Research Article *Araştırma Makalesi* DOI: 10.55590/literatureandhumanities.1937565

ATATÜRK ÜNİVERSİTESİ YAYINLARI
ATATURK UNIVERSITY PUBLICATIONS

Through the Eyes of Women Writers Women in the Context of Family Problems

Kadın Yazarların Gözünden Aile İçi Problemler Ekseninde Kadın

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Not: Bu makale, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Törenek danışmanlığında yürütülen "Son Dönem Türk Öyküsünde Kadın Öykücülerin Kadın Sorunlarına Bakışı 2000-2020" başlıklı tezden üretilmiştir.
Note: This article is derived from the thesis titled "Women Storytellers' Perspectives on Women's Issues in Contemporary Turkish Short Story (2000–2020)", supervised by Prof. Dr. Mehmet Törenek.

Abstract
In recent Turkish short stories, female authors' awareness of women's issues is particularly noteworthy. Authors who examine women through the lens of social life, family life, and professional life address the challenges women face in these areas and explore women's attitudes toward these challenges. The visibility of women's experiences in social life within literary works fosters significant awareness regarding women's issues. The challenges women face, particularly within the family, are a recurring theme in the works of nearly every female writer. A woman's position within the family, the responsibilities she assumes, the conflicts she experiences with other family members, and her approach to overcoming these challenges shape the focus of works where she takes center stage. Writers who draw inspiration from women hold a mirror to her journey from the confines of the home to the wider world. This study examines the issues women face within the family through the works of Turkish writers such as Adalet Ağaoğlu, Cihan Aktaş, Fatma Barbarosoğlu, Sibel Eraslan, Naime Erkovan, Ayfer Tunç, and Yıldız Ramazanoğlu writers who have revitalized the short story genre in Turkish literature and and aims to reveal how female writers approach women's issues within the family framework within the boundaries of the short story genre.
Keywords: Women, short story, family, female writers, women's issues, domestic problems, literary work, literary genre

Öz
Son dönem Türk öyküsünde kadın öykü yazarlarının kadın sorunlarıyla ilgili farkındalığı dikkat çekmektedir. Kadını sosyal hayat, aile hayatı, iş hayatı çerçevesinde mercek altına alan yazarlar, bu alanlarda kadının karşılaştığı sorunlara değinmekte, kadının bu sorunlar karşısındaki tavrı söz konusu edilmektedir. Toplumsal hayatta karşılaşılan kadın manzaralarının edebi eserlerde görünürlük kazanması, kadın sorunlarıyla ilgili önemli bir farkındalık oluşturmaktadır. Kadının özellikle aile içerisinde yaşadığı sorunlar hemen her kadın yazarın eserinde yer alan bir konudur. Kadının aile içerisindeki konumu, üstlendiği sorumluluk, ailenin diğer üyeleriyle yaşadığı sorunlar ve bu sorunlarla başa çıkma tavrı kadının başrol olduğu eserlerin odağını şekillendirmektedir. Kadından yola çıkan yazarlar, onun kapalı mekândan açık mekâna doğru ilerleyen yolculuğuna ayna tutmaktadır. Çalışmada Adalet Ağaoğlu, Cihan Aktaş, Fatma Barbarosoğlu, Sibel Eraslan, Naime Erkovan, Ayfer Tunç, Yıldız Ramazanoğlu gibi Türk edebiyatında öykü türüne ivme kazandırmış, yazarlarımızın eserlerinden yola çıkılarak kadınların aile içinde yaşadığı sorunlarla ilgili bir inceleme yapılmış, öykü türünün sınırları çerçevesinde kadın yazarların aile ekseninde kadın sorunlarına yaklaşımını ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır.
Anahtar kelimeler: Kadın, öykü, aile, kadın yazarlar, kadın sorunları, aile içi problemler, edebi eser, edebi tür

Geliş Tarihi/Received 25.04.2026
Revizyon/Revision 08.06.2026
Kabul Tarihi/Accepted 08.06.2026
Yayın Tarihi/Publication Date 09.10.2026

Atıf:
Sancar, E., & Törenek, M. (2026). Kadın Yazarların Gözünden Aile İçi Problemler Ekseninde Kadın. *Edebiyat ve Beşeri Bilimler Dergisi* (78), 218-229.

Cite this article:
Sancar, E., & Törenek, M. (2026). Through the Eyes of Women Writers Women in the Context of Family Problems. *Journal of Literature and Humanities* (78), 218-229.

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Introduction

The short story, which stands out as a neglected genre in Turkish literature, plays a leading role in the evolution from "hikâye" to "öykü," both in terms of name and content. Although literary dictionaries draw conceptual distinctions between the two, the two terms complement one another. Indeed, when defining the term "story," Turan Karataş (2001) primarily uses the term "short story." The definition in question is as follows: *"Short story. A text that narrates events occurring in human life or that might occur, or that evokes the impression of what will happen, within a certain scope is called a short story."* (Karataş, 2019, p. 146) Ömer Lekesiz, meanwhile, emphasizes that the concept of "short story" conveys a more literary meaning compared to "story" when distinguishing between the two terms. According to him, the first term is "creation," while the second is "innovation." (Şakar (ed.), 2018, p. 18) Consequently, it is through the short story that the narrative attains a more literary dimension and takes on a more beautiful style. The fact that the short story which has recently gained greater recognition in Turkish literature is inherently part of the Turkish language is one of the factors that has accelerated the acceptance of the concept. The short story's focus on the individual places the human being at the center of the narrative; the story revolves around the human figure. Mehmet Kaplan's (1979) observation on this subject is significant. In his *Hikâye Tahlilleri* [Analyses of Short Stories], Kaplan states: *"The short story writer, who directs their attention more toward others than their own 'self,' approaches the psychologist, sociologist, or philosopher who seeks to understand humanity. I believe that the short story writer understands humanity better than scholars do. Because his subject is not 'humanity' in the general sense, but 'humanity' in the particular sense that is, 'personality' and 'the individual.' Every person constitutes a separate world. In good stories, we encounter the 'real human' a person living in specific times and places, possessing a unique world of their own."* (Kaplan, 2018, p. 13) A story that captures a slice of human life must be realistic enough to convince the reader, yet fictional enough to retain its artistic integrity. This is particularly important in stories with a central thesis. The subject the story focuses on and explores with care must maintain its credibility for the reader. Indeed, the realistic fiction found in the works of female storytellers addresses women's issues; for this reason, the short story form serves as a perfect medium for writers with a cause.

In Turkish short stories written from the perspective of female authors, it is possible to observe a feminine sensibility. Topics that were not discussed, were glossed over, or were ignored from a women's perspective have been brought to light in the works of female short-story writers, creating a strong awareness of women's lives and issues. However, gender-biased attitudes regarding whether the author is a woman or a man have also led to prejudice against the work itself. The fact that women writers entered the literary world later than their male counterparts, and the tendency to equate artistic merit and talent with experience while excluding other factors are among the reasons for these prejudices. Yet, when we look at ancient traditions, the storyteller has mostly been a woman. Women have always appeared as narrators through their roles as mothers, grandmothers, or healers/shamans. *"In oral culture, the feminine worldview found in the language of folktales, or the feminine language in poetic forms such as lullabies, folk songs, and dirges, has found its counterpart in written literature only after a long journey."* (Örgen, 2014, pp. 63–85) However, with the transition from oral to written culture, the fact that the act of writing is concerned with the external world has caused women to be pushed into the background. Consequently, the role of the storyteller has shifted from women to men, and women have been portrayed through the male gaze. In recent Turkish short stories, however, women have now been given a voice; they reflect the emotional intensity and poetic style inherent in their nature in their stories. The conclusions reached by Cihan Aktaş and Yıldız Ramazanoğlu in their study on women regarding the comparisons made between the female and male genders are significant. According to the study, as women and men exist in social life, they should choose the path of mutual progress rather than engaging in a battle for supremacy; both women and men should be able to exist in the literary world without their rights being infringed upon, setting aside gender-biased attitudes. The following statements by Aktaş point to the fundamental problem regarding women's existence in social life: *"Why can't a woman be a poet, painter, writer, politician, bureaucrat, film director (or even a cook, seamstress)... And of course, why should a woman be defined as a "deficient gender" a human species whose humanity is diminished while her physical attributes are emphasized above all else..."* (Aktaş, Ramazanoğlu, 2009, pp. 77–86) It is possible to contrast Aktaş's "reasons" with Moran's (1972) "causes." In the chapter titled "Feminist Criticism" of her work *Edebiyat Kuramları ve Eleştiri* [Theories of Literature and Criticism], Moran, drawing on the views of Gilbert and Gubar, states: *"Gilbert and Gubar first draw attention to how women writers are forced to write their novels in a hostile environment. This environment is hostile because the belief that writing is a man's job—and that a woman should not meddle in this field—is widespread. Why is it a man's job? Because creation is the man's domain."* (Moran, 1999, p. 256) In her book *Osmanlı'da Kadın Hareketi* [The Women's Movement in the Ottoman Empire], Serpil Çakır (1994) writes the following regarding women's establishment of a presence in social life: *"Women's self-expression and self-promotion took place for the first time through the press. It is possible to find women's bylines in period newspapers, in the pages and supplements targeting women published by some newspapers, and especially in women's magazines. Women's magazines played a significant role in helping*

women from all walks of life overcome their hesitation and reluctance to write and in conveying their demands" (2016, cited in Atça, 2019, p. 57). The real breakthrough in women's literary journey, however, came with Halide Edip. The degree of dominance exhibited by the female protagonists in her works demonstrates that women also play an active role in social life. Halide Edip's ability to carve out a space for herself displaying an idealistic, strong stance in an environment where a male-dominated social structure persisted brings women to the forefront both as writers and as subjects of writing.

Female short story writers, who have gained significant momentum in recent Turkish short fiction, are bringing the issues women face into their stories, thereby raising notable awareness of women's issues. Women face numerous challenges both in social life and in family life; they either develop strategies to cope with these challenges or choose to accept the problems they encounter. Family life, in particular, is one of the spheres where women often find themselves in a state of acceptance. Scenes from women's daily lives are frequently depicted in Turkish short stories through the lens of female writers. In stories, the attitude women adopt in the face of domestic problems is often shaped by societal norms. For example, in societies where traditional structures prevail, women tend to be passive, resigned, and accepting when faced with problems involving their spouses, children, or other family members; whereas in modern societies, this attitude gives way to a stance characterized by defiance, rebellion, and the willingness to leave an environment that makes them unhappy. Since women are often held responsible for maintaining the household's internal order and taking on duties such as cooking, housework, and child care, the problems they face are largely related to disruptions in these responsibilities. While stories often focus extensively on the problems women face with their husbands, women may also experience issues with other family members such as children, mothers-in-law, mothers, fathers, and sisters-in-law.

Every short story writer approaches her female protagonist in a different way. For example, while Cihan Aktaş's women adopt a combative stance in the face of problems and question their circumstances, Sibel Eraslan's women wage their struggle internally, retreating into a state of quiet contemplation. Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, on the other hand, portrays her women as travelers on a journey from destruction to reconstruction. Ayfer Tunç's female characters exhibit diversity depending on the stance they take in the face of problems. Some find the solution to confronting problems in transcending the limits of reason, while others prefer to quietly withdraw to a corner. In stories that explore traditional social structures, the protagonist questions societal norms but takes no action regarding the problems they face. Instead, by clinging to conventional thinking, they perpetuate the existing order. Women, who are often the subject of conflicts within the family, either perpetuate the status quo through their stance or, by voicing their disapproval of certain situations, become the first to break the ice. At the root of the problems women face within the family social norms, the decisions made about women by the outside world, and the lack of a voice granted to women. Below, drawing on the stories of female short story writers, women are examined through the lens of the problems they face within the family, highlighting how a social phenomenon is reflected in fictional narratives.

Problems Women Face in Their Marriages

Adalet Ağaoğlu (2018), one of the leading figures in Turkish literature, addresses the rapid changes occurring in social life in her latest collection of short stories, *Düşme Korkusu* [fear of falling], and explores the process of change women are undergoing. The story explores how women opened up to the outside world with the advent of the republic and how women, once hidden behind closed doors, became visible. At the same time, it draws attention to the harm inflicted on women by existing social norms. Domestic violence ranks among the foremost social issues, and Adalet Ağaoğlu, like nearly every other writer, addresses this topic in her stories. In the story titled "Orta Sınıf" [The Middle Class] from the author's collection *Düşme Korkusu* [*fear of falling*], the narrative centers on a family where oppression and violence reign. Güler and Ahmet, who married out of love, face domestic problems that escalate to the level of violence years later; Ahmet abuses Güler, subjecting her to physical and emotional harm. Violence resulting from unresolved domestic problems is one of the issues women face that causes them both physical and emotional harm. The author conveys the violence the woman suffers at the hands of her husband to the reader with the following words: *"Ahmet had grabbed his wife by the wrist and was beating the woman who had once been his great love, Güler, according to the neighbors' accounts, kept screaming 'Help!' as she tried to break free from his grip; then the young woman suddenly broke free from her husband's grasp and threw herself into the street, while her husband ran after her."* (Ağaoğlu, 2018, p. 62).

Cihan Aktaş (2001), who has made a name for herself not only through her high-quality works in the short story genre but also through her studies on women's social visibility, is one of the authors who addresses women's issues in her stories. The author's short story titled "Üç Kuzen" [Three Cousins] features women facing problems in their marriages. The cousins, who come together as the story's protagonists, share the problems they face in their personal lives and offer each other support. In particular, the story addresses the problems experienced in marriage and the wear and tear resulting from these issues. The protagonist, described as the 'cousin with the bag' believes that goodness can overcome all evil and strives to keep that

spirit alive by feeding stray animals. This attitude is also a way she has found to make it easier to put up with her difficult husband. The author conveys the thoughts of a woman who has taken on the burden of self-sacrifice within the family and considers tolerating her husband's misdeeds one of her duties with the following words: *"She began to walk briskly, clutching her bag tightly. She endured her husband's misdeeds, thinking, 'Goodness, only goodness, goodness clears everything away; goodness washes away and cleanses the evils.' He was a man who found fault with everything, who always had the last word, and who never grew tired of temporary sulks. When he was younger, people had said, 'He's young; he'll improve and change in time.' Who was without fault, after all… Yet, the routine of their twelve-year marriage where she always gave in to avoid arguments continued only as long as she kept giving in."* (Aktaş, 2018, p. 25). When the figure of the father, a figure of authority within the family is coupled with excessive authority, it invites discord and causes the father to become a source of distress within the family. Instead of maintaining a firm yet compassionate stance to uphold his authority, he exists solely through his anger. The way the home where the purest relationships are formed and which people finally see as a safe haven becomes tainted by the husband's unrest is expressed in the author's words as follows: *"She thought of the uneasy silence that enveloped the house in the evenings as he was about to return. It seemed to feed on mishaps, defiance, and fault-finding. He would break things, tear them down, and then ask for forgiveness, saying, 'God is testing you through me.'"* (Aktaş, 2018, p. 25). This situation undermines the woman's authority within the family; in an environment where only the father's word holds sway, the mother cannot transcend the role of a mere symbolic figure. This dynamic, which belittles and devalues women within the family, also brings about domestic problems. The author addresses the root of these problems with the following words: *"Once again, they were forced to visit only the people he liked, watch the TV shows he approved of, and read the books he wanted. A man who mistook kindness and compassion for weakness! She had to be mentally prepared at all times. Even during a pleasant conversation, anything could turn into a major flaw: a misplaced word, a crooked teapot lid, a dripping faucet, a salad without lemon, a book left unfinished…"* (Aktaş, 2018, p. 26).

In his work *Halama Benzediğim İçin* [Because I Resemble My Aunt], Cihan Aktaş (2003) explores women in various contexts, raising significant awareness about women's issues. The story titled "Yazgülü'nün En Son Hali" [Yazgülü's Final State] included in the book, addresses all the challenges a woman might face. Serving as a prime example of domestic issues, the story lays bare the problems a woman encounters within the family both with other family members and with her husband. Yazgülü and her siblings, who lost their mother and father at a young age, are divided among the other family members; Yazgülü is given to the family of the story's protagonist. A dreamy young girl, Yazgülü spends her youth fantasizing about a love story with a happy ending, just like in TV movies. Eventually, a man named Âlim comes along. Despite her family's disapproval, Yazgülü enters into a marriage with Âlim. Married life becomes the beginning of an even worse existence for Yazgülü, and she begins to live a life of captivity in Zeytinburnu for years. This is because Âlim cannot hold down his latest job and leaves for England. There, Âlim begins to lead an immoral life and never returns to Yazgülü. Left to face abandonment, Yazgülü continues to live with her mother-in-law. Being abandoned and feeling unwanted are among the primary problems women face within the family. This situation is also a consequence of existing problems. Women whose husbands have left them begin to live like intruders in their mother-in-law's home and endure every hardship they encounter during this process. Indeed, Yazgülü has also been subjected to such treatment; she has endured her mother-in-law's every grievance and suffered every kind of insult. The lives to which women are condemned offer them no room to live, leave them no choice, and force them into unconditional acceptance. The author portrays Yazgülü's married life through the protagonist's perspective: *"From what I gathered from the conversation, Yazgülü was living a life of captivity in Zeytinburnu. She rarely left the house, and when she did, she wasn't allowed to go far from the neighborhood because she was required to wear flowered pajamas under her clothes. Her mother-in-law, who struggled to move due to her obesity, not only made her do all the housework but also held her responsible for her own personal hygiene. They didn't buy her any new clothes, nor did they send her to her sister's house on the Kadıköy side. Once, they beat her nearly to death simply because she went or tried to go to the summer movie theater with a neighbor's daughter. Sometimes a threat of eviction, sometimes a word of insult could be heard. "Slut!" That word had a strange effect on me. It cracked like a whip, leaving bloody marks on Yazgülü's body, covered in flowered pajamas. By the end of those five years in Zeytinburnu, Yazgülü had become an unwanted, repulsive woman in her husband's eyes."* (Aktaş, 2019, p. 125).

In Aktaş's (2009) short story titled "Kusursuz Piknik" [The Perfect Picnic] we again encounter a family setting where women are looked down upon and effectively reduced to the role of servants. The events unfolding around a picnic attended by the town's leading figures and their spouses offer clues about the woman's stance in both her inner and outer worlds. The chief clerk, who adds a new event to the annual picnic festivities he organizes, is being quite meticulous about this year's picnic which will be attended by the deputy governor, his family, and the judge and is pressuring his wife to ensure everything proceeds flawlessly. His harsh and hurtful behavior toward his wife serves as an example of the communication issues women face. The language men use toward their wives comparing them to other women or placing the entire burden of responsibility

on the woman, thereby putting her in a difficult position leads to the woman's devaluation within the family and the emergence of domestic problems. In the story, the author highlights a comparison between the chief clerk and his wife, illustrating the disparity in how two people living under the same roof present themselves: *"Her husband, getting ready to go out again, looked much younger than his age, with his tanned skin a clear sign he'd spent his days in Istanbul swimming in the sea and his light-colored T-shirt and jacket. She, on the other hand, was just like all the other women in the neighborhood; neither more nor less. With her head covered in a yemeni adorned with various embroidery, her pleated skirt reaching down to her ankles, and her jacket, she looked no different from the local women of the town."* (Aktaş, 2009, p.13) This comparison demonstrates that women are more worn out than men. The author specifically emphasizes that the chief clerk went swimming in Istanbul. While he was enjoying himself, depriving his wife or family of this experience and savoring the pleasurable aspects of their shared life all by himself is at issue. In the story, this self-centered attitude is expressed through the perspective of his own daughter: *"As if inviting the entire staff to picnics all summer weren't enough, he went to Istanbul all by himself without even thinking to take you along"* (Aktaş, 2017, p. 15).

Comparing women to one another is another issue that harms their self-image. When this is done within the family especially by a spouse it wears the woman down, and the feeling of not being appreciated leads to a loss of self-confidence. For example, the chief clerk compares his wife to the deputy director's wife, who is dressed appropriately for a picnic, and views his own wife as poorly dressed. He describes the apron his wife tied around her waist while stuffing the lamb as a rag, and at the same time, he is angry that the task of stuffing the lamb is taking so long. The chief clerk's accusation that his wife is neglectful, coupled with his expectation that she perform every task assigned to her flawlessly, reflects the role women are assigned in family life. In their view, women should be like machines skilled enough to make their lives easier while also not neglecting themselves. The fact that husbands, who are as polite and understanding as possible in social life, can be so short-tempered in family life is one of the domestic problems women face. The author illustrates this situation through the deputy governor as well. His insults directed at his wife *"What a scatterbrained woman you are! How many times have I warned you!"* following the disappearance of a few fish meant for the picnic reveal that the deputy governor is a very different man within his family environment. The author conveys this observation through the deputy governor's wife's perspective: *"The chief clerk who is polite, articulate, so knowledgeable about the subtleties of the Turkish language that he carries a spelling guide in his pocket, and so sensitive to women's issues that he would consider opening a women's guesthouse for the women coming from the village to the town for the market was accusing his wife of being a fool and incompetent because she had forgotten the strings for the swing, the okey boards, the ropes for the swing, and many other important items at home"* (Aktaş, 2017, p. 27).

Fatma Barbarosoğlu(2000), one of the writers who has made significant contributions to Turkish short fiction, also addresses women's issues and explores the plight of women facing domestic problems. In "İmajatörün Evi" [The Imager's House] a story from her collection *Gün Akşamsızdır* [The Day Has No Evening], she portrays a woman who is neglected by her husband and children and condemned to loneliness. The story's protagonist, the "imajatör" Nuri Hoca, listens to people's troubles like a psychologist, seeks solutions to their problems, and offers them various suggestions. The story recounts the difficulties a woman faces in her home-bound life with her husband, as she seeks support from Nuri Hoca. A woman who has dedicated her life to her children and husband is later held accountable for this dedication; the failure to recognize her self-sacrifice damages her self-image, and she suffers injustice at the hands of her husband. The story's protagonist, who has focused solely on her home and children, is accused by her husband of standing still at the same point after the children have grown up and all responsibilities have been borne by her a situation that has created a sense of failure within her. Social judgment mechanisms that equate women with inadequacy or failure, and that do not consider managing the household or meeting the needs of the husband and children as achievements or work, have accused the woman of being flawed. Indeed, the woman is described by her husband with the following words: *"Every time she starts a new round, I'm always stuck in the same one. I really need to break free from the shell I've trapped myself in. I've chosen the easy way out. While there's a fierce battle raging outside, I've been endlessly replaying the 'Little Mother Ayşegül' game over and over again. "A person should at least take a look at their friends. While everyone has built a career in their field, and many of my friends hold the promise of a political future, how could I have chosen to live with the contentment of a housewife, using raising children in the safe haven of home as an excuse?"* (Barbarosoğlu, 2020, p. 56)

Ayfer Tunç's stories, which devote considerable space to psychological analyses of her characters, explore crises between spouses, with women typically taking the lead in managing these situations. Tunç's female protagonists who are far from rebellious, resigned to their lot, and often portrayed as victims mostly manage their male partners while suppressing their anger and frustration. However, this silence eventually erupts into a psychological crisis in various situations, and the noise generated by excessive silence is palpable in the story's lines. Aiming to reflect the realities of social life and draw attention to the problems women face, Tunç (2000) also addresses women within the framework of various issues in her work *Aziz Bey*

Hadisesi [The Aziz Bey Incident]. One of these is the behavior women encounter within the family. For example, in the book's first story, "Aziz Bey Hadisesi" [The Aziz Bey Incident] the protagonist, Aziz Bey, is a man who has lived in the shadow of a harsh father. The father is quite intolerant toward both Aziz Bey and his mother, while the mother adopts an utterly silent, submissive attitude toward her husband: *"Aziz Bey's father was a hot-tempered man. Though he had a deep appreciation for the finer things in life, he never showed it to anyone. His wife suffered greatly at his hands. Constantly furrowed brows, a fist that would come crashing down on the table at the slightest provocation whether the food was too salty, the shirt unironed, or the bread stale and a booming voice that scolded at every opportunity…"* (Tunç, 2008, p. 15). The family dynamics Aziz Bey witnessed in his childhood would later form the foundation of his own relationships. Consequently, the theme of genetic transmission, which occupies a significant place in Tunç's stories, is also evident in the story titled "Aziz Bey Hadisesi". Indeed, years later, Aziz Bey adopts the same attitude toward his wife, Vuslat, that his father once directed toward his mother. Vuslat, who works as a seamstress in an inn, accepts the marriage proposal of the famous tambur player Aziz Bey, unwittingly throwing herself into a life that will imprison her. Contrary to Vuslat's belief that this marriage is built on love, Aziz Bey expects nothing from this marriage and is simply enjoying the fruits of his fame. The author describes Vuslat's withering away as she waits, like a flower by the window, to be the recipient of Aziz Bey's compliments, with these words: *"While he is out there, losing himself amidst the raki glasses constantly raised to the air, the music, and the laughter; Vuslat sits by the window in a distant corner of the room, bathed in the deep shadows cast by the burning lamp, gazing at the broken moonlight reflecting on the murky waters of the Golden Horn, pondering her own life and feeling sorrow. Despite Aziz Bey's objections, she had a child, but it did not survive. After that, she withered away completely, her voice and breath fading away"* (Tunç, 2008, p. 66).

Naime Erkovan (2014), who has captured the attention of short story enthusiasts by adding a new dimension to contemporary Turkish short fiction through her use of fantasy, attempts to view the existing world through a different lens in her stories, framing the implausible within a plausible framework. While exploring the humorous side of the fictional world, she has not remained indifferent to the issues women face in social life, providing examples of situations where women are overlooked. Although she does not make women's issues the central theme of her stories, the story titled "Bakarız" [we'll see] in her collection *Asılsız Hikâyeler* [False Stories] serves as an example of the problem of indifference that women often face. The indifferent attitude she encountered during her second meeting with the man she later married persisted throughout their marriage. The story's protagonist describes her husband's untrustworthy demeanor with the following words:

"I heard him say it for the first time during my second meeting with my husband, with great enthusiasm:
'Will we see each other tomorrow?' I asked.
'We'll see,' he said.
We did meet, but since I didn't know exactly what 'we'll see' meant, I spent the time until the next day just waiting. I didn't call to ask. Our relationship hadn't reached the point of suffocating each other yet… After a while, I learned not to trust his answers. There were times when, while waiting for him to pick me up from the airport, I hopped into a taxi and went home alone without being surprised that he didn't show up or calling him to ask where he was" (Erkovan, 2023, pp. 81–83). The woman's acceptance of her husband's indifference and her taking on the entire burden of the household alone is also portrayed in the stories as a way for women to cope with the problems they face within the family.

In the story titled "Benim İçin Önemlisin" [You Matter to Me] featured in Erkovan's (2019) *Fantastik Şeyler* [Fantastic Things], a marriage that ends in disappointment stands out. *"The man had always promised to take the woman to the island, but he had always backed out for one reason or another. At first, the woman didn't mind the disruption of their plans, but after a while, the disappointments became so frequent that her sadness began to show"* (Erkovan, 2020, p. 13). Describing this situation as the first crack in the marriage, the author places an extra chair at the table at the end of the story. This detail in the story suggests to the reader that the man has remarried, laying bare how the woman is treated as if she were an outdated piece of furniture.

Problems Women Face with Their Children

Women may also experience problems with their children within the family. Being accepted by her children and aligning with their lifestyle are among the responsibilities placed on a woman by her children. Forced to live within a constant chain of responsibilities both in social life and family life women have drawn the attention of storytellers; female writers, who are also a link in this chain, bring the difficulties women face into the literary world. For example, in the story titled "Biberon" [Baby Bottle] from Cihan Aktaş's(2003) collection *Halama Benzediğim İçin* [Because I Resemble My Aunt], the conflict between a woman who juggles both her home life and her work at an association and her daughter is explored. The story's protagonist clashes with her teenage daughter because of her involvement with the association; she is frequently criticized

by her daughter and faces objections when attempting to divide household chores with her: *"If she hasn't cleaned the sink after washing the dishes, the dishes aren't really done. If I'm twice as tired trying to finish the tasks she left unfinished, it's because I chose to do so. And just because I go to the association, I'm not considered a working woman… Our work isn't about pastries, buns, gossip, or idle chatter; my daughter, charitable work those are far more important."* (Aktaş, 2019, p. 9). When this topic is discussed with her friends at the association, the story's protagonist is overcome by a sense of guilt for neglecting her daughter. When one of her friends at the association suggests that the tension between children and mothers is caused by mothers who don't stay at home, it pushes the story's protagonist to question her own motherhood. This also draws attention to the controversial situation of women who choose to participate in social life. This situation, which mothers experience with their daughters and could be described as a generational conflict, causes unrest within the family; mothers are also being mistreated by their children and subjected to hurtful behavior. For example, the protagonist, believing she has done something that will make her daughter happy and please her, may instead encounter the exact opposite reaction: "I had praised her, right in front of everyone, as if she were in desperate need of praise I really emphasized that 'like' part here, lavishing her with exaggerated compliments, which made her turn bright red with embarrassment. What a silly thing, just like Aunt N. did, there it goes again, 'like' but what else could I have used here instead of 'like' to describe a mother praising her daughter and, because of it, making everyone laugh at her behind her back. Don't praise me in front of others; don't belittle me in front of others. Sometimes she speaks with such a definitive tone, as if putting the final nail in the coffin of my self-analysis: *"Yes, Mom, your biggest flaw is this: you say you hate people who impose their views on others, but you're doing the same thing"* (Aktaş, 2019, p. 13). This dialogue between two women who do not understand each other and who have lived through the same period of their lives in different eras serves as another example of the problems a woman faces within the family.

The story titled "Annem Otuz Yaşında" [My Mother Is Thirty] found in Aktaş's (2005) *Duvarsız Odalar* [Rooms Without Walls], tells the story of a mother and her young daughter who face difficulties in their relationship due to the age gap between them. Told through flashbacks, the story's protagonist, Hatice, is an eight-year-old girl. Because of the age gap between them, she struggles to accept her as a mother and feels ashamed of the woman who looks more like a grandmother. The inability to accept one another, arising from various reasons between parents and children, is one of the painful situations for women. However, mothers who worry about being worthy of their children without letting them feel this hurt add another act of self-sacrifice, striving to bridge the gap. *"I perceive my elderly mother differently inside the house and even more differently outside. Inside, she seems as if she'll live forever, but outside, she's approaching death. In the light of the home, her lines are reasonable; outside, they're of a depth that places her among grandmothers. At home, she never leaves my lap, but outside, I consider it a virtue to avoid walking beside her depending on the situation. I also clearly remember being careful not to call her 'Mom' when we spoke on the bus. She was aware of my efforts she wouldn't upset me, and as if joining me in this, she'd feel embarrassed that, even though she's past sixty, she still has a little girl."* (Aktaş, 2017, p. 96).

The problems women face with their children can, in a sense, be seen as a reflection of the father's attitude toward the mother. It is possible to say that children adopt a pattern of behavior they have observed in society or from their fathers. In particular, elderly mothers who have become dependent may be subjected to their children's pushing, shoving, and scolding. Yıldız Ramazanoğlu (2008), who devotes significant space to women's issues in her stories, features a train journey in *Kırmızı*'s [Red] story titled "Ayla and Zeliha." The narrator, one of the passengers on the train, witnesses the moment an elderly woman is hurriedly, almost dragged, and with a somewhat careless haste, helped onto the train. This situation is presented in the story as an example of the ingratitude children show toward their mothers: *"Two men, each taking an arm, are leading the elderly woman toward the train car with a haste that does not forgo respect though I hesitate to call it impatience almost as if dragging her. It wasn't entirely clear whether they were actually dragging her, but the scent of dragging reached my very nose, to be honest. It was an invisible scent a sensation pervading the atmosphere."* (Ramazanoğlu, 2018, p. 9).

Writers' approaches to the conflicts parents experience with their children within the family vary. In the stories written on this subject, authors address the disagreements between mothers and their children and the problems arising from these disagreements sometimes siding with the children and sometimes with the mothers. For example, while Ayfer Tunç (2004) seems to adopt a pro-mother stance in her stories, she cannot bring herself to condemn her protagonist, attributing her negative behaviors to a lack of love. In the author's stories, nearly every character is in search of love. In *Evvelotel*'s "Halas," the story also addresses the negative attitude of a woman deprived of her mother's love, which leads her to the point of killing her mother. The story's protagonist is a photographer who observes the dynamics between mother and daughter, develops a romantic relationship with Halas, and is also their neighbor. The story begins with the photographer visiting Halas in the detention center. Halas is a young woman with a somewhat rebellious streak who began living with her mother after her father's death. Following her father's death, she moved into the apartment across from the photographer, who serves as the narrator of the story. Over time, a romantic relationship develops between Halas and the photographer. Halas, who

cannot get along with her mother, can no longer bear the hatred her mother feels toward her and stabs her to death. In the story, the author draws attention to how women subjected to emotional abuse such as a lack of love and feelings of worthlessness are driven to crime as various psychological issues begin to surface. The story's protagonist, a photographer, describes the troubled mother-daughter relationship with the following lines: *"The story of a mother who cries while looking at her daughter. The story of a mother who wants to slit her wrists. The story of a mother who wants to hang herself. The story of a mother who wants to drink insecticide. The story of a mother who couldn't do any of these things. The story of a mother who couldn't go to other men. The story of the daughter who couldn't go to a man because her mother couldn't go to other men. The story of the mother and daughter the world doesn't want."* (Tunç, 2018, p. 53).

Problems Women Face with Other Family Members

Women may experience problems not only with their spouses but also with other family members; particularly in regions where traditional family structures prevail, women may be subjected to pressure and abuse from figures such as their mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and cousins-in-law. The issues between women depicted in the stories of female storytellers also serve as examples of the problems women face within the family. This situation, in which a woman leaves her father's home to marry and enters a new family with entirely different hopes, manifests as an acceptance issue. This approach, which makes it difficult for her to settle into her husband's home, opens the door to yet another family problem for her.

Examples of this issue being addressed can also be found in Cihan Aktaş's (2001) stories. For instance, in the story "Ağzı Var Dili Yok Şehrazat," [There is Usage, But No Language Şehrazat] the challenges women face within the family and their position within the family are examined. The story's protagonist, Şehrazat, goes to her mother-in-law's house for a vacation with her son. The exclusionary and sarcastic attitudes she encounters there lead Şehrazat to reflect on her husband Şehriyar and his family. In the story, the author addresses the problems faced by the sisters-in-law, highlighting stereotypical notions such as childlessness or the lack of a son that are viewed as flaws for women in society, and draws attention to the family problems arising from the resulting emotions of envy and jealousy among family members. Şehrazat's older sister-in-law laments her childlessness, while the younger sister-in-law considers herself flawed for not having a son. Consequently, the story's protagonist, Şehrazat, who has a son, is in a position that others envy from their perspective. Concepts such as childlessness or the absence of a son which reflect societal pressures within the family not only cause discord within the family but also bring with them attitudes that demean and disparage women. Society seems to go out of its way to find fault with women, even placing the responsibility for biological factors squarely on their shoulders. Another issue the author addresses in the story is the expectation that women bear the entire responsibility for the family's continuity and act as the sole manager of all adversities. Şehrazat's mother-in-law expresses this self-sacrifice with the following words: *"She's not much of a conversationalist, my daughter-in-law she's quiet as a mouse, but she's a meek, innocent girl… She's the one managing that grumpy Şehriyar. She wants to live here why wouldn't she? but my wayward son isn't coming… So who bears the burden of their daily life? Who pays the bills, does the shopping, hosts the guests, takes the children to the doctor? Oh, Şehriyar, oh!"* (Aktaş, 2018, p. 88).

In Aktaş's (2009) short story titled "Her Yere Sığabilir Biri" [Someone Who Can Fit Anywhere] the mother-in-law is also presented as a cause of domestic problems. The mother-in-law, unable to take care of her son, adopted a demeaning attitude toward her daughter-in-law and blamed the female protagonist for the divorce. In the story, a woman who cannot bake good poppy seed buns or iron clothes properly is deemed by her husband and mother-in-law to be incapable of maintaining the marriage and, for these reasons, is considered deserving of being abandoned. In the sentences the author constructs in the story, the mother-in-law lists the woman's faults as if she were a spokesperson for society: *"Then the words varied: His mother made remarks implying that she couldn't fulfill her wifely duties, explaining to her husband and friends why we divorced. She didn't know how to cook. She was incapable. She'd cook a huge pot of food on Sunday, then reheat the same meal day after day and serve it to the child. I couldn't teach her to make poppy seed cookies. She wasn't cut out for such work. "She was incompatible."* (Aktaş, 2017, p. 86). These words, which the author has the protagonist utter, demonstrate the influence of the mother-in-law's role in the breakdown of family unity. In the face of this situation, the husband's attitude directly endorsing what his mother said eliminated the sustainability of the marriage.

Rather than being a constructive member of the family, the mother-in-law who creates various obstacles for the woman trying to settle into her new family can appear in stories with both positive and negative traits. For example, in the story titled "Kayınvalide Hikayeleri" [Mother-in-Law Stories] from Barbarosoğlu's (2002) *Ahir Zaman Gülüşleri* (Smiles of the End Times), women gathered at a women's gathering discuss their mother-in-laws. The story's protagonist, Ayşe, is considered lucky by the guests visiting her home because she doesn't have a mother-in-law. Makbule Hanım, one of the older women in the group, shares the following remarks while recounting the problems she faced with her own mother-in-law: *"Oh, my dear, is that all? In our day, the key to the pantry was in the mother-in-law's hands. You couldn't find a thing to eat or drink.*

Especially when you were craving something. How could you possibly tell your husband what you were craving? And even if you did, would he go get it for you?!" (Barbarosoğlu, 2012, p. 37).

The slightest mistake or problem on the woman's part is used by the mother-in-law as a means of threatening her, and the woman is thus oppressed and humiliated. For example, in Eraslan's (2008) story titled "Çevirgel" the narrative features the conversations of women who have gathered for cupping therapy, a traditional form of treatment. The mother-in-law daughter-in-law relationship depicted in the story is narrated from the perspective of one of the patients present. In the story, the mother-in-law has brought her childless daughter-in-law for treatment. The remarks the mother-in-law makes about her daughter-in-law, whom she claims is ill, cause the young woman distress; as the mother-in-law speaks, the daughter-in-law feels increasingly oppressed in that setting: *"'Oh, my dear, she's been struck by the evil eye, she's gotten mixed up with the fairies,' says the woman as she tells her daughter-in-law's story, and no one else speaks. For some reason, this middle-aged mother-in-law strikes me as so know-it-all, while her daughter-in-law, sitting right beside her, looks as pale and frail as a feather. As she speaks so anxiously, the poor girl's head bows a little lower. Though two years have passed, her daughter-in-law, who still cannot conceive, bends her slender frame five more times toward the ground, her neck weighed down by the five-in-one charms hanging from it. The secret, like a flower, is scattered right in everyone's midst… Its petals fall the moment it snaps… The bloodletting apprentice, around thirty years old, comes to her rescue: 'This is God's will, auntie; we'll ask Him. "As long as you keep talking like this, what need is there for fairies? You'll melt this girl like a bar of soap thrown into a well, and no one will even notice just be patient!"* (Eraslan, 2017, p. 120).

Within the family, a woman who maintains her presence not only as a mother and daughter but also as a daughter-in-law faces acceptance issues in her new family environment; she is pushed around and looked down upon. Moreover, this attitude does not stem solely from the mother-in-law. For example, in Sibel Eraslan's(2006) work *Balık ve Tango* [Fısh and Tango] the person who creates problems for the woman within the family is her sister-in-law. In the story titled "Aferin" [Well Done] from *Balık ve Tango*, the protagonist's mother is constantly scolded and belittled by her husband's sister. Despite the inheritance she received from her father, the woman remains silent in the face of this treatment and does not react. This attitude, which is an example of societal norms, finds expression in the protagonist's words: *"Despite the vast inheritance my mother received from my grandfather, I think about how her voice never rises or even comes out at all and how she is silenced at every opportunity by my aunt, as if she were merely an item in an estate… I suppose I didn't want to be like my mother"* (Eraslan, 2020, p. 32).

The Breakdown of Family Unity

Instead of finding solutions to problems within the family, ignoring these issues, dismissing women's grievances as trivial, and viewing relationships among family members as a battle for dominance rather than seeking mutual understanding—all of these lead to the breakdown of family unity. Indeed, in these stories, female protagonists distance themselves from the problems they cannot resolve by leaving or getting divorced. In these stories, situations such as divorce or abandonment are portrayed as consequences of family problems.

In the story titled "İncir Ağacının Gölgesinde" [In the Shadow of the Fig Tree] from *Ahir Zaman Gülüşleri* [Smiles of the End Times), Fatma Barbarosoğlu (2002) also explores the process by which unhappy homes fall apart. Situations such as divorce or abandonment create major problems for both women and men. However, while a man may be able to pick up his life where he left off after some time has passed since these negative events, the situation can be more difficult for a woman. In her story, Barbarosoğlu gives equal weight to the destruction of both parties, describing the man as a "young man whose bones have melted" and the woman as a "young woman turned into a mummy." The author draws attention to newly established homes shattered by families' excessive interference, highlighting the helplessness of both the woman and the man in the face of this situation. The author conveys this ending to the reader through the emptying space: *"Belongings are being loaded. The curtains are being taken down from the windows. The woman, no longer called the new bride, goes upstairs one last time. Her mother shouts, 'Don't linger, come quickly!' unwilling to let her daughter bid farewell to her dreams and memories. The young woman does not hear her mother. She looks down through the curtainless windows, as if wanting the entire neighborhood to gaze upon her"* (Barbarosoğlu, 2012, p. 21).

In Tunç's stories, however, the silence of the female characters harbors a noise of its own. The woman leaves the house in silence, leaving behind deep remorse, great devastation, and regret. The role the author assigns to his characters successfully conveys these emotions to the reader. In the first story of the author's collection *Evvelotel*, which gives the book its title, the protagonist goes to the hotel where he encounters his father, who had abandoned them years ago. At the hotel, he meets the son of the hotel owner, who was his friend years ago, and recalls what happened when he went with his mother to find his father. Years ago, the mother took her young child by the hand and went to the hotel where the man who had abandoned them was staying. The father, who leaves the hotel with a woman, causes the mother to faint by declaring his

love for her. When the father takes no action in response to this situation, people from the surrounding area come to the mother's aid. The woman, who is both abandoned and betrayed, is left completely alone with her child in the face of her husband's behavior. The protagonist conveys his experiences to the reader with these words: *"At that moment, my father and that woman were coming down the stairs, holding hands. My father stopped, my father stopped, that woman stopped, my mother, I, the world, the universe everything stopped for a moment. My mother was watching. My father said, 'I love her,' nodding toward the woman. That was it. I screamed as my mother fainted, because the hand that had been gripping mine so tightly had suddenly gone limp, becoming a soft, cold, lifeless hand. My father ran over and lifted my mother up. I was sobbing uncontrollably at my mother's side"* (Tunç, 2018, p. 14). Years later, at the same hotel, a young man in the same situation as his father is cheating on his wife and remains indifferent to the thoughts urging him to return to the home of the woman he's cheating with. The theme of heredity or genetic transmission, which stands out in nearly every one of the author's stories, is also evident in this story. Through his narrative, the author lays bare that such behaviors are genetic and practically makes the reader say, "He's just like his father," regarding the story's protagonist. This is, in a way, the author's attempt to exonerate his characters. By attributing the protagonist's behavioral disorder to genetic factors, he conveys the difficulty of changing what has been passed down.

Sibel Eraslan (2006), who describes separation as the mother of sorrow, also devotes ample space to separations in her stories, weaving the theme of sorrow throughout their lines. The protagonists of her stories are women who have been separated from or forced to part with their mothers, fathers, grandmothers, fiancés, or husbands. While the attitudes women adopt in the face of separation vary, they are mostly characterized by a quiet sadness. For example, in the story titled "Dikey Geçiş" [Vertikal Transition] from her work *Balık and Tango*, the protagonist retreats into silence following her abandonment, coming to terms with her pain. The protagonist describes her situation with these words: *"Your departure had swept me away like a roaring flood breaking suddenly from the mountain… I was being swept along. As 'something' sucked me forcefully inward, my heart pounded against the walls of this vortex with relentless pain. I was trapped in a violent whirlpool, plunged into by your departure"* (Eraslan, 2020, p. 17). These sentences reflect how the protagonist internalizes her pain without sharing it with anyone. The emotional state brought about by the experience of abandonment is at the heart of the matter. The fact that the protagonist's love for the person who abandoned her persists has cast her into a state of madness. The protagonist, having lived for months without eating, drinking, speaking, or moving, reconnects with life as his suffering reaches a point of maturation. The author's poetic style serves to temper the protagonist's anger, which gives way to a state of profound surrender. The following sentences provide another example of this style: *"Your departure cast me into a vast desert. It was an abandonment determined to feed a person to wolves and birds. I was stunned. Like anyone who has been separated and lost everything, I was dazed. It was as if I had forgotten all languages to the point where I couldn't even answer if someone asked my name. No letter would bear the weight of my pain. Having given up on all speech and pleas, I could only say, 'Ah.' 'Aah…'"* (Eraslan, 2020, p. 19). The story ends with the woman starting her life anew.

Balık and Tango's story titled "Bohçasından Belli Gelin" [The Bride Revealed by Her Trousseau] also explores another tale of separation. The author, who characterizes separation as an ontological event, presents a protagonist who not only navigates the process of separation quietly but also maintains a dignified demeanor, responding to the departing partner's behavior with maturity. This sense of resignation and acceptance in the author's characters softens the story's tone; calmness replaces harsh words, offering the reader a safe space while leaving a bittersweet aftertaste. The story's protagonist, Derya, begins living with a friend after her breakup with Tuğrul. The package delivered to her home is a summary of the seven years she spent with Tuğrul. Tuğrul, having given up on Derya, has sent her the remaining belongings. The author conveys Derya's stance in the face of this renunciation with the following words: *"If a man says he has given up, no objection can make him change his mind. From that moment on, it befits every woman who realizes she has been abandoned to wither away like a daffodil. Ms. Derya, how well pride suits you. If I were a man, I might have fallen in love with you, standing at that threshold where you met the separation with grace and composure…"* (Eraslan, 2020, p. 85). These statements serve as an example of what a woman experiences following the collapse of family unity. Indeed, almost every separation yields similar results, and the literary language successfully conveys the woman's emotional state.

Conclusion

Recent Turkish short stories focus on the problems faced by women, drawing attention to the occupied spaces of life for women. Female writers, in particular, prioritize addressing women's issues in social, family, and professional life. This situation, which allows women to see each other's faces, has created a presence concerned with women's issues. Short story writers achieve remarkable success in this regard thanks to the brevity of the story, the focus on a single event, and the clear presentation of the intended thesis.

Authors such as Fatma Barbarosoğlu, Cihan Aktaş, Ayfer Tunç, Naime Erkovan, and Yıldız Ramazanoğlu, who have made significant contributions to the short story genre, draw attention to the problems women face, particularly within the family, in their works, and address the value they receive based on their position within the family. The family problems of women, which occupy a significant place in these stories, are emphasized in all their aspects; the woman's stance in the face of these problems, her methods of struggle, and the psychological and physical damage she ultimately suffers are thoroughly examined.

Hakem Değerlendirmesi: *Dış bağımsız.*
Yazar Katkıları: *Konsept – E.S.; Tasarım – E.S.; Denetim – M.T.; Kaynaklar – E.S., M.T.; Malzemeler – E.S.; Veri Toplama ve/veya İşleme – E.S.; Analiz ve/veya Yorum – M.T.; Literatür Taraması*
Çıkar Çatışması: *Yazarlar, çıkar çatışması olmadığını beyan etmiştir.*
Finansal Destek: *Bu makale Erzurum Atatürk Üniversitesi Bilimsel Araştırma Projeleri Birimi tarafından SDK-2023-11731 numaralı proje olarak desteklenen "Son Dönem Türk Öyküsünde Kadın Öykücülerin Kadın Sorunlarına Bakışı 2000-2020" başlıklı tezden üretilmiştir.*
Yapay Zeka Kullanımı: *Herhangi bir yapay zeka uygulaması kullanılmamıştır. İngilizce metnin çevirisi için bir internet sitesinden destek alınmıştır. Metin daha sonra düzenlenmiştir.*

Peer-review*: Externally peer-reviewed.*
Author contributions: *Concept – E.S.; Design – E.S.; Supervision – M.T.; Resources – E.S., M.T.; Materials – E.S.; Data Collection and/or Processing – E.S.; Analysis and/or Commentary – M.T.; Literature Review – E.S.; Writing – E.S.; Critical Analysis– M.T.; Other – E.S.*
Conflict of Interest: *The authors has no conflicts of interest to declare.*
Financial Disclosure: *This article is derived from the thesis titled 'Women Storytellers' Perspectives on Women's Issues in Contemporary Turkish Short Story (2000–2020)', supported by the Atatürk University Scientific Research Projects Coordination Unit under Project No. SDK-2023-11731.*
Use of Artificial Intelligence: *No artificial intelligence applications were used. Translation of the English text was supported by an online service. The text was subsequently edited.*

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