INTEGRATION OF TURKISH IMMIGRANT WOMEN IN FINLAND INTO FINNISH SOCIETY
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Abstract

Collecting statistical data on the socio-economic features of immigrants such as educational and professional background is necessary in order to achieve successful results of integration programs in a national or local scope.

The aim of this study was to examine the current situation of Turkish immigrant women in Finland, their relationships with Finnish society and their integration to society to get an impression of their life and to address the problems that they experienced as immigrants as well as women in Finland. The research method employed was ethnomethodology and it was mainly based on qualitative data, which was collected through in-depth interviews with Turkish immigrant women.

Turkish immigrant women do not seem well integrated into Finnish society. They are not well integrated into working life or into social life even though they would like to be. The most significant obstacle hindering integration is the language skills.

Keywords: Immigration, integration, women immigrants, Finland

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I especially want to thank the immigrant women who opened not only their doors, but also their hearts to support me throughout this research.
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1. INTRODUCTION

Immigration is a phenomenon as old as human history. Sometimes natural disasters such as earthquakes, flood, drought, famine, hunger, and sometimes calamities such as wars force people to immigrate; sometimes people immigrate for a dream of rich and luxurious life. Whatever the reason, the purpose has often been the same: to survive and to live in safety without a fear of death and hunger. As early as in the 1800s, there were some European people immigrating to the United States of America, but after the Second World War, Europe became the destination of immigration flows. Today approximately 175 million people in the world are living in a country in which they were not born (Boswell and Crisp, 2004: 3).

Turkey has a long migration history from the beginning of the Republic up to today. The general internal immigration trend was from the rural areas of eastern part of Turkey towards the big cities in the western part. The most important migration in the Turkish Republic occurred at the beginning of the 1950s from Anatolia to Europe. Many young Turkish workers immigrated to European countries, especially to Germany. In the following years, these immigrant people gathered their families and relatives from their home countries. Immigration from Turkey to Finland began at the beginning of the 1980s. The data indicate that immigration from Turkey to Finland increased after the 1990s because of economic problems such as unemployment, low salaries and poverty.

Integration is an important concept for both immigrant people and Finnish society. This study focuses on Turkish immigrant women and their integration into Finnish society.

1.1. Importance and aim of the research

Manninen (2001) classifies immigrants into three groups: the immigrants in the first group (well-integrated immigrants) have the proficiency of Finnish, are studying or working, have satisfactory social networks, and feel that they can control their lives. Those in the second group try to integrate into the society. The immigrants in the third group isolate themselves from the community and do not have contacts to Finnish society and culture. Turkish homemakers in particular are in great danger of being part of this group. This study intends to address these women’s feelings, thoughts and experiences.

During the nine months I lived in Finland, I asked many people what they thought about Turkish immigrant women. The answers were the same. “I do not know anything about them.”
People should know each other in order to understand “others” and to live in peace in the same society.

The purpose of this study was to shed some light on the current situations of Turkish immigrant women, on their relationships with Finnish people and on their integration into society, and also to describe their life and to point out the problems that they experience as immigrants and women in Finland.

1.2. The hypothesis and methodology of the research

The hypothesis I aimed to test was “Turkish immigrant women in Finland are not well integrated into Finnish society economically, politically and socially.”

The main object of this study was to explore the Turkish immigrant women in their daily lives and in the economical, social and cultural context. The methodology used in the research is ethnomethodology, which studies daily, common, and routine social activities. A substantial portion of ethnomethodological research focuses on studying how participants in social interaction make sense of a research process. In conversations between two people, a substantial part of the meaning is shared and understood in advance, rather than stated literally. Ethnomethodologists study how participants in social interaction clarify such shared understandings to ensure that they are communicating properly. They assume that communication begins with some things that should be clarified and that clarification proceeds in identifiable stages according to distinct rules. In addition to clarification of shared agreements, there are some words and phrases that are called indexical, such as “he”, “she”, “it”, “they”, whose meaning depends on the social context in which they are uttered. Although the meaning of these terms can never be generalized to fit all situations and they can never be context-free, ethnomethodologists feel that the rules by which the meaning of such term is made clear to participants in a conversation are general and can be studied and learned (Bailey, 1987: 288).

I used qualitative analysis to evaluate my research in this field study. Field studies take place in a natural setting, use participant observation in most cases and have very little structure imposed upon the setting by the observer (Bailey, 1987: 245). This study is mainly based on qualitative data that was collected through in-depth interviews with Turkish immigrant women. I conducted in-depth interviews, which go beyond surface talk to a rich discussion of thoughts and feelings (Maykut and Morehouse, 1994: 80), with thirty women living in
Helsinki, Turku and Tampere. The interviews were conducted in the period from September–December in 2003.

I used snowball sampling to collect in-depth qualitative data, especially for sensitive topics, where respondents, such as homemakers, are not visible (Bailey, 1987: 95) and the best method of selection is through personal contacts. According to Berg, (1988) this process is based on the assumption that a ‘bond’ or ‘link’ exists between the initial sample and others in the same target population, allowing a series of referrals to be made within a circle of acquaintance (Atkinson and Flint, 2001).

Snowball sampling can be applied for two primary purposes: firstly and most easily, according to Hendricks, Blanken, and Adriaans (1992), as an ‘informal’ method to reach a target population. If the aim of a study is primarily explorative, qualitative, and descriptive, then snowball sampling offers practical advantages. Most often snowball sampling is used to conduct qualitative research, primarily through interviews. Secondly, according to Snijders, (1992), Faugier and Sergeant (1997), snowball sampling may be applied as a more formal methodology for making inferences about a population of individuals who have been difficult to enumerate through the use of descending methods such as household surveys (Atkinson and Flint, 2001).

I preferred snowball sampling because it is an economical, efficient, and effective method for getting the results quickly. Participant observation is done during a long period of time and it generally involves a primary relationship between the observer and the persons being observed (Bailey, 1987: 251). Being a Turkish woman and a member of the same culture helped me to understand Turkish immigrant women’s thoughts and feelings. In addition, it helped me to enter this immigrant society easily because they had trust in me. In the earlier phases of the research, the immigrant women I interviewed were strangers to me; however, I should admit that we became good friends at the end. I shared their feelings, their sadness, and their happiness. Sometimes we laughed and sometimes we cried together, which also occurs in feminist studies. Feminist observational or interview-based studies include a strong connection between the researcher and people studied that improves during the course of study and lasts beyond it. As Mishler (1986) pointed out, an in-depth interview is a joint

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2 The questionnaire used in this study was developed by a research project group investigating into Turkish immigrant women in Finland and co-ordinated by Tuula Sakaranaho at the University of Helsinki. I studied in this group and conducted 30 in-depth interviews. Other group members conducted 38 interviews for the project. Consequently, the questionnaire and results of this study were also used in that research project.
product of what interviewees and interviewers talk about together and how they talk with each other. The record of an interview is just a representation of that talk (Reinharz, 1992: 263).

In general, I conducted interviews in the respondents’ houses because most of them were homemakers and they thought it was easier to meet at home. Each interview lasted for about five or six hours, or sometimes longer. I tried to take some notes in the first interviews but recognized that I was missing some important things. Moreover, most importantly, I was missing the eye contact. Therefore, I began to observe and to record everything, and transcribed the tapes later. In addition, I took some notes about the respondents’ living environments or something that they did not want to have recorded on tape.

During in-depth interviews, I asked the respondents about their backgrounds. Details about the Turkish immigrant women include their age, education level, language skills, marital status, children, place of origin (urban/rural), and income level when they were still residing in Turkey. I asked them what kinds of relations they have with the Finnish government such as the date of and reason for migration, citizenship, and receiving social benefits in the form of unemployment benefit, housing allowance, maternity allowance, and so on.

I wanted to learn about their integration into working life. I asked some questions about their willingness to work; working experience in the past; their current employment situation; what kinds of obstacles they had faced in working life; reasons for unemployment; and what kinds of arrangements would make it easier for them to obtain a job.

I attempted to explore the requirements they should have to be able to meet to integrate into Finnish society without losing their cultural identity. In addition, I wanted to learn about their private lives, such as sharing housework with their husbands and spending money. I asked questions about their social life such as participating in events, relations with Finnish and Turkish people, and with other immigrants, or relatives. There were questions about participation in political life or in civil society. I also asked a few questions regarding their children’s integration into Finnish society, their language skills, education situation, and relationships with Finnish and Turkish friends. I wanted to learn about their religious life as an important part of cultural life. I asked about religious discrimination, obstacles preventing them from practicing religion in Finland, and the importance of religion in their life. In addition, I wanted to find out about the way in which they cope with health problems.
Finally, I asked about their future expectations. I wanted to find out about how happy they are in Finland and whether or not they want to return to Turkey.

1.3. Limitations of the study

At the beginning of this study, I was expecting to face many obstacles. The first problem was to find out the names and addresses of Turkish immigrant women living in Finland. I immediately contacted the Turkish Embassy to seek help, but they could not help me right away because they in turn had to contact the Turkish Foreign Affairs to access the immigrants’ addresses because these were secret individual information. After waiting for an answer for three weeks, I decided to look for other solutions to find the addresses of the people that I wanted to interview, because I had a very limited time to finish the study. The telephone book was one source that provided me with little information. I called the phone numbers found in the book, and fortunately, the people in the other end of the line were receptive and open enough to accept an interview with me. Luckily, being Turkish and sharing the same background made communication easier. This was the reason why these first people I met introduced me to other Turkish people, to their friends, and so forth. When you come to a new country for the first time, churches, mosques, synagogues and alike are places where you can socialize, find somebody similar to you. In the Turkish culture, religion has quite an important role. The Mosque in Helsinki was such a place where, as I expected, I met some Turkish women. In addition, the academicians surrounding my research were another valuable source. A Turkish lecturer I met at the University of Helsinki introduced me to some Turkish women who, again, introduced me to other Turkish people they knew.

Therefore, the way in which I reached the women for my interviews followed the “snowball sampling” method. After finding a person I needed for my research, she would link me to another person and then to another person, like a snowball gathering by itself more and more snow until it becomes bigger and bigger. This is how I succeeded in the end to have quite an impressive collection of material for my research on Turkish immigrant women living in Finland.

Sometimes I became disappointed and discouraged about finding addresses. I was sad about not being able to convince women who gave negative answers to my interview requests. In addition, I worried about women who first accepted interviewing but changed their minds after they had asked their husband for permission. At the same time, I worried about whether
these women had to face their husbands’ bad attitudes because they had accepted interviewing without asking their husbands’ permission first.

1.4. Review of previous studies

Immigration phenomena are not new to European countries. A large amount of worker immigration occurred after the Second World War. Young immigrants came to Europe on the crest of this immigration wave in the 1950s and the 1960s – immigration from Turkey to European countries occurred at its largest during the 1950s. After the 1970s, their families began to join them. The last immigration wave began in the 1980s and continued increasingly after 1990s; the immigrants were refugees who escaped from their countries because of lack of human rights and democracy.

Finland used to be a country to emigrate to rather than to immigrate to until 1970, and it has a small number of immigrants compared to other European Union member countries. Returning Ingrian Finns, rapidly increasing international marriages, immigration for education and refugees added to the number of immigrant people in Finland after the 1990s (Zechner, 2002: 9).

What does being an immigrant in Finland mean? The Finnish Ministry of Labour (MOL) defines immigrants as all persons who have immigrated to the country. Officially, the term ‘immigrant’ refers to refugees, migrants, repatriates and other foreigners living in Finland (MOL, 2001). Wall and Jose, for their part, describe an immigrant as a person who left his home country to resettle in a new country on a long-term basis (2003: 5).

Generally, integration of immigrants is defined as immigrants’ participation in economic, social and political life of their new country. According to the Ministry of Labour (2001), integration means acquiring the knowledge and skills that help immigrants to settle down in the new country, finding a job and being able to participate in activities as an equal member of society. As Valtonen (1999) has said, integration is a long-term project, a lifelong learning and self-development process. Integration has a focus on participatory activity, relationships, and ties of resettling persons to the mainstream society, accepting at the same time that immigrants retain their ethno-cultural identity and important cultural features in the process. In effect, integration involves taking into account and combining aspects of the old and the new culture. Nevertheless, as the Ministry of Labour (2001) has pointed out, integration requires adjusting from both the minority and the main population.
According to Coussey and Christensen (1997), integration can be divided into four different dimensions: political, economic, social, and cultural integration. These dimensions can be looked at on the level of the individual or of society. Political activity has to do with voting but also with applying for citizenship, following the media and unionizing. The economic dimension is related to work, unemployment, the segregated labour market and the share of immigrants in different occupation groups. Employment is probably the most important issue in integration. The use of social welfare services, housing and living, language skills and relations to other inhabitants of the country are related to the social dimension. The cultural dimension means the size of the community, the meaning of an immigrant’s own culture and ethnic unionizing (Zechner, 2002: 13).

There is a three-tier policy for integration of immigrants in Finland (Zechner, 2002: 9):

1. National integration policy
2. Municipal immigration policy programme and an international plan
3. Integration plans for individuals and families. After the immigrants have committed themselves to an integration plan, they are entitled to the social security end benefits and services.

According to the Ministry of Labour (2001), an unemployed immigrant who is permanently staying in Finland has been entitled to the national integration programme since 1997. Many immigrants are not aware of this. The integration programme that aims to train immigrant participants in learning Finnish and getting an occupation in order to find a job lasts for almost one year. During this programme, participants learn about Finnish culture and society and have chance to get in contact with Finnish and other foreign people.
Table 1: Foreigners in Finland

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<td>22 603</td>
<td>23 024</td>
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<td>68 566</td>
<td>73 754</td>
<td>80 600</td>
<td>85 060</td>
<td>87 680</td>
<td>91 074</td>
<td>98 577</td>
<td>103 682</td>
<td>107 003</td>
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*Former Yugoslavia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia


3 Statistics about foreigners are based on citizenship: those immigrant people in Finland who have already obtained a Finnish citizenship are not counted as foreigners in these statistics. For this reason, even though there are only 2 287 Turkish immigrants in the statistics, according to the Turkish Embassy’s enlistment, there are more than 4 000 Turkish immigrants living in Finland today.
According to official statistics, there are 107,003 immigrants living in Finland. This is 2% of the total population of the country (5,219,000). Most of the immigrants are Russian; the second biggest group consists of Estonian immigrants.

Women’s studies are a very important and rapidly developing field of research in Finland (Bergman, 2002; Tuori and Silius, 2002). There are many academic and official studies conducted on immigrants in Finland, even though studies on women immigrants are relatively few. According to Zechner (2002: 13), research on migration in Finland can be divided into three main branches: immigration, emigration, and ethnic minorities. Immigration, immigrants and their integration into Finnish society must have been the most investigated topic. However, I noticed that there are only a few studies on and little statistical and systematic information about the current situation of Turkish immigrant women living in Finland. Probably, due to their population number, researchers and officials have been ignoring this minority. According to the Finnish Embassy, there are 2,000 Turkish people in Finland – around 500 of them are women. In reality, the number is much bigger than this. According to the Turkish Embassy, there are 4,000 Turkish people living in Finland – almost 1,000 of them are women. The reason underlying this discrepancy is citizenship. When Turkish citizens become Finnish citizens, the Finnish government considers them Finnish even though they have a dual citizenship.

Finnish citizenship is based on birth; on the grounds of legitimization, it can be acquired by application or by notification. Foreigners may apply for Finnish citizenship if they are of legal age (18), have lived in Finland long enough before making the application (5 years as rule), have lived a respectable life, have a secure income and are proficient in Finnish or Swedish (Zechner, 2002: 11).

There are some Turkish immigrant women who have lived in Finland for more than ten years and fulfil all the required conditions but who have still not applied for Finnish citizenship; some of them applied for it as soon as they immigrated. In this study, nineteen women are Turkish citizens, two women are Finnish citizens, and six women have a dual citizenship.
Social welfare benefits are available for all people living in Finland. Immigrants are entitled to services and social benefits, which help them to cope with a new environment. The obligations and rights differ depending on where they come from (MOL: 1).

All people who live in Finland and have a residence permit for at least one year are granted most of the social and health services and benefits. Health care is organized by municipalities. Everybody (regardless of nationality) has the right to use health care services and claim compensation for treatment and daily sickness allowance from the Social Insurance Institution of Finland. Mothers must have been living in Finland for at least 180 days before the due date in order to receive maternity, paternity or parent’s allowance. Also all mothers giving birth in Finland get a maternity grant (mothers can choose a maternity pack containing baby necessities or 140 euros). Every child living in Finland receives a child allowance (90 euros) until the age of 17. Anybody who does not have enough money to survive can apply for income support, which is provided by the state. Immigrants must have lived in Finland at least for five years to receive national pensions such as old age, unemployment, disability and survivor’s pension. The level of pension depends on the amount of time the applicant has resided in Finland (Zechner, 2002: 12).

All of the women I interviewed (30 women) were informed about social services and benefits and most of them (22 women) got social benefits – the unemployment benefit, housing allowance, and maternity allowance – in some way. However, all of them agreed that they would like to have more information about social services and benefits. Most of the information about these services and benefits are in Finnish and in some other languages but
not in Turkish. Language is the foremost problem for them. Consequently, they wanted to receive this kind of information in Turkish.
2. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this part, I focus on the results of my field study.

2.1. Background of the Turkish immigrant women

In this section, I look at issues such as immigrant women’s place of origin and education as well as the income level of their families. According to the Turkish Embassy, there are 4,000 Turkish people living in Finland – almost 1,000 of them are women. Most of the women I interviewed had immigrated to Finland at the beginning of the 1990s. The overall immigration dates of the interviewees varied between the years 1989–2003. The reason for immigrating in most of the cases (23 women) was marriage. Three immigrated because of family problems and three of them moved because of education. Only one was a refugee.

![Figure 2: Reasons for immigration](image)

Most of the women I interviewed are from the middle and southeastern parts of Turkey. Ten came from rural areas; twenty came from urban areas (see Figure 3.)
Most of these women have many sisters and brothers. One of them said, laughing, that her family had already seven children when she was born and called her (IW1) the last rose, wishing that she would be the last girl they would have.

Generally, their mothers are homemakers; fathers are workers or doing jobs that do not bring them a lot of money. Their income levels are generally very low in Turkey. Out of the thirty women I interviewed, eleven had a very low income level, ten had an average income level, and only nine had a good income level. The education level of the families of women coming from the eastern and southeastern parts of Turkey was rather low. Most of their mothers were uneducated and did not have any occupation. Twenty-three mothers of all interviewees were homemakers.

The immigrant women had known very little about Finland, except for its geographical location and climate, and none of them had known Finnish before coming to Finland. Consequently, the way in which Finnish people were speaking, dressed, leading different life styles, and almost everything was strange for these women when they came to the country for the first time. Their most important problem was being alone. A woman who had immigrated to Finland ten years ago said that

“...This is like an open prison. No one goes to see each other in here...” (IW9)

Their husband and relatives (if they had some) in Finland were their all-social environment before they learned to know people and started to have some friends. Nevertheless, after a while, they started to have problems with their relatives, generally for financial reasons.
2.2. Family life

In this section, I explore the aspects of marital and family relationships, and the dynamics of immigrant women.

Studies about migration in Europe have shown that immigrant families usually arrive in a country in two waves. First young male workers migrate in order to find work and set up a home, then their dependants (wife, children, sister, brother, parent, etc.) join them (Wall and Jose, 2003: 5). The situation with Turkish immigrants is almost the same in Finland. Most of the immigrant women’s husbands immigrated before them and worked in Turkish pizza or kebab restaurants owned by other Turks. Later most of them had their own working place and continued to work. After they had earned and saved a certain amount of money in order to provide good living standards for their families, they began to bring in their wives. Single men got usually married to girls who their mothers found in Turkey and brought them to Finland.

It was the first marriage for most of the immigrant women. However, a few of them had married more than two times. Only two of them were single. I learned that some of the women married just to come to Finland, even though they did not love their husbands.

Twenty women in my research said that their family with or without their consent arranged their marriages through a special system called “görücü” in Turkey. It is a common method for arranging a marriage. Görücü is a woman (or a man but mostly a woman) who goes to see the candidate for marriage. As Timur (1981) has said, it is not surprising that family exerts a great influence on their children in choosing a suitable partner. Marriages take place by parental arrangement, since it involves not only the spouses’ relationship, but also the integration of the bride into the extended family. In addition, these women were married off too young. One of the interviewees was just 12 years old when the first “görücü” came, and 18 years old when she got married (IW1). Kandiyotti explains this situation by patriarchy:

“Under classic patriarchy, girls are given away in marriage at a very young age into households headed by their husband. There they are subordinate not only to all men but also to the more senior women, especially their mothers-in-law.”
(Kandiyoti, 1997: 89)

Marriages with relatives are very common among the immigrant women. The main reason for that kind of marriage is to prevent their family’s inheritance from being shared with a foreigner (according to the groom’s family, because the bride is not from their family, she is a
foreigner to them). According to Timur (1981), marriage with a relative is encouraged among traditional extended families, since marriage is not considered simply to be an agreement between partners, but also an alliance between the families.

The relationships between women and men coming from rural areas are shaped by traditions, customs and beliefs. The women who were brought up according to traditions that do not allow friendship between genders were married off without knowing their husbands-to-be in advance. These women had seen their husbands before wedding only once or twice in front of all family. If they liked each other, this meeting was enough to make a decision to marry them off to each other. Therefore, it was very difficult for those immigrant women who had been raised traditionally to understand, get used to and follow the relationships between genders in Finland. They were jealous of their husbands who had got used to talking freely with other women. Sometimes, this situation caused even some break-ups in families.

Timur (1981) has observed the cyclic development of an extended family particularly in rural and eastern parts of Turkey, in which a married man passes through three stages of family life: in his father’s house, in his own independent core family and as a patriarch of his extended family. Patrilocality is the rule of marriage in villages. Young couples are expected to reside in the groom’s parental house, thus becoming a part of patriarchal, extended family. However, soon after marriage, the young man breaks away from his father’s house and sets up his own core family. After years, if this man has a son, this son will reside in his father’s house for a while, until he forms his own core family. There is a cyclic development of women in patriarchally extended families. According to Kandiyoti (1997), women’s life cycle begins with the deprivation and hardships they experience as young brides in these families, and then eventually, superseded by the control and authority she will have over her own subservient daughter-in-law as a young bride.

Meanwhile these immigrant women had to live in Turkey separated from their husbands until they received a visa or a residence permit. In some cases (especially among the immigrants coming from rural areas and traditional families), the women who were waiting for a visa or a residence permit had to stay with their husbands’ parents and serve them as a “bride” during this time.

Immigrating to Finland changed those women’s lives either in a good way or in a bad way. However, some of the interviewees said that the changed environment did not affect their family life because they kept their traditions and customs, while others said that life was very
different in Finland and it affected their family life as well. Some of them claimed that the changing environment affected their social life but did not affect their family life.

Moving to Finland has contributed to their personal development and they have had experiences that would not have been possible in Turkey for some of them in some cases. Most of them revealed that they have changed, become active, self-confident and independent.

2.2.1. Children

In this section, I examine the Turkish immigrant children’s education situation, language proficiency, and their relationships with Finnish children. Additionally, I focus on the relationships between parents and children. Here I want to highlight the difficulties these children have experienced because they live in a foreign country.

I observed that almost all immigrant women became pregnant within three or four months after they came to Finland because they got bored with being lonely. They wished and planned the pregnancy. All the women I interviewed were using birth control.

It was very interesting to observe that almost all women’s husbands had been present in the delivery room with them. In Turkey, such an attitude is not well known. These men stayed with their wives in order to help them with language problems, as the women were not good at speaking Finnish. They told me about very funny events having occurred during delivery. For example, when one of these women (IW17) had been screaming in pain during contractions, a nurse had come and warned her husband:

"Please tell your wife not to scream and cry out so loud. Otherwise other women waiting to give birth can get scared." (IW17)

When the wife asked what the nurse had said, her husband looked at her, a woman in great pain, and said:

"She said you can scream and cry out as much as you want!" (IW17)

When listening to this story, I remembered an interview conducted with one of my respondents, a doctor. She told me:

"Showing emotions is very different in Islamic societies and especially among the people coming from the Arabic countries. The patients cry out to show their
illness in these kinds of societies. When she began to cry out in hospital, she was disturbing other Finnish patients in the same ward. There were 20 Finnish patients in the same ward and they are very silent even in their own homes. Consequently, when you warn a patient, they misunderstand and begin to complain about discrimination or racism.” (IW11)

Generally, the Turkish families I interviewed have two children (10 families). They take care of their children for at least three years. After starting to take their children to a day care centre, women go to language courses and start to learn Finnish. Mostly, the age of starting the day care centre is three. Mothers take their children to day care. If mothers work, fathers take care of this. My observation is that all the families I interviewed were in contact with teachers and school administration. Generally, fathers attend school meetings because mothers do not know Finnish, or they attend together and fathers translate.

All of these children, whether they had been born in Finland or moved to the country later, speak Finnish very well. Nevertheless, the children whose families speak Turkish at home had some problems when they were taken to a day care centre or school for the first time because they did not know Finnish. Fortunately, these children succeeded in learning Finnish and made many Finnish and foreign friends at school in a very short time. Their teachers in a day care centre or school tried to help them in this issue. For example, the teacher of the daughter of one of my interviewees (IW1) learned some Turkish words in order to establish contact with her.

Of course, some problems occurred. We believe that children are not prejudiced, but sometimes they indeed are. One interviewee (IW6) did not know how to handle her daughter who was rebelling against being a foreigner because her schoolmates discriminated her. She was blaming her mother for bringing her to Finland. However, the school the daughter (IW6) attended helped the mother a lot in this issue. For example, she prepared and presented a study about the relationship between Somalian immigrant parents and their children:

“During this study I learned that immigrant people experience a transformation crisis. This transformation crisis has five stages. We experienced all these five stages with my daughter. Further, I wrote about us as an example in my study. Learning about these stages made it easier for me to say something to lessen the pain that my daughter suffered.” (IW6)

Another woman told me that her son had experienced some problems with his appearance and
that she had realized it after he began to go to school. She said:

“*My son was complaining about looking different and explaining about his desire not to be different and to look like others by asking why he was a brunet, why he was different, if he could colour his hair or use contact lenses...*” (IW21)

A Turkish immigrant woman who is married to a Finnish man thinks that her daughter's cultural identity is shaped by language, not by geography. Therefore, she considers it important to teach Turkish to her daughter. She said:

“*I believe my daughter will keep her mixed cultural identity. Probably she will feel like a Finn whose one side is Turkish because she will live in Finland. I accept this.*” (IW22)

An immigrant woman explained a common anxiety among women:

“*Our children are generally together with Finnish children. I am afraid the next generation will forget our own culture.*” (IW10)

In addition, one of my interviewees was worried that her children will forget their culture and will want to live like Finns. She said:

“*I respect the Finnish culture and living style but we are Turkish and we cannot live like them. I do not let my children go out late at night, drink alcohol or date with boys.*” (IW14)

Another interviewee was not as worried as some other interviewees were. She said:

“*We teach our culture by living it. It is Turkey inside the home but when you go out it is Finland. I don’t have any worries about my daughter’s choices.*” (IW15)

One revealed another difficulty she had experienced with her daughter:

“*I am trying to explain our own culture to my daughter, but it is very difficult for her to understand something she has never seen. For example, she has never seen the Eid celebration (a religious ceremony of Muslims). She supposes Christmas is her own cultural religious celebration. She learns and sings Christmas songs at school with her Finnish friends. They give presents to each other. It is so difficult to explain to her that it is not her own religious Eid...*” (IW12)
With respect to Turkish culture, virginity is still a very important issue. Most of the Turkish women (whether they are very well educated or traditional) experience their first sexual relationship with their husbands. An immigrant woman said that Finnish culture is not very different from Turkish culture except for when sexual freedom of young people is concerned. She said:

“Of course my daughter will fall in love, date, it’s very normal. However, I’m worried about whether she starts her sex life very early. My daughter’s girlfriends are very ornate, attractive, and very interested in young boys. I wish that their interest remains only as platonic love or friendship and that they do not go further. I am conservative about this issue. Of course I cannot interfere after a certain age but I have anxiety until she reaches an age that she can think comprehensively.” (IW21)

Foreigners living in Finland are entitled and obliged to receive comprehensive education or corresponding instruction. Immigrants of compulsory school age can have preparatory instructions. Children learn their native languages for two hours a week (Zechner, 2002). As Valtonen (1999) pointed out, native language (mother tongue) proficiency cannot be regarded solely in its cultural context. Children rely on their native language as a direct or indirect language tool in a learning process until they reach proficiency in Finnish.

The women I interviewed believe that teaching their native language to children is necessary to understand their history and culture. In addition, it is important to them that their children learn Finnish and another foreign language as well as their native language. The women think that Turkish education is not adequate in Finland. The most important problem is not having enough teachers of Turkish. For example, only one teacher serves Helsinki and its surroundings. The situation is the same in Tampere and Turku. Another problem is the combination of classes. Since there is only one teacher, all the 5–15-year-old children living in the same neighbourhood or district take Turkish courses in the same classroom. It is not difficult to understand how difficult the situation is for the teacher.

All of the women I interviewed believe in the importance and necessity of education. Particularly those women who themselves had been deprived of education wanted their children, especially their daughters, to be very well educated. Well-educated daughters with a good job who stand on their own two feet are the common wish and desire of the immigrant women. Generally, these women explained that the reason for them being uneducated was that there were economical problems; however, there were also other reasons. For example,
one woman (IW1) who comes from the southeastern part of Anatolia claimed that people do not consider education to be important in that part of Turkey. Her family had not supported her education. Furthermore, the education system at school did not support and courage the women but rather kept them away from school.

One of my interviewees (IW12) believes in the importance of education. She has learned Finnish quite well and she was taking an English course:

“I am trying to develop myself in order to be a good example to my children. My aim was to be a good example to them while I was learning how to drive or to speak a foreign language. I am taking a swimming course now. I wish my children would think that their mother can do everything that they can do. I should be a good example to my children because children are always one step ahead of their parents... so I have learned many things from my children.”

(IW12)

2.2.2. Housework, childcare, shopping, and paying bills

Family structure and sex roles in families have changed because women increasingly take part in working life in many countries. After women started doing paid work, men felt pressure to increase their contribution to doing housework. Nevertheless, men increased their family participation only many years after women had already entered working life (Lein, 1984).

Generally, in Turkey, Turkish women are responsible for doing all housework such as washing dishes and clothes, cleaning, ironing, cooking, and childcare in the traditional family structure. Men are responsible for chores to be done outside the house, such as going shopping and paying electricity, water, etc., bills. Even though this basic division of labour continues to be part of the social structure, nowadays men share more responsibilities at home. They have begun to master some certain chores such as cooking, preparing and clearing the dinner table and putting the dishes into the dishwasher. However, they refuse to do some housework such as cleaning the house, ironing, or childcare, because they consider these kinds of chores to be women’s work. As Lein (1984) argues, men resist and do not want to increase their participation in housework because they perceive housework as demeaning and want to enjoy their privileged position in the family.
Sharing housework in traditional Turkish families living in Finland is not very different from Turkey. Women do almost all the work, whereas their husbands do some of it. Only six women share housework and five women share childcare at the time of the interviews.

Table 2: Correlations between education level and sharing housework, childcare, and number of children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level</th>
<th>Sharing housework with men (women)</th>
<th>Sharing childcare (women)</th>
<th>Number of children (women)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literate (3 women)</td>
<td>sharing (–) not sharing (3)</td>
<td>sharing (–) not sharing (3)</td>
<td>no child (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no child (–)</td>
<td>1 child (–)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 children (3)</td>
<td>3 children (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>more than 3 children (–)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school (10 women)</td>
<td>sharing (1) not sharing (9)</td>
<td>sharing (1) not sharing (8)</td>
<td>no child (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no child (1)</td>
<td>1 child (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 children (4)</td>
<td>3 children (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>more than 3 children (–)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school (2 women)</td>
<td>sharing (–) not sharing (2)</td>
<td>sharing (–) not sharing (2)</td>
<td>no child (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no child (–)</td>
<td>1 child (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 children (–)</td>
<td>3 children (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>more than 3 children (–)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school (6 women)</td>
<td>sharing (2) not sharing (4)</td>
<td>sharing (1) not sharing (4)</td>
<td>no child (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no child (2)</td>
<td>1 child (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>2 children (2)</td>
<td>3 children (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>more than 3 children (–)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University (4 women)</td>
<td>sharing (1) not sharing (3)</td>
<td>sharing (2) not sharing (1)</td>
<td>no child (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>no child (1)</td>
<td>1 child (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>2 children (1)</td>
<td>3 children (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>more than 3 children (–)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master’s degree (4 women)</td>
<td>sharing (2) not sharing (1)</td>
<td>sharing (1) not sharing (1)</td>
<td>no child (2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>single (1)</td>
<td>no child (2)</td>
<td>1 child (2)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2 children (–)</td>
<td>3 children (–)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>more than 3 children (–)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Doctorate (1 woman)</td>
<td>sharing (–) not sharing (–)</td>
<td>sharing (–) not sharing (–)</td>
<td>no child (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>single (1)</td>
<td>no child (1)</td>
<td>1 child (–)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>more than 3 children (–)</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
According to Table 1, three of the women are literate, have two children, and none of them shares housework or childcare. Ten women have graduated from primary school. Most of them do not share housework (9 women) and childcare (8 women). Most of them have two or more than two children. Two women had graduated from secondary school and none of them shares housework and childcare. One of them has only one child and the other one has three children. Six women have graduated from high school; two of them share housework and only one of them shares childcare. They have only one child or two children. Four women have graduated from the university. One of them shares housework while three of them do not, and two of them share childcare. They have one or two children. Four women who have graduated have a Master’s degree. Two of them share housework and one of them shares childcare. Two women have only one child, while two of them have no children.

Generally, these women do not expect their husbands to help them in housework and childcare because their husbands work for almost 18 hours a day. They indeed have very little time to share with their husbands. However, some women considered that it is inappropriate for a man to do housework. For example, one of them (IW16) said:

“Housework is women’s work. Women should do it even if men do not work outside.” (IW16)

Another woman who is married to a Finnish man said an interesting thing about sharing housework:

“If we talk honestly, I trained well my husband in this issue. This is possible only with training. Like your mother trained you and you trained your child, you will train your husband just like this. We are doing all – housework and childcare together. Not everything is perfect, but it is ok. I am trying to be equal as much as I can.” (IW24)

Daughters are the most important helpers of mothers who cannot share housework and childcare with their husbands. The situation of Big Sisters that Riitta Lavikka (1997) wrote about in her book is still valid in immigrant families living in Finland. If parents work and even in many situations in which the mother of the family does not work, the elder children (especially elder daughters) take care of other children and help their mother with housework.

Generally, the women do the shopping by themselves or together with their husbands, which is different from traditional families. The women said that they like shopping. They perceive the big shopping centre not only as a place for shopping, but also as a recreation place to have
a good time, because it can be very cold outside in winter. Generally, they buy groceries from big shopping centres once a week, besides that they buy their daily groceries in grocery shops.

When the women go shopping alone, they buy clothes for themselves and for their children. Further, they do not forget to buy some presents for their relatives and friends in Turkey when they visit them on their holiday. The most favourite presents are little kitchen apparatus.

Women prefer to use cash when shopping, whereas their husbands use cash cards and credit cards. While nineteen women prefer cash, four women prefer to use only cash cards, and seven women use both. Essentially most of the women do not have credit cards. In addition, they have cash cards that they do not use.

Normally men pay the bills (18 men). Nine women pay the bills themselves. Generally, they use the automated banking machine to pay bills; a few of them pay them through the Internet. The most important reason for women not to pay the bills was lack of language skills; they were afraid of doing something wrong.

Although the women who work have their own bank accounts, they do not differentiate between “my money” and “your money”. Husbands and wives share the budget and pay all expenses together.

2.3. Education

Education is a very important component of integration. In this section, I focus on their educational situation (educational background and language skills) in Finland and in their home country as well. I wanted to learn their thoughts about education and especially about learning Finnish.

Most of the women I interviewed had graduated from primary school (10 women), and some of them even had not even finished primary school (3 women). Only six women had graduated from high school and two women had graduated from secondary school. I also interviewed very well-educated women; one of them has a PhD, four of them have a Master’s degree, and four had graduated from the university (see Table 2).

An observation made by a woman who perceived the importance of education in Finland and benefited from it is very significant:
“The education system is perfect in Finland. You know that there is always an appropriate education for you. For example, I am going to evening school now. Furthermore, it is free. Everything you learn opens a new door for you. Especially adult education is very good in Finland. Even you are fifty or sixty years old, you can continue education. Working places are sending workers to vacation courses. If you want to change your occupation, the Employment Office gives advice suitable for you. I learned and chose my occupation during the course that they recommended me.” (IW6)

She thinks that the education system in Finland is perfect because it has high-quality education, qualified teachers, and concrete opportunities. In addition, education is available for everybody at every age.

None of the immigrant women I interviewed knew Finnish before coming to Finland. The Finnish government provides free Finnish courses to immigrants in Finland. The women had attended these courses for three, six, or nine months. However, most of them had had no success in learning Finnish. Most of the immigrant women had begun these language courses but had not continued because the courses did not give them what they had expected. They wanted to learn the everyday language that would be useful for their daily life, problems, and needs.

Indeed, learning a foreign language depends on the necessity of it. People who do not have an opportunity to improve their skills and to find work do not need to learn Finnish. However, some of the immigrant women had not shown any effort to learn Finnish. For example, an immigrant woman who had been living in Finland for more than ten years did not attend the Finnish course. She had learned Finnish to cope with her daily life from her children and husband. When I asked why she had not participated in the course, she answered honestly “because of laziness”, feeling ashamed. (IW9)

The level of the women’s language skills is also related to the level of their educational background. Half of them had had less than high school education. They had never studied a foreign language, as one of my interviewee explained:

“I could not succeed in learning Finnish. Everybody was speaking English at least a little bit in the course I took part in, whereas I know neither English nor any other language. I dropped the course, as I could not understand anything. Later my husband taught me Finnish.” (IW1)
Another woman described a common problem among women concerning language skills:

“...I can understand conversations but can not speak well. I am afraid of writing because of making mistakes.” (IW5)

One of my interviewee had succeeded in learning Finnish even though it had been difficult for her. She explained the secret of her success:

“... I am not a clever person but I have a good habit; I never give up. If I wasn’t able to learn something in three days, I learned it in five days. I always continued my efforts because I know that one can do anything if one tries. Of course, it is not easy. I do not accept any defeat.” (IW12)

Another woman pointed out the importance of knowing Finnish as follows:

“Knowing Finnish is a key to this country! The doors will be opened in front of you after you have passed the language barrier.” (IW2)

Moreover, the women who are not able to communicate in Finnish cannot represent themselves independently. They always have to depend on someone else’s assistance.

2.4. Health

In this section, I examine the immigrant women’s attitudes towards health problems. First, I asked if they had a health problem. Most of them did not have a health problem.

![Diagram showing health status](image)

Figure 4: Having a health problem
I observed that none of the women goes to the doctor unless it is necessary. They do not have regular check-ups. Only six women go to the doctor regularly, five women go to the dentist regularly, meaning here once or twice a year.

![Figure 5: Frequency of visiting a doctor](image)

![Figure 6: Frequency of visiting a dentist](image)

However, the women visit a doctor when they are ill. They have learned how the health care system in Finland works, and they know well how they can use it. Half of them visit a doctor alone (17 women), but the women who do not know Finnish well have to be accompanied by their husbands or other relatives (13 women).
Figure 7: Visiting a doctor alone or with someone

The women’s experiences have an effect on their preference for visiting a doctor in Finland or in Turkey. Eleven women prefer to visit a doctor in Turkey and thirteen in Finland. On the other hand, there is a very small difference between the two groups.

Figure 8: Preference to visit a doctor in Turkey or in Finland

The reason why the women do not want to go to the doctor in their home country is that they have had bad experiences with doctors or hospitals. Some of them prefer to go to the doctor in Finland because hospital conditions are better in Finland, even though they believe that Turkish doctors are better.
The following observation made by one of the respondents is particularly important, especially because she is a doctor herself. She said:

“...I trust the doctors in Turkey absolutely. The possibility of making mistakes is smaller because they had many practices. Doctors have difficulty diagnosing in Finland...” (IW11)

The women I interviewed said that doctors in Turkey diagnose symptoms easily and give them a lot of medicine, whereas doctors in Finland do not give them any medicine without having tests conducted. Immigration refers to a hard and painful socialization process psychologically. Immigrants face a foreign society, language, culture, values, and discrimination sometimes. They fall into internal conflict and social contradiction between two different cultures and lifestyles. Some of them pass this integration period very easily but most of them have problems. They experience a very rapid cultural transition and, generally, young immigrants can adapt to this new culture better than their parents can. Many families experience a culture shock, which can cause conflicts in the family (different between man and women; children and family). These immigrant people often have psychological problems (CRE, 2001).

The women I interviewed said that many women have some psychological problems due to being in a foreign country or to having some family problems. Consequently, they need psychological support. They mentioned that most of these women do not know Finnish enough to explain their problems and they need a Turkish-speaking psychologist. They said that most of the women who need to go to a psychologist or psychiatrist do not want to go because they do not trust the interpreters they would need to use.
2.5. Working life: Willingness to work, problems, discrimination

In this section, I focus on the Turkish immigrant women’s participation in working life and address the problems they have experienced.

According to Tuori and Silius (2002), women’s participation in the labour market has a long history in Finland. Women worked generally in agriculture and after the 1960s, women’s participation in the labour market was encouraged because it was necessary for the developing service sectors. Employment opportunities and rights of women have developed for several years. What can be said about the Finnish labour market pattern is that women largely participate in wage work; a large number of women work full-time and there is sharp gender segregation in the labour market.

Turkish women did not have to fight to have equal rights with men in Turkey.

“*In Turkey, as against many western countries, the legal system has no obstacles to the emancipation of women, although it needs improvement. The basic framework was put in place by Atatürk: the right to vote and to be elected, the compulsion to be sent to school at least five years primary school (nowadays primary school lasts eight years), monogamy, proper divorce proceedings, equal inheritance and property rights, and equal pay for equal work, equal social security, and so forth...*” (Cosar, 1978).

Even though they do not have any obstacles to it, women’s participation rates in both economic and political life are very low in Turkey.

Generally, immigrant women do not have any work experience before coming to Finland. Fourteen women had never worked; four women had worked as unpaid family workers. Eleven women had worked generally in the informal sector as unregistered workers in Turkey. Working without the union and social insurance is one of the important reasons for women’s poverty in Turkey (Cömertler, 2004). Immigrant women did outsourced jobs for textile and ready-made clothing firms or worked as salesclerks, cleaners, baby-sitters without any social insurance. Women working in these kinds of jobs had to change workplaces frequently because their employers did not pay their salary regularly or they paid too little. An immigrant woman who changed jobs many times in Turkey said:
“I worked at many different workplaces. I had to change workplaces many times since we could not reach an agreement on salary with bosses in any case. Employers wanted to pay less but give a lot of work to do. I was working seventeen hours a day...” (IW25)

Generally, immigrants in European countries mainly work in certain sectors, such as the industrial and service sectors, in which qualifications and average wages are low. Although immigrants’ level of integration into working life depends on the level of their educational, professional, and linguistic skills as well as on working time and experience in the host country, most of them experience wage disadvantages (Wall and Jose, 2003). I observed that most of the Turkish immigrants (mostly men) work in service sectors (especially in the food sector) in Finland.

The women who had been looking for a job were mostly educated. Five women had found a job through the Employment Office. Three women had found their current jobs through the Internet. One of them found a job through a newspaper advertisement. Another way to find a job was to get help from friends (1 woman) and from relatives (2 women). One woman had received help from the university and another one had found a job with the help of a Finnish professor. Kinship and home-based social relations play an important role in finding work among Turkish immigrant men in Finland, which corresponds to Yücel’s (1987) results presented in his field study on Turkish immigrant workers in Germany.

Half of the immigrant women have not looked for a job after coming to Finland (15 women). Most of the women who had not had any work experience in Turkey have not looked for a job in Finland either (9 women). Immigrant women explained that they could not have the kind of job they wanted because of lack of occupational education (12 women). In order to get a job in Finland, one should first have vocational education and a diploma. Lack of language skills (13 women) and lack of work experience are other reasons that discourage them from joining the workforce.
Table 3: The relationship between education and employment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education level (women)</th>
<th>Work experience in Turkey (... women)</th>
<th>Past work experience in Finland (... women)</th>
<th>Present employment situation in Finland (... women)</th>
<th>Reasons for unemployment</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Literate (3)</td>
<td>Did not work (3)</td>
<td>Did not work (2)</td>
<td>Not working (2)</td>
<td>Lack of language skills, lack of courage, no occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worked (unpaid) (–)</td>
<td>Worked (unpaid) (–)</td>
<td>Working (unpaid) (–)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worked (–)</td>
<td>Worked (1)</td>
<td>Working (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary school (9)</td>
<td>Did not work (4)</td>
<td>Did not work (6)</td>
<td>Not working (8)</td>
<td>Health problem, lack of language skills, no occupation, husband</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worked (unpaid) (3)</td>
<td>Worked (unpaid) (2)</td>
<td>Working (unpaid) (–)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Worked (3)</td>
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<td>Working (1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Retired (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school (2)</td>
<td>Did not work (–)</td>
<td>Did not work (2)</td>
<td>Not working (2)</td>
<td>Lack of language skills, lack of courage, no occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worked (unpaid) (–)</td>
<td>Worked (unpaid) (–)</td>
<td>Working (unpaid) (–)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worked (2)</td>
<td>Worked (–)</td>
<td>Working (–)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school (6)</td>
<td>Did not work (2)</td>
<td>Did not work (4)</td>
<td>Not working (4)</td>
<td>Lack of language skills, lack of courage, no occupation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worked (unpaid) (–)</td>
<td>Worked (unpaid) (–)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worked (4)</td>
<td>Worked (2)</td>
<td>Working (2)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>University (4)</td>
<td>Did not work (4)</td>
<td>Did not work (–)</td>
<td>Not working (–)</td>
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<td>Worked (–)</td>
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<td>Working (4)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master’s degree (4)</td>
<td>Did not work (2)</td>
<td>Did not work (–)</td>
<td>Not working (1)</td>
<td>Maternity</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worked (unpaid) (1)</td>
<td>Worked (unpaid) (–)</td>
<td>Working (unpaid) (–)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Worked (1)</td>
<td>Worked (4)</td>
<td>Working (3)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Doctorate (1)</td>
<td>Did not work (–)</td>
<td>Did not work (–)</td>
<td>Not working (–)</td>
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<td>Worked (unpaid) (–)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Worked (1)</td>
<td>Worked (1)</td>
<td>Working (1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3 indicates the link between work experience and the education level.

Before conducting the interviews, I thought that religion, pressure by husband and childcare problems would be barriers that would prevent women from working in Turkey and expected them to be important obstacles to working for Turkish women in Finland as well. Nevertheless, after the interviews my thoughts changed. These women’s husbands do not prevent them from working. On the contrary, they support and encourage them to work. Only one woman told me that her husband does not want her to work. Childcare was not a problem for working women because this problem is solved in Finland through the day care system. There are very good day care centres and schools for children. None of the women I interviewed mentioned religion to be the reason for not wanting to work. However, one woman I met in Mosque in Helsinki said:
“Men and women are not allowed to work together in the same place according to our religion. Of course, women can work if there are suitable working conditions. But it is not true to work in unsuitable working conditions according to our religion.” (IW7)

In her mind (IW7), suitable working conditions mean a workplace at which women and men work apart from each other and they do not have to see each other unless it is necessary. Women can dress according to their belief (e.g. wear a scarf). Religious women do not perceive women’s working outside home as a good thing because it means that they will have to work at home as well because their husbands rarely share housework. They think that Islam wants to save women from this fate. According to their decision, giving birth to children and being a good mother are the main duties of Muslim women and more important than working outside and producing products (Sakaranaho, 1998).

Actually, not looking for a job does not mean that these women only sit at home. On the contrary, they work at their husbands workplaces as unpaid workers. The women whose husbands have their own restaurants work in them. These women actually confessed that they do not accept this to be real work, saying:

“We are doing our own work instead of sitting without doing anything”.

None of them gets regular salary from their husband. In fact, they have never considered their workplace to be their husbands’ workplace in particular. They work hard without earning any money thinking that the workplace belongs to their families, not only to their husbands, but also to them. However, of course, it is not the same thing to think of oneself as the owner of a workplace and to actually be the real owner of the place. Should their husbands divorce them, they would gain nothing but a very small compensation that could never be enough to compensate their efforts. Kandiyoti claims that “the patrilineage totally appropriates both women’s labour and progeny and renders their work and contribution to production invisible” (1997: 90).

The women whom I asked what kind of jobs they wanted to do are interested in very different jobs. Their most favourite jobs are cooking, baby-sitting, and nursing. However, there are also some women who want to be city bus drivers (IW1, IW5). The women who want to be owners of their own workplaces prefer to open a café or a flower shop (IW10), and one wants to open a hairdressing salon (IW12). One of them told me that she wants to cook Turkish food for Finnish people and to introduce Turkish culture by cooking Turkish food for organizations.
and big celebrations (IW1). Another woman’s idea is interesting (IW25). She has been thinking about opening a dance school to teach “oriental” dance to Finnish women because she had noticed that they want to learn it when they go to Turkey. She thinks why not teach them how to dance in oriental style in Finland.

Some of the women had already been working at that time (12 women) and the women who did not have a job were willing to work. Almost all of the immigrant women told me that they prefer to work and to earn their own money even if their husbands earn good money. Only four women were not willing to work because they thought it was easier not to work. A woman explained the common idea about willingness to work as follows:

“Working and being independent economically is the most beautiful thing for a woman. This is the most delicious meal, the most abundant money.” (IW10)

It was very important also for another woman:

“A woman must be productive all the time. She should have a job and economic freedom. She should not be like a slave. A married couple is said to share everything but this is not true in practice. Because of that women should be independent economically as well as socially.” (IW29)

Some of the women I interviewed have problems in finding a job in Finland even though they have a very good education. One of them who had graduated from English Philology could not find a job even though she had been looking for a job for a long time. She said:

“There was a long unemployment spell during the year we arrived (she immigrated in 1995). The unemployment rate was about 17%. This rate was higher among the academically educated people. According to employers, hiring these people was costly. It was very important to know and use technology very well in order to find a job in Finland. We both had the work permit for five years because my husband was an EU citizen. I looked for a job, but could not find one. They told me that it was a requirement to know Finnish to apply a job. The Employment Office sent me to a Finnish course. I attended some other courses after this course as well. I had learned Finnish but still it was not enough, I had to be better. I continued to attend Finnish courses for years and years. I got five points over six from the third stage of Yleiset kielitutkinnot (General language examinations). How I improved, my Finnish was not important because they did not accept my job application. My teachers always supported and encouraged me
but the employers did not give me a job.” (IW2)

She explained the reasons why she could not find a job even though she was highly educated and knew Finnish very well:

“In my opinion the most important reason is that Finnish people don’t want to work with foreigners. They are stating Finnish as a requirement but do not accept the result I got from an official language exam...They do not want to give salary to foreigners as it provides people with retirement insurance until the end of their lives. It is a very important event to have a permanent job in Finland. Being a married woman is another reason for not getting a job. They do not want to accept me because I can give a birth and take maternity leave. The initial cost of employment is very high in Finland when one starts to work. For this reason, employers do not want the employees to quit working…” (IW2)

Eventually she (IW2) had found a job with the help of her Finnish course teacher and this workplace sent her to a proficiency course in Finnish writing. She got her current job through this course. She is pleased with it, even if it is not what she had dreamed of. She has not sought another job, because she believes that she would face the same problems again. However, she thinks that many things have changed in Finland from 1995 to today and foreigners are more tolerated now. Today they can find a job more quickly and more easily. I asked the women who had a job whether they were looking for another job. Only two of twelve respondents wanted to change jobs and seek another one. The most important reason for not looking for another job was the fear of having to experience the same problems again.

Another immigrant who had graduated from both high school and the university in Finland complained about not having the job for which she was educated. She said:

“My current work is not the one I dreamed of, liked, and wanted. Nevertheless, in the end, it is work, and furthermore, it is work experience. Essentially, who is doing the job that she would like to be doing? It is very difficult. Especially in a foreign country, you do not have a chance to choose. For example, 400 people applied for the one single job I applied for…” (IW3)
One of my interviewees (IW6) who had been working in a government office in Turkey had thought she would get office work when she came to Finland. However, it was not possible. She had to do any kind of work in order to make enough money to earn a living for herself and her little daughter. With the help of her friends, she found a job and worked in a kebab and pizza place as a cleaner and dishwasher. Afterwards, she learned how to make pizza. She learned to work with men in Finland. As a child, she had been taught to stay away from men. Therefore, as a teenager, she had locked herself in the toilet to avoid shaking hands with male guests. She said:

“I saw how easy it is to work with men, especially in some issues. There was no jealousy among us. Nevertheless, there were some difficulties of course. Men’s world is very cruel. Women are more emotional.” (IW6)

After she learned Finnish, she participated in a course preparing for a profession and became a trained nurse. She continued to work in old people’s home as a trainee; she is well liked at her workplace. Working encouraged her and improved her self-confidence. She said:

“I have two professions that are valid all the time. I am a trained nurse and a pizza maker at the same time. I can stand on my own two feet if I am healthy. I trust myself.” (IW6)

One interviewee and her husband had started to learn Finnish as soon as they had arrived in Finland and gone to school to get their vocational diploma. They have been running their own pastry shop for four years. What she (IW23) said is very important:

“It is very easy to go forward if you have a vocational diploma in Finland. My husband is a pastry maker by profession. He went to school in order to take a pastry maker diploma in Finland. We applied the government for investment credit in order to set up a pastry shop after he took his diploma. We did not have any money. We began this work with the credit of the government with no money in our pocket. However, the financial comptroller should accept your idea that you presented as a “project”. They consider it, if this idea brings income, makes enough money for one to live on. Additionally they try to point out what kinds of benefits it can provide for the city, region, and society in the terms of employment and taxes. There is no obstacle to benefit from this credit for foreigners; on the contrary, it is an encouragement.” (IW23)
Another immigrant woman managed to set up her own pizza place after she got divorced. She said:

“I took a loan from my close friends and relatives and had my own workplace without asking for any financial help from the government and without using credit. Especially middle-aged Finns showed a reaction against me when I had my pizza place. They were asking me how we were able to open our own place, have our own car as soon as we came to Finland and from what sources we were finding enough money. In addition, they were shocked when I told them I borrowed this capital from my close friends and I did not use bank credit. They had to take credit in order to open a place. And this was a very big event according to them.” (IW29)

I asked the women with a job whether they are discriminated at the workplace because of being foreigners. Four women said they had experienced discrimination, ten women said they had never been discriminated.

According to Zechner (2002), discrimination in working life appears both at the stage of hiring workers and at workplaces. Additionally, discrimination is more visible in male-dominated fields. One of the interviewees (IW2) working in a private company explained how differently they are treated. She claimed that she is discriminated not only because she is a foreigner, but also because she is a woman.

“...When a Finnish person makes a mistake then it is tolerated. Nevertheless, if a foreigner makes the same mistake it will never be forgiven... There is no doubt about that, there is discrimination between Finnish and foreign people. There is discrimination in real life and employers always prefer men to women while employing, although it seems as if there is no gender discrimination. Women are misusing their working hours by taking often leaves for reasons such as their illness, their children’s illness, and motherhood permit. All permanent workers are members of some worker’s union in Finland, and firms cannot kick them out easily. Additionally, there are always men in high positions even though women are much more successful at that particular workplace, for example.” (IW2)
In addition, Martikainen’s research (1997: 64) supports these thoughts:

“The high rate of unionization together with a centralized bargaining system does not guarantee women equal terms of employment on the basis of the Finnish experience. There are naturally things, such as the provision of maternity and childcare, which are attended to relatively well. Despite full-time employment and good education, women’s wages are nevertheless clearly lower than men’s wages. In addition, collective agreements include a lot of indirect discrimination.”

Another respondent (IW29) told me about her foreign friend:

“One of my Iraqi friends applied for a job through the Employment Office. They sent him to a company. When he went there, the director of the company told him “something must have been misunderstood. We don’t need a worker”. It was not very believable. If that place did not need workers, the Employment Office would not have sent him there.” (IW29)

One of my interviewees (IW3) was working in an international company and she did not think there was discrimination at her workplace. However, she said that generally they do not trust foreigners and prefer Finnish people as employees. She explained the reasons for this preference being the lack of language skills and trust. She said:

“None of the foreigners can speak Finnish like a Finnish person. Finnish is a very difficult language to learn. Trust is another important factor. There is very big distrust of foreigners in Finland. A foreigner is always a foreigner in this country.” (IW3)

Another interviewee (IW6) working in a rest home is very happy about her boss. She thinks that there is no discrimination between Finnish and foreign people. However, she did add that some of her colleagues at her workplace do not like foreigners and gossip about them. She said:

“They are telling that their taxes are spent for foreigners and they do not want to accept this situation. However, at the same time they are also thinking that foreigners take their work from them. One of my female colleagues told me one day: “Mrs..., do you know that one day we will not able to find a job because of these foreigners.” I noticed bad attitudes toward black people. Finnish trained
nurses were against employing black trained nurses because “old patients are afraid of the blacks!” (IW6)

An immigrant woman who had trouble when she set up her pizza place said:

“The people who were against me changed their attitudes later and became my friends after they saw that I was trying to stand on my own feet through my own work without having any benefits from the government. Then they appreciated my effort.” (IW29)

Another woman is a childcare helper in a day care centre. She has very good relationships with her director, her colleagues, and children’s families at her workplace:

“I have never faced discrimination at my workplace; on the contrary, they loved and helped me in everything...I am the only foreigner in the day care centre...” (IW10)

An interviewee who is a doctor at a university hospital underlined that she has never faced discrimination because of being a foreigner. She said:

“They have always accepted my existence as diversity. I have been working in the same hospital in Finland for thirteen years. I see at the hospital that there is no difference between Finnish and foreign patients. Actually, immigrants are lucky. For example, Muslim women patients have a chance to have private rooms or to get a female doctor, whereas Finnish patients don’t.” (IW11)

Another woman said that she had been working successfully for a long time. She explained the secret of her success as follows:

“There is freedom in this country but there is a saying at the same time. If you want to live well economically and in peace, you have to obey the official and social rules of the place in which you live, especially in business life. We have been living in Finland for four years. At home, I live according to my culture and my own rules; on the other hand, I obey the Finnish rules outside. Consequently, I have never experienced a negative event. Essentially their rules are not strange, impossible things. Finns say “…if you are living in this country with us, you should respect us and obey the rules as we do.” If everybody obeys the rules and respects each other, we can live in peace.” (IW23)
Valtonen (1999: 53) points out these rules:

“There are many written and unspoken rules and regulations which are crucial for coping in society and which are not all learned in formal classrooms. Newcomers must learn about rules for living in rental apartments. They should learn how to approach, deal with and relate to Finnish officials, learn how they think, how they work, how to seek help in the right places, and learn the penalties for neglecting official warnings, and so on”.

2.6. Socio-cultural life

In this section, I try to highlight my interviewees’ way to follow the news, their relationships with Finnish people and Turkish people. Here I look at their religious life and political life.

2.6.1. Following the news

The most common way to follow the news is the television. Most of the Turkish families watch Turkish television channels (13 families). Usually they do not have a chance to watch the news during the first years of their arrival. They buy earthenware pot antenna and “digi Turk” to be able to watch Turkish TV channels as soon as they have the opportunity because the wives get bored at home and the children’s Turkish language skills need to be improved. Furthermore, it is so important an issue that the first thing they ask when renting a flat is whether they can put the antenna on the roof. If this is not allowed, they start looking for flats with a balcony on the south side because they can place antenna on the balcony. They also have a compass on them, as the direction of the antenna is very important for receiving the channels clearly.

Most of women do not know Finnish well enough to watch Finnish TV channels. They know the news about Finland because their husbands or children tell them about it. For this reason, they generally follow the news on Turkish TV channels. Thirteen women follow the news in Turkish, seven women in Finnish, and ten women use both languages.

It is very easy to see the effect of watching TV on language skills. The women who do not have Turkish TV channels and who watch Finnish TV regularly said that they understand Finnish very well, whereas the women who always watch Turkish said that they do not under-
stand Finnish easily. If there were Turkish channels, no one would watch Finnish TV channels at home. On the other hand, the children who have Turkish TV channels at home speak Turkish more fluently than other children who do not watch Turkish channels.

![Figure 9: Following the news in Turkish or Finnish](image)

The immigrant women confessed that they do not read any newspapers, not in Turkish or in Finnish. Most of them do not read books either. Twelve women read regularly, while seventeen women do not read at all. However, they read newspaper advertisements to find out about prices and discounts.

2.6.2. Relations with Finnish people

In this section, I focus on the relations of immigrant women with Finnish people in society. According to SOCCARE experts, immigrant people need intensive language training for several years from the beginning to settle in Finland. In addition, they need support in managing in their daily life. The most important thing they need is regular contacts with Finnish people (Zechner, 2002).

The immigrant women’s social environment is composed of their relatives if they have them in Finland and of some close Turkish friends. They have relationship with a very few Finnish people. The reason for this situation is not their unwillingness to communicate, but mostly lack of language skills. In addition, they cannot find things to share because they come from different cultures. Lack of time to communicate with Finns is the excuse of the women who have a job.
An immigrant woman (IW29) explained why it is difficult to communicate with Finns:

“Friendship with Finns is very good. However, it is not continuing. For example, you invite your Finnish friend to your home or workplace to have a cup of coffee. It is very nice. Then she invites you to a disco or a pub to have fun. If you decline these invitations every time, your friendship does not continue. Going to a disco or pub at night is very normal according to their culture just like going to a café. However, it is not normal for us, on the contrary; it is not an acceptable attitude according to the Turkish culture. So we have difficulty continuing our friendship with Finnish friends.” (IW29)

I should mention that this woman (IW29) is from a traditional family. Going to a pub or disco are normal activities for many Turkish women living in big cities in Turkey (especially for young women). However, it is not normal for traditional women in rural areas.

The immigrant women described Finnish people as being quiet, calm, hardworking, and respectful of the rules. They thought that they could be trusted. Of course, it is not right to make stereotypes depending on the attitudes of the few Finnish people they knew. The purpose of this question was to understand what their feelings toward Finnish people and their thoughts were.

According to Valtonen (1999), immigrants’ encounters with natives have an impact on integration. If they have negative experiences, immigrants isolate themselves to their own ethnic group. Negative attitudes towards foreigners can be stereotyping, physical violence and verbal insults.

I received very different answers when I asked the women about how Finns behave towards them. Most of them have been affected by experiences of negative attitudes or stereotyping in some way, at least one time. One of my interviewees (IW6) had observed that Finnish people are afraid of foreigners and they do not want to live among them. One of her colleagues told her as follows:

“... one should gather all foreigners, fill a ship with them, and send them back to their countries.” Another one told her “A black trained nurse will never wash me when I get old.” (IW6)
An immigrant woman’s observation explains negative attitudes towards immigrant clearly. She said:

“The fear toward unknown dominated their attitudes towards foreigners. Their reaction is to protect themselves, but not to destroy the unknown thing. Most of them are coping with this fear by meeting foreigners. There is no similar racism like in Germany and I wish it would never exist.” (IW22)

In fact, she was talking about xenophobia, fear of everything strange and unknown; foreigners are perceived as a threat or as a possible danger. According to Cashmore, “Xenophobia, denoting fear of strangers of hostility to the Other, is a term used in public circles as an alternative to racism. It depends on the idea of fundamental differences between cultures, while racism relies on ideas of inferiority” (1984, 383). As Valtonen states “… for the individual who interfaces at disadvantages with stereotyping, prejudice, discrimination or inequality regardless of terminology used, the effect is the same: an offence against his humanity” (1999: 44).

Even though they do not have the kinds of relationships with neighbours that they used to have in Turkey, they are happy with their Finnish neighbours. They greet each other when they meet. They said that their neighbours give presents to their children at Christmas. In addition, they give some gifts to their Finnish neighbours and their children. They indicated that Finns like giving presents.

Generally, Finnish people behave friendly towards them. As an exception to this, some Finns behave in a hostile manner. A woman mentioned about an unpleasant event:

“…while I was waiting at the bus station, a woman came and told me, “What is your place in this country? I do not want to pay tax for you. Go away. Go back to your own country.” I could not find words to say anything since I was in shock. But a young Finnish man got angry and said something to her.” (IW27)

An immigrant woman said:

“I listen to people without judging them. There are good Finns and there are also bad Finns, just like, there are good Turks and bad Turks. Essentially nobody is either completely good or completely bad. Some people make me very happy and some of them make me sad in Finland.” (IW22)
Finnish people’s work ethics have had the greatest impact on the woman (IW22) who works at the university as well as in a translation office at the same time. She continued to explain:

“Finnish people are not very talkative but it indeed depends on the topic you talk about. Finnish people are not accustomed to “small talk” which is very common in the Mediterranean countries. But you can make in-depth intellectual conversations with them.” (IW22)

One of the women I interviewed has lived and studied in Finland for a long time. She is married to a Finnish man and she is working for a big company. She has observed many events during these years:

“People’s attitudes change depending on their ages. Finnish students feel themselves closer to foreigners as they are together frequently at school. An about 35-year-old unemployed Finnish man perceives foreigners as people who have come to Finland to take over their jobs. In addition, he thinks they also take their women because foreign men get married to Finnish women in order to settle in Finland.” (IW3)

It should be mentioned that the “beach boy phenomenon” (as it is called in Finland) has an impact on the impression that Finnish people have of Turkish people and the relationships between Turks and Finns very negatively. Men’s attitudes bring about negative effects and cause some problems.

The woman (IW23) shared with me the problems she had observed among her close friends. She said:

“The problems begin one year after a Turkish man and a Finnish woman get married. A Turkish man wants to be the owner of his wife, but a Finnish woman says “It is my life and my way of living, you cannot interfere”. Then the “my money, your money” time begins. If they have a baby, the “my child, your child” division is a problem. Another problem in marriage between foreigners is the age difference. Generally, Turkish husbands are very young and Finnish wives are older. They meet each other in a beach town in Turkey, fall in love and get married within a short time. In Finland, these men are called “Marmaris grooms”. After coming to Finland, Turkish young men begin to go to the disco and meet with young girls or they prefer to be together with people from their own culture. And the problems begin.” (IW23)
One of the immigrant women shared with me her anxiety:

“My son is living with a Finnish girl. Of course, I accept it because it is his life and the most important thing for me is his happiness. Nevertheless, frankly, it is disturbing me. I know that some problems occur in marriage between couples who come from different cultures. They are very young now and do not want to see this fact. Tomorrow is too far for them. We also see it too far. Nevertheless, it is closer than tomorrow…” (IW29)

The immigrant women complained about young Finns, about how they are spitting all the time. Another complaint was about drunken people: they drink a lot but do not disturb people. One of the women explained this common thought as follows:

“They drink very much but they do not harm anybody else but themselves.” (IW16)

I asked them how they would behave if their children wanted to marry to a Finn or a foreigner. Even if the answers began like “of course it is their life”, they then continued “but if they ask me I could not support it!” The answer for my question “Why?” was “…they can understand each other better with someone from the same culture. Also, children will be Turkish.” They want their grandchildren to grow up according to Turkish traditions and customs. Actually, it is very difficult to say that they are open-minded. On the contrary, they are conservative. I presented the same question to their young children. They said that they do not want to marry a Finn because they do not feel that they belong to this country and they considered themselves different from Finnish people. However, it was very interesting that their boy or girl friends were Finnish. One of the boys was dating a foreigner and his mother knew this but she had agreed to it because he was not planning to marry her. However, it was very clear that if they eventually want to get married, she would oppose the marriage. Another woman told me that she would agree with his son if he wanted to marry to a foreigner. She had one condition, however: she wanted to look after their children.

For me, an interesting observation about the women who are married to foreigners is that they want to raise their children as Turks. Of course, the children will have dual nationality, as their fathers are foreigners, but they should also have a Turkish identity. Furthermore, it was very interesting that all of them had given Turkish names to their children. Some of these children also have a Finnish name as their middle name but they always use their Turkish name.
Most of the interviewees believed that lack of knowledge and misconceptions about immigrants and their cultures feed stereotyping. Moreover, it prevents communication with Finnish people. Both Finns and immigrants thus close the doors between them. As one of my interviewee (IW22) said, education is very important in overcoming prejudice:

“Adaptation to this country is very difficult to people if they have “we and others, Turks and others” decisions in their minds. Some things exist only in people’s imagination. I mean the differences and the discriminations we imagine in our minds. Actually, Finns are not very different from people coming from Turkey. The only difference from Turkey is that everybody is educated in Finland... Education is very important in opening minds to new ideas and developments.”

(IW22)

2.6.3. Relations with Turkish people

Turkish immigrant women usually meet other Turkish women shortly after they arrive in Finland and they set up small groups. They have very few or no relatives and friends at all and less social life than they had had in Turkey. I observed the relationships between immigrants, which get different shapes depending on in which city they lived: Helsinki, Tampere, or Turku. In Helsinki, these relations are more individual than in Tampere and Turku. The women prefer to meet with their friends at restaurant, cafes, or big shopping centres instead of meeting at home. However, immigrants living in Tampere and Espoo have very close relationships with their friends. They prefer to meet at home instead of going out because meeting outside home was not economical as well as it is not a cultural habit. One of them referred to this situation as follows:

“We can prepare a pot of tea and a plate of cookies with the same amount of money that we can buy only one pulla and a cup of tea in a café.” (IW13)

Hardly any of the Turkish women have night life culture; they do not go to the disco, pub, or restaurant at night, not alone or with their husbands, because they do not appreciate this life style as suitable to Turkish culture. Some families who maintain a higher living standard have dinner outside, although not very frequently.

I was very upset to hear that Turkish people do not support each other; on the contrary, they are cautious and avoid each other; they do not want to be together. One of the women I interviewed (IW29) told me that immigrant women are not close to each other because they
do not want others to hear about their own problems; they are afraid of gossiping. Another woman (IW29) claimed that although everybody knows everything, these women continue “the happy play” because they have to.

There is a Finnish–Turkish Association in Turku and another Turkish Association in Helsinki. Almost everybody I interviewed in Helsinki knows about this association. However, they do not participate in its activities. The president of Finnish–Turkish Association is very optimistic about this. She said:

“The aim of our association is not to gather together all Turks living in Finland. The Turkish community has a very rich culture. Our aim is to represent this culture in Finland. The purpose of the association is to gather together people who were interested in this issue.” (IW11)

2.6.4. Political life

I looked into immigrant women’s participation in political life and in civil society. Politics has never been a way of life or a dominating feature in the immigrant women’s life in Turkey. With the exception of two, none of them actively participates in political life in Finland. Actually political life is not attractive to most of them. They believe that “politics is not their business”. Some of them vote in local elections (10 women), because there are some Turkish candidates in those cities (Turku, Tampere, and Helsinki). They answered positively my question about whether or not they want to vote in the next election. Twenty-five women are willing to vote. However, they stated that they do not have enough knowledge about the elections, about the system, or about the candidates. Only a few women want to play an active role in political life.
These results lead me to conclude that women do not effectively participate in political life or civil society.

The immigrant women who are not interested in political life are not interested in civil society either. Civil society participation refers to organizational activity and to participation in the public discourse. Only six women are members of some associations and four women are interested in civil society. The rest are not members in any association. However, all of them are willing to support and participate in the activities of an organization gathering them together to look for solutions to their problems.
2.6.5. Religious life

In this section, I focus on the impact of religion on immigrant women’s way of life and their decision about religious discrimination.

“Muslim societies are consequently preoccupied with the position of women and with women’s role in the family and society… There is a continuing pressure for Muslim women not to be seen to be disloyal to Islam, Islamic heritage and Islamic culture, whether they live in a Muslim country or belong to a minority in the third world or in the west. If they are disloyal to Islam and accept some western values such as not veiling, they are described as corrupted by western values”. (Rozari, 1996)

Turkish Muslim women have different positions among other Muslim women living in Muslim countries because Turkey has been a secular country since 1937. They are free to veil or not according to secular Republic Laws. Wearing a headscarf or veiling is optional outside public areas. In Turkey, wearing a headscarf is not allowed in public areas such as schools, universities, hospitals, and public buildings. Therefore, women with headscarves cannot work as government staff or go to schools and universities. Four women (IW5, IW9, IW15, and IW17) among my respondents had been wearing headscarves in Turkey. In addition, they mentioned that they wore scarves more because of tradition than as a religious sign. Only one of them (IW17) wore it as a rule of Islam.

The Turkish immigrant women I interviewed are all Muslim, with the exception of four. A woman who is not Muslim told me that she is “Alevi” and does not perceive “Alevi belief” as Muslim religion, whereas many “Alevi” people define themselves as Muslim but different from “Sunni belief” in practice. Actually, many women I interviewed are “Alevi” but they define themselves as “Alevi Muslims”.

Sakaranaho (1998), who wrote her dissertation on women, Islam, and ideologies in Turkey, observes that “Turkish” is commonly understood to be synonymous with “Muslim”, because 90 percent of the population of Turkey are Muslims. Therefore, when asked about religion,

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4 The Alevis, one of the Shiite groups, are so far away from the Sunni mainstream that their adherence to Islam is uncertain. They use the Koran very little, they do not go to the mosque, and they ignore many of the Islamic regulations and practices (http://www.danielpipes.org/article/823). For more information about the Alevis, go to http://www.alevibektasi.org, http://www.alevi.dk, or www.religioscope.com/info/notes/2002_023_alevis.htm.

5 The Sunni belief is known in Arabic as the Ahl-i Sunnah (the People of Sunnah), a term which according to the earliest classical sources emerged in the ninth century. The word “Sunnah” means custom, method, path, or example, and refers particularly to the example of the prophet Muhammad as found in the Hadith. Thus, the Ahl-i Sunnah are those who follow the tradition of the prophet and his companions in understanding the Islamic faith (go to http://philtar.ucsm.ac.uk/encyclopedia/islam/sunni/sunni.html)
the first answer given by some of them “of course, we are Turkish” means “we are Muslims”.

Almost all of the women who said that they are Muslims mentioned that they are not religious and do not practice regularly. According to them, being religious is doing all religious practice completely and maybe being radical sometimes. For a few of them, Islam is the way of life; for others, Islam is only one aspect of their cultural background.

I made an observation – when asked about their religion, the women answered “we are Muslim, elhamdulillah, we do not eat pork...” They understood that being Muslim means not eating pork. Nowadays it is not necessary to explain to Finns why Muslims do not eat pork because they have already learned why.

However, within the first few years after their arrival, there were not so many Muslims in Finland and they had to mention and explain the reason for not eating pork. This situation caused some problems for little children at school. If the family of Muslim children did not want them to eat pork, they mentioned this condition when they were registering to the school. These children had another kind of meat such as lamb or beef at school. Everything seemed very normal but it was difficult to explain to the children asking why they could not have the same meat as their friends had. The most difficult thing for these little children was to try to explain this to other little children.

I asked them if anything had changed in their belief or practice after immigrating to Finland. It was the same for most of them. Two women (IW1, IW27) had developed an interest in Islam and one of them (IW1) had started to try to learn how to read the Koran. One woman (IW3) said that she had been fasting in Turkey but does not fast now. Four women (IW5, IW9, IW15, and IW17) had been wearing headscarves but they do not wear them in Finland.

Most of the women I interviewed stated that there are no obstacles or discrimination, official or individual, one can live according to one’s belief and practice one’s religion freely in Finland. It was very interesting what a woman who teaches the Koran and religious knowledge to women and children at a mosque said:

“There is no religious discrimination and obstacles to practicing religion in Finland if someone wants to do it. On the contrary, Finns are respectful to people who live their religion.” (IW7)
Another woman said that her Finnish director is respectful of Islam:

“\textit{I was fasting during Ramadan. My director sent me to children’s bedroom and told me \textit{“go and sleep” at lunch time.”} (IW10)"

However, they thought that Finns began to be suspicious about Islam as the rest of the world especially after the 9/11 attack. One woman (IW23) observed that Finns are afraid of becoming involved in a terrorist attack. She said:

“\textit{Finnish people do not like wars. Many people died from hunger in the last war against Russia. So maybe today’s youth do not but their parents and grandparents know war and starvation very well. For example, during the Iraq War, my customers criticized Bush and were worried about human died in war.”} (IW23)

One of my interviewees married to a Finn is very pleased with her husband, because he has never wanted the change her religion. Nevertheless, sometimes they have had some problems. She said:

“\textit{He watches some news about Islam and makes comparison with my country. He blames us for not being as religious as other Muslim countries. I go through the trouble of explaining the religion in the secular system in Turkey. I know that he is trying to learn and understand Islam. I never told him to change his religion. I believe that if he changes his religion because I want him to, it does not mean anything. It is meaningful only if he wants to be a Muslim by himself. He can be a real Muslim at that time.”} (IW25)

She (IW25) told me that one of her Turkish friends had to change religions and become a Christian because her husband pressured her to do so.

There is another side to the story. One woman (IW23) said that religion is a very important problem in marriages between foreigners:

“\textit{Our young men are very unconscious about religious issues. They are forcing their Finnish wives to convert to Islam...A Finnish woman accepted being Muslim as she loved her husband. When I asked her why she became Muslim, she told me \textit{“You are Muslim, why are you asking this question instead of just being happy”}. I cannot be happy. How can I be happy? She accepted Islam just}
because she loved her husband. I told her “Do not be Muslim!” Because when you argue and divorced two days later, you will say, “I am not Muslim!” (IW23)

Of my interviewees, nine are married to a foreigner. These women did not have any problems until they decided to have a baby. The most important problem concerned the baby’s religion. Three of them are not Muslim, they have children, and the religion of their child is not important to them. Actually, their husbands do not care about religion. Nevertheless, six other women are Muslim and deciding about their babies’ religion was a very important problem for these women. Some of them prefer not to have children.

One of the interviewees said that there is discrimination but there are not so many physical obstacles to practicing religious requirements. She said:

“Finnish society is very secular and even hostile to religion. I think there is some kind of fear of religion not only to Islam, but also to all religions. If you are too religious, it is not a good thing in Finland. It does not matter if you are Muslim, Christian, or whatever, religion in people’s life here is not so obvious and visible.” (IW8)

Even though they have not faced any obstacles, they have some requirements for practicing easily. First, they want a place to practice “namaz” when they are not at home. In fact, there are some small mosques in Helsinki, Tampere, and Turku. However, they are not like mosques because they are not open for twenty-four hours a day for practice; they are closed except for some certain time. They are open just for special holy days and nights for people to get together and practice. One of the women suggested as a solution:

“I wish there was a special room to worship in a big shopping centre like baby care rooms. These places can be paid for to keep them clean and ready for worship.” (IW1)

The women I interviewed complained that there is nobody to ask some questions about religion. They mentioned their demand for an official religion staff. They wanted this staff to be sent by the Turkish government.
2.7. Happiness in Finland and future expectations

In the end of my interviews I wanted to learn if they were happy or not in Finland. The answer given by all women was “I am happy of course. My children and husband are with me but I wish I wouldn’t be homesick.”

All of them had different explanations for being happy in Finland. One of them said:

“I am happier than I was in Turkey because women have more rights in Finland.” (IW1)

Another one said:

“I feel confident in this country. I am not anxious about my children’s future.” (IW12)

She (IW3) is very happy because it is quiet in Tampere. Her complaints concern the traffic jam and crowded streets of Istanbul. Nevertheless, according to her, Tampere does not have sufficiently social and cultural activities.

The immigrant women have succeeded to adjust to the climate of Finland and love its nature. They love winter as well as its beautiful summer. However, some women have not been able to adapt to the climate. For example:

“My worst problem is the cold weather in Finland. This climate is killing me.” (IW24)

Of course, life is much more difficult in winter. An interviewee explained with this simple sentence:

“Staying inside is boring; on the other hand, outside, there is snow.” (IW16)

However, there was one woman who said that she is unhappy in this country. She said:

“...I love nature, winter and summer in this country. It is very strange not to see any mountains. There is silence, cleanliness, and calmness. However, people are hostile, and they are not friendly. I do not like this country just for this reason...” (IW2)

This is what she said but when I asked her if she wanted to return to Turkey, she said:
“I do not think I go back to Turkey. I have a good job here, and it seems to me very difficult to have the same conditions in Turkey. I have already worked a lot in order to get them. But still it is not certain.” (IW2)

All of the immigrant women answered my question about going back to Turkey negatively, at least concerning the near future. However, they said that they could return after their children have grown up and have a profession and a job. Most of the families I interviewed had bought a house or a flat in Finland through bank credit and they are paying it back. Having their own houses is very important to immigrants. Parents try to have their own house because they want to provide a house for their children in case they do not want to return to Turkey when their parents decide to do so.

An immigrant woman who divorced does not want to go back to Turkey. She said:

“...living in Turkey is very difficult for a divorced woman. People are always looking down upon you and following what you do, where you go. However, it [divorce] is very normal in Finland. I like to live in Finland for this reason... I have not planned to return to Turkey and will never do so. If I go back, where can I live, how can I find a job? Living in Finland is very easy and comfortable for me economically and actually in every way.” (IW5)

Another woman said:

“...If we had the same opportunities in Turkey, we would not have to immigrate to Finland. We have many opportunities in Finland. Women have more rights. I love Finland for this reason...” (IW17)

After all my interviews, I noticed that they do not feel a sense of belonging in any place. One interviewee explained her feelings:

“...living abroad is very difficult. When we go to Turkey, we miss Finland and say ‘we wish that we would be back home!!!’ On the other hand, when we are in Finland, we miss Turkey. I do not know which country we belong to, which country we are happy in.” (IW12)
3. CONCLUSIONS

In this research, I talked to the Turkish immigrant women living in Finland. Their economic, social, and political integration to Finnish society was the main research subject.

Immigration does not merely mean moving to another country, changing environments, climates, and so on. It also means changing cultures, the ways of life, values, languages, and sets of beliefs. In this sense, almost all of the immigrant women I interviewed had experienced trouble when settling down in Finland.

In the following, I draw some conclusions and suggestions by using the research findings and observations:

Collecting statistical data on the socio-economic features of immigrants such as educational and professional background is necessary in order to achieve successful results of integration programmes of national or local scope.

For their integration, it is very important to keep immigrants well informed. Turkish immigrants need to be informed about the process and applications of various institutions in Finland because the institutional bureaucracy is very different in Turkey. Relatives who had immigrated to Finland before can have the informative role of institutions. However, sometimes, they give wrong and deficient information. Brochures in Turkish about social services and benefits could be useful in this sense.

My research findings indicate that some serious family problems in marital and family relations exist among immigrant families. They (especially women) need help from social services, from a family adviser or psychologist. However, existing institutions cannot help them because they are not open-minded and they do not know Finnish. They would need an interpreter, but the problem is that they never trust interpreters. These women prefer not to go to the psychologist and not to use social service help. They try to cope with family problems by themselves. Turkish-speaking psychiatrists and psychologists would be helpful in overcoming some integration problems.

The results show clearly that native language training is a necessity but not sufficiently provided. Educating children in their native language is important not only in the cultural context but also for their lifelong learning process. There are many professional teachers among Turkish immigrants, also many people who have university education and who are
able to teach Turkish to the immigrant children. Employing these people as Turkish teachers can be helpful at the first stage and it can be most preferable since they can also be beneficial for integration into society. Another solution can be to cooperate with The Ministry of National Education of Turkey; it can send Turkish teachers to Finland as it sends teachers to the other European countries.

There are only two generations of Turkish immigrants in Finland. The second generation is well integrated because they have a good education. Therefore, the children of immigrant families should be encouraged and offered support for entering higher education and universities. A well-educated second generation will participate in working life more easily and have better jobs than their parents.

Most of the interviewees mentioned that language skills are the key to integration as they form the basis for human relations. Even though most of the immigrant women know Finnish for very basic daily activities, only a few of them have good language proficiency. Inadequacy of language skills is the most obvious obstacle to integration because it is not possible to communicate and integrate into society if one does not understand the language. Language training is an essential way of providing integration in all spheres. Therefore, all immigrant women should be encouraged and provided support for attending Finnish courses.

The women’s educational backgrounds and knowledge of a second language are affecting their success in learning Finnish. They can be more successful if they have lessons with people of similar educational backgrounds. In addition, teaching them the daily language that they need will increase their attention and course attendance. The women who begin courses but who eventually drop out should be observed and the reasons for their being unsuccessful should be analysed.

The women should be informed about the health care system and about the maternity and childcare systems through brochures published in Turkish, as the information also exists in other languages.

A significant problem among most of the immigrant women who do not work but who are willing to work is language. Generally, they prefer to set up their own businesses and work for themselves. They should be informed and supported in this issue. In addition, immigrants who succeed in setting up their own business can be good examples and pave the way to others.
Women who know Finnish complain about not having jobs suitable to their education. Generally, they have found low-skilled work with low salary even though they have an occupation and university education. They are working but they are not satisfied with their work. The employers’ decisions supporting the idea that the immigrants should not be employed can be changed through spreading news about good experiences gained at the workplaces at which immigrants are employed. Another way to convince them can be to use recommendation letters. My findings show that some of the women had found good jobs with the help of recommendation letters from their teachers or previous supervisors.

In addition, integration into the workforce not only in the private sector, but also in the public sector should be improved. Complaints about discrimination in hiring and promoting should be taken into consideration by effective governmental mechanisms.

Generally, the women have very close relationships with Turkish people but I think it does not mean that they live in isolation. Turkish women have relations (but not very close) with their Finnish neighbours and friends even though they cannot understand Finnish very well. Nevertheless, it is very difficult for most of them to be very close to the Finns because of cultural differences. The division into “we” and “others” is very common among immigrant women. However, there are disagreements among immigrants. There is competition between them as most of them are working in the same service sector (food). This competition is also affecting their social relationships. People who are disagreeing do not communicate with each other and their relatives.

Turkish women are not interested in politics in Finland as they were not in Turkey either. They are willing but hesitant to participate in civil society. Therefore, they should be informed about the political system and civil society.

Even though religion is not the core of their way of life, it is significant for immigrant women as a cultural value.

There are Finnish–Turkish Associations in Helsinki, Turku and Oulu. Their studies on integration of immigrants can be helpful. In addition, the directors of these associations have been living in Finland for a long time and they are aware of the many problems that immigrants have. They try to help in finding a solution these problems. Using their experiences will increase the efficiency of integration programmes. Socio-cultural activities in cooperation with these associations can be beneficial to increase communication between cultures.
An important subject for future research is children of immigrant families. The effects of cultural changes on their family life, school life and relationships with people and their experiences in choosing their profession, finding a job and in discrimination should be analysed in detail in the future.
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