

# Gender roles during COVID-19 pandemic: The experiences of Turkish female academics

Simel Parlak<sup>1</sup>  | Oya Celebi Cakiroglu<sup>2</sup>  | Feride Oksuz Gul<sup>3</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, Faculty of Education Sciences, Istanbul Okan University, Istanbul, Turkey

<sup>2</sup>Department of Nursing Administration, Faculty of Health Sciences, Istanbul Medeniyet University, Istanbul, Turkey

<sup>3</sup>Department of Educational Administration, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Istanbul Medeniyet University, Istanbul, Turkey

## Correspondence

Oya Celebi Cakiroglu, Department of Nursing Administration, Faculty of Health Sciences, Istanbul Medeniyet University, Istanbul 34720, Turkey.  
Email: oya.celebi55@gmail.com

## Abstract

This study aims to explore the COVID-19 experiences of Turkish female academics in terms of gender roles by focusing on how these women have dealt with domestic and academic responsibilities. The study group consisted of 21 female academics working from home, along with their spouses. Interpretative phenomenological analysis was used to analyze the data collected through semistructured telephone interviews. The findings were clustered under five main themes: the early days of the pandemic, work life after the pandemic, domestic responsibilities after the pandemic, family relationships after the pandemic, and the perception of gender roles. The results indicate that the pandemic has deepened gender inequalities, and the academic life of female academics has changed in terms of academic productivity. Therefore, we recommend that more research examining the quarantine process and involving women in other occupations and of different socioeconomic statuses should be done to develop more effective social policies.

## KEYWORDS

COVID-19 pandemic, domestic and academic responsibilities, female academics, gender roles

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

The inequality between women and men is witnessed in several areas of daily life and considered a result of gender. It is mostly women who experience this inequality as the disadvantaged side (Günçavdı et al., 2017; Günindi Ersöz, 2016). There is a typical distinction in which men dominate the public sphere, while women are associated with the private sphere (Dildar, 2015). Gender-based discrimination, which is thought to decrease

with increase in the female labor force participation rate, still exists in many societies (Hochschild, 1989). Although there are developments toward achieving gender equality in the paid work segment, it has been observed that the primary responsibility of housework is given to women, and gender-based inequality continues (Blossfeld & Drobic, 2001).

In Turkey, where the sovereignty of patriarchy is explicit, it is commonly thought that as the head of the family, men (first father, later husband) determine the very existence of women, and domestic work is considered to be the primary responsibility of women. Therefore, the discrimination experienced by women is not perceived as an issue that should be tackled (Kagnicioglu, 2017). The vast majority of working women also internalize gender roles (Günçavdi et al., 2017), feel an extreme sense of responsibility toward family due to working outside the house (Kagnicioglu, 2017), and struggle with balancing the demands of their careers and family lives (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014). Working married women usually spend more time than their husbands on unpaid childcare and housework, called second shifts, after completing paid work. Considering the sum of paid and unpaid work, women who work more hours than their husbands often feel exhausted (Blair-Loy et al., 2015).

Even well-educated women with a high status and well-paying jobs continue to experience inequalities related to gender hierarchy and division of labor (Başarır & Sarı, 2015; Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014; Sayer et al., 2009; Özçatal, 2011). Studies conducted on academics report that female academics have less free time and more domestic responsibilities than their male colleagues and spouses (Fetterolf & Rudman, 2014; Sutor et al., 2001; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2004). Women academics undertake the vast majority of gender-based unpaid work (such as cleaning, childcare, and housework) as well as academic work (such as lecturing, publishing articles, and attending conferences; Günçavdi et al., 2017). It is emphasized that gender culture and work-life balance create more negative effects on women who are in the early stages of their academic careers (Vohlidalová, 2020). Especially for women who are at the beginning of their academic career and with young children, academic life has some challenging features—such as excessive and never-ending workload and uncertainty in job description and duration, in addition to the expectation of a second shift at home (Akbat, 2017; Keskinclik Kara, 2017; Ward & Wolf-Wendel, 2012).

Female academics in the early career phase face additional difficulties in academic life, as they are new to the academic community. A study conducted by Bazeley (2003) indicated that academics in the early career stage, especially those employed in the social sciences, were crushed under heavy teaching loads and could not allocate enough time for research. The early career phase has been defined in various ways by several researchers. There are studies indicating that the early career period is typically used to describe the 5 years after a doctorate (Bazeley, 2003; Bosanquet et al., 2017). Conversely, Timperley et al. (2020) included the first 7 years after a doctorate in this phase in a national study. However, the life experiences of academics working on a contract or project basis require us to go beyond time limits (Bégin-Caouette et al., 2018) and include postdoctorate researchers, research assistants, senior research assistants, and other researchers (Kyvik, 2015).

Tenure is one of the main concepts that should be considered in explaining the early career stage. It is commonly known that assistant professors are not accepted as midlevel (experienced) academics in many higher education contexts (Acker & Webber, 2017). Likewise, assistant professors are not considered as midlevel academics in Turkey since they are not appointed permanently by the law although faculty members consist of assistant professors, associate professors, and professors. While hiring assistant professors, a position is announced by the rectorate in line with the desired criteria, and appointments are made in accordance with the reports of the recruitment board. The appointment is made by the rectorate for 1–4 years. At the end of the term, the appointment ends, and reassignment can happen based on the studies of these assistant professors (Higher Education Law, 1981). Lecturers and research assistants are not considered faculty members in Higher Education Law but categorized as “teaching staff.” In this study, lecturers, research assistants, and assistant professors are defined as early career academics, regardless of their ages, on the grounds that they do not have permanent appointments and are expected to carry the faculty’s teaching load. In addition, research assistants and assistant professors are under pressure to conduct research activities not only for permanent appointments

but also for the faculty's mission to expand research capacity. Lastly, these early career academics are expected to support academic administrators for secretarial and administrative works more than associate professors and professors.

It is predicted that the COVID-19 pandemic—which has resulted in essential reflections in many areas, such as gender, education, and employment—may create a sexist effect (Alon et al., 2020). Examining health-related effects, it can be seen that men are at a higher risk than women (Chen et al., 2020). However, the pandemic not only caused a significant crisis in the field of health but also profoundly affected social life and the economy. Alon et al. (2020), exploring this pandemic's effects in the long term and broadly, predicted that it will have different and more severe effects on women than men. Examining how the epidemic continues to affect the genders differently and understanding its primary and secondary effects on the individual and society is necessary to establish effective and fair policies (Wenham et al., 2020).

Many countries around the world have entered quarantine to control the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the scope of social distancing measures, daycare centers, schools, and universities were closed, and education was interrupted after February 2020. Flexible and alternative working arrangements have been adopted, and an online work-from-home model has been implemented in various sectors. Family life's support mechanisms have become dysfunctional due to isolation and "stay at home" practices. All these emerging developments led to the transfer of childcare back into the house and increased the domestic workload of women (Alon et al., 2020; Petts et al., 2020; Wenham et al., 2020). A study on epidemics and gender indicated that women undertake most unpaid labor (J. Smith, 2019). A recent report stated that this pandemic may have permanent effects on gender roles and labor division within the household (Alon et al., 2020). In a longitudinal study, Rosenfeld and Tomiyama (2020) examined the beliefs toward gender roles before and during the pandemic. This study indicated that participants approved and further internalized traditional gender roles and stereotypes during the pandemic. It was emphasized that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the attitudes toward gender roles and that more research is needed to see beyond gender roles (Rosenfeld & Tomiyama, 2020). It is essential to examine the reflections on the impact of the pandemic on gender roles and make women's voices heard by conducting gender-based analysis (Alon et al., 2020; Mantovani et al., 2020; Wenham et al., 2020).

This research aimed to explore, in depth, the family and work-life experiences of female academics who are married, have children, are in the early stages of their academic careers, and work from home (along with their spouses) due to the COVID-19 pandemic in the context of traditional gender roles. This study's final aim through documenting women's life experiences in real time during the pandemic was to shed light on gender inequality. In line with the purpose of the study, answers were sought to the following research questions.

1. What are the family life experiences of female academics who are married, have children, are in the early stage of their careers, and work from home (along with their spouses) due to the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What are the work-life experiences of female academics who are married, have children, are in the early stage of their careers, and work from home (along with their spouses) due to the COVID-19 pandemic?

## 2 | METHODOLOGY

### 2.1 | Design

The interpretative phenomenological approach is a pattern that aims to deeply understand and interpret the life experiences of individuals related to any phenomenon and is influential in enriching data (Creswell, 2007). This approach was chosen to reveal the life experiences of female academics during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research was reported based on the Consolidated Criteria for Reporting Qualitative Research checklist (Tong et al., 2007).

## 2.2 | Participants

There are different approaches to determining sample size in qualitative studies. However, Creswell (2007) suggested that 3–25 participants are suitable for interpretative phenomenological qualitative research. The study group of the present study consisted of 21 female academics determined by using the snowball and criteria sampling methods. In the study, potential participants were reached using the researchers' professional networks and the participants' recommendations. The inclusion criteria of the participants were (a) being married, (b) having children, (c) being in the early stages of their academic career (not yet an associate professor), and (d) working from home (including the spouse) due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The study participants' age range was 31–45 years (mean = 35.76). Sixteen of the participants had one child, four of them had two children, and only one participant had three children. The age range of the participants' children was 1–15 years. The length of marriage varied between 2 and 17 years (mean = 7.81). Nine of the participants were from the faculty of education, eight of them were from the faculty of health sciences, three of them were from the faculty of science and literature, and one of them was from the faculty of medicine of various universities in Turkey. The professions of the spouses were reported as academic, manager, specialist, software developer and designer, store manager, lawyer, engineer, art instructor, and teacher. Seventeen of the participants were working at public universities, while the remaining four were working at private universities. Eleven of the participants were recruited as assistant professors, eight of them were research assistants who were working on their dissertations, one of them was a research assistant (PhD), and one of them was an instructor (PhD). The participants have been working as academics for 2–17 years (mean = 8.62).

## 2.3 | Data collection

Data were through semistructured telephone interviews. The phone call method, which is recommended for use in cases where personal contact threatens security, was preferred to protect both the researchers and the participants from COVID-19 (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). Compared to face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews provided anonymity in explaining the participants' experiences (Vogt et al., 2012) and improved data quality on sensitive issues (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004). However, it was a significant disadvantage that visual and nonverbal cues could not be captured (Novick, 2008). All interviews were conducted by the first author of the study at a time convenient for the participants and in a quiet room of the participants' houses. Most of the participants preferred to be interviewed after 10 p.m. due to childcare responsibilities. Before starting the interview, the research scope was explained to the participants, and permission was obtained to record the interviews. The participants were encouraged to freely express their experiences and were given the opportunity to direct the conversation. Since the researcher conducting the interviews has the same gender and working as an early career academic like the participants, the participants expressed their views with peace of mind. The interviews lasted from 16 to 31 min (mean = 22). All interviews were digitally recorded and copied with the consent of the participants. The data were collected in May 2020, and the data collection process was terminated based on the principle of data saturation, which means that the responses started to repeat (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). Three key interview questions are as follows: (a) Could you describe your typical day during the COVID-19 quarantine? (b) What has changed in your life with the COVID-19 pandemic? and (c) What are your experiences related to your family and academic life in this process?

## 2.4 | Data analysis

Using interpretative phenomenological research (IPA, proposed by J. A. Smith et al., 2009), the research data were analyzed, by the NVivo 12 program. The researchers chose IPA to understand how participants perceive the

personal and social world and provide insight into how a particular person makes sense of a particular phenomenon in a particular context. Moreover, IPA brings researchers as close as possible to the perspective of participants experiencing a particular phenomenon (J. A. Smith & Osborn, 2004). In line with IPA, the steps followed in this research were as follows: (1) The recorded interviews were written word for word by the third author. (2) The research team listened to the audio recordings independently, took notes, and repeatedly read the transcripts. (3) Each researcher developed a comprehensive codebook by labeling the key quotes that emerged in the transcripts. (4) Themes created from the code were linked with quotes and transcripts using a cyclical process. (5) Possible relationships between subthemes were examined to identify the main themes. (6) These procedures were repeated for each transcript. (7) Codes and themes created separately by the researchers were compared with each other and discussed until a consensus was reached. Later, the research team created the main themes by associating the subthemes in the transcripts according to their conceptual similarities. (8) Finally, the findings were organized by mapping all themes (J. A. Smith et al., 2009).

## 2.5 | Researcher positionality

As the researchers of this study, we are female academics without children. Two of us work in the same state university, and the first author works in a private university. We are in the early phase of our careers, like all the participants we included in our study. Having faced domestic and academic responsibilities in a restricted area, we have experienced many gender-related problems. To understand these problems and observe what other women of our society experience, we decided to conduct this study with female academics who have dependent child/children. Although our personal experiences have motivated our interest in exploring female academics' lives during the pandemic, we have a limited ability to understand our peers' experiences, considering they have children and different working conditions. Therefore, our methodological selection aimed to focus on participants' lived experiences and the interpretation of meaning making they assigned to such experiences.

## 3 | FINDINGS

### 3.1 | The early days of the pandemic

The participants have experienced difficulties in adapting to a new way of life, especially in the early days of the pandemic because social support given by family and friend circles and services provided by babysitters and house cleaners have decreased/stopped. The participants had difficulties in carrying out household responsibilities, childcare, and academic responsibilities at the same time. The fact that the female academics had to take the primary responsibility in childcare and household work caused a feeling of inadequacy. As a result of this feeling, the participants requested help from family members (mainly from husbands and, in some cases, from children). Only then did they seem to get some help in household-related work and childcare. In addition, the participants used technological devices more for cleaning purposes. They tried to alleviate domestic workload by purchasing such devices. The early days of the pandemic consist of two subthemes: "trying to adapt" and "developing strategies for adaptation."

### 3.2 | Trying to adapt

The participants' experiences of the early days denote a transition period in which they positioned themselves as the organizer of household work and the primary responsible person for childcare. Our data related to this

transition process emerged as two distinct but closely related codes: the disappearance of the space and the feeling of inadequacy. Feeling inexperienced in family life and inadequate for all responsibilities is closely related to the disappearance of space, resulting from a lack of support/assistance at home. As Participant 8 expressed, being at home with all responsibilities created a state of confusion and shock.

I had hard times at first. [I] could not get organized. Meals, on the one hand, and how could we make plans with my daughter? We have not spent such a long time together in the house. Moreover, we were baffled. It was bizarre. (P8)

In addition to this state of confusion, the participants clearly expressed that the space they created before the pandemic disappeared. As seen in Participant 1's statement, the absence of assistance in household responsibilities caused these women to experience a feeling of inadequacy they did not face before in their family lives.

Occasionally, I had crying spells. Because I could not organize the house, in this sense, I was inexperienced ... because when I came home, the house was cleaned. The dinner was cooked if I wanted it to be done earlier. Well, it was just me actually spending time with my daughter and caring for her at night. (P1)

### 3.3 | Developing strategies for adaptation

During the early days, female academics experienced a shock phase in which they had to deal with family-related responsibilities and academic responsibilities at the same time. Afterward, they were in search of practical ways to decrease the burden created by domestic workload. The use of electrical household appliances such as washer dryers and robot vacuum cleaners were among these practical solutions. The participants' statements emerged as two codes under this theme: using technology to facilitate household work and requesting help from family members. Participant 19 expressed how she decreased physical burden by buying an appliance and added that she requested help from her husband, who clearly did not consider himself responsible for domestic work.

My workload has increased. I have tried to do some things to decrease some of them. For example, there is a robot cleaner. I ordered one immediately. At least, I am physically less tired. Furthermore, I demand help from my husband. Men are different from us. They do not feel responsible like us, but I can get help when I demand it. (P19)

Some of the participants stated that they demanded support from their children as well. These kinds of statements lead to the implication that domestic responsibilities should not only be considered as a physical burden but also as a cognitive burden to women since they organize household tasks.

### 3.4 | Work life after the pandemic

Participants have had to organize their academic responsibilities (teaching, publishing articles and books, researching, etc.) according to the time left after childcare and household chores. It was seen that female academics could engage in academic work late at night when the children were asleep, which led to an intense and tiresome work pace and sleep deprivation. Due to limited time and an intense working pace, the participants experienced stress and felt inadequate as both mothers and academics. Conversely, the spouses maintained the same way they

work at the office. Women were primarily responsible for domestic responsibilities and childcare due to flexible working hours. Even if the spouses did not have to work at an intense pace, the primary responsibility of the house was still on the women. The spouses had supportive roles in household tasks and childcare in the best conditions. The main theme, *work life after the pandemic*, consists of five subthemes: “the work life of the spouse,” “the attitude of the spouse toward academic life,” “the intertwining of academic life and family life,” “being less involved in academic responsibilities,” and “feeling inadequate.”

### 3.5 | Work life of the spouse

This subtheme consists of two codes: the unchanged work life of the spouse and priority given to the spouse's work life. The data have shown that the spouses of the female academics maintained their work life as if they were working at the office, mostly using the privilege of a separate room. Participant 3 simply explained that her husband worked at home as if nothing had changed.

He is working from home too. When the pandemic started, they immediately shifted to the home office. He continues to work as he did at the office. (P3)

Participant 1 explicitly denoted how her husband separated himself from family life. Even though the men had flexible working hours, they seemed not to take responsibility for the house and children. As opposed to female academics, the husbands separated work and family life, which left no other choice for women than being the primary caretaker of family members. As a result, the women felt that the men were more privileged when it comes to careers.

We can hardly see him during the weekdays. He closes himself to the working room, and he just comes out for the toilet and stuff. So nothing has changed much for him in terms of working hours ... So all responsibilities of the household and childcare are on me right now. (P1)

### 3.6 | The attitude of the spouse toward academic life

Some of the statements have shown that the spouses implied resentments about the work life of the participants and adopted negative attitudes toward their academic life. Two codes emerged under this subtheme: a lack of spousal support for academic life and the view of the spouse that academic works can wait.

Participant 14 explained how her husband gave reactions when she worked. This statement implies that the spouse did not respect the academic life of the participant. Likewise, Participant 9 felt that her husband's academic career was more important than hers, as evidenced by her getting no support throughout her master's education.

My academic life has always been challenging, never easy. It has been very hard, especially after the child. I mean, never getting support, never getting enough support. Simply putting, my husband got his master's degree in 2015, and I could finish mine in 2017. I could finish in four years. (P9)

“You are workaholic, like is it so important right now,” he says ... I mean, honestly, I am perceived like this at home, like I am a person looking for every opportunity to study. Unfortunately, there is this way of looking. (P14)

A lack of spousal support is also seen in academic couples. Female academics stressed the privileged positions of their husbands when it comes to careers. Participant 8 said that her husband clearly considered her academic studies not as important as his, even though they both work on research projects.

Sure, he can continue his research. I can create some time for him if he has things to do. However, on the other hand, honestly, things get different after I got a Ph.D., like “You are at ease right now, you do not need to rush,” he says. “You can help my studies,” he says, smiling. For my studies, he says, “You do not have deadlines, and you don't need to take burden.” We have started a couple of new research [sic], for example. So I need to take action for them. Nevertheless, these are not seen as important now. It is thought like I am producing unnecessary work. (P8)

### 3.7 | The intertwinement of academic life and family life

This finding indicates that the borders of academic and family-related responsibilities have become unclear. The female academics had to care for other family members, do housework, and carry out academic responsibilities simultaneously. The emerging codes of this subtheme were the intertwinement of academic and household responsibilities, academic life that comes after domestic responsibilities, and working at night due to being the primary caretaker of the children.

Participant 10 expressed that she had hard times during some of her classes due to the presence of her daughter. She also explained how she is divided between both responsibilities, which is clearly a cognitive burden beyond a physical one.

After a while, I joined the classes with my daughter sitting on my lap ... My daughter sleeps [for] two and a half hours during the day. During that time, I cook [and] tidy up the house. I was exhausted ... I even could not change my clothes for a class once. I was like with my daily clothing in front of my students. It was so hard. Students asked many questions. My eyes were on my daughter all the time. It is like splitting your brain, like I could not even express myself appropriately. (P10)

Participant 12 added an additional responsibility to these family-related responsibilities—that is, taking care of the husband's needs. She expressed that she has household, childcare, and husband-related responsibilities besides academic ones.

Whether it is household responsibilities, mommy responsibilities, or responsibilities related to my husband's needs, one day passes, taking responsibilities on these three roles. (P12)

It was seen that the women had to give priority to domestic responsibilities and create time for academic responsibilities at night. Participant 2's statement below is a typical expression of night work. Female academics had to work late at night mostly because of childcare. Some participants were sleep-deprived, owing to the heavy workload.

Well, let me put it this way, starting from the nights because my son sleeps at 10 o'clock. After he sleeps, I sit in front of my laptop for two to three hours until 1 a.m. So I can study for two to three hours. Then I sleep. (P2)



### 3.8 | Being less involved in academic responsibilities

The female academics clearly expressed that there is an unequal allocation of household responsibilities in their family lives. Such inequality causes female academics to postpone some of their academic responsibilities—which, in turn, clearly impacts their academic productivity. Two codes merged under this subtheme: being unable to complete academic tasks and delaying academic research and publishing. Participant 17 stated that she could only have time for lectures and meetings because she had to take care of all needs of family members. She stressed that academic and household responsibilities could not be fulfilled together with an unequal distribution of labor at home.

I can do my lectures and join meetings as academic responsibilities. I mean, I stay at home, and oh, I spend more time on my articles, then do some personal stuff and concentrate on publishing, etc. None of these happened. I have a proposal presented. I need to write an article. I cannot even make time for that because there are people waiting for me to serve them in the house. It is not just meals—afternoon tea with some snacks, for example. Moreover, all of them are constant. It never ends, so exhausting. Seriously, both career and household works are not possible together. Maybe if family members were out, it could be easier. However, it is not easy because everybody is at home. Not easy. Just the opposite of easy. (P17)

The absence of a nanny or cleaning assistance caused the heavy workload of the women—which, in turn, adversely affects academic productivity. Some of the women academics published poorly during the quarantine, and some had to set aside their projects and theses. Participant 1 is one of the young academics who had to stop working on her PhD thesis.

I stopped working on my thesis and the stuff in order not to take any risk—I mean, not to call on our nanny. (P1)

### 3.9 | Feeling inadequate

The female academics have taken multiple roles and responsibilities at home during the quarantine. Organizing the house together with performing academic responsibilities and childcare put physical and emotional pressure on them, which caused a feeling of inadequacy. This subtheme consists of the following codes: restlessness, tension caused by a lack of focus on academic responsibilities, a lack of motivation, burnout, and the mental burden. Participant 4's statement below shows that the women felt unable to finish academic tasks no matter what they try. Feeling depressed, unproductive, restless, and hopeless is also observed in the statements of Participants 9 and 20.

Honestly, I feel inadequate. That's for sure. I have so many plans in [sic] my mind ... At the end of the day, believe me, I cannot figure out how it ended. Because I start the day very early, I get up at six when it is still dark. Because of the child, there is no way of working. However, I need to study late at night. Furthermore, I have to get up early. I say to myself, "Am I not planned [sic] enough?" It makes me feel both inadequate and depressed. (P4)

In fact, I am very angry, tired, and hopeless. All of these will never end. I cannot continue these works, academic responsibilities. Furthermore, my energy is running out. I do not want to do academic stuff. I

say enough to myself. As we get up late, and so [sic] my son gets up late and goes to bed late. Then I say enough, and I do not want to study. I do nothing. It is like a humpback. Wherever you go, it is there. When I put my head on the pillow, I say you should have done this, but you did not. I feel remorse. (P9)

We get tired physically, for sure, but it is more tiring psychologically due to uncompleted tasks, disruption of our daily routine, [and] having to work late at night, and you cannot be productive because you are tired. Moreover, it brings like—it is more like pressure. We face this pressure, and it is constantly on our minds. There are minimized windows on your computer, just like that. There are lots of minimized windows, and you cannot close any of them ... I mean, I cannot keep up with anything. I feel that way, at least. I complete nothing. (P20)

### 3.10 | Domestic responsibilities after the pandemic

The female academics were primarily responsible for domestic responsibilities, such as childcare and household chores, during the quarantine. Their spouses were positioned in a supporting role, in which they engaged in domestic labor when the women demanded. The women conducted the organization of domestic responsibilities. Hence, the women experienced emotional and physical difficulties due to the mental burden of performing this constant organizing activity and being the primary caretaker of the family. This theme consists of the following subthemes: “the supporting role of the spouse,” “women as the primary responsible person,” and “the inability to catch up with multiple tasks.”

#### 3.11 | The supporting role of the spouse

The spouse's supporting role has become more evident due to the absence of nannies and/or housekeepers. The following codes merged under this subtheme: the absence of a nanny and/or a housekeeper, the spouses were supporting daily housework, the supporting role of the spouse in childcare, and the spouse engaging in a supporting role only when demanded. It is implied that husbands' supporting roles were even less visible before the quarantine. Still, they chose to do some household chores—especially when they were free, as Participant 4 stated.

Well, my husband sometimes sets the table or clears it, according to my availability. He can cook. Alternatively, he can help with cleaning. If he has nothing to do, he can do it. If we are both free, I do the things. (P4)

As Participants 16 and 19 stressed, the spouses performed household responsibilities when the female academics demanded. The allocation of housework is unequal, and the act of allocation is made by women.

He helps as much as I demand. That's it. When I tell him to do something, he does, maybe partially. Nevertheless, if I do not say anything, he does not help. (P16)

But I have to tell him to do so. Or else, in fact, it is not like we live in this house [with] three to four people so everybody should take responsibility. It is not like that. In our society, women have to both take care of the housework and work at the same time. However, if I ask him to help me, he helps, thank God. (P19)

### 3.12 | The woman as the primary responsible person

The participants have been dealing with heavy housework and childcare. Besides, they have been continuously organizing the house and deciding what needs to be done. Thus, this subtheme consists of three codes: endless housework, childcare, and the process of always organizing the house. Childcare, including playing, is mainly for women, and men do not feel as responsible as women. Participant 9 expressed her resentment toward her husband as “it eats my heart” to consider his neglect.

So the child does activities with me. Doing activities with her is on me ... At one point, I say, “Enough, you have played with her as much as you can. You did what you should do.” Then I say daddy can play with her now. However, he does not. It eats my heart. Then I play with her all by myself. (P9)

As Participants 15 and 20 explained, women had to tell family members what to do for domestic responsibilities and take care of most of these responsibilities. This is because men did not feel responsible for domestic work.

If you ask me how my husband supports me in the house, the main responsibility is on me. I mean, I have to arrange my works according to [the] children. I feel more responsible than my husband. (P15)

Organization of the house, women have to be organized in the house. If you do not organize chores and stuff, nothing will be done. You have to tell, “Let's do this and that, do it that way.” (P20)

### 3.13 | The inability to catch up with multiple tasks

This subtheme is mostly about being unable to complete multiple responsibilities and consists of the following codes: anxiety about the child's disrupted education, the feeling of being insufficient for the child's needs, and the feeling of guilt. As Participant 13 expressed, women felt overwhelmed by the diversity of tasks and the problem of being unable to complete them.

Of course, it is a tough time. Sometimes, you feel down because you have lots of things to do. Moreover, you have a house and family to take care of. So you feel like you cannot catch up. (P13)

Women experience this inability most of the time because they see themselves as the primary responsible person for the development and education of the children. Taking care of children, among other chores, consume women's time. Despite this fact, the women still thought that they were not enough for their children and questioned their motherhood, as seen in the statements by Participants 1 and 20.

I am constantly worried about whether we can teach the child properly, take care of her sufficiently, [and] give our support. (P1)

I mean, I feel like not unable [*sic*], like there is not a household order. There is a constant rush. It is like we are catching up [on] something, chasing the [*sic*] time. We try to reach somewhere. We are

constantly after the children ... You feel insufficient because you cannot catch up with the things that should be done. You question your motherhood. You say to yourself, Am I not capable of organizing the house? (P20)

### 3.14 | Family relationships after the pandemic

Time spent with family members undoubtedly increased during the pandemic. Being together for such a long time was new to all the participants. However, it had different effects on familial relationships. Some of the participants experienced tension and needed to spend some time alone due to heavy domestic workload and academic responsibilities. There was a clear need for space where they could care for themselves only and do personal activities. Conversely, some of the participants described the quarantine period as an opportunity to get to know each other better and bond with family members. These women could witness the development of their children. Moreover, the women expressed that they felt less guilty about the thought of neglecting their children thanks to spending much time together. Heavy workload, domestic responsibilities, and the position of being the primary caretaker of children increased the tension between the women and their family members. Due to multiple responsibilities, the women could not create alone time to relax and care for themselves. The main theme of family relationships after the pandemic was formed from the following subthemes: "tension," "intimacy," and "need for a personal space."

### 3.15 | Tension

This subtheme consists of the following codes: tension due to heavy domestic labor, tension due to childcare, the experience of distress due to being together all the time, tension due to delaying academic works, and personal interests. The female academics experienced tension because of the conflict created by family related responsibilities and academic responsibilities. This tension became more evident as their daily workload increased. Participant 16 expressed that she had felt anger and resentment since she postponed academic studies and personal interests.

Sometimes, I become very tense. I get angry or frown. I reflect on that because I have reasons. I postpone academic studies and things like my interests. I bought lots of books with great enthusiasm but ask me how many I have read? None. There are things I want to do as a woman also. However, I get angry and aggressive when I cannot do what I want to do. (P16)

Being at home all day with family members caused some conflicts and outbursts of anger. Participant 17 stated that having to stay at home together all day created tension between family members, whereas Participant 9 pointed out arguments she had with her son and husband.

I lose my patience and do not have the energy after a while. I have arguments with my son. I yell at him, and he yells at me. We argue about anything. Then I fall out with him. Sometimes, I intervene in the relationship between my husband and my son. This causes tension between us. (P9)

Of course, there are some outbursts of anger. You cannot help it, so much time together. We have been together for so long—[usually] only on holidays, and now you have to. And that obligation also makes it boring. It puts pressure on you. (P17)

### 3.16 | Intimacy

Although most of the participants experienced tension at home, some of them indicated that the quarantine days affected familial relationships positively. This subtheme consists of the following codes: organizing household chores together, the increase of time spent together, and getting to know one another closely. Our participants live in big cities in Turkey and have less time for family members due to transportation constraints and hectic city life. As seen in Participant 5's and Participant 18's statements, some could organize home activities (such as movie nights and gardening with family members), while some, such as Participants 6 and 7, could have the opportunity to know each other better as couples and had fewer fights.

In fact, I kinda like staying at home. I mean, being together, spending some time together ... We, immediately, throw ourselves into the garden after we finish our work. We do stuff together. (P5)

Thinking [of] our family life, this may sound weird to you. For example, preparing for kindergarten used to be noisy and messy. We used to fight with each other every morning. These fights are over now. We do not raise our voices anymore. I mean, the relationship between my husband and me [has] become better. (P6)

We have been married for seven years. Moreover, we have never stayed at home together for two months before. We [have] always worked very hard. This quarantine has been good for us because we could not see each other before. Moreover, now we have the opportunity to do stuff together. (P7)

We can organize movie nights, for example. Before the pandemic, we did not use to do such things at home. However, now we pick a movie and get in front of the TV together. Alternatively, we play fun and different [sic] games together. These are the good things about being at home. (P18)

### 3.17 | Need for a personal space

The women lost their alone time during this quarantine period and deeply felt the absence of a personal space. This subtheme consists of the following codes: the need for some alone time and the need for accomplishment. Participant 8 sadly expressed her need to be alone and missed this. Her statement denotes that her psychological state has been immensely affected by home isolation and obligation to be with family members all the time.

I like staying alone. I missed feeling it very much. I said to myself the other day, and there is nowhere to go or walk around. The only opportunity to do something alone is to go to the store. I said that I would go to the store last week. I wanted to wander around by myself. I walked around the shelves. At least, it is the only place within the allowed conditions that I can stay away, be myself. (P8)

Participant 16 stressed that she was upset because she cannot spend time on personal interests.

The only thing, of course, not being able to do things I have planned makes me uncomfortable. The plans I made for myself include my personal interest, not like academic studies. Reading novels, I do

not know I made a list that says, "Go find yourself a hobby." However, I could not do it. It is because I do not have time. (P16)

### 3.18 | The perception of gender roles

The quarantine experiences of the participants indicate that traditional gender roles were more observable in the daily lives of female academics. Some of the participants somehow accepted the supporting roles of spouses, did not question the unequal division of domestic labor, and normalized the traditional gender roles of Turkish culture, which is also profoundly affected by the conservative lifestyle and religion. Since this is not our focus, we have not investigated the religious foundations of gender inequality. Conversely, some participants stated that they were furious about gender inequalities and had arguments with their spouses from time to time. The traditional gender roles were clearly observed in the spouses' attitudes, in which they accused women of neglecting the family by engaging in academic studies. Moreover, they gave support for domestic work in a manner that exhibits condescension. This main theme consists of the following subthemes: "being accused of negligence," "the unequal division of domestic responsibilities," "the internalization of gender roles," "anger," and "women being responsible for the domestic sphere and men being responsible for the public sphere."

### 3.19 | Being accused of negligence

Some of the participants were accused of neglecting their families by their spouses because they spent too much time on academic studies and less on childcare and household errands. This subtheme includes the following codes: being accused of spending too much time on academic responsibilities, being accused of neglecting the family, and spouses supporting in a condescending manner.

The fact that the spouses helped the women to perform domestic responsibilities in a condescending manner also implies the women's negligence of the family. Participant 21's statement clearly shows that how her husband thinks she neglects her "duties."

My husband tidies up the house. Yes, he helps. However, he acts like he did something I should have done. He is like, "I helped you, I do the things." He says things like "I shake the carpets from the balcony like women, I tidy up the house like women. This is moms' duty, honey, but we do not have a mom at home," etc—such sarcastic comments. (P21)

Participant 20's spouse exhibits a similar attitude by clearly expecting his wife to be thankful for what he has done. Giving some sort of support led these men to see themselves as the primary responsible person for the house.

But he thinks that he organizes the house. According to him, he does all the work all the time, but I do not. He wants you to be thankful for his support. This is so tiring—hearing, "I do things, I care for [the] children." (P20)

### 3.20 | The unequal division of domestic responsibilities

This subtheme consists of the following codes: the spouses' refusal of domestic responsibility, men acknowledging domestic work as the duty of women, and women acknowledged as the primary caretaker of the children. During

the quarantine period, the unequal labor division in the house has become more pronounced due to the absence of nannies and housekeepers. The female academics have had to experience this inequality since their spouses denied being responsible for the house/children and implied that domestic responsibilities belong to women. As seen in the following two statements, the men could have options to do housework no matter how hard the women tried to share the workload.

Sometimes, I give him options like tidy up the house or do the dishes. I try to involve him in domestic work. He does what he chooses. Sometimes, he does none of my options. He is like, "I do not want to do anything today; I have academic tasks in my mind, I cannot focus." (P9)

But basically, he does something if he wants. Not like feeling responsible for it ... If he cooked, for example, for two days out of responsibility as I did, I could rest. Moreover, I cannot demand, maybe others can. However, in our country, it is different. I can say I am exhausted. (P19)

The fact that household responsibilities are acknowledged as women's duty in our culture can be observed once again in the statement of Participant 18. Although this participant refused to cook and expected her husband to do so, he did not care for cooking, which leads her to return to the job. Our study group supports the idea that men continue to deny equal division of labor at home.

Sometimes, I say I do not want to cook today. Moreover, he says, "Never mind, then let's not cook tonight." Then I have to cook again. But why? I say, "You can cook too." Sometimes, I ask him to do something. However, he does not want to because it is a task, normally, I do before. You know we can have conflicts in such situations. (P18)

### 3.21 | The internalization of gender roles

The female academics tended not to defy gender roles because they did not think that they can create a difference at home, even if they felt angry. This subtheme consists of the following codes: living up to traditional gender roles and stressing that the spouse's expectations are not high.

Some of the participants seemed to have internalized these roles to maintain the marriage. They thought that it is impossible to break traditional gender roles in the marriage. It should be noted that participants who live in conservative circles, especially, explain the nature of the marriage and household labor division according to religious foundations, such as Participant 15.

We are not an egalitarian family. I mean, from the beginning, our marriage was constructed that way. I do not question this construction because I cannot tear it down. After all, it is not possible for me to write my dissertation while my husband cooks. He is not that kind of guy. To maintain our marriage and to maintain it with balance, I accepted him and this way of living. I mean, I do not question it. (P15)

As Participant 21 expressed, some of the women normalized gender roles by stating the low expectations of their husbands. This statement implies that female academics did not meet the cultural standards that a traditional Turkish woman has. Being not criticized, for example, for not preparing a full course is a display of gender inequality because women are normally expected to prepare such a meal.

My husband is aware of my work life, so he does not expect much from me as a woman. You know, for example, we eat what I can cook. When I cook pasta, he does not criticize me for not preparing a whole meal, with its soup and main course. (P21)

### 3.22 | Anger

We also discovered that some women had experienced anger due to various reasons, considering gender roles. This subtheme consists of the following codes: feeling anger due to being the primary responsible person for the household, feeling anger due to being accused of neglecting family, and feeling anger due to not having time for oneself. As opposed to the participants who have normalized gender roles (explained in the previous subtheme), some mostly felt anger because they were seen as the primary responsible person for household responsibilities. Participant 4 explained how she had to do housework during resting times.

I get really angry sometimes. Let's say it is resting time for both of us, and we are both nothing to do. It is almost all the time me doing housework in that free time. In such times, I have to tell him to help me. He helps, but you need to tell him to do so. Very rarely, he does housework by himself. I can easily get angry at such times. (P4)

Some female academics were tense and angry for being accused of neglecting the family and household responsibilities. The women felt that their efforts for the family and the house were not seen and that they were accused of neglecting the family when they could not handle all the responsibilities. Participant 19 expressed her anger with some shock. Although most of the participants could not express their feelings to family members, some of them made their anger seen by family members (such as Participant 16), which resulted in temporary relaxation for them.

They immediately feel when I am tense. My husband feels it. Actually, I make it to be felt, and I like it. It is simple. I want them to understand me. They try to cheer me up and try to help more in the house. They help to organize the house, but we experience tension at that point. (P16)

I feel shocked. Moreover, it is like how he could not see how he does not notice the things I do. I am OK with this, like he can cook, and I will gladly play with my daughter. I am a bit angry. A feeling of anger comes out. Moreover, the fact that he does not understand me and what I do is upsetting. Because he said once, "You do not work at home." During the first two weeks of quarantine, he said that I did not care for our child. If I do nothing, then who does all of the housework? (P19)

### 3.23 | Women being responsible for the domestic sphere and men being responsible for the public sphere

Due to the quarantine, the female academics returned to the domestic sphere and experienced domestic workload, along with academic responsibilities. On the other side, men undertook a supporting role in the house and became the public face of the family by doing the shopping and other outside tasks. Although the public sphere is mostly about shopping during the quarantine, men dominated this task, and women were directed to household



responsibilities such as cooking and cleaning. Even such an uncomplicated experience is a strong expression of gender roles. Many of the female academics stated similar expressions, such as Participants 9, 11, and 14.

My husband goes out and does shopping because he is at home; he is working from home. Moreover, since he is taking care of shopping, I became the party that generally cooks and do pastry at home. (P9)

My husband takes care of shopping, tasks that need to be done outside, and the technical problems our daughter has for her online classes. Of course, household work and childcare is on mothers in our society ... Because there is cleaning, cleaning is mostly women's responsibility." (P11)

Well, we share work—like I do not get engaged in any outside-related work, like shopping. My husband plays with our daughter when I am doing daily chores. These chores are like cooking, cleaning, and stuff. (P14)

## 4 | DISCUSSION

Gender-related problems faced by women vary according to different cultures, life conditions, and habits. Examining the lives of women in the context of social and cultural discourse makes the lived experience visible (McLaughlin, 2003). By acknowledging that gender-related problems are closely associated with different experiences of womanhood (Güriz, 2011), this study examined Turkish female academics' experiences of family and academic life in terms of traditional gender roles and inequalities during the COVID-19 pandemic. To see how gender roles affected these women's lives, the study group consisted of female academics with dependent a child (or children). Besides, the presence of the spouse at home during the quarantine was another criterion. The related literature denotes that women are more adversely affected by infectious diseases similar to COVID-19 than men (Adams et al., 2016). As a result of this study's findings, it can be said that the COVID-19 pandemic profoundly and negatively affected the family and academic lives of women.

The first main theme of the study, *the early days of the pandemic*, describes how the women struggled to adapt to quarantine day routines and how they developed strategies to decrease household workload. Based on the roles society attributes to being women and men, women are supposed to do housework and childcare, whereas men are supposed to be strong, authoritarian, logical, brave, and competitive and make decisions for home order (Bhasin, 2003; Bora, 2012; Günindi Ersöz, 2016). Although the World Bank (2020) predicted that household responsibilities would be distributed in an equal manner during the pandemic, our study clearly showed that the household responsibilities of the female academics increased to a great extent, and these women have struggled to develop strategies to handle household tasks for which their husbands do not feel they have any responsibilities. The women were exhausted and felt a solemn responsibility to organize the house due to given gender roles.

The women experienced a feeling of inadequacy and were in search of any support due to the absence of nannies and housekeepers during the pandemic. It was found that they demanded support from spouses and children for household responsibilities and bought technological devices to make household tasks more comfortable. There is some research supporting our findings. United Nations Development Programme (2020) and Wenham et al. (2020) indicated that there is an increase in unpaid care and that women are held responsible for this unpaid care with the coming of the COVID-19 pandemic. Moreover, consistent with our findings, it was expressed that women's workload would increase after schools were closed since domestic responsibilities and childcare are associated with women.

The second theme, *work life after the pandemic*, consists of the following subthemes: work life of the spouse, attitudes toward the academic life of woman, the intertwinement of academic and family life, being less involved in academic responsibilities, and feeling inadequate. The asymmetrical relationship created by traditional gender roles

between women and men leads to significant differences in family, occupation, marriage, and social life for both genders (Ergöl et al., 2012). In a study conducted with 695 participants, Rosenfeld and Tomiyama (2020) concluded that women and men have more strongly acted according to traditional gender roles during the pandemic in the United States. This research showed that traditional gender roles have significantly affected family life and academic life.

According to our findings, the spouses' work lives were maintained at a normal pace, whereas the women could only allocate time for academic responsibilities in between childcare and household tasks. As a result of the limited time given to academic life, the female academics could only complete teaching tasks, and they had to delay research and publishing. Multiple roles and responsibilities of women have been stressed in related literature. Women are expected to be at home if they have children, place the children at the center of their lives, and be responsible for their education, as well as perform their duties as spouses and sacrifice their own needs (Ensbj, 2006; Rushing & Sparks, 2017). Alon et al. (2020) stated that flexible working would create differences in the sharing of domestic responsibilities and childcare in that the father will take a more active role in these two domains. However, our findings clearly portray a different story in which men continue to work undisturbed, mostly in a separate room, whereas women's workload has increased with childcare and additional household tasks.

Traditional gender inequalities in Turkey are observed as getting the permission of the husband to work, taking the main responsibility in house cleaning and childcare, and being invisible in the public sphere. As a result of these inequalities, women feel shame and guilt and see themselves as worthless; they engage in self-violence and inflict harm on children more (Altınay & Arat, 2007; Bilican Gökkaya, 2009; Ministry of Family and Social Policies, General Directorate on the Status of Women, 2016). Consistent with these studies conducted in Turkey, the female academics of the present study experienced various adverse feelings—such as tiredness, burnout, and inadequacy because of the unequal division of domestic labor, which prevents them from fulfilling academic goals. Due to the quarantine, the female academics withdrew from the public sphere. Also, the spouses did not take responsibility for housework and childcare; they perceived these domains as the duty of women and implied that academic responsibilities could be postponed. As a result of gender roles that shape the lives of women and men in most societies, working in the public sphere and politics are seen as “men's work,” whereas domestic and family related responsibilities are accepted as “women's work” (Akin & Demirel, 2003; Bora, 2012). The reflections of such a general aspect of gender roles could be traced during the pandemic on the grounds that our participants were responsible for domestic work while the spouses were active outside.

Our third theme, *domestic responsibilities after the pandemic*, consisted of three subthemes: the supporting role of the spouse, women as the primary caretaker of the family, and inability to catch up tasks. The female academics indicated that they are the main responsible person for the organization of the household and that their husbands have a supporting role in daily tasks. In current literature, life during the pandemic is described as a marathon, and it is stressed that women take most of the household responsibilities (Stadnyk & Black, 2020), as clarified in this study. Research on female academics before the pandemic reveals that spouses take only a supportive role in household responsibilities and childcare, marital equality is only a matter of theory rather than practice, and an unequal division of domestic labor is acknowledged as the problem of women by society (Amer, 2013; Başarır & Sarı, 2015; Ergöl et al., 2012). In their research conducted on female academics, Stadnyk and Black (2020) reported that women are responsible for planning the children's education and family life. Again, in this study, women are defined as the coordinator of the house, and it is reported that women take over the majority of tasks, even if both parents work from home. These results support our findings in that the COVID-19 pandemic has increased the workload of women. Also, women have been exposed to inequality in family life more due to existing traditional gender roles and patriarchal perspective.

Our fourth theme, *family relationships after the pandemic*, comprises three subthemes: tension, intimacy, and the need for personal space. To control the COVID-19 outbreak, work-from-home and homeschooling practices implemented within the scope of social distance measures have created unprecedented changes in our lifestyles (Westrupp et al., 2020). With the closure of daycare centers and kindergartens, parents who undertake full-time childcare and work from home simultaneously feel increasing pressure and strive to adapt to the new order (Restubog et al., 2020;

Westrupp et al., 2020). Restrictions to stay at home necessitate close physical and emotional contact (Lebow, 2020). Staying in a restricted area with family members likely has multiple and significant adverse effects on spousal and family relationships (Westrupp et al., 2020). Restubog et al. (2020) reported that the outbreak resulting in blurring the line between family and work roles will cause conflict and emotional tension in the family. It is also assumed that during the COVID-19 pandemic, people's reactions to others will change, and social changes will cause deterioration of mood and an increase in stress (Forbes et al., 2020). Brooks et al. (2020) provided evidence that the quarantine has a range of psychological consequences, including stress, confusion, and anger. Families are going through an intense period. It is described as a period in which stories of intimacy and family conflicts with unique outcomes, and distress will be quite common (Lebow, 2020). Consistent with the literature, in this study, some of the female academics were found to experience tension due to the increased time spent with their family members, while others considered this process as an opportunity to get to know family members more closely.

The last theme of our study, called *the perception of gender roles*, consisted of the following subthemes: being accused of negligence, unequal division of domestic responsibilities, the internalization of gender roles, anger, and women being responsible for the domestic sphere and men being responsible for the public sphere. Recent literature reports that the COVID-19 pandemic will have permanent effects on gender norms and roles. Some studies have reported that the pandemic process will make gender roles more egalitarian (Alon et al., 2020; Craig & Churchill, 2020). However, some studies have emphasized that "being a working mother has taken on a whole new meaning" (Guy & Arthur, 2020) and that women will have to handle the majority of household responsibility due to the roles generally attributed to women (Guy & Arthur, 2020; Wenham et al., 2020). In a recent study in which the traditional gender roles were examined longitudinally by Rosenfeld and Tomiyama (2020), an increase in the acceptance of gender stereotypes was revealed. In another recent qualitative study conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was emphasized that there is the expectation and pressure that women take a step back to fulfill their traditional roles as mothers and spouses in patriarchal societies (Safdar & Yasmin, 2020). Similarly, in our study, the female academics stated that their husbands accused them of not fulfilling the roles attributed to women by society. They also emphasized that domestic responsibilities were not distributed equally. Similar to other studies in the literature, it can be seen that some of the participants have accepted the traditional gender roles and internalized them (Günçavdi et al., 2017); some of them, however, felt anger due to gender inequalities.

## 4.1 | Limitations

There are some limitations to be considered in this study. Most of the participants of this study live in Istanbul, the megacity of Turkey. The others joined our study from other large cities in Turkey. Hence, our study involves the lives of female academics who live in large cities. Considering the differences between city life and rural life, the experiences of female academics from rural areas might have different aspects to be considered. Another limitation of this study comes from the fact that we collected data by the phone call method. It is accepted that the phone call method may prevent in-depth data collection. A lack of visual and nonverbal cues, such as the facial expressions and body language of the participants; distraction due to other people or the environment; and possible call disconnections are among the most significant disadvantages of phone calls (Lechuga, 2012; Novick, 2008).

## 5 | CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic will deepen existing inequalities, along with gender inequalities (United Nations Development Programme, 2020). Understanding how this pandemic affects men and women differently is a fundamental step to examine its primary and secondary effects on different individuals and communities and create effective and fair policies and interventions. As a result of the research, it was found that the pandemic has deepened gender inequality

with the closure of schools and daycare centers and the absence of nannies and housekeepers. Moreover, women have had to undertake most of the responsibilities of the household and childcare. Women cannot allocate time for their academic responsibilities due to intense labor and time they devote to the domestic sphere, and their existence in the public sphere has declined. Considering these experiences, the reallocation of the unpaid labor done by women should be constructed differently with societal support. Apart from this research conducted on female academics, more research on different womanhood experiences should be designed to develop a holistic understanding of how women experience gender roles during the outbreak. Female academics possess relatively sufficient economic income and a certain standard way of living. It is of utmost importance to examine women's experiences from disadvantaged populations such as minorities or low incomers to see how economic and cultural backgrounds affect the lives of women. Developing a holistic understanding of womanhood experience during the pandemic will help to minimize gender inequalities in future policies.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The authors would like to thank all of the female academics who participated in this study for their support.

## CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflict of interests.

## DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical restrictions.

## ETHICS STATEMENT

The research protocol was approved by the Istanbul Okan University Ethics committee university (Date: 13.05.2020, no.: 56665618-204.01.07). The purpose and scope of the research were explained to the participants. It is guaranteed that the data obtained will be stored in encrypted files and will not be shared with anyone or any organization other than scientific research. Informed consent was obtained from the participants who agreed to participate in the research. In order to protect the privacy and identity information of the participants, each participant was given a number separately.

## ORCID

Simel Parlak  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8651-2693>

Oya Celebi Cakiroglu  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5552-4969>

Feride Oksuz Gul  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4958-7928>

## REFERENCES

- Acker, S., & Webber, M. (2017). Made to measure: Early career academics in the Canadian university workplace. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36(3), 541–554. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2017.1288704>
- Adams, V., Allié, M. P., Beurrier, P., Biedler, M., De Bonis, E., Colebunder, R., Curtis, D., Dacey, G., De Clerck, V., Gabaldon, J., Henry, X., Mounis, F., & Sánchez, V. (2016). *OCB Ebola review*. Stockholm Evaluation Unit. <http://evaluation.msf.org/evaluation-report/ocb-ebola-review-2016>
- Akbay, T. (2017). Survival of assistant professors in academia: A case study. *Mehmet Akif Ersoy University Journal of the Institute of Educational Sciences*, 5(7), 1–16. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ebed/issue/33633/364907>
- Akın, A., & Demirel, S. (2003). Toplumsal cinsiyet kavramı ve sağlığa etkileri. *CÜ Tıp Fakültesi Dergisi*, 25(4), 73–82. <http://eskidergi.cumhuriyet.edu.tr/makale/494.pdf>
- Alon, T. M., Doepke, M., Olmstead-Rumsey, J., & Tertilt, M. (2020). *The impact of COVID-19 on gender equality*. National Bureau of Economic Research. <https://doi.org/10.3386/w26947>
- Altınay, A. G., & Arat, Y. (2007). *Türkiye'de kadına yönelik şiddet*. Metis Yayınları.

- Amer, M. (2013). Combining academic career and motherhood: Experiences and challenges of women in academia. *International Research Journal of Social Sciences*, 2(4), 12–15. [www.isca](http://www.isca)
- Başarır, F., & Sarı, M. (2015). Kadın akademisyenlerin "kadın akademisyen olma"ya ilişkin algılarının metaforlar yoluyla incelenmesi. *Journal of Higher Education & Science*, 5(1), 41–51. <https://doi.org/10.5961/jhes.2015.108>
- Bazeley, P. (2003). Defining 'early career' in research. *Higher Education*, 45, 257–279.
- Bégin-Caouette, O., Jansson, J., & Beaupré-Lavallée, A. (2018). The perceived contribution of early-career researchers to research production in Nordic Higher Education Systems. *High Education Policy*, 33, 777–798. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41307-018-0125-5>
- Bhasin, K. (2003). *Social gender "roles laid on us"*. Publications of Women's Solidarity Foundation.
- Bilican Gökkaya, V. (2009). Türkiye'de şiddetin kadın sağlığına etkileri. *Cumhuriyet Üniversitesi İktisadi Ve İdari Bilimler Dergisi*, 10(2), 167–179. <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.12418/2204>
- Blair-Loy, M., Hochschild, A., Pugh, A. J., Williams, J. C., & Hartmann, H. (2015). Stability and transformation in gender, work, and family: Insights from the second shift for the next quarter century. *Community, Work & Family*, 18(4), 435–454. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13668803.2015.1080664>
- Blossfeld, H. P., & Drobnic, S. (2001). *A cross-national comparative approach to couples' careers*. Oxford University Press.
- Bora, A. (2012). *Toplumsal cinsiyet duyarlılığı eğitimi toplumsal cinsiyete duyarlı kamu hizmetleri. kadın ve kadın STK'larının güçlendirilmesi projesi*. [https://www.gapcatom.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/TCDE\\_KAMU.pdf](https://www.gapcatom.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/09/TCDE_KAMU.pdf)
- Bosanquet, A., Mailey, A., Matthews, K. E., & Lodge, J. M. (2017). Redefining 'early career' in academia: A collective narrative approach. *Higher Education Research & Development*, 36(5), 890–902. <https://doi.org/10.1080/07294360.2016.1263934>
- Brooks, S. K., Webster, R. K., Smith, L. E., Woodland, L., Wessely, S., Greenberg, N., & Rubin, G. J. (2020). The psychological impact of quarantine and how to reduce it: Rapid review of the evidence. *The Lancet*, 395(10227), 912–920. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30460-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30460-8)
- Chen, N., Zhou, M., Dong, X., Qu, J., Gong, F., Han, Y., Qiu, Y., Wang, J., Liu, Y., Wei, Y., Xia, J., Yu, T., Zhang, X., & Zhang, L. (2020). Epidemiological and clinical characteristics of 99 cases of 2019 novel coronavirus pneumonia in Wuhan, China: A descriptive study. *The Lancet*, 395(10223), 507–513. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30211-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30211-7)
- Craig, L., & Churchill, B. (2020). Dual-earner parent couples' work and care during COVID-19. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 28(1), 69–79. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12497>
- Creswell, J. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Dildar, Y. (2015). Patriarchal norms, religion, and female labor supply: Evidence from Turkey. *World Development*, 76, 40–61. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2015.06.010>
- Ensbj, J. (2006). *The experience of burnout: Mothers as child welfare workers (master thesis)*. Available from ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global (304934947). (Order No. MR25066). <https://search.proquest.com/docview/304934947?accountid=16693>
- Ergöl, S., Koç, G., Eroglu, K., & Taskin, L. (2012). Encountered difficulties of female research assistants at domestic and business life in Turkey. *Journal of Higher Education and Science*, 2(1), 43–49. <https://doi.org/10.5961/jhes.2012.032>
- Fetterolf, J. C., & Rudman, L. A. (2014). Gender inequality in the home: The role of relative income, support for traditional gender roles, and perceived entitlement. *Gender Issues*, 31(3–4), 219–237. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-014-9126-x>
- Forbes, P., Feneberg, A. C., Lamm, C., Nater, U., Pronizius, E., Silani, G., & Stijovic, A. (2020). *The COVID-19 crisis, stress, mood, and behaviour: An ecological momentary assessment study*. <https://osf.io/gsvdf>
- Günindi Ersöz, A. (2016). *Toplumsal cinsiyet sosyolojisi*. Anı Yayınları.
- Günçavdi, G., Göktürk, S., & Bozoglu, O. (2017). An insight into the challenges faced by academic women with pre-school age children in academic life. *Universal Journal of Educational Research*, 5(6), 953–959. <https://doi.org/10.13189/ujer.2017.050607>
- Güriz, A. (2011). *Feminizm, post-modernizm ve hukuk* (2. Baskı). Phoenix Yayınevi.
- Guy, B., & Arthur, B. (2020). Academic motherhood during COVID-19: Navigating our dual roles as educators and mothers. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27(5), 887–899. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12493>
- Hochschild, A. (1989). *The second shift: Working parents and the revolution at home*. Viking.
- Kagnicioglu, D. (2017). The role of women in working life in Turkey. In C. A. Brebbia, E. Marco, J. Longhurst, & C. Booth (Eds.), *WIT transactions on ecology and the environment* (pp. 349–358). WIT Press.
- Keskinliç Kara, S. B. (2017). Based discrimination in universities. *Bartın University Journal of Faculty of Education*, 6(1), 85–101. <https://doi.org/10.14686/buefad.266448>
- Kyvik, S. (2015). The academic career system in Norway. In M. Yudkevich, P. G. Altbach, & R. E. Rumbley (Eds.), *Young faculty in the twenty-first century: International perspectives* (pp. 173–200). Suny Press.
- Lebow, J. L. (2020). Family in the age of COVID-19. *Family Process*, 59(2), 1–4. <https://doi.org/10.1111/famp.12543>
- Lechuga, V. M. (2012). Exploring culture from a distance: The utility of telephone interviews in qualitative research. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, 25(3), 251–268. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2010.529853>

- Mantovani, A., Dalbeni, A., & Beatrice, G. (2020). Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19): We don't leave women alone. *International Journal of Public Health*, 65, 235–236. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s00038-020-01369-4>
- McLaughlin, J. (2003). *Feminist social and political theory, contemporary debates and dialogues* (3rd ed.). Red Globe Press.
- Merriam, S. B., & Tisdell, E. J. (2015). *Qualitative research a guide to design and implementation* (4th ed.). John Wiley & Sons.
- Ministry of Family and Social Policies General Directorate on the Status of Women. (2016). *Aile içi şiddetle mücadele projesi sağlık çalışanları kılavuzu (Fighting against domestic violence project health workers' guide)*, Ankara, Turkey. [http://www.ceidizleme.org/ekutuphaneresim/dosya/573\\_1.pdf](http://www.ceidizleme.org/ekutuphaneresim/dosya/573_1.pdf)
- Novick, G. (2008). Is there a bias against telephone interviews in qualitative research?. *Research in Nursing & Health*, 31(4), 391–398. <https://doi.org/10.1002/nur.20259>
- Özçatal, E. Ö. (2011). Ataerkillik, toplumsal cinsiyet ve kadının çalışma yaşamına katılımı. *Çankırı Karatekin Üniversitesi İktisadi İdari Bilimler Fakültesi Dergisi*, 1(1), 21–39. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/ckuiibfd/issue/32888/365347?publisher=karatekin>
- Petts, R. J., Carlson, D. L., & Pepin, J. R. (2020). A gendered pandemic: Childcare, homeschooling, and parents' employment during COVID-19. *Gender, Work & Organization*. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12614>
- Restubog, S. L. D., Ocampo, A. C. G., & Wang, L. (2020). Taking control amidst the chaos: Emotion regulation during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 119, 1–6. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2020.103440>
- Rosenfeld, D. L., & Tomiyama, A. J. (2020). Can a pandemic make people more socially conservative? Longitudinal evidence from COVID-19. *PsyArXiv*, <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/zg7s4>
- Rushing, C., & Sparks, M. (2017). The mother's perspective: Factors considered when choosing to enter a stay-at-home father and working mother relationship. *American Journal of Men's Health*, 11(4), 1260–1268. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1557988317693347>
- Safdar, M., & Yasmin Alvi, M. (2020). COVID-19: A threat to educated Muslim women's negotiated identity in Pakistan. *Gender, Work & Organization*, 27(5), 683–694. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12457>
- Sayer, L. C., England, P., Bittman, M., & Bianchi, S. M. (2009). How long is the second (plus first) shift? Gender differences in paid, unpaid, and total work time in Australia and the United States. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 40(4), 523–545. <https://doi.org/10.3138/jcfs.40.4.523>
- Smith, J. (2019). Overcoming the 'tyranny of the urgent': Integrating gender into disease outbreak preparedness and response. *Gender & Development*, 27(2), 355–369. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13552074.2019.1615288>
- Smith, J. A., Flowers, P., & Larkin, M. (2009). *Interpretative phenomenological analysis: Theory, method and research*. Sage Publications.
- Smith, J. A., & Osborn, M. (2004). Interpretative phenomenological analysis. In G. M. Breakwell (Ed.), *In Doing social psychology research* (pp. 229–254). The British Psychological Society Blackwell Publishing. <https://doi.org/10.1002/9780470776278.ch10>
- Stadnyk, T., & Black, K. (2020). Lost ground: Female academics face an uphill battle in postpandemic world. *Hydrological Processes*, 34, 3400–3402. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hyp.13803>
- Sturges, J. E., & Hanrahan, K. J. (2004). Comparing telephone and face-to-face qualitative interviewing: A research note. *Qualitative Research*, 4(1), 107–118. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794104041110>
- Suitor, J. J., Mecom, D., & Feld, I. S. (2001). Gender, household labor, and scholarly productivity among university professors. *Gender Issues*, 19(4), 50–67. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12147-001-1007-4>
- Timperley, C., Sutherland, K. A., Wilson, M., & Hall, M. (2020). He moana pukepuke: Navigating gender and ethnic inequality in early career academics' conference attendance. *Gender and Education*, 32(1), 11–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09540253.2019.1633464>
- Tong, A., Sainsbury, P., & Craig, J. (2007). Consolidated criteria for reporting qualitative research (COREQ): A 32-item checklist for interviews and focus groups. *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, 19(6), 349–357.
- United Nations Development Programme. (2020). *Briefing note: The economic impacts of covid-19 and gender inequality. Recommendations for policymaking*, New York, NY. [https://www.undp.org/content/dam/trinidad\\_tobago/UNDP%20Note%20The%20Economic%20Impact%20of%20COVID%20and%20Gender%20Inequality.pdf](https://www.undp.org/content/dam/trinidad_tobago/UNDP%20Note%20The%20Economic%20Impact%20of%20COVID%20and%20Gender%20Inequality.pdf)
- Vogt, W. P., Gardner, D. C., & Haefele, L. M. (2012). *When to use what research design*. The Guilford Press.
- Vohládlová, M. (2020). Early-career women academics: Between neoliberalism and gender conservatism. *Sociological Research Online*, 26(1), 27–43. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1360780420914468>
- Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2004). Academic motherhood: Managing complex roles in research universities. *The Review of Higher Education*, 27(2), 233–257. <https://doi.org/10.1353/rhe.2003.0079>
- Ward, K., & Wolf-Wendel, L. (2012). Managing work and family in the early career. In *Academic motherhood: How faculty manage work and family* (pp. 47–62). Rutgers University Press.
- Wenham, C., Smith, J., & Morgan, R. (2020). COVID-19: The gendered impacts of the outbreak. *The Lancet*, 395(10227), 846–848. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30526-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30526-2)

- Westrupp, E. M., Karantzas, G., Macdonald, J. A., Olive, L., Youssef, G., Sciberras, E., Fuller-Tyszkiewicz, M., Evans, S., Mikocha-Walus, A., Ling, M., Cummins, R., Hutchinson, D., Melvin, G., Fernando, J. W., Teague, S., Wood, A. G., Toumbourou, J. W., Berkowitz, T., Linardon, J., & Olsson, C. A. (2020). Study protocol for the COVID-19 pandemic adjustment survey (CPAS): A longitudinal study of Australian parents of a child 0-18 years. *Frontiers in Psychiatry, 11*, 555750. 1–11. <https://doi.org/10.31234/osf.io/hqke9>
- World Bank. (2020). *Gender dimensions of the COVID-19 pandemic*. World Bank Group. <https://doi.org/10.1596/33622>
- Yükseköğretim Kanunu (Higher Education Law). (1981, 4 Kasım). *Resmî gazete (sayı: 17506)*. <https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/MevzuatMetin/1.5.2547.pdf>

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

**Simel Parlak** is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling of Faculty of Education Sciences, Istanbul Okan University, Istanbul, Turkey. Her research focuses on planning psycho-educational works and nation-wide programs to prevent intimate partner violence targeting conflict resolution skills, communication skills, anger management, healthy romantic relationships, and gender equality.

**Oya Celebi Cakiroglu** is a Research Assistant in the Department of Nursing Administration of Faculty of Health Sciences at Istanbul Medeniyet University, Istanbul, Turkey. Her research works cover the employment, female workers, gender equality/inequality, gender discrimination, management, and leadership issues in the health-care sector.

**Feride Oksuz Gul** is a Research Assistant in the Department of Educational Administration of Faculty of Educational Sciences at Istanbul Medeniyet University, Istanbul, Turkey. She focuses on the development of early career academics and academic identity. In addition, she conducts studies related to academic, financial, and managerial autonomy in the context of higher education management.

**How to cite this article:** Parlak, S., Celebi Cakiroglu, O., & Oksuz Gul, F. (2021). Gender roles during COVID-19 pandemic: The experiences of Turkish female academics. *Gender, Work & Organization, 28*(S2), 461–483. <https://doi.org/10.1111/gwao.12655>