themselves (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020; Poustie et al., 2018; Tavares et al., 2021). The study of Tavares and her colleagues (2021) concluded that targeted parents' coping strategies could be clustered into two categories: problem-focused coping and emotion-focused coping. Looking for information about parental alienation is a common problem-focused coping strategy targeted parents commonly use. Additionally, another research found that most of the targeted parents employ self-education to cope with the detrimental effects of parental alienation (Poustie et al., 2018). Focusing on learning about parental alienation and learning new things regardless of the content is helpful for targeted parents to cope.

When it is looked at emotion-focused coping strategies, the most common one is using social support systems. Targeted parents find communicating difficult emotional experiences related to parental alienation with their friends and family members beneficial in coping with the adverse emotional effects of parental alienation (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020, Tavares et al., 2021). Other emotion-focused coping strategies are receiving professional help and support from a psychotherapist or a psychiatrist, being busy with work, engaging in different hobbies, and using faith and religious practices (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020; Tavares et al., 2021). As it can be seen, targeted parents have and are aware of several coping strategies they can use to handle the negative effects of parental alienation on them.

In contrast, some targeted parents may not cope well or may not cope at all with what parental alienation brings since its emotional and psychological outcomes are challenging for them. According to Lee-Maturana and her colleagues (2020), smoking, drinking, hiding or blocking their emotions, and isolating themselves from their social contacts are some behaviors targeted parents engage in (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020). It may be inferred that not

all targeted parents can successfully cope with the negative effects of parental alienation. The emotional burden of parental alienation is so heavy that some targeted parents may experience difficulties when they are trying to cope with it.

1.4.3 Parental Alienation Research in Turkey

As it was mentioned before, parental alienation literature is a relatively new field of study that has been growing year by year in the world. However, when it is looked at the literature about parental alienation in Turkey, it is more recent than the other countries. When it is looked at the scientific resources about the concept, it is seen that there are three books related to parental alienation and parental alienation syndrome (Erdoğan, 2014, 2021; Torun, 2019). Before 2014, the concept had not yet been acknowledged or communicated by the scientific community. With Erdoğan's book (2014) about the sample reports about the divorce and custody processes, people have started to mention this concept more. However, those three books do not cover any empirical study that was conducted in Turkey. They give theoretical, conceptual, and practical information about what parental alienation is and how a targeted parent can act toward that concept for the child's best interest.

After the concept became more apparent in the literature, some master's theses that were not published in a peer-reviewed journal investigated the concept of parental alienation from a scientific perspective (Dolanbay, 2022; Öksüz, 2019; Turgut, 2021; Ulutürk, 2019; Yurdakul, 2022). However, all those studies looked for the impacts and outcomes of parental alienation syndrome on children. The findings of those studies are consistent with the previous literature and defend the idea that parental alienation syndrome has both short-term and long-term adverse outcomes on children. Moreover, those studies mainly approached the concept from a medical or social services perspective. Thus, those master's theses indicate that there is still a need for a multidisciplinary study that focuses on targeted parents' experiences after divorce and custody in the context of parental alienation.

Only one empirical study has been done to date that was published in a peer-reviewed journal about the parental alienation experiences of targeted parents in Turkey (Torun et al., 2021). A mixed-methods study was conducted to understand targeted noncustodial parents' experiences of parental alienation and their opinions about legal and mental health services in the process of divorce. Research findings show that targeted parents have felt many alienating strategies are used against them, and prevention of visitation by the targeting parent is the most common tactic (Torun et al., 2021). The study also showed that targeted parents think both legal and mental health professionals do not have enough information about parental alienation (Torun et al., 2021).

To sum up, based on the reviewed literature, the whole picture shows that experiencing parental alienation or getting divorced has several detrimental outcomes for children, parents, and family systems. However, most of the studies report findings from Westernized countries. The gap in the parental alienation literature in the context of different cultures and countries is a significant blank that should be filled out. Also, based on the empirical evidence about parental alienation in Turkey (Torun et al., 2021), it was thought that an in-depth exploration might enrich researchers' and professionals' knowledge about the concept to apply the theory of parental alienation to the practice.

1.5 The Current Study and Research Questions

In the light of the theoretical and conceptual frameworks and literature about parental alienation, the current study's primary purpose is to focus on and explore the experiences of noncustodial fathers from a systemic and multidisciplinary perspective in Turkey. More specifically, the present study has qualitatively explored the experiences of noncustodial fathers in Turkey in the context of parental alienation and their perspectives on the legal and mental health services provided by the state and the professionals in the process of divorce and custody.

Semi-structured interviews were carried out with noncustodial fathers for finding answers to the central question of “*What are the experiences of noncustodial fathers after the divorce and custody processes in the context of parental alienation?*”. That main question led to four subquestions:

- a) How are the father and father-child relationship affected by the processes of divorce and custody in the context of parental alienation?
- b) How do the extended family members and other social systems involve in the divorce and custody processes and parental alienation?
- c) How do the legal and mental health professionals involve in the divorce and custody processes, and what are the fathers’ opinions about those services?
- d) How do the fathers cope with the difficulties that divorce and parental alienation bring?

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

2.1 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

Interpretative phenomenological analysis (i.e., *IPA*) (Smith, 1996) is one of the qualitative analysis methods that profoundly focuses on a specific and small group of people's experiences. The main aim of IPA research is to make sense of the understandings and perceptions of a specific group of people about a specific content (Smith & Osborn, 2003). To put this matter differently, instead of making generalizations about people's experiences, IPA is used when a researcher wants to find out a specific group of people's perceptions about a situation that they are experiencing in detail.

IPA is an approach that integrates two aspects: phenomenology and interpretation. The phenomenological part of IPA comes from exploring how a participant makes sense of the events that s/he is experiencing (Braun & Clarke, 2013). On the other hand, the interpretative aspect of IPA includes two kinds of interpretation in the analysis: (1) the interpretation of a participant about their own experience, and (2) the interpretation of a researcher about a participant's interpretation of their own experience (Smith & Osborn, 2003). That is, IPA emphasizes a participant's perspective and encourages the researcher to participate in making sense of what the participant experiences actively for generating themes across a small group of participants.

Since the current study focuses on the experiences and perceptions of noncustodial fathers about their post-divorce relationships with family and larger systems, it was thought that using IPA may bring in-depth insights into the existing research problem. Moreover, it can sometimes be difficult for participants to express some emotions and outcomes of difficult experiences, and interpretations should be used to clarify those difficulties (Smith & Osborn, 2003). As it can be seen in the literature, parental alienation has several emotional

outcomes on targeted parents. Because of those reasons, the current study philosophically and methodologically leans on IPA in every step.

2.2 Purposeful Sampling and Sampling Pool Characteristics

Due to the fact that IPA mainly aims to explore the experiences of a specific group of people, it suggests using purposeful sampling when recruiting participants (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The purposeful sampling strategy helps to explore the target group's experiences by creating a reasonably homogenous sample. As mentioned before, the main goal of this study is to examine and understand what the noncustodial fathers experience in the context of parental alienation after getting divorced. That is why it was crucial to ensure whether all participants experience parental alienation in the current study context.

Hence, to recruit alienated noncustodial fathers for in-depth interviews, an online survey including Rowland Parental Alienation Scale (Rowlands, 2018) was distributed to social media groups in the first place by using snowballing to create a sampling pool. It is a technique used in the participant recruitment phase of IPA (Smith et al., 2009). In the light of the previous studies about parental alienation, the inclusion and exclusion criteria were determined for creating a homogenous sample.

The **inclusion criteria** for the sampling pool were:

- a) The divorce case should have been concluded in the context of Turkish law.
- b) The custody case should have been concluded, and the child's custody should have been given to the mother due to the court verdict in the context of Turkish law.
- c) The participant should be a noncustodial father.
- d) The participant should have given his communication information (mobile phone number and/or email address) at the end of the online survey.

On the other hand, a father is **excluded** from the sampling pool if:

- a) The participant has been in an ongoing divorce and custody process.

- b) The participant did not provide his contact information at the end of the survey.
- c) The participant has been rewarded with sole custody or shared custody in the court verdict.

Two hundred nineteen individuals entered the online survey link, but 110 of them did not complete the survey. Thus, they had been removed from the sampling pool immediately. Among 109 participants, one of them had shared custody with his former spouse, four had sole custody of their children, and 12 were in an active ongoing divorce and custody process. Those fathers were excluded from the sampling pool. One of the participants wrote that she is completing the survey on behalf of her husband. That participant had also been removed from the participant list. Moreover, 24 of 91 fathers did not share their contact information. These fathers were also excluded. In the end, interviewees were selected among 67 noncustodial fathers.

Fathers' ages in the sampling pool ranged from 29 to 62 ($M = 42.69$, $SD = 7.75$). The average marriage duration was 96.15 months, and candidates spent 31.34 months on average separated from their former spouses before the divorce verdict was finalized. Please see Table 1 for detailed descriptive information about age, marriage duration, and RPAS scores of the sampling pool.

Table 1*Main Descriptives of the Sampling Pool*

(N = 67)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Range	
			Minimum	Maximum
Age (in years)	42.69	7.75	29	62
Marriage Duration (in months)	96.15	76.70	4	4111
Separation Duration Until Divorce (in months)	31.34	48.94	0	339

When it was looked at the sampling pool's demographic distributions, it predominantly consisted of highly educated noncustodial fathers. 52.2% of the sampling pool were university graduates, and 20.9% had a Master's or Doctorate Degree. On the other hand, 14.9% were high school, and 11.9% were middle school graduates. Additionally, the majority of the sampling pool was employed. 86.6% of potential participants had an occupation, and 13.4% of the pool were unemployed. The monthly income of fathers was as follows: 11.9% of fathers had 4.000 TL and below monthly income, 31.3% had 4.000-7.000 TL monthly income, 34.3% had 7.000-10.000 TL monthly income, 17.9% had 10.000-15.000 TL monthly income, and 4.5% of the fathers had 20.000 TL and above monthly income in the sampling pool.

Furthermore, 38.8% of the fathers were married, and 61.2% were single or in a relationship. The majority of the noncustodial fathers were fathers of a single child in their marriage with their former spouse. Out of 67 fathers, 76.1% had one child, 16.4% had two children, and 7.5% of the sampling pool had three or more children. Most of the fathers from the sampling pool have visited their children either once or twice a month (38.8%) or had not

seen their children since the custody case concluded (25.4%). Last but not least, in the context of alimony payment, 47.8% were paying alimony every month, and 52.2% were not paying alimony at all.

There are many opinions about what the sample size should be in IPA. Still, it is suggested that using approximately three to eight participants is enough for a novice researcher to make an in-depth interpretative phenomenological analysis for the first time (Smith et al., 2009). Since this was the principal investigator's first time in IPA, seven noncustodial fathers, whose overall parental alienation score was above the sampling pool's mean in RPAS, were recruited and interviewed in the current study.

2.3 Participant Demographics

Seven divorced and noncustodial heterosexual fathers from the sampling pool, who are experiencing parental alienation, were interviewed in the current study. All fathers' RPAS scores were above the average of the sampling pool ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 0.96$). The average parental alienation score of seven interviewees was $M = 3.12$, $SD = 0.58$. All the participants got divorced from their former spouses by the rules of Turkish law. Participants' age ranged from 37 to 52 ($M = 41.71$, $SD = 5.09$). The detailed personal demographics of the seven interviewed participants are shown in Table 2. Participants' divorce- and custody-related demographics can be found in Table 3. As it was mentioned before, in order to protect participant anonymity, each participant was given an ID and a pseudonym. Those ID numbers and pseudonyms are also represented in each table.

Table 2*Personal Demographics of the Participants*

ID	Pseudonym	Age	Residence	Relationship Status	Occupation	Education Level	Monthly Income
F1	Recep	37	İzmir	Married	Unemployed	Middle school	Below 4.000 TL
F2	Bartu	40	Balıkesir	Single	Electrical Technician	High school	4.000-7.000 TL
F3	Ferhat	52	İstanbul	Married	Medical Doctor	Doctorate Degree	7.000-10.000 TL
F4	Murat	42	İstanbul	In a relationship	Digital Marketing	Undergraduate	4.000-7.000 TL
F5	Sarp	37	Ankara	Married	Government Employee	Master's Degree	7.000-10.000 TL
F6	Osman	41	Dubai (UAE)*	Single	Tradesman	Master's Degree	Above 20.000 TL
F7	Altan	43	Sivas	Married	Correction Officer	Undergraduate	4.000-7.000 TL

Note. () Osman has lived in Dubai for seven months. Before that, he was living in Ankara, Turkey.*

Table 3*Divorce- and Custody-Related Demographics of the Participants*

ID	Pseudonym	Marriage Duration (in months)	Separation Until Divorce (in months)	Date of Divorce Verdict	Date of Custody Verdict	Number of Children	Current Age and Gender of Children	Age of Children During Separation	Visitation Frequency
F1	Recep	25	132	August 2017	August 2017	1	15, boy	6 months	Not since 2019
F2	Bartu	142	1	June 2019	June 2019	1	13, boy	10	Once or twice a month
F3	Ferhat	118	121	January 2017	January 2017	2	22, boy & 20, boy	1.5 & 3	Not since 2008
F4	Murat	132	25	June 2021	June 2021	2	11, girl & 8, boy	8 & 5	Not since June 2021
F5	Sarp	11	53	June 2013	May 2009	1	14, boy	3 months	Not since 2017
F6	Osman	93	3	June 2018	June 2018	1	8, girl	5	Once or twice a year
F7	Altan	169	49	November 2019	November 2019	2	17, girl & 9, boy	10 & 2	Once or twice a month

2.4 Instruments

2.4.1 Demographic Questionnaire

Several previous studies showed that sociodemographic variables might have some associations with the experiences of parental alienation (e.g., Tavares et al., 2020; Tavares et al., 2021; Torun et al., 2021). For this reason, detailed demographic information of the candidate interviewees was taken while creating the sampling pool before starting the interviews. The questionnaire aimed to retrieve participant information from two aspects: demographic information related to divorce and custody, and personal demographic characteristics.

For divorce and custody demographics, various demographic data were collected from the participants, such as the time they had been separated and divorced from the other parent, the number of shared children with the former partner, their genders and ages, alimony payment, and so on. Moreover, to understand the sampling pool's personal demographic characteristics, age, residence information, education level, current marital status, employment status, and monthly income were also retrieved from the potential participants. The detailed demographic questionnaire can be found in Appendix C.

2.4.2 Rowland Parental Alienation Scale (RPAS)

RPAS is a 23-item 5-point Likert scale where “0” stands for “*never*” and “4” stands for “*almost always*” (Rowlands, 2018). The scale aims to measure the intensity and existence of parental alienation from targeted parents' perspectives. Respondents rate the statements such as “How often does/did your child belittle or make fun of you?”, “Does/did your child make accusations against you that the other parent has also made against you?”, and so on (see Appendix D).

RPAS was initially in English, and there was no Turkish translation until the current study. For this research, the scale was first translated from English to Turkish. One of the

graduate students from the couple and family master's program did the reverse translations. Then, the prepared Turkish version of RPAS was compared and revised with the graduate student. After that, the Turkish scale was given to the thesis advisor and the other two thesis committee members to take their professional opinions about the translation since they have been working with families for a long time. The finalized version of the RPAS Turkish version was given to the population of noncustodial fathers. Participants' overall parental alienation scores were calculated by averaging the responses from 23 items.

When the reliability of the scales was checked, it may be seen that the original scale's Cronbach's alpha was $\alpha = .94$ (Rowlands, 2018). In the present study, the internal consistency of RPAS Turkish adaptation was highly satisfactory ($\alpha = .95$). A high Cronbach's alpha value similar to the English version of the scale indicates that the newly translated RPAS Turkish version is reliable, but in-depth investigations should be conducted on this translated scale before it can be used in future studies.

2.4.3 Interview Questions

Since the current study's fundamental purpose is to explore the experiences and perceptions of noncustodial fathers in-depth, semi-structured interviews were held with the participants selected from the sampling pool. The interview contains 22 main questions with their follow-up questions. The questions can be clustered under four main categories: the process of divorce and custody, father-child relationship and parental alienation, mental health and legal services, and coping strategies of fathers with the outcomes of parental alienation (see Appendix E).

All the questions and the interview flow were designed according to the family system theory lens. Meaning that, it was tried to comprise all levels of the systems in the questions. The principal investigator primarily prepared the interview questions based on the central premises of family therapy and conceptual frameworks of divorce and parental alienation.

For example, *“If you were to live all these experiences once again, what would you like to do differently?”* is a question that was prepared based on the family therapy practice, or the question of *“Being exposed to parental alienation may make you feel some emotions. How do you feel when talking about these events you have experienced here now?”* was prepared in the lights of parental alienation literature and family therapy.

Furthermore, some questions were adapted from previous studies about parental alienation (Tavares et al., 2021; Harman et al., 2020). In order to understand the perceptions of fathers about parental alienation strategies that targeting parents use in the family system, the questions were adapted from the study of Harman and colleagues (2020). For instance, *“What examples could you give from the first time you felt that your child was ‘alienated’ by your former spouse?”* is a question that was adapted from that study. Besides, to explore participants’ coping strategies, the question *“How did you deal with the difficulties of parental alienation while going through all these experiences?”* was adapted from Tavares and her colleagues’ study (2021) with adding some follow-up questions afterward.

2.5 Procedure

At first, for getting the ethical approval to carry out the current study, an application was made to Özyeğin University Ethics Committee. After getting the ethical permission, the three questionnaires and an informed consent that was prepared for the creation phase of the sampling pool (see Appendix A) were transferred to Qualtrics, an online platform used for data collection. Three questionnaires were: demographic questionnaire, RPAS, and “Depression, Stress, and Anxiety Scale” (i.e., DASS) by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995). Nevertheless, DASS scores were not used in any part of the sampling or analysis processes.

Then, the search for participants to create the sampling pool started. The announcement poster and the online survey link were posted to several divorce- and custody-related Facebook groups that include fathers, such as “Fatherless Children, Childless Fathers

Association”, “Divorced Victim Fathers Platform”, and so on. The survey was open to access for approximately 2 months, from January to March 2022. After closing the survey link, the collected data were downloaded into and cleaned and analyzed by using a statistical software program, named IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 23). Participants who did not meet the inclusion criteria, except the ones who did not share any communication information, were deleted. After checking the reliability scores of RPAS, the other participants were also excluded from the sampling pool.

Sixty-seven noncustodial fathers, who gave their contact information, were ranked according to their scores on RPAS, from highest to lowest. The average of the sampling pool in overall RPAS was determined as a cutoff score ($M = 1.87$, $SD = 0.96$), and I contacted the ones who were above that mean score. The written invitation text for an interview was sent to the fathers via e-mail or a text message, depending on the contact information they shared at the end of the survey. The appointments were set with eight noncustodial fathers who replied to the invitation message.

In order not to put the participants at risk due to the COVID-19 pandemic, all the interviews were held in an online setting via a video conference application, Zoom. The interviews were recorded by using the voice recording feature of the application. Before an interview, informed consent was sent to a participant via e-mail to inform them about the study’s purpose and process, ethical standards, data confidentiality procedures, and voluntary participation (see Appendix B). At the beginning of an online meeting, I highlighted the ethical framework of the study again and answered the questions of a participant, if there were any. After they gave their consent to participate orally, I started to record it. The semi-structured interview questions were asked to participants to understand the experiences of the noncustodial fathers in-depth. Interview durations changed between participants, ranging from 54 to 102 minutes ($M = 74.28$ minutes).

Due to the fact that it is crucial to protect participant anonymity in research, each father in the sampling pool had a random participant identification number (i.e., ID). Then, those ID numbers, RPAS scores, and contact information were matched in order to make an invitation for the interviews. Interviewed noncustodial fathers' demographic information was taken out from the data set, and then that information was matched with the new ID numbers and code names of those participants after the interviews were completed. All the audio recordings were preserved with participant ID numbers, code names, demographic information, and consent forms in an encrypted external disc for data analysis.

Although interviews were held with seven noncustodial fathers, seven of them were transcribed. The first interview was done as a pilot study and was not included in the analysis. The interviews' audio recordings were transcribed after they were done. Once all the transcriptions were ready, they were transferred into a software program named MAXQDA 2020 (VERBI Software, 2019) for making the analysis. First, three different types of exploratory comments (i.e., descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual) were taken beside the participants' transcriptions. After that, those notes were transformed into experiential statements. Then, personal thematic maps were created by clustering the experiential statements, and personal experiential themes were determined for every case individually. Finally, group experiential themes and subthemes were created by making cross-case analyses across seven participants' personal experiential themes.

2.6 Trustworthiness of the Study

It is highly significant to maintain the trustworthiness of a qualitative study. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), the trustworthiness of a qualitative study's findings is determined by four criteria: (1) credibility, (2) transferability, (3) dependability, and (4) confirmability. To achieve trustworthy research findings, a researcher can use several techniques in the analysis.

Research with conceivable results that other researchers approve of is categorized as a credible study (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In the current study, “peer debriefing”, “expert checking”, and “member checking” were used to ensure the *credibility* of the results. For *peer debriefing*, one of the friends of the principal investigator, a graduate master’s student in the field of social psychology, was the debriefer in the whole research process since the peer’s objectivity and competency in qualitative research and IPA were reliable. The peer helped to realize some of the self-biases in the exploratory commenting and the determination of experiential statements and personal experiential themes.

For *expert checking*, the group experiential themes and subthemes found in the analysis were sent to the thesis advisor Dr. Selenga Gürmen and to one of the thesis committee members, Dr. Yudum Söylemez. After getting feedback, the group experiential themes and subthemes took their finalized versions. Then, for *member checking*, after getting confirmation from two professors as mentioned above for the finalized versions of themes, all the interviewed participants were contacted via WhatsApp message and asked whether the current study’s results represent their experiences. Six out of seven participants replied to the messages and confirmed that the themes that were found reflect their own experiences about divorce, custody, and parental alienation. One participant did not reply to the message that was sent to him.

Transferability, or qualitative validity, is a criterion for whether the findings of a study are applicable to other contexts or settings. It can be provided by indicating the sample’s demographic characteristics to the audience (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Because of that reason, two *detailed demographic tables* were prepared to criticize research findings based on transferability (see Table 2 and Table 3). On the other hand, according to Lincoln and Guba (1985), putting a checkmark near the credibility criterion is enough to have dependable results. Thus, no additional techniques were used to ensure dependability.

Yet, to ensure *confirmability*, or being confident about the results are not biased, an *audit trail* was used. For this purpose, all the information about data collection, transcription, coding, and analysis procedures were documented and kept explicitly. Also, since IPA takes the interpretation of the researcher into account, researchers should be aware of their own biases (Braun & Clarke, 2013). That is why a *reflexive journal* was kept by the principal investigator to write down his experiences, feelings, reflections, and interpretations during the whole research process, from participant selection to the end of the analysis. The overall personal reflections of the principal investigator can be found in the section below (see Section 2.7).

2.7 Self-Reflections of the Principal Investigator

As the current study's principal investigator, I am a couple and family therapy master's student who has been working with individuals, couples, and families in a psychotherapy setting for two and a half years. In my practice, I mainly use the family systems theory perspective to look at the clients' presenting problems. I think that looking at the problems from the angles of different systems deepens insights by bringing multidimensional perspectives. That is why I took this theory's framework as a base for the parental alienation concept and my research questions.

My personal interest in parental alienation comes from my family of origin history. I was a child of a high-conflict couple in an intact family system, and I had been in a coalition with my mother for a long time. Until I started the couple and family therapy master's program, I always felt the distance between my father and me, but I could not understand the reason behind this distance. When I first read a study about parental alienation in my first semester in the master's program, I realized that alienated children's experiences were almost similar to mine. Until that time, I had already known and understood the experiences and motivation of the targeting parent in that kind of phenomenon since the coalition that I had

with my mother. Thus, what targeted fathers experience in an event such as coalition formation or parental alienation was almost a closed box for me, but I was curious to learn it.

When I read more about the parental alienation concept, I also started empathizing with my father and his experience. That is why I first wanted to go deeper into the concept of coalition formation by writing my thesis about the experiences of targeted fathers in intact families. However, as a researcher, I thought studying parental alienation in divorced families might help me isolate my possible personal prejudices and biases by bridging a distance between my personal life and my research topic. I tried to minimize the risk of biased research at every step of the current study by peer debriefing and expert checking. However, there were some points in the research process that should be considered in the context of researcher bias.

As a person, I define myself as a feminist. I come from a family that has several strong women figures, and I have raised by my parents, who also defend the feminist ideology. Thus, I have been interested in gender equality, women empowerment, violence against women, and femicide since my adolescence. Furthermore, I have read many theoretical books about feminist theory since my undergraduate education. Because of that, I am oversensitive to sexist language and thoughts in my life.

I have been a member of the two aforementioned fathers' social media groups since I decided on my thesis topic, and I have followed the posts and comments of those groups for a while. In those groups, I saw a lot of hate speech towards women from several members. The language that they used was humiliating, judgemental, and aggressive. That is why I was biased about all the members of those groups, and I was anxious about conducting interviews with the noncustodial fathers from there. I was also worried about not being able to manage my biases during the interviews.

In the interviews, some participants used the same language that I saw in those Facebook groups. In the first two interviews, I got triggered and could not ask enough follow-up questions related to their thoughts about femicide and gender-based inequality that they felt. The freeze response that I gave may have led them to cut their answers short related to those topics. After the second interview, I discussed this issue with my peer debriefer. We decided for me to use some grounding techniques that I use when I have sessions with high-conflict couples. Then, I was more able to regulate my emotions during the rest of the interviews.

The beginning of the coding process was also challenging for me. Reading affirmative statements about femicide and gender-stereotypical thoughts in participants' narratives challenged me to conserve objectivity. After a while, I realized that I started to understand why men think this way. Being exposed to those narratives for an extended period helped me look at the situation from the men's side. I still think the same about femicide and women's societal position. Nonetheless, I gained much knowledge from men's perspectives, which made me understand that the other side of the coin is telling a different story. This study taught me to look at divorce, custody, violence against women, and femicide from a more objective lens.

Different from my self-reflections, the contextual setting is also a significant part that should be pointed out. It should not have been forgotten that this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic. That is why the interviews could not be held in a face-to-face setting. Although I tried to make the participants relaxed before the interviews by having short periods of daily talk, talking in a virtual setting may have brought some filters to participants' answers naturally. Opening one's emotions to another person that s/he just met can be challenging for some individuals. The fact that face-to-face communication that forms the basis of human sociability could not be achieved due to reasons beyond our control may

have created a barrier, especially in talking about emotional experiences. However, I think that my ability as a therapist to communicate with people safely and comfortably and the fact that I have the same gender as the participants relaxed them a little bit and created a safe space where they could talk comfortably.



CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

The narratives of the seven noncustodial fathers were clustered under six group experiential themes and a total of 24 subthemes. The six main themes are: “Ways of Parental Alienation”, “Fathers’ Psychological Outcomes”, “Father-Child Relationship Outcomes”, “Experiences with Professional Services”, “Gender-Based Inequality”, and “Ways to Light Up Darkness”. The themes were determined based on participants’ experiences by using IPA. All the group experiential themes and their subthemes are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Overview of Group Experiential Themes and Subthemes

	Ways of Parental Alienation	Fathers’ Psychological Outcomes	Father-Child Relationship Outcomes	Experiences with Professional Services	Gender-Based Inequality	Ways to Light Up Darkness
Subtheme 1	Preventing father-child communication	Hard times in coping	Father as outsider financial sponsor	Complaints about lawyers’ elaboration	Inequality before the law	Noncustodial fathers groups
Subtheme 2	Denigrating father with allegations	Anger	Not seeing the father as a father	Financial burden of qualified services	Women’s statement being essential	New partner
Subtheme 3	Provoking child against father	Difficulties in communicating emotions	Counteraction to parental alienation	Affordable but inefficient services	Justification of femicide	Friends
Subtheme 4	Threatening and scaring child	Ongoing traumatic effect	Emotional distance between father and child	Need for mandatory psychological support		Focusing on interests
Subtheme 5			Cut-off			

3.1 Group Experiential Theme 1: Ways of Parental Alienation

Based on the parental alienation's definition, targeting parents' parental alienating behaviors indicate the presence of parental alienation in a family. All of the participants heard the term "parental alienation" before. Thus, all of them could have mentioned about the parental alienation examples that they have been observed in their immediate family system. Therefore, the first group experiential theme is about the mothers' existing parental alienation behaviors that have been observed by the fathers since divorce and custody.

According to seven fathers' narratives and perspectives, it is understood that mothers express several common behaviors in the context of parental alienation. Those behaviors are clustered as ways of parental alienation such as "Preventing father-child communication", "Denigrating father with allegations", "Provoking child against father", and "Threatening and scaring child".

3.1.1 Preventing Father-Child Communication

All of the participants mentioned that prevention of the father-child communication by the mother after separation is one of the ways that they feel their children are alienated from them. Based on fathers' experiences, prevention of the communication is done by blocking either physical contact or telecommunication channels between the father and the child. For instance, when one of the participants described his divorce process, he said:

"The child was little when we got separated. I moved to İzmir after the separation. When I went to İstanbul for the first time, I said I was coming to see the child. She said, 'Don't come. I will come. I will bring the child to you.' I waited... I waited for a very long time. And they did not come." (Recep)

As it is seen, Recep explains how his former spouse prevented the physical father-child contact during the separation process. Although the divorce and custody cases had not been finalized at that time, it is possible to say that the mother had control over the father-

child physical contact even before the legal verdict. From what Recep said, it can be understood that even though the father made an effort to communicate, the mother's intervention led the communication between father and child not to be established and may have contributed to the parental alienation.

Sarp described the separation process as follows:

“She was gone to her family’s home. She took the child with her too. While they were on the road, I tried to reach them, but her phone was turned off. And for a long time, I did not hear any news. Not from her or my child.” (Sarp)

In here, it is seen that the participant’s former spouse prevented physical contact and telecommunication simultaneously. Taking the child with her is evaluated as obvious prevention of father-child physical contact. Additionally, turning off the only distant communication tool (i.e., mobile phone) is an example of the prevention of telecommunication. It is possible to say that blocking two fundamental communication channels may carry the intention to prevent father-child communication, as evidenced by Sarp’s experience of parental alienation.

One of the participants answered the question about the early examples of parental alienation as:

“I haven't been able to see my child for about 4-5 months. I didn’t know their new address. I was constantly calling, trying to talk, trying to reach them from other phone numbers because she has blocked my numbers... By the way, I bought and gave my child a separate phone so that I could call her comfortably. She took the phone from the child and did not give it to her...Or, when I went to Mersin, I could not find their address. The address on the state’s website was our old home address. That process was quite painful to me because the child had started to be distant to me.” (Osman)

In this statement, it is seen that for Osman, making a phone call was the only way to communicate with his child since he did not know his child's and his former spouse's new home address. However, although he tried to reach his child several times, his former spouse prevented the communication by blocking both the physical communication (i.e., not updating their new residency address officially) and telecommunication channels (i.e., blocking the father's phone numbers and taking the child's personal phone away). As it can be observed from Osman's example, these preventions may be evaluated as the starting point of parental alienation by creating a gap between the father and the child.

3.1.2 Denigrating Father with Allegations

Blaming fathers for something they do not do during and after divorce and custody processes is commonly observed among the participants. Five out of seven fathers mention how their former spouses contributed to parental alienation by making denigrations and false accusations about them. It is seen that those allegations are reported to either child or legal authorities.

One of the participants made the following statement when he was explaining the current father-child relationship:

“As I try to keep the child away from these events, his mother tries to tell him what a dishonest, characterless, dishonest man I am. She is like, let that child know what his father is like, what his father did. But I didn't do anything. Seriously. Anything... It's really not good for me to go through such bad things for something I didn't do.”

(Sarp)

As it is seen from Sarp's perspective, although he does not want his child to be involved in the post-divorce conflict, his former spouse puts the child in the conflict by denigrating Sarp to the child. The mother's allegations are reported to the child by denigrating the father about his personality. At the same time from what Sarp said, it was

thought that blaming the father for the things he did not do in reality contributes to parental alienation since the child's perception of his father becomes more negative with the impact of the denigration.

When one of the participants was asked about his experiences in the custody process, he made the following statement:

“There, the prosecutor told me to my face that I was accused of raping my own children in such a way that they witnessed each other. A sentence no father should hear... They said it was their mother's accusation.” (Ferhat)

Similar to what Ferhat experienced, when Altan talked about the legal processes in divorce, he said:

“In one of the trials, they said that, ‘When your daughter was 3 years old, you kissed her on the lips, you kissed her on the neck. Also, you were watching porn on TV with your son.’. Their mother made such accusations about me. At that moment I was destroyed. Completely destroyed. I was sued for sexual abuse because of that. It's a terrible thing to be accused of such an allegation about your children, whom you care about very much.” (Altan)

In those statements, it is seen that both participants were accused of the same allegations, which is sexual abuse of their own children. Based on the use of the same form of accusation in both examples, it can be pointed out that this parental alienation method, denigrating fathers' paternity identities with a heavy accusation, may have distanced those fathers personally from their father-child relationships. Furthermore, as evidenced by both of the fathers' experiences, with the involvement of the legal authorities in the post-divorce process, the father-child communication could not be established for a while, and these legal denigrations and allegations naturally bring distance between the fathers and their children.

3.1.3 Provoking Child Against Father

In conjunction with the denigration of the father, provoking the child against the father is another way of parental alienation commonly seen among participants. Five out of seven fathers mentioned that their children are agitated by their former spouse's use of misleading information about the father. For example, when Recep was asked about the responsibilities he took to care of his child, he answered as:

"I can't take care of my child. She always uses the child as a gun. When I go to their house when I want to see my child, he says: 'You are inglorious, why are you here?' My own son. He says, 'Get the fuck out of here.'. I was constantly exposed to his angry insults when I tried to communicate with him. Imagine how he is raised to the bait."
(Recep)

In this statement, the participant explains how the child behaves against the father by using bad language. For him, his child is agitated because his former spouse uses the child as a gun in the post-divorce process. Moreover, as it can be understood from the child's use of bad words and swearing at his father, it may be thought that the child is angry with the father, and this anger arises due to the mother's provocations, according to Recep's perception of parental alienation.

One of the participants answered how the decision was made about where and with whom the child would live as follows:

"There's nothing like making a decision about it anyway. You know, when you go to court for this job in Turkey, they automatically give custody to mothers. And then, the process of provoking and processing the child against the father begins. So you're bad and you left. My son, I did not leave, you left. Oh, is that so? But you weren't sending me money? Son, I was sending you money. You didn't come to see me?... These are the questions that are asked by mother's agitations." (Bartu)

As it is seen in Bartu's answer, provoking the child against the father automatically began with the decision of custody in his case. He sees a relation between a mother being a custodial parent and the presence of parental alienation by provocation. According to him, with his former spouse's agitations, the child had doubted the father's financial contribution to the mother and the child and his intention to see the child. Also, from what the participant reported, it can be understood that the child heard some misleading information about the father beforehand. The child believed in those and then questioned his father according to them.

3.1.4 Threatening and Scaring Child

Threatening and scaring the child before visitations is counted as one of the ways of parental alienation. Although only three out of seven participants mentioned this parental alienating behavior, it was an important point in those participants' narratives about their parental alienation observations. In the following statement, Sarp explains the early examples of parental alienation as follows:

“At the end of the day, he returned to that home no matter what. The kid knows this. He knows he will be punished when he returns that home. I know that she threatened him about leaving and not seeing him again. For example, you asked for parental alienation. ‘If you choose that place, if you like it, if you accept it, I will never see you again.’ She said this to the kid. She said that she will delete him. She said this in front of me...” (Sarp)

In this statement, Sarp defines this experience as a prominent example of the parental alienating behavior of the mother that he observed. It can be thought that the mother's statement that she will debar the child from herself and her love can be a frightening threat to the child. It is possible for the child to move away from the father because of this threat and the fear that comes with it. As Sarp said, it may be inevitable that the relationship between

the child and the father becomes distant with the feeling of fear because the child is returning to his mother's home at the end of the day. Additionally, according to Sarp's perception, his former spouse tried to lower him as much as she scared the child by saying these threats in front of Sarp.

When Altan was asked what are the early examples that he felt his child is alienated from him, he told:

“When I first got the child after a long time, it coincided with the child's birthday. Fourth of the first month. When I got my son, I bought him a birthday cake and gifts. His mother said to him, ‘if you eat the cake and cut the cake, your birthday will not be celebrated again.’. She told him ‘do not celebrate your birthday with him.’. I said son, I said look, eat your cake. ‘You're not going to take a picture, are you, Dad?’ he said nervously. I saw the fear in my child's eyes. So, I said ok I will not take it. After that, the boy was able to relax and blow out the candles.” (Altan)

In here, the participant tells about how his former spouse's threats to the child made him uncomfortable during their first visitation. The situation the child relaxes after making sure that the communication with the father will not be seen by the mother may be thought to be the fear of the mother learning about communication. In addition, as it can be understood from the fact that this event was given as an example of parental alienation by the father, Altan perceives this tense and distant stance of the child as an indication of the child's alienation from him.

3.2 Group Experiential Theme 2: Fathers' Psychological Outcomes

Divorce, custody, and parental alienation process can be difficult for parents, especially for those who are on the target. Thus, “Fathers' psychological outcomes” is the group experiential theme that reflects the fathers' individual psychological consequences of divorce, custody, and parental alienation. Although participants experience several

psychological consequences, it seems that they have experienced four common psychological outcomes such as “Hard times in coping”, “Anger”, “Difficulties in communicating emotions”, and “Ongoing traumatic effect”.

3.2.1 Hard Times in Coping

Six out of seven participants experience difficulties coping with the psychological challenges and outcomes of divorce, custody, and parental alienation processes. While some of the participants do not cope initially, others try to cope by employing dysfunctional strategies. For example, when one of the participants talked about his parental alienation example, he said:

“I felt very bad, especially after hearing that accusation. I didn't know what to do. I even thought of committing suicide. It seemed so unbearable what I went through. I didn't do anything for a while.” (Altan)

In here, Altan explains how he felt when he heard the legal accusation from his former spouse. The experiences were so unbearable for the father that he considered killing himself as an option rather than coping with the difficulties. As evidenced by Altan's experience, it may be thought that the way of parental alienation made the father feel helpless, and this feeling may have blocked him from taking action to cope for a while.

Osman answered how he was able to cope with the outcomes of parental alienation as follows:

“I couldn't cope in the beginning. I closed myself to others. I have been shutting myself up and never leaving the house for 4-5 days, and I have been in bed all the time. So, I got depressed, I shut down and went to bed.” (Osman)

In this statement, the participant tells about the difficulty he experienced in coping with the first time he started to experience parental alienation. As it is seen Osman's statement, as a primary reaction to parental alienation, he socially isolated himself and

withdrew into his shell. Based on the participant's experience, it may be said that avoidance from social interaction is one of the behaviors that indicate a person is struggling with coping.

When it was asked whether he received any psychological support while coping with the difficulties of parental alienation, Bartu replied in this way:

"I received, yes. But I received it like this. I am not an addict but I used drugs. There were no drugs left that I didn't use. I'm not an alcoholic, but I drank heavily. The alienation of the child from you after the divorce is such a painful process that at first one does not know what to do. That's why I clung to alcohol and drugs for about six months. Those were tough times. I've wasted too much on myself. After that, I decided to seek psychological support." (Bartu)

In this statement, the father explains how he experienced some difficulties in coping with the emotional burden of parental alienation. From Bartu's answer for psychological support mechanism, it can be inferred that since he did not know how to cope with the complicated feelings brought on by parental alienation, he tried to alleviate the burden of the emotional pain by using alcohol and drugs. For him, using alcohol and drugs is not a functional way of coping because instead of dealing with it in this way, he finds it appropriate to deal with professional psychological support, according to Bartu's statement.

3.2.2 Anger

Among five out of seven participants, the most common emotion that appears on the surface is anger. They are able to talk about anger clearly and easily. The fathers report that they have been feeling angry toward their former spouses. One of the participants explained his emotions about experiencing parental alienation as follows:

"I am angry, naturally. I mean, because I feel deceived. Of course I am angry, angry and gave really heavy reactions in the past because of my anger." (Osman)

In here, it is seen that Osman feels angry because of feeling deceived by his former spouse. From his statement, it can be pointed out that he not only feels anger but also acted with anger in the past. Thus, anger is not only experienced as an emotion but also reflected in the father's behaviors toward the mother in the past based on Osman's experience of anger.

When Sarp was asked how it made him feel to talk about his experiences of parental alienation, he made the following statement:

"I'm angry. I get angry and angry whenever I think about what she did to me. So, I am a person of faith. Even though I am a religious person, if I had killed her, I would not have felt any religious or conscience discomfort. I'm talking about such anger. When I say anger, it's not just simple anger. That's how much I hate, that's how angry I am."

(Sarp)

This statement tells how the participant has experienced intense anger towards his former spouse. As evidenced by Sarp's explanation of anger, he does not only experience feelings of anger, but also he experiences feelings of hatred. For him, anger and hatred are intertwined emotions. As it can be understood from his approach to the thought and act of killing, which can be considered as a great mistake according to his religious belief system, Sarp experiences both hatred and anger intensely due to what he has been exposed to after divorce and custody.

3.2.3 Difficulties in Communicating Emotions

Although anger is a reported common emotion among participants, in five out of seven narratives, it is seen that fathers have some difficulties when communicating other divorce and parental alienation related emotions. It is thought that fathers' pauses and struggles in putting their feelings into words when talking about difficult emotions during the interviews happen because of the impact created by the complex emotional structure of parental alienation experiences. For example, one of the participants gave the statement

below when he was trying to talk about his emotions related to divorce and parental alienation:

“So how can I say?... So... That process... It was a difficult process. You know, that voice message sent by my child... It hurt a lot for a father. So, it's a very painful thing.” (Ferhat)

In this statement, Ferhat tries to talk about his emotions that are related to divorce and parental alienation. However, he experiences some difficulties when he tries to name those emotions. He defines the experienced emotion as pain. From this physical expression of emotion, it may be thought that the experienced emotions are so complex and intense that it may be difficult for him to pronounce.

Murat gave the following statement about the emotions that he has felt about experiencing parental alienation:

“Hmm... I feel... I feel many things... So, let me say it like this. Three of my teeth are broken right now. I always gnash my teeth like this. Sometimes when my jaw hurts, I can feel that I'm clenching my teeth. I am having trouble sleeping at night. I can't fall asleep when I go to bed. My head is full of thoughts.” (Murat)

As it is seen in the participant's statement, he explains physical symptoms as an example of emotional experiences. It can be pointed out that since the burden of parental alienation has been so heavy for the father, it creates difficulties in the wording of the emotions and may lead to some bodily reactions. Also, based on what Murat experienced in the context of parental alienation, it may be thought that those physical symptoms (i.e., clenching teeth, troubles in sleeping) can be the outcomes of uncommunicated difficult emotions since somatic reactions are commonly seen in emotional suppression.

3.2.4 Ongoing Traumatic Effect

Ongoing traumatic effect is a subtheme that covers only two out of seven participants' narratives. However, it was the primary psychological outcome of parental alienation for both of them. When one of the participants was asked about his observations from the early times of parental alienation, he started to cry and wanted to pause the interview for a minute. After he had done his self-regulation, he said:

“I didn't know it was like this. I guess I'm still traumatized. It means I couldn't figure out some things. I mean, everything isn't over yet, it's probably happening because the parental alienation still isn't over. I thought I got over this.” (Altan)

Here, Altan explains the traumatic effect triggered during the interview. When he was giving his parental alienation narrative, he got upset and cried. According to his perspective, the reaction that he gave happened because of the ongoing process of parental alienation. He got surprised from this reaction of his because he saw that the traumatic impact of parental alienation process has not gone yet. Although these emotional reactions are not as frequent as when it is compared with the beginning, it can be thought that he feels parental alienation's traumatic impact with a similar intensity in a continuous way as evidenced by Altan's here-and-now experience during the interview.

In parallel with that, Ferhat expressed his experiences as follows while describing divorce and custody processes:

“After that, it's all war. But the world went dark. The world turned black. Like this. You can't really see anything. It still feels like this. I guess it's the nature of the trauma. Its effect continues over the years.” (Ferhat)

In this statement, Ferhat mentions parental alienation as an ongoing traumatic experience. For him, the traumatic impact of parental alienation is stable over the years.

Based on what the participant said, it may be pointed out that the ongoing traumatic effect is so intense that it is difficult to remove the darkness that has come naturally with the trauma.

3.3 Group Experiential Theme 3: Father-Child Relationship Outcomes

Divorce and parental alienation naturally changes the dynamics in the father-child dyad since it is mainly about the alienation of the child from the father. The changing father-child relationship with parental alienation may have reflections on the father's parenting practices. In participants' narratives about their divorce and parental alienation experiences, several kinds of changes and outcomes are detected in father-child relationships. However, cross case analysis showed that five different outcomes in father-child relationship are commonly experienced among the participants. Those are: "Father as outsider financial sponsor", "Not seeing the father as a father", "Counteraction to parental alienation", "Emotional distance between father and child", and "Cut-off".

3.3.1 Father as Outsider Financial Sponsor

Five out of seven fathers report that they become a parental figure who mainly provides financial support to family after divorce, like a sponsor. Also, according to those participants' statements, it is seen that they were pushed out of the family system by their alienating former spouses and their alienated children. When Murat was asked if he has been in contact with his former spouse for co-parenting, he replied:

"Definitely no. I don't know anything about my child's life. The boy was circumcised, I didn't even know about it. You stay out of the family as a father after the divorce. The only place you can be a part of the family is when it comes to money issues. If you have money, you are the father in the family. Otherwise, you are nothing." (Murat)

In this statement, the participant explains how he feels outside in the immediate family system. As it is seen, he is not only excluded from having major decisions about his child, but also he sustains his existence as a father by making financial contributions to the

family. Thus, it may be pointed out that the process of divorce may push the father out of the family system and lead them to continue their paternal duties as only being the financial supporter of the family, according to Murat's perception of co-parenting and paternity.

One of the participants explained his current parental duties as follows:

"We are the sponsors of our children and spouses. We are also the sponsors of our ex-wives' new lovers. This is our situation in Turkey. This is what 90% of divorced, non-custodial fathers experience. We even sponsor ex-spouses' lovers for our child's sake." (Osman)

In this statement, Osman describes himself as the sponsor of not only his former partner and child, but also his former spouse's new romantic partner. According to him, the majority of divorced noncustodial fathers in Turkey both provide financial support to everyone inside and outside the family and are pushed out of the family system. However, from what the participant said, it can be thought that the biggest motive behind the father's acceptance of this new parental role is to keep in touch with his child.

3.3.2 Not Seeing the Father as a Father

With parental alienation, it is expected that the child starts not to see the father as a father. Either directly or indirectly, most of the participants state that they feel their children do not see them as a father. This perception of children about their fathers leads to a shift in their father-child relationships. For example, one of the participants made the following statement when he was talking about the changes in his relationship with the child:

"I lost my daughter... I mean when I say I lost, I mean it figuratively. She doesn't call me dad. She says, 'That man' to me. She says, 'Bad man'. But I'm not a bad father... I'm not..." (Altan)

In this statement, Altan explains how the child's refusal to see the father as a father can affect the father-child relationship. According to him, when he is not perceived as a

father in the eyes of his daughter, it means for him that he has lost her. Thus, it may be pointed out that the child's withdrawal from the father-child relationship because of parental alienation is experienced as child loss by Altan, based on his statement.

Osman described the father-child relationship in the beginning of post-divorce process as follows:

“The child was completely alienated from me. By presenting me as different from what I am, the paternal feelings that the child should feel towards me had completely atrophied. The child began to see his mother's lovers as a father, not me.” (Osman)

In this statement, Osman explains how the child's perception of his father has changed due to parental alienating behaviors of his former spouse. From his perspective, his child stopped to perceive him as a father and started to see her mother and mother's partner as her new family. According to Osman's perception of father-child relationship, it may be pointed out that the gap created by parental alienation between the father and the child weakens the bond between the father and the child, and the child does not see his father as a father in return.

3.3.3 Counteraction to Parental Alienation

Four out of seven participants report that they spend a lot of time in dealing with the child's alienated behaviors in father-child interactions. The ways of counteraction to parental alienation is observed under two different categories among the participants: emotional and behavioral. An example for emotional counteraction to parental alienation can be seen in the following statement:

“One day I decided to talk to him. And said, ‘I know your sincerity for me and how much you love me. I love you just as much. I'm telling you this so you don't get upset. I'm aware that if you're in a troubled environment or if there are people you think can

cause you trouble, you can't talk to me comfortably. But other than that, I know you love me. You know I love you so much. '." (Bartu)

Here, Bartu explains how he approached his alienated child. It is seen that the father openly communicated about his observations of parental alienation. However, more important point that should be focused on is the way of communication. From what the participant said, it may be pointed out that the father's counteraction way is an emotional way which includes open communication with and empathy to the child.

Sarp explains how he dealt with the alienated behaviors of his child as follows:

"For example, my own child cursed me. And I didn't say anything. I said ok son, you know. 'That's how well my mother raised me, you did such things to us. '. While saying this, he curses me at the same time. So I immediately showed him the screenshots that I took. I said, 'Look, I tried to reach you on Facebook on this date. I said this to your mother to reach you on this date, but my message did not go because she blocked me. '. After seeing those screenshots, the boy suddenly calmed down. Because he couldn't find an answer to give." (Sarp)

In this statement, Sarp explains how he approached his child when he heard swear words and accusations from him. Different from what Bartu did, Sarp counteracted the alienated behaviors of his child by showing concrete evidence. As evidenced by Sarp's counterattack, it may be pointed out that he counterattacks to parental alienation behaviorally, which includes trying to substantiate one's own truth and trying to change the misinformation the child knows about his father.

3.3.4 Emotional Distance Between Father and Child

Emotional distance is one of the father-child relationship outcomes of parental alienation. Four out of seven participants mention the existence of distance between them and their children after the process of divorce and custody. In all of those participants' narratives

the emotional distance is created mainly by the child's alienated behaviors. When Altan was explaining his early parental alienation experiences, he mentioned:

“When I saw my child, I don't know, he was distant to me. The distance was pretty cold. He loved me, I know he missed me, but he was very cold to me.” (Altan)

In this statement, Altan explains how his child's emotional closeness to him had changed over time after divorce process. From what he said, it can be interpreted that the child's distant demeanor is a sign that shows the child is alienated from him.

Osman explained the changes in father-child relationship as follows:

“My daughter was very fond of me before the divorce. In other words, when I came home from work, so to speak, she would not get off me. But after the divorce, that fondness waned. An obvious distance came between us. The girl began to treat me distantly and coldly.” (Osman)

As it can be seen in Osman's statement, the relationship between father and child, which was very close before the divorce, began to distance itself after the process. It may be pointed out that the child's alienation from the father is observed from the child's withdrawal from father-child interaction by acting distant and cold. Based on what Osman experienced, it may be inferred that the changes may lead to some shifts in the father-child relationship in the post-divorce process.

For a question about the current examples of parental alienation, one of the participants made the following statement in his answer:

“The kids got away from me, yes. But I got away from them too. The things I was exposed to were so heavy that after a while, I started to treat them more coldly and distantly. I had to act like this.” (Ferhat)

Different from what other fathers said, in Ferhat's statement it is seen that not only the children but also fathers may become more emotionally distant from their children.

According to him, the only solution to stop several ways of alienation behaviors from the mother and alienated behaviors of the child was to become emotionally distant from the children. Thus, parental alienation can be a reciprocal experience, in which both the father and the child be alienated from each other, according to what Ferhat experienced.

3.3.5 Cut-off

Cut-off is a common pattern of shift in father-child relationship in the post-divorce process. Six out of seven fathers report cut-off because of the parental alienation's existence with time. The following statement was made by Ferhat when he was talking about his observed changes in father-child relationship after parental alienation:

“After that, the acceptance phase begins after a certain time. You know, after the personal relationship is cut-off, you don't have a chance to go back and do anything. Now you have to go the way of saving yourself and your own family.” (Ferhat)

In here, Ferhat explains how the cut-off in the father-child relationship made him to accept the parental alienation and move on with his life. From the word “*phase*”, it can be implied that father-child relationship had changed over time by following some steps and acceptance of the parental alienation in the family system is the last stage. From what he said, it may be pointed out that the cut-off resulting from parental alienation leaves nothing else to be done, and forcing the father to accept the situation.

Recep mentioned the following statement when he was explaining the current father-child relationship:

“So, I accepted this separation of the child from me and decided to move on. I got so tired. We don't have the slightest relationship with the child anymore. There is nothing else I can do.” (Recep)

In this statement, Recep talks about cut-off in father-child relationship with time. It is seen that he accepted parental alienation, both as a result of the fatigue caused by the effortful

process, and by accepting that there is no solution for the alienation of the child from the father. Both from Ferhat's and Recep's statements, it may be seen that the last paternal duty they could do to their alienated children was to accept parental alienation and withdraw themselves from their lives by cutting off the relationship with their children.

3.4 Group Experiential Theme 4: Experiences with Professional Services

The inclusion of legal professionals is an undeniable aspect of divorce and custody processes. Additionally, mental health professionals can sometimes be involved in those processes as well. There are some similarities in the participants' perspectives about professionals' services. Fathers' common perspectives and experiences with professionals are clustered as, "Complaints about lawyers' elaboration", "Financial burden of qualified services", "Affordable but ineffective services", and "Need for mandatory psychological support".

3.4.1 Complaints About Lawyers' Elaboration

Five out of seven participants complained about the imprecise work and elaboration of lawyers in the divorce and custody processes. From what they experienced, it is seen that the lawyers do not work on their clients' case files carefully and attentively. For instance, one participant made the following statement when he was explaining the legal support he took:

"The lawyer does not even have control over the file. He doesn't even read the file. He doesn't even read my statement. My lawyer, who is also a person who writes a book on behalf of the victim fathers. Even he didn't read my file." (Recep)

In this statement, Recep complains that his lawyer had no knowledge and control over his case file. Even though his lawyer was a professional that focuses on working with noncustodial fathers, the lawyer did not work on the father's case file carefully and attentively. Therefore, it may be pointed out that lawyers' elaboration to the legal process of divorce and custody is not enough when Recep's experience is taken into consideration.

When one of the participants was asked about his opinions about legal services, he answered as follows:

“Lawyers are purely money-oriented. They are not success-oriented. You know, they say that a stranger looks for other’s donkey by singing a song. For them, a case file is an ordinary customer. Every lawyer gets a customer. On the day of the court, he joins and then leaves immediately. They don’t even have knowledge about the file.” (Altan)

Here, Altan explains his opinions about lawyers. As evidenced by his experience with legal professionals, it may be seen that lawyers only care about the money that they take from their clients. Because of that reason, he thinks that lawyers do not pay attention to the file and to win the case. From what Altan reported it may be interpreted that the father is bothered by the indifferent attitude and careless elaboration of the lawyers.

3.4.2 Financial Burden of Qualified Services

Four out of seven participants mentioned that they need to have enough money to receive a qualified service from either a lawyer or a mental health professional since those services are expensive. All of those fathers reported that their financial situations did not allow them to receive a qualified service during the trials, or after the divorce. In the following statement, Murat answered whether he received psychological support from a professional during the divorce process:

“Getting support from a qualified psychologist requires financial means. I am a person who is already done with lawsuits. I spent all of my money on the lawyers. How can I go to a psychologist with a little money in my pocket? So, no. I did not go to a psychologist because of the ‘emotional’ issues.” (Murat)

Here, the participant explains why he did not receive any professional psychological support. It is seen that the money that he spent on the legal services limited his budget from

receiving qualified psychological support from a specialist. Based on his point of view, it may be said that professional qualified psychological support demands financial adequacy.

When one of the participants described the inclusion of professional legal services in the process of custody, he said:

“Receiving qualified legal service means having lots of money. It's impossible to get effective service if you don't have enough money.” (Sarp)

Similar to what Sarp said about legal services, Osman made the following statement about mental health services:

“I mean, you have to go to private clinics and give thousands of money so that you can get a real psychological service.” (Osman)

In their statements, both of the participants talk about how receiving qualified professional support is financially burdensome. It is seen that qualified professionals demand more money for their services, either it is a psychological service or a legal service. According to what Osman reported, it may be pointed out that both of the fathers think that money brings them to receive good and effective service from a qualified professional, regardless of their specialization.

3.4.3 Affordable but Ineffective Services

Among seven fathers, four of them shared their opinions about affordable services. From their point of view, the services that could have been afforded were ineffective. This perception of ineffectiveness comes from either fathers' lived experiences, or commonly known problems in affordable services. For example, one of the participants gave the following answer to the question asked about the legal support he received during the divorce and custody processes:

“The lawyer I could afford was not a good lawyer. I mean, he was a good person, he was ambitious, but he was a new lawyer. His power was not enough for everything, like their lawyer.” (Sarp)

In this statement, Sarp talks about his experiences with his lawyer during the process of the trials. With his limited budget, he only managed to hire a lawyer who newly started to work in the field. From what he said, it may be thought that the professionals who are new in the field provide affordable services, but their professional competency may not be enough to compete with their qualified colleagues.

Osman told about his experience with a mental health professional in the process of divorce as follows:

“When I asked for psychological support, they told me to go to a hospital. I made an appointment and went to the hospital. He asked what was wrong. I told him briefly. Well, he said take these drugs and then he sent me. In other words, once you are in a state hospital as a psychologist or psychiatrist in Turkey, your job is only to prescribe medication. Nothing more.” (Osman)

In this statement, Osman talks about the psychological support he received from a psychiatrist in a state hospital during the divorce process. As it can be understood from what he said, the only support he received was a prescription of medication. He underlined that this situation is a common situation for state hospitals. Thus, it can be thought that affordable psychological services quickly prescribe medication to eliminate only the symptoms on the surface of the water, rather than psychotherapy. This shows affordable mental health services may be problematic in Turkey in the sense that they do not give the required service that should have been given, as evidenced by Osman’s statement.

One of the participants elaborated his reason for why he did not receive a professional mental health support as follows:

“If you go to a specialist in a state hospital, it changes every three days anyway. The man doesn't know your story. He's not even interested in it. Because of that, I didn't go to a psychologist or anything. But I wish I could go.” (Altan)

In here, Altan tells about why he did not receive any psychological support from a professional, even if he wanted to. He sees state hospitals' mental health services as constantly changing and inattentive. From the perspective of the father, it is seen that affordable psychological support may be unstable. Also, based on Altan's experience it may be pointed out that affordable psychological services, provided by state hospitals, do not make an effort to establish the safe therapist-client relationship, which is the fundamental element of psychotherapy.

3.4.4 Need for Mandatory Psychological Support

Among the participants, four of them mention the need for mandatory psychological support during and after divorce processes. All of those participants report that they sought that kind of psychological service, especially to avoid parental alienation in the family system after divorce. For example, when one of the participants was asked what kind of support can be given to divorced parents by the state, he answered as follows:

“Especially for mothers and fathers who are in the divorce phase, a mandatory psychological service should be given. Parents should be taught about how they should behave to their children after getting divorced. This kind of service should become mandatory for every divorcing parent. This service can be given by a psychologist, a therapist... Or from anyone who is an expert on this subject. If such service was mandatory when I got divorced, maybe I would still be in contact with my children right now. ” (Ferhat)

In his statement here, Ferhat talks about the need for a psychological education that should be given to mothers and fathers during the divorce process. Moreover, from what he

saif, it may be inferred that he believes that mandatory psychological support would rescue his relationship with his children. As it can be understood from what Ferhat said, he thinks that making psychoeducation compulsory for divorcing parents may be an obstacle to the child's alienation from the father.

Murat explained his opinions about the possible professional supports as follows:

“Both of the parties should receive psychological support. I think that the mother should also get support, and the father should also get support. In fact, if the correct support was given, none of this would have happened. Because someone who is competent in this field could say ‘You are doing this, it is wrong.’, for example.”

(Murat)

In this statement, Murat talks about his need for psychological guidance from a qualified professional in the field. Similar to what Ferhat said, Murat also thinks that this kind of mandatory service should be provided to both parents because it may prevent parental alienation and other negative consequences in the post-divorce process, as evidenced by his statement above.

3.5 Group Experiential Theme 5: Gender-Based Inequality

Parental alienation is an experience that also includes interactions with the larger systems, such as laws and politics. All of the participants underlined their experiences with the unequal structure of those systems and their feelings of injustice in their interactions with them. In participants’ narratives, it is seen that they feel discriminated because of their gender in the eyes of the laws, the state, and the society. Fathers’ common opinions about the social structure clustered under three subthemes, which are “Inequality before the law”, “Women’s statement being essential”, and “Justification of femicide”.

3.5.1 Inequality Before the Law

According to six out of seven participants, the laws that are implemented are discriminatory and nonegalitarian. Participants report several examples of and opinions about the laws' gender-based inequality of men and women. Those fathers experience and observe this kind of legal inequality in the process of divorce and custody. One of the participants made the following statement when he was talking about the custody process:

“Men have no dignity in the eyes of the law. Definitely, men and women are not equal. I am angry with justice. I don't even believe in justice.” (Altan)

In this statement, it can be seen that Altan thinks men are given less consideration before the law than women. Based on his statement, this gender-based inequality makes him feel there is no justice for men before the law.

Similar to what Altan explained, Sarp also mentioned the inequality between men and women in the eyes of the law as follows:

“We are not equal in any respect before the law. Although it looks like we are equal, there is a caste system. It's like a noble and a peasant fighting.” (Sarp)

From his metaphor of the caste system, it may be thought that women are in a hierarchically higher position in the eyes of the law, especially in the process of divorce and custody. For him, this hierarchical difference between men and women may be interpreted as a war between the strong woman and the weak man in the legal processes of divorce and custody.

One of the participants described the legal system's situation as follows:

“They officially said this with 6284. The men oppressed the women, right. The women were being persecuted in every true sense, but what is being done now is to turn that wheel. They brought the bottom to the top, the top to the bottom. There is no balance.”

There is no equality. The woman must be stronger, definitely. But, there should be equality as individuals without discrimination between men and women.” (Murat)

In this statement, the father expresses that the place of men and women in society has changed with Law No. 6284. According to his statement, in the unequal legal structure where men were strong before, women are now stronger than men. Based on his definition of the changes in the legal system, it seems to him that the law itself makes women stronger and men weaker, and this makes him feel inequality between men and women in the eyes of the law. Similar to Sarp’s statement, gender-based inequality’s representation of hierarchical structure may be observed in Murat’s quotation as well. However, for him, this gender-based unequal structure of the legal system can be solved only by putting men and women at the same hierarchical level in the eyes of the law, as evidenced by the quotation above.

3.5.2 Women’s Statement Being Essential

In connection with the subtheme above, fathers also state that taking the women's statement as essential was one of the problems that they face in the implementation of the law. According to four out of seven participants, while the laws take what women say as essential they do not hear men's voices. In the following statement, one of the participants mentioned how women’s statement is essential for the law as follows:

“The advantage of women is a fact that develops outside of custody. Because of this law named 6284, for example, when the two of us are talking, if a woman from here stops and says he harassed me is my direct reason for taking me in, and I will be exhausted until I prove it. I probably can't prove it.” (Sarp)

Altan made the following statement when he was talking about how he received support from noncustodial fathers’ Facebook groups:

“We call this 6284 as the defamation law. Because with this law, women can easily calumniate men who are not guilty and who are victims, like us. And in return, our answer is certainly not listened to.” (Altan)

In both of those fathers' statements, it can be seen that the fact that the women's statement being essential is determined by the law makes it easier for women to slander men who have done nothing. Even if the women have been slandered, the reality of it is not investigated by the legal authorities. According to them, authorities take action based on the woman's statement directly. From both of the participants' narratives, it has been seen that the man who wants to oppose the slanders has to make a lot of effort to make his voice heard, but these efforts are generally inconclusive.

3.5.3 Justification of Femicide

Four out of seven participants mention femicide in the interviews. Results show that all of those participants see femicide as a result of the difficulties experienced by men. For instance, one of the participants made the following statement when he was talking about the traumatic impact of parental alienation and divorce:

“Why women are killed? They say on TV that we couldn't protect another woman, but we should look at the truth behind it. The man couldn't pay the alimony, so he went to jail. He got out, he returned to work and they got him again. She sued him again about alimony. She does not leave him after the divorce, the man continues to pay the money to the woman. Then, she drives the man away from home. She spends all his money and turns the children against him. You know, there was a woman who was murdered by a throat cut next to her child. All day, men are so traumatized that they have no choice but to kill.” (Altan)

Here, Altan explains his justification for femicide. According to him, femicide has taken place both because of what was done by the former spouses in the legal context during

the divorce process and because of the child's alienation from the father. Based on what Altan reported, it is seen that these experiences' intensity may lead men to kill their former spouses because there is no other way out for them.

When one of the participants was talking about the inclusion of legal services in the divorce and custody processes, he made the following statement:

"I don't want my words to be misunderstood. I'm a man who gets sad even when his fish dies. But I don't feel pity for the femicide I see in the media today. Maybe because of my experiences. What comes to my mind is, who knows what this woman did to this man that he killed this woman. It was the man's last way out probably." (Recep)

In this statement, Recep explains his opinions and feelings about femicide. It is seen that he understands men's side of femicide with the influence of his difficult experiences after divorce. From the way he explained his feelings about femicide, it may be interpreted that the impact of his experiences makes him benumbed about femicide as well. According to him, femicide is due to what men experience because of their partners.

3.6 Group Experiential Theme 6: Ways to Light Up Darkness

Based on the fathers' experiences, it can be understood that parental alienation is an experience that may bear some difficulties. Although most of the participants had reported that they had hard times in coping with the outcomes, all the fathers somehow found a way to cope with what the divorce and custody processes and parental alienation bring. The group experiential theme is named after a metaphor that was used by two of the participants in their narratives. When they were talking about how they cope with parental alienation, they both defined their coping experiences as a light that enlightened the darkness. This metaphor could also be applied to other participants' coping narratives as well. Thus, among seven participants, "Noncustodial fathers groups", "New partner", "Friends", and "Focusing on interests" are the four common ways to light up the darkness that they have experienced.

3.6.1 Noncustodial Fathers Groups

Most common way of coping is contacting other noncustodial fathers from Turkey. Six out of seven fathers reported that communicating with other fathers via Facebook groups during and after the divorce and custody processes helped them cope with the psychological and legal challenges they have faced. One father made the following statement while describing his difficult feelings about parental alienation:

“Then I started contacting these divorced victim fathers’ platform groups. And there was a light in that darkness. Immediately... We always rehabilitate each other.”

(Ferhat)

From what Ferhat said, it is understood that contact with other fathers directly helped him to alleviate his depressive feelings, which were represented as darkness by him. At the same time, he feels that the mutual support between the fathers is to help each other to reintegrate into life, as evidenced by his narrative. This mutual support helped him to process his difficult emotions about parental alienation.

One of the participants described his experience to contact with fathers’ social media groups as:

“I mean, at the point where I couldn't get support from lawyers and social services when these problems were experienced, and when I wanted to get support, I said, I wanted to at least try to get an opinion from those who have experienced these. When I see those fathers who have lived, I used to be sad that I don't have shoes, they say, until I see those who don't have feet... So after that, I started not to be sad due to not having shoes.” (Osman)

In this statement, Osman talks about how he decided to have contact with other fathers at a time when he felt unsupported. His primary motivation was to get support from those fathers by hearing about their own experiences with divorce and custody. However,

based on his statement above, it is seen that interaction helped him to cope with the feelings of sadness by comparing his own experience with the other fathers'. As evidenced by his experience of coping, it may be interpreted that being in contact with a group of noncustodial fathers made him see that his own experiences of parental alienation after divorce and custody are more manageable than those of other fathers.

Bartu described how being in contact with other noncustodial fathers via Facebook groups as:

"I saw that the difficulties that happened to me were also suffered by others, that is, others were also exposed to these difficulties. I understood that I was not the only victim." (Bartu)

In here, the participant explains how being in contact with other fathers helped him, as father solidarity. Based on his explanation of the interaction, it made him understand that he was not the only person who experienced those struggles after divorce and custody processes. Moreover, as evidenced by Bartu's statement above, being in those groups helped him to perceive parental alienation as a shared challenging experience of noncustodial fathers, and it weakens the intensity of those experiences by normalizing. It can also be seen that it helped him to cope by making to feel that he was not lonely.

When one of the participants was asked how it felt to be in contact with the fathers in the father group, he gave the following answer:

"There are certain people in those groups who can show you the easy legal ways. So if you do it like this, it will run faster. Prepare petitions like this. Do it like this, do it like that. These people support us legally, because only we can understand our problems." (Sarp)

As it can be seen in Sarp's statement, being in a father group enables him to take practical steps in legal processes. From what the participant reported, may be pointed out that

it is a support mechanism where experiences are transferred from fathers who have already experienced in legal processes to fathers who are at the beginning of divorce and custody processes. Thus, father groups also help coping with the legal issues.

3.6.2 New Partner

Among seven participants, five fathers are either in a relationship or married. In all of those not single fathers' narratives, romantic partners were told as important support systems in parental alienation. In the following statement of Murat, he explained his most important supporting figure when he was asked about how he coped with the parental alienation's difficult emotions:

“Guess whom did I receive the most important support? I got it from my future wife. She definitely put her feelings behind and warned me when she saw that I had made a mistake about, for example, most importantly, children. She always waited patiently, and her patience helped me tremendously. So, she was patient with my anger. She was patient with me when I was upset. Think of it this way, you are in a completely dark environment. Hope is gone. It's almost like the sun is rising there. You don't give up hope. You say, okay, there is hope in something.” (Murat)

In this statement, it is seen that the participant managed to cope with the difficulties of parental alienation with his partner's support and patience. From what he said, it can be understood that his partner's patience helped him not only to experience difficult emotions such as sadness but also to see his mistakes in parenting. Moreover, with his romantic partner's support, Murat felt hopeful about life and the future, as evidenced by the quotation above.

When one of the participants was asked about his new partner's involvement in divorce and parental alienation processes, he replied:

“She always gave me good suggestions. She always treated me well. It helped. It calmed me down. After a while, when our relationship became official, I introduced her to the child. I said look, this is my partner. She really took care of the child. She played with him all the time when he is at my home.” (Sarp)

From what Sarp is saying, it is seen that his romantic partner’s advice helped him to relax emotionally. Furthermore, based on his statement, his partner’s good communication with him and with the child made him cope with the difficulties that were brought by divorce and parental alienation.

3.6.3 Friends

Four out of seven participants mentioned that their friends played important roles in coping with divorce, custody, and parental alienation. In the following statement, Recep explained his coping process as follows:

“Thank God, we have friends among us. I have 5-6 very close friends with whom we can sit and talk to. At least, people can feel relieved when there are people with whom they can sit and talk about their problems. There is nothing else we can do. But at least, when people share their problems with their friends, they feel a great sense of relief in that process.” (Recep)

In here, the participant explains how having close friends helped him to cope. From Recep’s perspective, it may be interpreted that friends are for pouring out grief to each other. That is why he opened up his problems and emotions, which he experienced due to parental alienation, to his friends. Communication with his friends helped him to feel relieved in an unsolvable situation, according to his statement.

When one of the participants was asked whether he received psychological support from any specialist in the process of divorce and custody, he answered as follows:

“I got it from my own friend. I said I'm not fine. I do not feel good. They also supported me. They gave the support not as medicine, but by talking... So I didn't get psychological support from someone I don't know.” (Ferhat)

In this statement, Ferhat talks about how communicating his problems with friends helped him to cope with parental alienation. According to his perspective, talking with friends is really beneficial to cope with not being fine and good, just like psychological support. From his statement above, it can be pointed out that talking with someone he knows, like a friend, acts as psychological support in the process of dealing with divorce, custody, and parental alienation.

3.6.4 Focusing on Interests

Focusing on personal interests, such as hobbies, was not a common way of coping among the participants. Only three out of seven participants mentioned the impact of focusing on interests in coping with parental alienation. However, it took up a significant part of those participants' narratives about the ways of coping. That is why it is important to underline the helping role of personal interests. When Sarp was asked what he did to cope with parental alienation, he said:

“Focusing on my personal development has helped me a lot. For example, I like to deal with a foreign language. I improved my English. I started learning German. I used to be able to make wooden sculptures. I said let's do it again. Now, I am still making wooden sculptures.” (Sarp)

As it is seen in Sarp's statement, tuning in different types of interests has helped him to cope with parental alienation. The motive of personal development is his key motive to focus on personal interests, according to his way of explanation. In return, learning new languages and going back to his old hobby has benefited him by contributing to his motivation for personal development.

One of the participants was asked whether he received social support while coping with the difficulties of the process, and his answer was as follows:

“I am not a person who can easily open up his problems to anyone. I did not receive any support from anyone, nor did I expect support. I got some support from my family, from my mother. However, since I did not want to upset her too much, I did not open these topics to her. But I got my biggest support from my motorcycle. I mean, I saw it while I was watching ‘The Terminator’ when I was eight. Thirty years later, at the age of 38, I got stubborn and learned to use it. Got my license and got my motorcycle. It has been my biggest support.” (Bartu)

From what Bartu said, it is seen that he focused on his childhood passion to cope since he does not open up his problems to others and does not take any social support from anyone. However, based on his experience, giving his focus on motorcycle riding acts as social support, and helps him to cope with the difficult emotions of parental alienation.

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

The current study explores the experiences of seven noncustodial fathers after divorce and custody processes by asking the central question of, *“What are the experiences of noncustodial fathers after the divorce and custody processes in the context of parental alienation?”*. Based on that main question, four subquestions were created to explore the experiences of the targeted noncustodial fathers. Those fathers’ experiences are investigated in the context of parental alienation in-depth with semi-structured interviews using interpretative phenomenological analysis (i.e., IPA). The results of the study revealed six main themes: “Ways of Parental Alienation”, “Fathers’ Psychological Outcomes”, “Father-Child Relationship Outcomes of Alienation”, “Experiences with Professional Services”, “Gender-Based Inequality”, and “Ways to Light Up Darkness”.

The first theme concerns the noncustodial fathers’ perceptions of parental alienation strategies that their former spouses have employed. The second theme helps to understand the psychological consequences that fathers have or had experienced due to divorce, custody, and parental alienation processes. The third theme represents several reflections on the presence of parental alienation in the father-child relationship and interaction. The fourth theme helps to understand the fathers’ perceptions of and opinions about legal and mental health services that the professionals provide during divorce and custody cases. The fifth theme is a crucial theme that reveals fathers’ perceived inequality that they experience in legal and social contexts based on their gender. This gender-based inequality occurs in the system by accepting women’s statements essential according to their point of view. Lastly, the sixth theme investigates the different ways of psychological support mechanisms that have helped noncustodial fathers to cope with the divorce, custody, and parental alienation processes.

In this section, revealed group experiential themes are discussed one by one with their subthemes based on family systems theory, divorce, and parental alienation literature, and women and gender studies. Then, the current study is considered in the context of strengths, limitations, and the routes it has uncovered for future research. Finally, the study results are discussed practically for legal and mental health services and the state.

4.1 Discussion of Group Experiential Theme 1: Ways of Parental Alienation

Based on the definition of parental alienation, the concept mainly covers the strategies and behaviors of a targeting parent for alienating a child (Lorandos & Bernet, 2013). Thus, the presence of parental alienation tactics is an undeniable and essential aspect of the concept. When it is looked at the literature, it can be seen that there are many examples of parental alienation tactics that the targeting former spouses employ.

According to research (Harman et al., 2020), parental alienation strategies of targeting parents are dichotomous, which means that ways of parental alienation can be clustered into two categories: direct and indirect. The direct form of parental alienation tactics includes blocking or changing the mobile phone number to prevent targeted parent-child communication, blocking the parenting time of the targeted parent, violating court orders, and so on. On the other hand, indirect parental alienation strategies cover badmouthing the targeted parent to the child, telling false stories from the past about the targeted parent, calling authorities to get the targeted parent arrested based on false claims, and so on.

The current study's homogeneous sample's experiences during and after divorce and custody reveal four common ways of parental alienation: preventing father-child communication, denigrating father with allegations, provoking child against father, and threatening and scaring child. Based on Harman and her colleagues' framework (2020), it can be interpreted that noncustodial fathers are exposed to both direct and indirect ways of parental alienation. Prevention of father-child communication and threatening and scaring

child are examples of the direct, denigrating father with allegations and provoking child against father are examples of the indirect parental alienation strategies.

Research (Harman et al., 2020) found that mothers prefer to use more indirect parental alienating strategies than fathers when they target their former spouses. Based on current study findings, it may be thought that gender may not play a role in determining the way of parental alienation since it is found that mothers use both direct and indirect tactics. Thus, this group experiential theme's subthemes contradict the previous studies (Gardner, 1992; Harman et al., 2020), which defend the idea that gender plays a role in the type of parental alienation strategy preferred. Other than that, the findings are mostly consistent with the previous literature.

The current study results show that mothers' use of preventing father-child communication is the most common parental alienation strategy that all participants observe during and after divorce and custody processes. This subtheme is consistent with the previous studies that searched for parental alienation strategies in a family system (Ellis & Boyan, 2010; Gardner, 1992; Harman et al., 2018; Junco López et al., 2014; Poustie et al., 2018; Rand, 1997; Torun et al., 2021). All those studies, including the current one, show that preventing communication between the child and the targeted parent is one of the most prevalent forms of parental alienation tactics used by targeting parents. Torun and his colleagues (2021) found that most targeted parents feel that their former spouses attempt to remove the children from their lives, and targeting parents intervene and prevent the time spent with the children. Some of the participants also mentioned those during the interviews.

Additionally, Harman and her colleagues (2018) underlined that blocking communication and visitation with the targeted parent is one of the most effective strategies targeting parents may employ for parental alienation since it dramatically diminishes the chances of sustaining healthy parent-child relationships. Current study findings are consistent

with those studies in the sense that the motive of targeting parents in prevention mainly aims to cut the father-child relationship off, based on the participants' narratives. By blocking either physical or telecommunication or both communication channels, the targeting parents directly created a stage for parental alienation experience. In the light of the analysis, blocking fathers' telephone numbers, moving to another city, hiding their new address, and not sending their children to visitations are some of the examples of preventing the father-child communication after separation. Those examples for the prevention also align with past research (Harman et al., 2018; Junco López et al., 2014; Poustie et al., 2018), which found those examples as separate parental alienating strategies. However, in the current study context, those ways of parental alienation were clustered under one broad category.

The data of this study show that denigrating father with allegations and provoking child against father are two other common ways of parental alienation among participants. In participants' narratives, it is seen that denigrations are reported to either children or legal authorities. Two of the participants' former spouses denigrated those fathers by claiming child abuse, which were wrong according to their statements. Children are exposed to in the current study's participants' experiences. Those exposed denigrations may increase child's negative feelings towards the targeted parent, and this may contribute to provocation of children against their fathers. This finding is in line with the previous studies (Harman et al., 2018; Junco López et al., 2014; Poustie et al., 2018) that were also found those aforementioned strategies in the parental alienation experiences of targeted parents.

Threatening and scaring child is the last subtheme under the ways of parental alienation. Although this strategy was mentioned by a few participants in the current study, it was taken into consideration as a significant tactic since it is a behavior that is directed at children, and it may directly and psychologically harm them. Some of the noncustodial fathers reported that their former spouses threaten and scare their children before they spend

time with their fathers. Mothers' threats are in the contexts of not approving of having close father-child communication and interaction and threatening to deprive them of their love for their children.

This subtheme is in line with the previous literature. According to Poustie and her colleagues (2018), increasing fear and guilt in the child whenever s/he communicates with the targeting parent is one of the most prominent examples of emotional manipulation for parental alienation. That kind of emotional manipulation directly puts a distance between the targeted parent and a child by saying that sustaining a relationship and communication with the other parent is not acceptable, and s/he should avoid the targeted one. This underlying mechanism of threat and fear also found in the current study, based on participants' narratives.

On paper, it is seen that parental alienation is a linear concept in which one of the parents targets the other one by using several strategies. However, from the perspective of family systems theory, parental alienation phenomenon can also be investigated from a circular causality. Circular causality can be defined as there is a reciprocity in human interaction, and it should be looked at from both sides' perspectives (Gehart, 2013). Hence, in the context of current study, although it is seen that noncustodial fathers are the victims of parental alienation because of their former spouses' use of several strategies, it should also be looked from the mother's side.

According to Amato's extensive review (2014), it is seen that divorce is a distressing event for both men and women, regardless of the custodial verdict. Moreover, being a custodial mother makes them to take the role of only parent since children spend most of their time with their mothers (Leopold & Kalmijn, 2016). Based on those findings, it may be inferred that the stress created by divorce and changed parenting practice may make mothers more tired, emotionally fatigue, and tense. Moreover, at the societal level, divorced mothers

are usually exposed to a lot of criticisms and suggestions regarding parenting and getting married to another one. All of those factors may increase the felt pressure of mothers and may make them to be in coalition with their children towards everyone, from structural family therapy perspective (Minuchin, 1974).

All in all, noncustodial fathers are exposed to both direct and indirect parental alienation strategies from their former spouses. Those parental alienation strategies cover noncustodial fathers, alienated children, and legal authorities. However, those strategies also include targeting mothers too. An inclusive study conducted with alienated children (Aloia & Strutzenberg, 2019) explored that being alienated in childhood not only influences the relationship with the targeted parent but also impacts the relationship with the targeted parent negatively by increasing the feelings of fear in the parent-child communication. Thus, it can be concluded that children may experience fear not only about communicating with the targeted parent but also interacting with the targeting one. Based on the literature and the current study, it is now clear that those parental alienation strategies both have psychological impacts on noncustodial fathers and their children.

4.2 Discussion of Group Experiential Theme 2: Fathers' Psychological Outcomes

Being on the target in the context of parental alienation makes fathers experience some psychological outcomes. When it is looked at the literature, it can be seen that most of the studies with targeted parents looked for the psychological and emotional outcomes (Lee-Maturana et al., 2018, 2020; Poustie et al., 2018; Tavares et al., 2020, 2021). All those studies searched for different aspects of parental alienation from the targeted parents' perspectives and found several psychological outcomes of the concept. Despair, isolation, feelings of helplessness, and depression are some of the outcomes most targeted parents experience significantly due to parental alienation and post-divorce distress (Lee-Maturana et al., 2018; Tavares et al., 2020). In the current study, four psychological outcomes of noncustodial

fathers regarding parental alienation were found: hard times in coping, anger, difficulties in communicating emotions, and ongoing traumatic effect.

Hard times in coping is the most common psychological outcome that fathers experience in the present study. Almost all participants reported that they had experienced a lot of difficulties in processing the events they experienced and regulating themselves, especially during the first time after divorce. In the sample, it is seen that some of them could not manage to cope at first, while others used some dysfunctional coping strategies, such as substance abuse, isolation, and moving to another country.

This subtheme is consistent with the study of Lee-Maturana and her colleagues (2020), which explored that almost half of their sample either coped with the negative outcomes of parental alienation inadequately or did not cope at all. When it is looked at the answers of the current study participants, it is seen that some of them could not cope at all, and isolated themselves from their close contacts for a while. Even one of the participants mentioned that he thought about committing suicide because seeing his child alienated from him was unbearable for him. From those responses, it can be inferred that the emotional burden of divorce, custody, and alienation-related experiences are too heavy for the noncustodial fathers, and this may lead them to experience some difficulties in regulating their own emotions and in coping. On the other hand, smoking, drinking, and moving to another city are some examples of dysfunctional coping tactics that were found in previous research (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020). The current study findings are in line with the previous research too.

Anger and difficulties in communicating emotions are two emotional outcomes of parental alienation that the participants experienced. These two subthemes are taken into consideration together. Even though those emotional reactions seem totally different from each other, there is a connection between the two because of gender socialization. During the

interviews, although participants had some difficulties when they were communicating some emotions, they were able to talk about anger clearly and easily. Although during the analysis it was thought that this difficulty is happening because of the complex emotional structure of parental alienation, this situation can also be explained by gender roles and gender socialization regarding emotional communication.

Based on the literature, it is clear that men communicate emotions that have an externalizing nature more, such as anger (Flynn et al., 2010). Additionally, it was also found that men suppress internalizing emotions, such as sadness, more than women (Flynn et al., 2010). Those externalizing emotions are considered more culturally acceptable in men than women, from the beginning of their childhood.

At the societal level, “Boys don’t cry” is one of the societal mottos that gives an idea about the emotional socialization of boys. That message can be given to people in different settings including immediate and extended family, school, media, and so on. Thus, it may be inferred that the participants of the current study were not able to communicate their sadness, loneliness, despair, and helplessness since they are not used to opening those feelings to others.

These emotion-related findings may actually contribute to the understanding of the difficulties experienced in coping. Those experiences of the participants may also be explained from the perspective of emotion regulation. According to research (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020), hiding or blocking emotions for coping is a common way in the targeted parents’ population. Theoretically, this kind of coping is named *avoidant coping* (Carver et al., 1989), and it mainly says that some people may give reactions to stressors by either blocking themselves from the stressor and environment or giving their attention to some inadequate behaviors for regulation. Since men mostly do not socialize to communicate internalizing emotions to others, and since men’s emotional regulation levels are lower than

women's (Delhom et al., 2021); it can be inferred that gender socialization regarding emotional communication may contribute to those hard times in coping that noncustodial fathers experience based on divorce, custody, and parental alienation.

All those aforementioned psychological outcomes of noncustodial fathers do not only occur due to parental alienation. The process of divorce also may also be related to those outcomes. According to Amato's model of divorce (2000), divorce is a process that can prolong over months or years, and it may decline the couples' standards of living. Moreover, nonresident parents (mostly noncustodial fathers) find it distressing to decrease daily contact with their children after divorce (Amato, 2014; Vogt Yuan, 2014). Thus, it can be interpreted that divorce is naturally a difficult and distressing event for both parents. Nevertheless, being exposed to parental alienation strategies may increase the intensity of those psychological experiences.

4.3 Discussion of Group Experiential Theme 3: Father-Child Relationship Outcomes

Since parental alienation is a phenomenon that defines the secession of the targeted parent and child, there are some outcomes in the relationship between them. Some of the previous studies mentioned about the impact of parental alienation on that relationship, but not in a detailed way. The current study yielded five father-child relationship outcomes of parental alienation: father as outsider financial sponsor, not seeing the father as a father, counteraction to parental alienation, emotional distance between father and child, and cut-off.

Father as outsider financial sponsor is a subtheme that is consistent with the traditional Turkish family structure that has clear gender roles for men to earn money (Kuzucu, 2011). Most of the participants in the current study reported that they felt pushed out from the immediate family system after divorce, and only function of them in that system is providing money for their children and their former spouses. However, studies showed that father's involvement in co-parenting has several positive outcomes on children (Andreasson

& Johansson, 2019; Bureau et al., 2021; Salman-Engin et al., 2018). The results of the current study show that consideration of fathers as breadwinners is a common outcome among participants.

In line with that subtheme, not seeing the father as a father is another common shift in father-child relationship after divorce and because of parental alienation. As it is said, fathers conserve their existence in a family system as being an outsider financial sponsor. However, this exclusion is also reported by their children and it made noncustodial fathers to feel that they do not have paternity role anymore. Previous studies (Emery, 2011; Rowen & Emery, 2014, 2018; Tavares et al., 2021) about divorce found that it changes family structure.

From the perspective of structural family therapy (Minuchin, 1974), this situation can be taken as the changes in the boundaries and hierarchies in the core family structure after divorce. Noncustodial fathers' experiences from the current study shows that mothers become closer to their children and form a coalition against them with parental alienation. Moreover, fathers' hierarchical position is lowered by pushing him away from the family system by not taking his opinions into account when there is a decision that should be made for their children. Those changes in the family system may make fathers to stay as a financial sponsor and change children's perception of their fathers. This familial reorganization is also in line with Tavares and her colleagues' research (2021).

Counteraction to parental alienation is one of the ways that noncustodial fathers use to create and sustain a relationship with their children after divorce. In the current study, participants tried to counterattack with an open communication and providing concrete evidence against the false claims. However, most of them did not succeed in those. In return, an emotional distance between them and their children started to get bigger. At the end, most of the father-child relationships ended up with a cut-off.

If it is looked at the parental alienation experiences of targeted parents and children in a circular pattern (Gehart, 2013), it can be pointed out that there is a lot of effort from fathers' side at the beginning. They tried to save the relationship with their children. However, every time they tried, they also faced with more intense parental alienation strategies. Those interactions may also lead to open an emotional distance between father and child. This cycle was broken by accepting the existence of parental alienation and resulted in the cut-off in their relationship.

All those father-child relationship outcomes can also be explained by the concept of *ambiguous loss* (Boss, 2009), which can take two forms. In the first form a loved one is physically absent, but psychologically present. In the second form of it, a loved one is physically present, but psychologically absent. With parental alienation, it can be inferred that both fathers and their children experience the second form of ambiguous loss. Harman and her colleagues (2022) looked for the parental alienation experiences of children from the perspective of ambiguous loss. They concluded that children experience ambiguous loss both with the targeted and targeting parents. Moreover, Tavares and her colleagues (2021) found that feelings of ambiguity is one of the consequences of parental alienation on relationship with the child. When the framework ambiguous loss is applied to the current study with previous studies, it may be possible to infer that noncustodial fathers also experience ambiguous loss since their children are physically absent but psychologically present. Thus, parental alienation affects the father-child relationship by creating mutual experiences of ambiguous loss.

4.4 Discussion of Group Experiential Theme 4: Experiences with Professional Services

From the family systems theory lens, parental alienation is a systemic problem regarding the interactions with the larger context since it starts to occur after separation while interacting with the legal system in the company with the professionals. That is why the

current study also explores noncustodial fathers' perceptions of the professional services that are, or should be, included in divorce and custody processes. In participants' narratives, four primary and common perspectives regarding legal and mental health services have been detected: complaints about lawyers' elaboration, the financial burden of qualified services, affordable but ineffective services, and the need for mandatory psychological support.

All participants received legal support from a lawyer during divorce and custody cases. However, most of them reported their complaints about their lawyers not elaborating on their case files. Those complaints were about not giving their attention to the case files and focusing on the money. Thus, it may be inferred that there is dissatisfaction among noncustodial fathers in terms of the quality and reliability of the lawyer's work. On the other hand, since most participants did not receive professional psychological support, no subthemes emerged regarding the perspectives on mental health professionals' services.

In line with the current study findings, previous studies also found that targeted parents have been not satisfied with the legal and mental health services that are provided during the process of divorce and custody (Poustie et al., 2018; Tavares et al., 2021; Torun et al., 2021; Vassiliou & Cartwright, 2001). Specifically, a qualitative study by Poustie and her colleagues (2018) explored that the targeted parents find the legal system uncaring, meaning that it does not hear and comprehend the needs of those parents in the custody cases and other legal contexts. The current study participants contribute to previous studies by bringing a specific experience: the lawyer's cursory examination and involvement in divorce and custody cases.

The financial burden of qualified services and affordable but ineffective services are two related opinions of the participants about legal and mental health services. From what they experienced, it was understood that in order to receive a qualified service from a qualified legal or mental health professional, an individual's economic status should be high.

Suppose a person's financial situation is not enough to give that amount of money, and s/he is compelled to apply for lower-budget services, which were found as ineffective, unstable, and sloppy by the participants.

Torun and his colleagues (2021) found that the majority of the targeted parents in Turkey reported that they received insufficient service from mental health professionals. However, that study did not search for the reasons behind this dissatisfaction. With the current study findings, it may be pointed out that perspectives about mental health professionals' services may be related to since the affordable services are mostly ineffective ones, according to the participants.

In line with the present study findings, past research that was conducted in a Westernized cross-cultural setting (Poustie et al., 2018) explored most of the targeted parents find the system ineffective and financially burdensome. Regardless of the country, in which the targeted parent lives, receiving a stable, caring, and affordable professional service is nearly impossible. However, divorce and custody processes naturally require the involvement of those services, at least a lawyer. Thus, it may be inferred that the larger system does not appropriately help the targeted parents and families in the context of professional services, not in Turkey or other countries. It is seen that the financial concerns of the professionals get in front of the aim of reaching the people of the service they provide.

The majority of the participants reported they felt a need for mandatory psychological support after divorce and custody. According to the participants, both of the parties (i.e., themselves and their former spouses) should have received a professional service from a mental health professional, especially during the first months of divorce. From their point of view, this support can be in the form of psychoeducation that may teach them to sustain co-parenting after divorce.

Different from psychoeducation about parenting, mandatory psychological support may also help noncustodial fathers' psychological well-being individually. According to studies (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020; Tavares et al., 2021), some targeted parents cope with divorce and parental alienation by receiving psychotherapy and counseling from psychologists, counselors, and psychiatrists. Hence, there is evidence that professional support services can benefit fathers by helping them deal with the adverse outcomes of parental alienation, such as depression, anger, isolation, and so on.

One of the participants in the current study reported that he regularly received psychological support from a psychiatrist for a short period. According to his perspective, this kind of service helped him eliminate the dysfunctional coping strategy he employed and made him move on with his life. Moreover, it can also be thought that this kind of professional mental health support mechanism may help noncustodial fathers process, regulate, and communicate their negative emotions, which are different from anger.

4.5 Discussion of Group Experiential Theme 5: Gender-Based Inequality

The current study brings the perspectives of noncustodial fathers regarding the structure of the larger systems, like laws and politics. All participants mentioned their perception of the unequal structure of the system and how they feel injustice while interacting with them. Participants' narratives indicate that they all feel discriminated against based on their gender. That discrimination happens in the laws, the state, and society. Gender-based inequality in the social structure that the participants perceive is categorized as inequality before the law, women's statement being essential, and justification of femicide.

As it was mentioned before, after Turkey had signed Istanbul Convention in 2011, the law to protect the family and prevent violence against women was accepted and started to be implemented in 2012 under Law No. 6284 (Laws Turkey, 2022). This law aimed to prevent violence against women and children and protect them. Moreover, it takes women's

statements as essential, especially in domestic violence and threats to death from their husbands or former spouses. Thus, on paper, women's statement being essential is a fact that is regulated by the law.

The current study explored that by taking women's statements as essential, noncustodial fathers feel unequal in the eyes of the law. For them, One of the participants defined this law as defamation law, which opens a space for women to accuse men of the things that did not happen in reality. As a result, the parental alienation strategy of denigrating the father with false allegations can be related to this situation. As mentioned before, two of the participants were reported to legal authorities by their former spouses with false claims about child abuse. Since the law takes women's statement as essential, those fathers' voices had not heard by the judges and pedagogues.

This group experiential theme and its subthemes are totally new concepts in the parental alienation literature. To date, no research has found that kind of perception of targeting parents about the gender-based unequal legal structure. Nonetheless, one study mentioned the targeted parents' general feelings related to injustice. According to Tavares and her colleagues (2020), targeted parents tend to believe that the world is unfair. However, since previous research was a quantitative design, it could not reach any conclusions regarding the underlying mechanism of this belief. With the findings of the current study, it can be thought that these feelings of injustice depending on the post-divorce process and parental alienation may be related to a legal system that filters out men's voices in some cases. Thus, this theme is consistent with what Tavares and her colleagues found (2020), and it also adds more about the targeted fathers' beliefs and understandings of women and femicide.

Although Law No. 6284 mainly aims to protect women, there has been a dramatic increase in the rates of femicide and violence against women in the last decade (Will Stop

Femicides Platform of Turkey, 2022). The present study is vital because it brings the perspectives of noncustodial fathers on femicide. Additionally, as it was found both in past research (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020; Tavares et al., 2020, 2021) and in the current study, anger is a common emotion among the targeted parents. Furthermore, men's emotional regulation levels are lower than women's (Delhom et al., 2021). Femicide and any form of violence cannot be validated. However, when all those findings are taken into consideration, it can be interpreted that noncustodial targeted fathers with unregulated anger and belief in an unjust world. The majority of the participants attribute the cause of femicides to defamations and economic exploitation by their ex-wives.

4.6 Discussion of Group Experiential Theme 6: Ways to Light Up Darkness

The last group experiential theme of the current study is about noncustodial fathers' coping strategies to deal with the adverse outcomes of parental alienation. Although most of the participants reported that they had experienced some difficulties while dealing with parental alienation, especially at first, they all managed to find a way to cope with it after a while by using several social support mechanisms and strategies. The group experiential theme was named after a metaphor used for coping by two participants in their narratives. The participants have lightened up the darkness that came with divorce, custody, and parental alienation by using four different and common ways: being in contact with other noncustodial fathers via social media groups, sharing their experiences with their new partner, communicating with friends, and focusing on personal interests.

The use of noncustodial fathers' groups as a social support mechanism to cope, like father solidarity, is the most common coping strategy employed by all participants in the current study. When it is looked at the interactions of the participants with those social media groups, it is seen that they both use those groups to receive social and professional support. Previous studies looked at the use of different kinds of social support (e.g., friends, family

members, partners, etc.) as a coping mechanism for targeted parents (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020; Poustie et al., 2018; Tavares et al., 2021). Nevertheless, none of them directly mentioned that being in contact with other noncustodial fathers in an informal setting (like a Facebook group) helped them cope with parental alienation.

To date, only two studies mentioned this kind of support mechanism, but in a formal setting. According to research (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020), targeted parents seek help from online support groups. Similarly, the results of Tavares and her colleagues' study (2021) indicated that targeted parents look for support associations as an emotion-focused coping strategy in the context of parental alienation after divorce. However, both studies indicate that fathers receive emotional and psychological support from a formal support group moderated by a professional (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020; Tavares et al., 2021). When it is looked at the context of Turkey, it can be seen that there are not enough formal support groups in practice. However, the results of this study imply that fathers seek that kind of support, and they use these social media platforms as support groups. Furthermore, the current study indicates that those informal support groups not only help them receive emotional support but also those groups help them to receive support for understanding the legal procedures in divorce and custody.

The use of those social media groups as a coping mechanism by all seven participants can be explained by the nature of the sampling pool created in the current study. The online survey link was mainly distributed to two Facebook groups that consist of noncustodial fathers. Thus, most of the candidate interviewees were members of those social platforms and naturally used those groups as a support mechanism. Nonetheless, this does not change the fact about the positive impact of sharing own experiences with the ones who have experienced the same thing.

The use of new partner and friends have emerged as two other types of social support mechanisms in the current study, as it did in the other research in the literature.

Communicating with friends and/or partners are two common ways of coping that the targeted parents employ to cope with the divorce and parental alienation outcomes (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020; Poustie et al., 2018). From the family systems theory perspective, it can be inferred that those three actors of social contact act as coping mechanisms by providing social support (Gehart, 2013). Interactions with immediate family (new partner) and community (noncustodial fathers' groups and friends) levels help fathers deal with stress due to divorce, custody, and parental alienation in the former immediate family system.

A previous study can explain the way those interactions help those fathers for coping. According to Lee-Maturana and her colleagues (2020), talking and sharing the grief with others help targeted parents cope with the existence and outcomes of parental alienation. In other words, fathers may experience parental alienation as child loss, and they need to mourn this ambiguous loss with grieving. Those three social support mechanisms help them open and communicate their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. Specifically, communication with noncustodial fathers' groups may help them very much in the sense that parental alienation may be interpreted as a shared experience in that kind of social environment since all of the members can understand each other and know what the others need to cope with the adverse outcomes of it.

Focusing on interests is the last way of coping in the current study that the noncustodial fathers have done. Different from the first three coping mechanisms, this one puts the individual himself at the center of coping. Most participants reported that engaging in hobbies (e.g., painting, learning new languages, riding a motorcycle, etc.) has helped them distract their attention from parental alienation and their relationship with children, just like was found by Lee-Maturana and colleagues (2021a). This subtheme is consistent with

previous research (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020; Poustie et al., 2018) because they both found a similar impact of focusing on hobbies.

Specifically, Poustie and her colleagues (2018) underlined that to cope with the detrimental effects of parental alienation, most of the targeted parents may also focus on self-education. Focusing on learning about either parental alienation or new things regardless of their content is helpful for targeted parents to cope. One of the participants from the current study mentioned that he had done much research about parental alienation since he likes to do it and wrote a book about his experience afterward. That experience of this noncustodial father also aligns with Lee-Maturana and her colleagues' study (2020) in the sense that targeted parents may spend time researching parental alienation and write a book about their parental alienation experience as a mental activity to cope. Hence, this subtheme implies that in addition to social support, activities that the person can do with themselves also help them cope with parental alienation's difficulties.

4.7 Strengths, Limitations, and Future Research Directions

The current study contributes to the literature by providing in-depth exploratory results about noncustodial fathers' experiences in Turkey from divorce and parental alienation contexts. As Lee-Maturana and her colleagues mentioned (2021b), the literature about targeted parents' perspectives is limited, and there is a need for more research on them from different countries and cultures. This study contributes to that need of the literature by providing an exploratory look from a country where sole custody is given as the common verdict in custody cases.

Taking family systems theory as a base and using interpretative phenomenological analysis, this research can be considered one of the first studies exploring what fathers experience intrapersonally and interpersonally after divorce and custody. Even though there were many studies about targeted parents in the parental alienation context worldwide, a few

studies focused only on fathers from a qualitative lens. Most of the found themes are consistent with the previous studies. However, the group experiential theme about gender-based inequality is a new point of view that was not mentioned before in the studies about targeted parents. Since it covers the clear views and justifications of men on femicide, it may also contribute to the knowledge in women studies and law literature. Hence, this study may enrich the knowledge about parental alienation, masculinity, and men's perspectives on femininity both in Turkey and worldwide.

Although the current study contributes to the literature by highlighting some new essential findings, some limitations should be considered. First of all, even though the trustworthiness of the study tried to be established by using several different methods (especially for the credibility and confirmability), it should not be forgotten that there is always a researcher bias in the nature of the qualitative research. Secondly, it should be pointed out that these findings were reached from a homogenous sample that is consisted of seven fathers' narratives. This small sample size and homogeneity make it hard to reach highly transferable results since it shows the perspectives of a particular group.

Even though this study explores the concept of parental alienation in a multidisciplinary framework, it puts more emphasis on psychology and less on the law. Since the principal investigator received an official undergraduate education in psychology and is currently a couple and family therapy master's student, the study's fundamental perspectives were from psychology theories and concepts. Furthermore, the principal investigator created all the interview questions, codings, and themes based on his knowledge of family systems theory and other related psychological concepts. That is why the current study is not strong enough in the law context.

In the present study, the homogeneity of the sample was provided by recruiting noncustodial divorced fathers. Nevertheless, as it was mentioned before, they were all

recruited from Facebook groups. This situation bears two critical points that should be taken into consideration. As it was mentioned before, there is a possibility that being a member of those groups might automatically create the subtheme about using noncustodial fathers' groups as a coping strategy. Also, those groups consist of noncustodial fathers who give a lot of hate speech about women on their social platforms. Thus, it cannot be sure whether all noncustodial fathers perceive this gender-based inequality or only the members of those platforms perceive it. This one should be differentiated by future research that will compare the perspectives of noncustodial fathers who are the members of those groups and those who are not a part of any group.

Future studies should also investigate that and check this perception of men, regardless of their marital status. It is crucial to explore the gender-based inequality aspect of fathers' experiences from different perspectives since it may help bring new insights into research about femicide, violence against women, and fragile masculinities. By combining women's experiences with men's perspectives, the whole picture of the situation can be seen. Taking two sides of the coin into consideration may create chances to design effective intervention and prevention programs about gender-related concepts.

The current study helps explore the parental alienation concept from the targeted parents' perspectives. In this exploration, several themes and subthemes were found, and those may suggest some directions for future studies. Future research can also look at those experiences of noncustodial fathers associated with the process of divorce, custody, and parental alienation in a mixed research design. Since being in contact with other noncustodial fathers positively impacted the current study's participants, a focus group qualitative study can be designed to understand further the gender-based inequality perspectives of noncustodial fathers. Since mixed design is one of the most reliable and valid methods to

reach clear conclusions, it may contribute to the theoretical construction of parental alienation.

The reliability and validity of the Turkish adaptation of the Rowland Parental Alienation Scale (Rowlands, 2018) can also be checked as a separate study. As it was mentioned before, the scale was translated into Turkish for the current study, and the reliability of the adaptation was high. This study may be accepted as a pilot study, and future research can investigate the reliability and validity of this scale with a larger sample size and using several questionnaires related to parental alienation, co-parenting, psychological outcomes, and so on.

4.8 Practical Implications

This exploratory study's findings not only theoretically enrich the parental alienation literature by providing insights from noncustodial fathers from Turkey but also practically contribute to the fields of psychology, law, and politics. Hence, approaching the parental alienation concept with a systemic and multidisciplinary stance in the present study may contribute to the knowledge of the mental health and legal services professionals and policymakers in the state. Those implications are in the context of the types of professional psychological support mechanisms that are needed and legal updates and regulations that may be done to decrease the chances of experiencing parental alienation after divorce.

Firstly, as seen in the current study results, participants complain about the expensiveness of qualified legal and mental health services. Moreover, according to participants, affordable legal and mental health services are not efficient. Since noncustodial fathers experience several outcomes because of divorce and parental alienation, professional psychological support may benefit them and should be accessible to everyone. Based on those fathers' perspectives, it may be thought that certain parts of the professional psychological support costs that fathers need after divorce may be covered by insurance

companies or the state. By doing this, psychological services may seem more accessible, and they may seek and receive more professional support.

Second, it is also possible to make discernment counseling legally mandatory for couples who apply to the court for a divorce. In that kind of psychological counseling, before starting the divorce process officially, the couple has a chance to review their relationship for the last time with the guidance of a mental health professional before reaching an ultimate conclusion. As a result of that counseling process, the couple is referred to couples therapy if they believe the problems can be resolved. On the other hand, if the couple decides that the problems in the relationship will not be resolved, they are referred to the court to get divorced. The research found that discernment counseling helps couples draw their future plan healthily (Emerson et al., 2020). Thus, this kind of mandatory service may prevent all the outcomes of and even the existence of parental alienation in divorced families since discernment counseling helps prevent the experience of high conflict during and after divorce.

Additionally, based on fathers' perspectives in the current study, there can be mandatory psychoeducation seminar series for divorcing couples about co-parenting and communication with their children in the post-divorce process. This kind of psychoeducation may stabilize a scene where parental alienation can occur. However, couple and family therapists and developmental psychologists should prepare those mandatory seminars since those specialization fields focus on parent-child interaction and co-parenting.

Fourth, the results of this study show that communication with other noncustodial fathers via social media groups during and after the divorce process has helped them cope with parental alienation. Moreover, previous studies (Lee-Maturana et al., 2020; Tavares et al., 2021) indicated that targeted parents seek professional support groups and associations for psychological and emotional coping. Based on all of those studies' findings, it may be

interpreted that targeted noncustodial fathers need to share and listen to each other's stories. Although the current study shows that noncustodial fathers from Turkey satisfy their needs in an informal support setting, this need of fathers may be provided by opening up a formal support group for noncustodial fathers with including professionals as moderators after divorce.

Last but not least, it is possible to make the parties go through this situation with minor damage and encourage divorcing couples to co-parent, such as by enacting joint custody in the law. A study (Bergström et al., 2021) showed that habitation with one parent only is related to an increase in a child's mental health problems. Moreover, that research showed that low co-parenting quality is significantly more associated with mental health problems in intact families and shared physical custody arrangements than in children who solely live with one parent. As seen in previous studies, bringing joint custody as the law may benefit not only noncustodial parents in parenting but also children's psychological well-being. However, those changes should be done carefully because of possible negative impacts on children, like damaging the stability in a child's life (Kayahan, 2021).

Appendix A

Informed Consent for Recruiting Sampling Pool (Turkish)

Projenin Adı: Velayeti olmayan babaların boşanma ve velayet sonrasındaki deneyimleri: Ebeveyn yabancılaşması ile ilgili fenomenolojik bir çalışma

Proje yürütücüsünün adı ve iletişim bilgileri:
Sezeran Uçar (...) & Dr. Selenga Gürmen (...)

Projenin amacı: Bu çalışma bilimsel amaçla yapılmaktadır. Araştırma, boşanma sonrasında çocuğunun velayeti yalnızca anneye verilmiş olan babaların ebeveyn yabancılaşması penceresinden deneyimlerinin incelenmesini amaçlamaktadır.

Süreç: Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz takdirde, sizden tamamlaması 10-15 dakika sürecek olan bir ankete katılmanız istenecektir. Anket; eğitim durumunuz, yaşıınız gibi bazı demografik sorular, çocuğunuzla olan ilişkiniz ile ilgili sorular ve son zamanlarda hissettikleriniz ile ilgili sorular içermektedir. Anketin sonunda, çalışmanın ikinci aşaması olan ve katılımcıların deneyimlerini derinlemesine anlatabilecekleri mülakata katılmak isteyen katılımcılardan iletişim bilgilerini yazmaları istenecektir. Sonrasında, iletişim bilgilerini paylaşan ve önceden belirlenen kriterlere uyan katılımcılarla iletişime geçilecektir.

Gizlilik: Çalışma süresince toplanan veriler anonim olarak toplanacak olup, araştırmanın herhangi bir aşamasında katılımcı kimlik bilgileri kullanılmayacaktır. Anketin sonunda isteyen katılımcılardan araştırmanın ikinci aşaması olan mülakata katılabilmeleri için iletişim bilgilerini yazmaları istenecektir. İletişim bilgileriniz sonuçlarla yalnızca sizinle iletişime geçebilmemiz için eşleştirilecek olup mülakatlar tamamlandıktan sonra iletişim bilgileriniz imha edilecektir. Sonuçlar kişisel bilgileriniz ile eşleştirilmeyecek ve araştırma sonucunda herhangi bir kişisel değerlendirme yapılmayacaktır. Yapılan görüşme bittikten sonra alınan ses kayıtları şifrelenmiş harici bellekte kimlik bilgileriniz ile eşleşmeyecek şekilde araştırma yürütücüsü tarafından saklanacaktır.

Gönüllü Katılım: Araştırmaya katılım tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır. Bu formu okuduktan sonra çalışmaya katılmama hakkınız her zaman geçerlidir. Katılmayı onaylamış olsanız dahi istediğiniz an anketi sonlandırıp çalışmayı bırakma hakkına sahipsiniz. Katılımı reddetmek herhangi bir zarara yol açmayacaktır.

Bu formda anlatılan araştırmanın etik yönleriyle ilgili soru veya görüşleriniz varsa lütfen Özyeğin Üniversitesi Etik Kurulu ile (...) numaralı telefonda temasa geçiniz. Yukarıda sözü geçen “Velayeti olmayan babaların boşanma sırasındaki ve sonrasındaki deneyimleri: Türkiye’de ebeveyn yabancılaşması” isimli araştırma projesinin detaylarını okudum ve bu proje ile ilgili sorularım cevaplandı.

Bu çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmayı onaylıyorum. ☐

Bu çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılmayı onaylamıyorum. ☐

Appendix B

Informed Consent for Interview (Turkish)

Projenin Adı: Velayeti olmayan babaların boşanma ve velayet sonrasındaki deneyimleri: Ebeveyn yabancılaşması ile ilgili fenomenolojik bir çalışma

Proje yürütücüsünün adı ve iletişim bilgileri:
Sezeran Uçar (...) & Dr. Selenga Gürmen (...)

Projenin amacı: Bu çalışma bilimsel amaçla yapılmaktadır. Araştırma, boşanma sonrasında çocuğunun velayeti yalnızca anneye verilmiş olan babaların ebeveyn yabancılaşması perspektifinden deneyimlerinin incelenmesini amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada doğru ya da yanlış cevap bulunmamaktadır. Sizden istediğimiz, kendinizi olabildiğince açık bir şekilde ifade etmeye çalışmanızdır.

Süreç: Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz takdirde, sizden 60-80 dakika sürecek olan görüşmeye katılmanız istenecektir. Görüşme, ortaklaşa karar verilen bir zamanda Zoom veya Skype uygulaması üzerinden yapılacaktır. Görüşmede yalnızca ses kaydı alınacaktır. Genel olarak boşanma ve velayet davası süreçleriniz ve çocuğunuzla olan ilişkiniz hakkında açık uçlu sorular sorulacaktır. Araştırmanın sonucunda deneyimleriniz belirli temalar altında toplanacaktır. Bu temaların sizin deneyiminizi yansıtır yansıtmadığı konusunda e-posta üzerinden sizinle iletişime geçilecektir.

Gizlilik: Çalışma süresince toplanan veriler anonim olarak toplanacak olup, araştırmanın herhangi bir aşamasında katılımcı kimlik bilgileri kullanılmayacaktır. Her katılımcıya bir katılımcı numarası verilecek ve o numaralar ile veri toplanacaktır. Sonuçlar kişisel bilgileriniz ile eşleştirilmeyecek ve araştırma sonucunda herhangi bir kişisel değerlendirme yapılmayacaktır. Yapılan görüşme bittikten sonra alınan ses kayıtları şifrelenmiş harici bellekte kimlik bilgileriniz ile eşleşmeyecek şekilde araştırma yürütücüsü tarafından saklanacaktır.

Gönüllü Katılım: Araştırmaya katılım tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayanmaktadır. Bu formu imzalamayıp çalışmaya katılmama hakkınız her zaman geçerlidir. Formu imzalamış olsanız dahi istediğiniz an görüşmeyi sonlandırıp çalışmayı bırakma hakkına sahipsiniz. Katılımı reddetmek herhangi bir zarara yol açmayacaktır.

Bu formda anlatılan araştırmanın etik yönleriyle ilgili soru veya görüşleriniz varsa lütfen Özyeğin Üniversitesi Etik Kurulu ile (...) numaralı telefondan temasa geçiniz.

Boşanma, velayet ve çocuğunuzla olan ilişkiniz hakkındaki deneyimlerinizi detaylı olarak konuştuktan sonra birtakım zor duygular yaşayabilirsiniz. Bu çalışmanın sonucunda eğer psikolojik destek almaya ihtiyacınız olduğunu düşünürseniz Özyeğin Üniversitesi Çift ve Aile Merkezi (ÖzÜÇAM) ile (...) nolu telefondan ya da ... Psikolojik Danışmanlık Merkezi ile (...) nolu telefondan iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

Yukarıda sözü geçen “Velayeti olmayan babaların boşanma sırasındaki ve sonrasındaki deneyimleri: Türkiye’de ebeveyn yabancılaşması” isimli araştırma projesinin detaylarını okudum ve bu proje ile ilgili sorularım cevaplandı. Bu çalışmaya gönüllü olarak katılıyorum.

İsim-Soyadı

Tarih



Appendix C

Demographic Questionnaire (Turkish)

1. Eski eşinizle ne kadar süre evli kaldınız?
Yıl: _____ Ay: _____
2. Eski eşinizle boşanma öncesinde ne kadar süre ayrı kaldınız?
Yıl: _____ Ay: _____
3. Boşanma davası ne zaman sonuçlandı?
Yıl: _____ Ay: _____
4. Eski eşinizle birlikte kaç çocuğunuz var?
__0__ __1__ __2__ __3__ __4__ __5+
5. Çocukların cinsiyetleri ve yaşları nedir?
Çocuk 1: Yaş____ Cinsiyet____
Çocuk 2: Yaş____ Cinsiyet____
Çocuk 3: Yaş____ Cinsiyet____
Çocuk 4: Yaş____ Cinsiyet____
Çocuk 5: Yaş____ Cinsiyet____
6. Velayet davası ne zaman sonuçlandı?
Yıl: _____ Ay: _____
7. Velayet davası nasıl sonuçlandı?
__Çocukların velayeti eski eşime verildi.
__Çocukların velayeti bana verildi.
__Çocukların velayeti ikimize de verildi.
__Diğer (Lütfen belirtiniz): _____
8. Eski eşinize nafaka ödüyor musunuz?
__Evet __Hayır
Cevap “evet” ise:
Aylık ne kadar ödüyorsunuz?
9. Velayetinizde olmayan çocuklarınızla ne sıklıkla görüşüyorsunuz?
__Haftada 1-2 kere
__Haftada 1-2 kereden daha fazla
__Ayda 1-2 kere
__Ayda 1-2 kereden daha fazla
__Yılda 1-2 kere

- __ Yılda 1-2 kereden daha fazla
 __ Görüşmüyoruz.
10. Velayetinizde olmayan çocuklarınızla en son ne zaman görüştünüz?
 __ Geçtiğimiz hafta içerisinde
 __ Bu ay içerisinde
 __ Son 6 ay içerisinde
 __ Son 1 yıl içerisinde
 __ 1 yıldan daha önce.
 __ Velayet davası sonuçlandığından beri görüşmüyoruz.
11. Hangi şehirde yaşıyorsunuz?
12. Yaşınız?
13. En son tamamladığınız eğitim seviyesi nedir?
 __ İlkokul __ Ortaokul __ Lise __ Üniversite __ Yüksek Lisans __ Doktor
14. Çalışıyor musunuz?
 __ Evet __ Hayır
 Cevap “evet” ise:
 Ne işle uğraşıyorsunuz?
15. Aylık geliriniz yaklaşık olarak ne kadar?
 __ 4.000 TL’den az
 __ 4.000 - 7.000 TL
 __ 7.000 - 10.00 TL
 __ 10.000 - 15.000 TL
 __ 15.000 - 20.000 TL
 __ 20.000 TL’den fazla
16. Şu anki medeni haliniz nedir?
 __ Bekar __ Evli __ Nişanlı __ İlişkisi var

17. Anketi tamamladığınız için teşekkür ederiz! Araştırmanın devamında gerçekleştireceğimiz, boşanma ve velayet süreçlerinde yaşadıklarınızı derinlemesine anlatabileceğiniz mülakata katılmak ister misiniz?

☐ Evet ☐ Hayır

Cevap “evet” ise:

Aşağıdaki kutucuğa telefon numaranızı ve/veya e-posta adresinizi yazınız:



Appendix D

Turkish Adaptation of Rowland Parental Alienation Scale

Lütfen aşağıdaki ifadeleri **velayeti sizde olmayan çocuğunuzu ya da çocuklarınızı düşünerek** ne derece sizi tanımladığını işaretleyin.

0 = hiçbir zaman

1 = nadiren

2 = bazen

3 = sık sık

4 = neredeyse her zaman

1. Çocuğunuz ne sıklıkla size lakap takar/taktı?
0 1 2 3 4
2. Çocuğunuz ne sıklıkla talimatlarınıza uymayı reddeder/reddetti?
0 1 2 3 4
3. Çocuğunuz ne sıklıkla sizi küçümser/küçümsedi veya sizinle alay eder/etti?
0 1 2 3 4
4. Çocuğunuz ne sıklıkla size kaba şeyler söyler/söyledi?
0 1 2 3 4
5. Çocuğunuz ne sıklıkla sizin hakkınızda olumlu veya sizi öven şeyler söyler/söyledi?
0 1 2 3 4
6. Çocuğunuz diğer ebeveyni idealleştirir/idealletirdi mi?
0 1 2 3 4
7. Çocuğunuz sizin herhangi bir olumlu yönünüzü belirtir/belirtti mi?
0 1 2 3 4
8. Çocuğunuz diğer ebeveynin hatasız olduğuna (yanlış yaptığına) inanır/inandı mı?
0 1 2 3 4
9. Çocuğunuz size karşı kırıncı bir karar verdiğinde, bu kararın sadece kendi kararı olduğunu ve diğer ebeveynin bu kararda hiçbir etkisi olmadığı konusunda ısrarcı olur/oldu mu?
0 1 2 3 4

10. Çocuğunuz, sizinle ilgili olan inançlarını diğer ebeveyninin etkilediğini inkâr eder/etti mi?
0 1 2 3 4
11. Çocuğunuz size karşı minnettarlığını ifade eder/etti mi?
0 1 2 3 4
12. Çocuğunuz size karşı sevgi ve şefkat gösterir/gösterdi mi?
0 1 2 3 4
13. Çocuğunuz, diğer ebeveynini ne olursa olsun desteklediğini gösterir/gösterdi mi?
0 1 2 3 4
14. Çocuğunuz, diğer ebeveynin ifade ettiği fikirleri destekler/destekledi mi?
0 1 2 3 4
15. Çocuğunuz sizin ifade ettiğiniz fikirleri destekler/destekledi mi?
0 1 2 3 4
16. Çocuğunuz sizin hakkınızda gerçeklerle desteklenemeyecek (gerçek olmayan) yanlış suçlamalar yapar/yaptı mı?
0 1 2 3 4
17. Çocuğunuz içinde olmadığı ya da hatırlayamayacak kadar küçük olduğu zamanlarda yaşanan bir olayla ilgili size yanlış suçlamalarda bulunur/bulundu mu?
0 1 2 3 4
18. Çocuğunuz, diğer ebeveynin de size karşı yaptığı suçlamaların aynısını yapar/yaptı mı?
0 1 2 3 4
19. Çocuğunuz sizinle ilgili olumsuz olayları anlatırken yaşından büyük ifadeler kullanır/kullandı mı?
0 1 2 3 4
20. Çocuğunuz, sizin akrabalarınızla zaman geçirmeyi reddeder/reddetti mi?
0 1 2 3 4
21. Çocuğunuz, sizin akrabalarınız hakkında haksız ve art niyetli ifadelerde bulunur/bulundu mu?
0 1 2 3 4

22. Çocuğunuz, sizin akrabalarınız hakkında gerçeklerle desteklenemeyecek (gerçek olmayan) yanlış iddialarda bulunur/bulundu mı?

0 1 2 3 4

23. Çocuğunuz, sizin akrabalarınızın en az birisine karşı da olsa sevgi ve şefkat gösterir/gösterdi mi?

0 1 2 3 4



Appendix E

Interview Questions (Turkish)

Boşanma Süreci ve Velayet ile ilgili Sorular:

1. Eski eşinizle nasıl tanıştınız?

Follow-up: Nasıl evlenmeye karar verdiniz?

2. Peki sonrasında boşanmaya nasıl ve neden karar verdiniz?

Follow-up: Boşanma sürecini biraz anlatabilir misiniz? Bu süreçte çocuklar kaç yaşındalardı? Bu süreçte siz neler deneyimlediniz?

3. Çocuğunuzun nerede ve kiminle yaşayacağına dair karar nasıl verildi?

Follow-up: Aileniz bu kararda nasıl bir rol oynadı? Eşinizin ailesi bu kararda nasıl bir rol oynadı? Hâkim ya da sosyal hizmet uzmanı bu kararda nasıl bir rol oynadı? Varılan kararı onaylıyor musunuz? Neden?

4. Bugün, eski eşinizle iletişim kurma ve iş birliğinde bulunma durumlarınız nasıl?

Follow-up: Birbirinizle ne sıklıkla konuşuyorsunuz? Ebeveynlik kararları hakkında birbirinize danışıyor musunuz? Birbirinizi hiç yüz yüze gördünüz mü boşanmadan sonra? Neden? Ortak velayet fikri hakkında ne düşünüyorsunuz?

5. Çocuğunuza/Çocuklarınıza bakmak için halihazırda **sizin** yaptığınız tüm görevleri ve etkinlikleri tanımlayabilir misiniz?

Follow-up: Herhangi bir zorlukla karşılaşılıyor musunuz? Bir aile üyesinden yardım alıyor musunuz? (Alıyorsanız, ne tür bir yardım?)

6. Genel olarak, boşanmanın çocukları nasıl etkilediğini düşünüyorsunuz?

Follow-up: Çocuklar için boşanmanın bazı zorlukları nelerdir?

Baba-Çocuk İlişkisi ve Ebeveyn Yabancılaşması ile ilgili Sorular:

7. Çocuğunuzla şu an olan ilişkinizi nasıl tanımlarsınız?

Follow-up: Boşanmadan önce ve sonra arasında bir fark var mı? Eski eşinizin çocuğunuzla aranızda olan ilişkiye müdahale ettiği zamanlar oldu mu? (Olduysa, nasıl bir müdahale?)

8. Daha önce ebeveyn yabancılaşması diye bir şey duymuş muydunuz?

(Duyduysa) Tanımlayabilir misiniz?

(Duymadıysa) Ebeveyn yabancılaşmasını bir ebeveynin, çocuğu diğer ebeveyninden uzaklaştırması olarak tanımlayabiliriz. Yani, eşlerden birinin

çeşitli taktikler kullanarak diğer eş ile çocuğun arasındaki ilişkiyi azaltmaya ve bitirmeye çalışması diyebiliriz. Açıklayıcı oldu mu?

9. Eski eşiniz tarafından yapılan ve bu yapılan şeyin çocuğunuzun size karşı “yabancılaştırdığını” hissettiğiniz ilk zamanlardan hangi örnekleri verebilirsiniz?
Follow-up: Eski eşiniz tarafından yapılan yabancılaştırmalara yakın tarihli ve spesifik örnekleriniz var mı?
10. Çocuğunuz tarafından yapılan ve bu yapılan şeyin çocuğunuzun size karşı “yabancılaştırdığını” hissettiğiniz ilk zamanlardan hangi örnekleri verebilirsiniz?
Follow-up: Çocuğunuz tarafından yapılan yabancılaştırmalara yakın tarihli ve spesifik örnekleriniz var mı?
11. Eski eşiniz çocuğunuzun size karşı yabancılaşmasında yardımcı olmaları için başkalarını (örneğin arkadaşlar, geniş aile üyeleri) kullandı mı?
Follow-up: Bu kişiler hangi şekillerde dahil oldular?
12. Ebeveyn yabancılaşmasına maruz kalıyor olmak sizde birtakım duyguları hissettiriyor olabilir. Yaşadığınız bu olayları şimdi burada konuşurken neler hissediyorsunuz?
Follow-up: Bu duyguyu eski eşinize nasıl gösteriyorsunuz? Bu duyguyu çocuğunuza nasıl gösteriyorsunuz?
13. Yabancılaşma zamanla nasıl değişti (eğer değiştiyse)? Zamanla daha mı iyi, yoksa daha mı kötü oldu? Neden?
14. Eski eşinizin çocuğunuzla şu an olan ilişkisi hakkında bir fikriniz var mı?
Follow-up: Size nasıl hissettiriyor peki eski eşinizin çocuğunuzla olan bu ilişkisi? Eski eşiniz ve çocuğunuzun arasındaki bu ilişkiye müdahale ettiğiniz zamanlar oldu mu? Olduysa, nasıl bir müdahale?

Ruh Sağlığı Servisleri ve Hukuki Servisler ile ilgili Sorular:

15. Boşanmış ebeveynlere devlet veya sosyal hizmetler uzmanları tarafından verilmesi gereken destek türleri hakkında herhangi bir fikriniz/düşünceniz var mı?
16. İçinden geçmiş olduğunuz boşanma sürecinde bir uzmandan psikolojik destek aldınız mı?
Follow-up (14a): Aldıysanız, ne tür bir hizmetti? Size ne gibi katkısı oldu? Daha iyi olabilirdi dediğiniz bir yanı var mıydı?
Follow-up (14b): Almadıysanız, böyle bir desteği aradınız mı? Sizi bu desteği almaktan geri tutan bir şey var mıydı?

17. İçinden geçmiş olduğunuz boşanma sürecinde bir uzmandan hukuki destek aldınız mı?

Follow-up (15a): Aldıysanız, ne tür bir hizmetti? Size ne gibi katkısı oldu?

Daha iyi olabilirdi dediğiniz bir yanı var mıydı?

Follow-up (15b): Almadıysanız, böyle bir desteği aradınız mı? Sizi bu desteği almaktan geri tutan bir şey var mıydı?

Başa Çıkma Mekanizmaları ve Sosyal Destek:

18. Bütün bu deneyimleri yaşarken ebeveyn yabancılaşmasının getirdiği zorluklarla nasıl başa çıktınız?

Follow-up: Sosyal çevrenizden bir destek aldınız mı? Nasıl bir destek aldınız? (Arkadaşlar, kendi aileniz) “Boşanmış Mağdur Babalar Derneği” ile temasta olmak size nasıl geldi? Neden?

19. (Eğer ki şu an partneri varsa) Şu anki partneriniz bu olaylara dahil oldu mu?

Follow-up: Nasıl dahil oldu? Ne yaptı? Onun bu yaptıklarıyla ilgili siz ne hissettiniz?

Kapanış:

20. Bütün bu yaşadıklarınızı yeniden yaşayacak olsaydınız, neyi farklı yapmak isterdiniz?

Follow-up: Eski eşinizin neyi farklı yapmasını isterdiniz? Çevrenizin neyi farklı yapmasını isterdiniz?

21. Eğer ki bu çalışmayı siz yürütüyor olsaydınız, bu sorulan sorular dışında başka sormak istediğiniz bir soru olur muydu?

Follow-up: Ne sormak isterdiniz?

22. Boşanma, velayet, ebeveyn yabancılaştırması ve psikolojik ve hukuki destek sistemleri konularıyla ilgili bizimle paylaşmak istediğiniz başka herhangi bir bilgi var mı?

Debriefing:

Çalışmamıza katıldığınız ve deneyimlerinizi paylaştığınız için teşekkür ederiz. Boşanma, velayet ve çocuğunuzla olan ilişkiniz hakkındaki deneyimlerinizi detaylı olarak konuştuktan sonra birtakım zor duygular yaşayabilirsiniz. Bu sebeple psikolojik destek almaya ihtiyacınız olduğunu düşünürseniz Özyeğin Üniversitesi Çift ve Aile Merkezi (ÖZÜÇAM) veya ... Psikolojik Danışmanlık Merkezi ile iletişime geçebilirsiniz. Telefon numarasını size çalışmanın başında ilettiğim gönüllü katılım formunda bulabilirsiniz.

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HacettepeUniversity.

