

RELATIONAL CUTOFF AND ITS ROLE
IN PROTECTING THE SELF IN SOCIAL CONTEXTS

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DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

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ABSTRACT

Relational Cutoff and Its Role in Protecting the Self in Social Contexts

The present study aimed to explore defensive features of relational cutoff in social contexts. Relational cutoff was conceptualized as stopping speaking to another person for a variable length of time, because of seemingly unresolvable conflict between intimates. Relational cutoff was investigated conditions in which the participants had the role of the offended or the offender in the conflict. The data were collected from 12 participants including 6 university students and 6 adults through a semi-structured one time interview. Grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006) was applied to analyze the interviews. It appeared that relational cutoff involved both intrapsychic and interpsychic processes, beginning with a narcissistic injury, followed by counteractions, relational evaluation. Relatioanal cutoff ended with forgiveness, resolved partially or stayed as unresolved. The results revealed that relational cutoff can be considered as having defensive elements consisting of avoiding overwhelming unpleasant emotions and having an unconscious motivation to protect the cohesiveness of self and self-esteem. The findings were discussed through the classical and the relational psychoanalytical perspectives by taking into consideration of the norms in the Turkish culture. Generational and gender differences in experiencing relational cutoff were also debated. Limitations and implications of the present study were also reviewed.

ÖZET

Küsmenin Sosyal Bağlamda Benliğin Korunmasındaki Rolü

Bu çalışma, küsmenin sosyal bağlamdaki savunma özelliklerini keşfetmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Küsmek, yakın bir insanla ilişkide çözülemeyen bir çatışmadan dolayı değişken bir zaman süresince konuşmamak olarak tanımlanmıştır. Katılımcıların küstükleri yada birbaşkasını küstürdükleri durumlar incelenmiştir. Araştırmanın verileri 6 üniversite öğrencisi ve 6 yetişkin olmak üzere 12 katılımcıdan bir defa yapılan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerle toplanmıştır. Analiz için Görüşmeler Gömülü Kurama (Charmaz, 2006) göre analiz edilmiştir. Küsmenin narsistik bir yaralanmayla başlayan, karşı tepkiler ve ilişkiyi gözden geçirmeyle devam eden interpsişik ve intrapsişik bir süreç olduğu görülmüştür. Küsmek bağışlanma, kısmi olarak çözülen veya devam eden olarak sonuçlanmıştır. Bulgular küsmenin çok yoğun olumsuz duygulardan kaçınmayı, bilinçdışı bir moritasyona sahip olarak benlik bütünlüğünü ve benlik saygısını korumayı içeren savunma özelliklerine sahip olduğunun düşünölebileceğini göstermiştir. Bulgular Türk kültürel normları göz önünde bulundurularak, klasik ve ilişkiyel psikanaliz bakışaçılarına göre tartışılmıştır. Farklı kuşaklar ve cinsiyetlerin küsme deneyimindeki farklılıklar da tartışılmıştır. Ayrıca Araştırmanın kısıtlı yanları ve çıkarımları da belirtilmiştir.

To my family and my wife, Özge

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Cultures have a great influence on people's relationships in their entire life. Cultures specify the roles of a person according to various characteristics of that person including his/her age, gender, economic class, etc. Conflict management is one of the interpersonal interactions influenced by cultural norms. It was argued that the Turkish culture emphasizes the notion of harmony in the relationships and proposes not to make the conflicts more serious (Fişek, 2018). Kusmek, a culture specific phenomenon of relational cutoff, has been seen in Turkey as a way of relational act in response to unsolvable conflict.

The aim of this research is investigating defensive characteristics of this relational cutoff from a psychoanalytical perspective. In the following pages, the concept of defense and silence in both social sciences and psychoanalysis will be reviewed. This will be followed by a description of the concept of relational cutoff and its proposed relation to the notion of defenses.

1.1 History of the concept of defense

From the earliest days of psychoanalysis, the term defense has been prominent as a subject of extensive study. Its definition and conceptualization vary according to the assumptions of different psychoanalytic theories about human nature, psychopathology and the structure of the psyche (Cooper, 1998). The concept of defense first appeared in Freud's article "The Neuro-Psychoses of Defense" (1894). In this paper, he maintained that the purpose of defense is to evacuate a drive or its derivative. Defenses were regarded as counter-cathexis, an effort to cope with a

counter-power that produces unpleasure or anxiety. Even though Freud (1905) proposed several defense mechanisms like displacement and humor, for thirty years he used the term more broadly referring to certain defenses especially repression interchangeably (Cooper, 1989; Çavdar, 2014). According to Freud (1914), repression is the cornerstone of psychoanalysis. The other defenses are called into to play when repression is not able to manage impulses and affect (Freud, 1926). In fact, some defense mechanisms that he spoke of earlier were not even mentioned in his Introductory Lectures (Vaillant,1992).

It was argued that Freud's formulation of defense changed when his views moved from his economic model to his structural model of the human psyche (Cooper, 1989). In his article "Inhibitions, Symptoms and Anxiety" (1926); Freud announced to a turn back to his old concept of "defense" in order to understand the ways the ego copes with anxiety. Freud (1926) introduced the theory of signal anxiety proposing that defenses can be regarded as ego functions, as ways to sustain the unconscious position of forbidden impulses and accordingly lessen anxiety. According to Freud (1926), the interpretation of defense leads a patient to realize the origins of his or her symptoms and eventually to give up the energy to maintain defensive adaptation. Finally, Freud (1926) explicitly redefined the concept of defense as all the functions of ego that are committed to regulating intrapsychic conflicts.

By reading Freud's entire work on defenses, Vaillant (1992) composes five discrete characteristics of defenses: (1) defenses operate "unconsciously", (2) they have a central role in handling drive and affect, (3) they are different from each other, (4) they are "dynamic and reversible", (5) lastly, defenses can be both "adaptive" and "maladaptive".

Following Freud's conceptualization of defense and its relationship with the ego, the discussion over defense was maintained further by ego psychologists who primarily focused on the ego and its' role in defensive processes. Anna Freud (1936) focused on the reality-testing function of the ego and explored the connection between reality and defense. Even though Anna Freud agreed with Sigmund Freud's conceptualization of defense in that in the defensive process there is unpleasure which is triggered by intrapsychic conflicts; but the source of unpleasure is more varied than what her father indicated (Arlow, 1966; as cited in Çavdar, 2014). She suggested that defenses can be categorized in accordance to the sources of anxiety which comprise instinctual pressure, external reality and superego. She was also the first to use the phrase "defense mechanism" rather than defense (Cooper, 1989) and to list specific defense mechanisms including repression, regression, reaction formation, isolation, undoing, projection, introjection, reversal, turning against self, and sublimation (A. Freud, 1936). Anna Freud stressed that defenses serve the ego by mitigating intrapsychic conflicts and their affects which are related to particular developmental stages. Instead of focusing on defense interpretation, she primarily made an effort to understand particular defenses, their relations to personality structures, developmental line of defenses, and the frequency and flexibility of the use of defense mechanisms (A.Freud, 1936).

The Ego psychology perspective investigated the separate functions of the ego and its association with defensiveness. Ego psychologists questioned whether ego operations are totally or partially defensive (Çavdar, 2014). Whilst the adaptive functions of defense mechanisms are highlighted, the understanding of defenses pertaining to psychopathology is deemphasized (Hartmann, Kris, & Loewenstein, 1946).

The ego psychology perspective's clearly formulated definition and categorization of defense mechanisms was criticized from several points of view. It was suggested that an explicit description of defenses was a simplification of psychic function and too superficial to catch the complexity of the human psyche (Blum, 1985). Furthermore, it was argued that defensive processes are interactive with several mechanisms, concordant with different levels of ego function and cannot be taken into consideration discretely (Wallerstein, 1967).

The British Object Relational School drew attention to the representation of the object and the self in the conceptualization of defense (Çavdar, 2014). Specifically, the aim of the defense is not only to regulate instincts and affects but also to influence the symbolization of the experience, and internalizing object configurations by modifying object and self representation (Lerner & Lerner, 1982). Although the object relational theorists cover common ground, they differ from each other in terms of the role of instinct, the development of defenses, and internalization of relations (Cooper, 1998).

Klein (1946) considered phantasies as a prominent element in defensive processes. Besides the function of phantasy as a mental representation of drives, it has defensive characteristics as a means of discharging impulses. Furthermore, phantasies can operate as a defense against internal reality. When the internal reality is painful such as suffering from hunger, phantasies come into play so as to escape from this reality. Lastly, phantasies can be a defense against other phantasies such as depressive phantasies as opposite to manic ones. Klein explained the difference between phantasy and defense mechanisms. The difference relies on the process and its specificity and particularity. For instance, the process of projection as a defense can be carried out while a person experiences the given moment as a phantasy

(Segal, 2002). For Klein (1946), the defense mechanisms of introjection and projection are the cornerstones of psychic development and internal object representations. She believed that in the internalization of the object which occurs gradually, an infant's fantasies and projections which are based on instincts play a role. In addition to the effects of impulses and phantasies, some defenses such as projective identification are implemented through the object (Klein, 1946). That is to say, Kleinian work on preoedipal defenses gave rise to the interpretation of "dyadic defenses" (Fisek, 2009). Nevertheless, the object is the internal representation of an other rather than the external real other (Kernberg, 1975). More recent work on the concept of projective identification redefined it as interpersonal communication (Bion, 1959; Ogden, 1979).

Rejecting the Kleinian notion of an instinctually rooted defensive process, Fairbairn (1954) emphasized the internalized object in the emergence and operations of the defenses. Similar to the concept of identification with the aggressor, he defined a new concept, moral defence. This mechanism was explained such that when an infant is surrounded by malignant parents/objects; he exhibits effort to turn these objects into good ones and takes himself as bad for the sake of security and the hope that the malignant objects can turn into loving ones in the future. He argued that when elements of an infant's relationship with his parents are unsatisfying, the infant internalizes these elements and fantasizes that they belong to him. That is to say, defensive processes and establishment of representations about the self and the other accompany each other, such that defensive processes generate the internal object relational world of the infant (Fairbairn, 1952).

Moreover, Fairbairn also contributed a lot to the development of personality and defensive process in it (Clarke & Scharff, 2014). In contrast to the understanding

which regards the ultimate aim of personality development as becoming an autonomous independent self, he considered that human baby goes through a developmental process, beginning as dependent on the object (infantile dependency) to becoming maturely dependent to the object. During this transitional process, there are two prominent threats that can give rise to psychopathology; schizoid condition associated with pre-ambivalent instances and depressive condition associated with ambivalent experiences. Fairbairn described four different defense mechanisms to cope with these vital threats; hysterical, paranoid, phobic, and obsessive (Clarke & Scharff, 2014).

Winnicott can be regarded as a transitional figure between those theorists who view defense from an intrapsychic perspective and those who focus on defense as an interpersonal view (Cooper, 1998). In addition to dealing with instinctual conflict, defenses mainly cope with environmental failure. If this failure is traumatizing, a great defensive effort is exhibited to mitigate anxiety. This effort constitutes a basis for false self organization (Winnicott, 1965). Environmental conditions also impact on instinctually based conflicts. When the infant's needs are inadequately met or his going on being is frequently disturbed, he withdraws from expressing his true self (in order to protect true self), and adjusts himself in accordance with environmental demands. A maternal (environmental) accepting response is a precondition for him in order to build a capacity to benefit from ego and subsequently regulate instinctual tension (Winnicott, 1965).

The real relationship began to emerge more clearly in psychoanalytic theories over time. Cooper (1998) alleged that there is a paradigm shift from a one person psychology of defense to a two person theory of defense. Sullivan (1953) challenged the intrapsychic notion of defense and increased the proportion of observable

relations in the concept of defense. He construed the purpose of defense as promoting harmony and decreasing conflict in relationships (Sullivan, 1953). The attempts of redefining early listed defense mechanisms and conceptualizing new forms of them become more explicit. For example, Modell (1984) classified defenses into two distinct categories; defenses against environmental failure and intrapsychic conflicts and suggested some relational defenses such as self-sufficiency and non-relatedness (as cited in Cooper, 1990). Interpersonal understanding of defense mechanism emerged in psychoanalytic group work too (Sideris, 2014). For instance, Rangell (1983) claimed the presence of defenses which work against an object, namely interpersonal and interactional defenses.

Kohut (1984) made drastic modifications in the conceptualization of the defense and its clinical usage. He observed that defense interpretation from classical theory is likely to hinder the mirroring stage of the analysis. He stressed that not all defenses should be worked through because in some particular conditions defenses function as the basic ends of the self (Cooper, 1990). Kohut (1984) viewed defensive frameworks as efforts to protect an enfeebled self. When the selfobjects fail in their emphatic response during childhood, defenses are constituted against them. He put the experiencing self at the center of his theory and arguing that the self should be defended from vulnerability and disintegration (Kohut, 1984). Even though Kohut (1984) proposed a two person theory of defense, he underscored the patient's subjective experience of the object rather than the real characteristics of the object (Cooper, 1990). For Kohut (1984), defensiveness is the only possible way to preserve the security and integrity of the self under the failures of selfobjects. The aim of psychoanalysis is creating emphatic understanding against defenses and developing a selfobject bond for the progress of the treatment (Siegel, 2008). Kohut's conception

of defense is similar with to object relational school by emphasizing the need to protect the self from overwhelming circumstances, however intrapsychic processes, drives and their derivatives, got minimal attention from him (Cooper, 1998). Interpersonal defense theory asserts that operations of defenses mainly comprise configurations of interpersonal behaviors, not intrapsychic procedures that the ego operates. These behaviors are exhibited so as to affect what will take place in interpersonal relationships rather than to regulate one's internal state (Westerman & Steen, 2009). In accordance with a person's wishes and fears, interpersonal behaviors influence outcomes in very complicated ways that also involve unwanted consequences. Instead of conflicting intrapsychic parties, interpersonal defense theory regards conflict as the characteristics of one's interpersonal circumstance (Westerman & Steen, 2009).

According to Bowlby, detachment, dissatisfaction of the crucial and primary need for attachment, is the source of all defenses (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Regulating affects is the central goal of defenses (Sroufe & Waters, 1997). Relational distance should be regulated in order to achieve "affect regulation" inasmuch as emotion is heavily based on the relationships with attachment figures (Knox, 2003). Implicit memory that is unattainable by consciousness records defensive configurations of distance regulation. These configurations become not only habits but also intrapsychic representations that have an effect on emotions, behaviors, and desires (Knox, 2003). This is like a relational and interpersonal unconscious (Schoore 1994).

In family and couples therapy, regulation of relational distance has been examined under the conceptualization of transpersonal defenses (Lansky, 1985). From this perspective, transpersonal defenses develop against negative emotions that

originate from the external relationship. Their purpose is not only to regulate the self and the relationship but also to preserve the self from disintegration and detachment from the outside. Impulsive actions, blaming, and preoccupation are indicated as types of transpersonal defenses that play a role in the regulation of relational distance (Lansky, 1985, 1987).

Çavdar (2014) reviewed the conceptualization of defense in Self Psychology, Attachment Theory and Interpersonal Defense Theory and concluded that they all draw attention to the real, observable world and the term of self-regulation. This kind of formulation of defense is similar to the classical understanding of it in a sense that unpleasurable emotions are defended against. Nonetheless, these emotions are not confined to the intrapsychic world; real external experiences which took place in the relational context are centered in understanding these emotions and the use of defenses. In fact, the purpose of defense has been enlarged to include intrapsychic balance as well as relational harmony (Çavdar, 2014).

Along with the development of relational psychoanalysis and intersubjectivity approaches, the concept of defense is not seen as an unconscious process that takes place in a closed system of the psyche; rather it is considered as “all unconscious communication processes” occurring in the relational context (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992; Fisek, 2009). Stolorow and Lachmann (1980) described defense as the exhibited efforts by a person to defend himself/ herself against overwhelming negative emotions that are generated by the external relationships in order to regulate both the self and the relationship. Hoffmann (1991) challenged the Freudian notion of defense and proposed a new approach with a co-construction of defense. He argued that analytic work creates new experiences that are not made sense of before in a context in which defenses are conceived as interpersonal and intrapsychic elements

of both parties in the room. As a result, in opposition to earlier psychoanalytic schools, relational psychoanalysis and the intersubjectivity approach proposed the mutual establishment of meanings as well as the involvement and the contribution of the other (Hoffmann, 1991).

D. B. Stern (2010) put dissociation in the center of all defensive processes and saw defense as an unconsciously triggered rejection to generate or integrate an experience, a turning away from possibilities. Instead of overwhelming emotions, unacceptable thoughts or memories, he illustrated dissociation as “a being against a self state” taking place in the interpersonal context (D.B.Stern, 2010). According to D.B. Stern (2013), repressed mental contents or drives are aimed to handle or avoid; particular patterns of relating. That is to say, what is defended against is impulses or mental content in the classical approach whilst in relational approaches, it is the relational so that a part of self in connection with an Other is handled defensively (Sideris, 2014).

Importantly, the recent relational movement in psychoanalysis is compatible with or parallel with the advances in psychology like neurology and neuropsychology (Schoore, 1994), infant observation (Beebe & Lachmann, 2002), developmental psychology (Sroufe & Waters, 1997) in a sense that it is not simply the influence of the environment on the person rather it is a continuing reciprocal interaction between the environment and the person (Fisek, 2018). Therefore, it became more promising to study the concept of defense from an interactional perspective rather than a closed system approach (Fisek, 2009).

In the present study, since kusmek will be considered as a relational silence, it will be useful to review the literature about the meaning and significance of silence

in social sciences particularly in linguistics, sociology, and anthropology before extending the discussion of silence and its role of defensiveness in psychoanalysis.

1.2 Silence in social sciences

As the integral ingredient of speech (Kurzon, 1998), silence has been described as a complete absence of sound or the fact or state of abstaining from the speech in Oxford English Dictionary. Even though silence carries as much prominence as speech does, it has been defined unfavorably and attributed little attention to (AL-Harabsheh, 2012). Despite the fact that silence is considered as passivity in general, it has idiosyncratic characteristics from the views of different disciplines.

Studies in the field of linguistics mostly focus on the communicative functions of silence and its role in human interaction (Jensen, 1973). Silence may function to structure human interactions or communication by organizing the reciprocal nature of conversations. Thanks to this function, interlocutors are able to rearrange their messages in different forms and shape how to send them in an understandable manner (AL-Harabsheh, 2012). Jensen (1973) claimed three different communicative functions of silence; linkage, affective, and judgmental. Firstly, silence may perform to link or to relate people to each other both negatively and positively. Secondly, silence has an affecting function. It may strengthen the relationships by enhancing the meaning of shared moments or it may separate people from each other adversely. It may cure relational wounds or it may lead to further severity in the relationships. Lastly, silence may serve as an agreement or disagreement about what has been put or introduced. In most cases, judgment displayed by silence is an acknowledgment of common sense and consensus. That is

to say, silence is a kind of attitude to comment on others' words, behaviors, thoughts, and ways of living (Jensen, 1973). Ling (2003) proposed a fourth communicative function of silence, silence as face-saving. It refers to the silence which appears as a result of the efforts to protector's self-image in the public by concealing unfavourableness.

In sociology and anthropology, the concept of silence is discussed in relation to power, gender, culture, workplace, etc. (Gal, 1991 & AL-Harasheh, 2012). Gal (1991) analyzed language both silence and speech in different contexts; politics, literature, organizations, hierarchic groups, and tribes. It was proposed that there is a certain relationship between the practice of power, gender, and usage of silence. People who are oppressed may not have a chance to make their thoughts, believes, and choices known and hence cannot affect their conditions and the course of history. However, silence itself is not inevitably an indication of powerlessness. Contrarily, silence in some settings is an exercise of power. For example, police officers who conduct interrogations; priests who lead the confessions have the power in their silent stances (Gal, 1991). Additionally, Candan (2017) indicated that the judges in the courts speak less since their words are the power of decision. A similar use of silence can be seen in state governance. Grand viziers speak in the name of Ottoman Sultans in *Divan* though Sultans take place in the congress (A.B. Candan, personal communication, October 25, 2018).

Gal (1991) concluded that culture specifies and structures the relationships between power, gender, and the practice of the language. When it is assumed that silence is a fundamental part of human interaction, it may describe the mechanisms of power and the control of communication (Muers, 2004). For instance, women in rural Greece are considered as both talkative and silent. Nevertheless, in both

conditions, they are characterized as being unable to regulate themselves and hence of accomplishing eloquent and pretentious self-display which establishes the form of a powerful man shaped by culture (Herzfeld, 1985). Gal (1991) mentioned the silent resistance movements of women against male dominant social-economic systems. Nonetheless, it is rare to see that these movements bring a change in the male dominant system. Even these resistances recreate and legitimize status quo mostly since females and males do not relate to each other as an individual rather the institutions in the system are organized and decisions are taken through talking (Gal, 1991).

Cross-cultural studies construe the usage, meaning, and the significance of silence. While some cultures promote silence by attributing the value of virtue, others prefer talking over it and regard silence like a handicap (Ronningstam, 2006). Oliver (1975) reviewed the great amount of Eastern rhetoric and concluded that in the west, silence was taken as socially disagreeable; on the contrary, it was treasured in the east (as cited in Ling, 2003). Whilst a part of Finnish culture is stigmatized as aberrantly silent (Lehtonen & Sajavaara, 1985), silence is a very complicated way of nonverbal communication that is designated by the history, tradition, and religion in Japanese culture (Morsbach, 1988). Saunders (1985) observed silence among people in the village of Valbella, an intimate and expressive culture located in the Northern part of Italy, and concluded that boring silence and sincere chit chat are similarly perceived interestingly. Consequently, aside from linguistic patterns, nonverbal ways of human interaction like silence are very prominent to recognize and communicate with a foreign culture. Thus, the interpretation of silence depends on culture (Kurzon, 1998).

Politeness is one of the common subjects that are frequently studied in relation to silence across cultures. Sifianou (1997) proposed two distinct types of politeness in silence. Firstly negative politeness refers to the silence by which a person exhibits silence so as to guard his or her personal boundary, to show deference, and to stay neutral emotionally. That is to say, silence features individual territory by abstaining from intrusion to others. In England, this kind of silence is really appreciated. Some cultures like Greek, in which social conversations and interactions rely on the intimate involvement of people, discern silence as a sign of non-relatedness, disrespectfulness, and a menace (a dog that barks does not bite). Secondly, silence is perceived as politeness since it might be an expression of harmony, consensus, and reciprocal positive experiences in human interactions. For instance, silence is discerned as interdependency and reciprocally affirmative attitudes in Finnish culture. Consequently, it is polite to communicate something by remaining silent, instead of directly expressing it. People from Britain do not express negative feeling directly to not disturb one's privacy as a way of showing their politeness (Sifianou, 1997).

In addition to the perception of silence associated with cultures, silence might be used a way of regulating tense emotions in relational conflicts. People may use their control which may lead to more complications like complete separation of the relationships rather than relaxing and getting easy by remaining silent (Ronningstam, 2006). A famous Arabic proverb says: "The killer of a man is between his jaws". People may become silent to not confront and dispute their interlocutors (Sifianou, 1997). However, it is still a passive expressive strategy to convey multiple meanings; thoughts, impressions, feelings, attitudes, and intentions of the source, who is the silent one (Nakane, 2003). That is why silence has the power to construct and

regulate the reciprocity of a conversation (AL-Harabsheh, 2012), even though it is neither a “communicational action” nor a “intermediary phenomenon among communicational actions” (AL-Harabsheh, 2012; Saville-Troike, 1985). There is also silence indicating more destructive emotions (Ronningstam, 2006). For example, a British proverb “to send someone to Coventry” means rejecting to relate to one or acting like the person does not exist anymore (Encyclopedia Britannica, 1945, p. 617). This kind of silence is a form of relational ostracism illustrating hostile emotions (Ronningstam, 2006).

1.3 Silence in psychoanalytic literature

When Freud published his early studies on psychoanalysis, his works were seen as a groundbreaking piece in science in a sense that he was offering a new methodology and perspective to understand and to cure the psychological symptoms of patients. His method was called the talking cure famously. In the psychoanalytical literature, silence has mostly been studied as a part of the therapeutic process rather than being a part of daily relationships.

For Freud (1912), silence is the most powerful resistance against the appearance of transference thoughts and recalling the memories especially related to anal erotic desires. Expanding Freud’s ideas on the subject, Ferenczi (1911) perceived speech as a discharge of drives and contrarily silence as withholding. Abraham (1919) maintained that silence aims to repress the discharge of instinct by removing drives from the original places to the oral zone as an operation of articulation. Reik (1926) drew attention to the affective power of silence. Later on, psychoanalytic studies on silence focused on the significance of silence like its relation to personality, interaction style of patients, and their conflicts and defenses

(Lane, Koetting & Bishop, 2002). Fliess (1949) categorized silence according to libidinal phases. Silence defensively wards off the fantasies, physical sensations, and unacceptable thoughts related to certain libidinal stages. That is to say, one's psychosexual developmental stage designates the purpose and kind of silence taking place. For instance, silence might be called a phallic one when it aims to defensively ward off castration anxiety. The underlying proposition is that similar to speech silence has a function of drive discharge (Fliess, 1949).

It was argued that the early psychoanalysts underscored the defensive functions of silence especially repression of sexual desires and phantasies, by mostly working on chronic silence (Fuller & Crowther, 1998). Shafii (1973) considered silence as a kind of inhibition, resistance to transference neurosis, and regression of ego (as cited in Lena et al., 2002). This is mostly because earlier analysts believed that the mind discloses itself through the medium of the body, therefore worthy of focusing on zonal experiences (Fuller & Crowther, 1998).

There were several psychoanalytic panels and conferences on the topic of silence held in different places like the meeting of Vienne in 1927 and 1937, the panel in Hungary in 1934 (Wheeler Vega, 2013). Actually, considering silence as an obstacle to overcome, a kind of resistance to analysis (Freud, 1912; Ferenczi, 1919), and a symptom of regression to pre-Oedipal stage (Bergler, 1938) prominently limit the space of analysis of silence (Knutson & Kristiansen, 2015). A panel was held on the topic of silence by American Psychoanalytic Association in 1958, called "The Silent Patient". The main question in the panel was "is the classical interpretation of silence satisfactory enough for our clinical practices or there is a need or benefit to study further on the meaning of silence?" (Ronningstam, 2006). The panel was fruitful in a sense that it created tremendous discussion on the different functions of

silence like material for therapeutic alliance and a way of communication (Loewenstein, 1961; Arlow, 1961; Khan, 1963).

Arlow (1961) noted the significance of the functions of silence and their overlap that makes difficult to orient the interventions of the analysts. He primarily elaborated two functions of silence, defensive function and the role of discharge, with a new perspective dominated by Ego Psychology School. Freudian interpretation of silence was lacking in covering all the range of silent cases since it only regarded silence as the counterforces of the ego against the interests of the id. Nonetheless, different kinds of structures take place in the case of a silent patient. For example, the function of discharge is not only related to the demands of the id. When there is intrapsychic conflict, the superego increases the intrapsychic tension more. Moreover, Arlow (1961) claimed that silence as the most influential instrument at the hands of patient to trigger countertransference, hence it is vital to handle it in more useful and an emphatic way rather than feeling just disappointed and controlled at the side of analysts.

Loewenstein (1961) drew attention to the object relational aspect of silence. He thought speech is one of the ways of expression through which people exhibit their own object relational scenarios. Psychoanalysis anticipates analysands to convert all dimensions of their object relational scripts into speech. However, some of these object relational patterns cannot be transformed into verbal means rather they reveal themselves by a hindrance of speech or by silence as a nonverbal way of communication (Loewenstein, 1961). Similarly, Calogeras (1967) challenged the emphasis on verbal communication as the main method for understanding transference and insisted that silence reveals unconscious transference phantasies as a worthwhile connection.

Winnicott (1958) discerned that significant relating or communicating might occur in a silent state, and he made a distinction between non-communication moments as a defensive silence triggered by anxiety and plain non-communication like being alone in the presence of another. He expected the psychoanalytic technique to tolerate a patient's non-communicating state in which the patient will be able to live through his or her privacy and eventually to develop the capacity for withdrawal which is fundamental for incorporation in a responsibility. He described a noncommunicated essence in the developing authentic self which can stay detached in silence (Winnicott, 1958). Following Winnicott's ideas on silence, the positive functions of silence were studied. For example, it was discussed that silence possesses the integration of characteristic and the facility to constitute a space where verbal communication completes its entire meanings and operations via the silence, and the intimacy of two parties in the therapy is sensed, but not verbalized (Knutson & Kristiansen, 2015).

Even though common interpretation on silence has shifted from handling silence just as a defense or a resistance, to a kind of communication and a form of relating to the analyst, some theorists defend the classical views and maintain silence as an obstacle to the treatment (Ronningstam, 2006). Kurz (1984) asserted that silence is a resistance against the transformation of the personality and a contending element for the improvement in the treatment process. According to Hadda (1991) silence as resistance emerges when an analysand is fearful about his or her analyst's sensitivity to meet the need of mirroring.

Contrarily, recent developments in neuroscience and infant observation studies have underlined the importance of non-verbal elements for interactive regulation and self-regulation (Ronningstam, 2006). Attachment studies indicated

that having a rejecting mother is significantly associated with an avoidant way of relating in the infants (Main & Weston, 1982). With the recurrent experiences of rejection from the attachment figure make the infants to feel anger and eventually withdraw from these painful circumstances. A pattern of avoidance is finally acquired (Main & Weston, 1982). Silence and several other behaviors such as keeping away from eye contact in the sessions were considered as avoidant behaviors which might be understood as an escape to see the psychotherapist as a possible attachment character (Fuller & Crowther, 1998).

Contemporary psychoanalytic approaches draw a complex process of interaction within the relational matrix where nonverbal indicators take place as a booster for empathy, attunement and also interfering responses like anxiety (Pally, 2001). According to some theorists, silence symbolizes a developmental arrest or a premature individuation that the patient reveals to the therapist an early deprivation. For example, patients can disclose how they felt while staying with a seriously depressed caregiver or patients can reenact a missing part of the relationship with their caregivers because of the inconsistency in presence of the caregivers (Ronningstam, 2006). Thus, silence may be a part of non-verbal development. Silence might be a space, creating an opportunity to reconstruct the borders that have been destroyed relentlessly, and assisting inner changes and psychic growth (Ronningstam, 2006). Therefore, silence is like a hideaway for clearing up the conflicts that language cannot appreciate (Kurz, 1984). For Gabbard (1989), silence can enable preservation and justification of the core authentic self. Additionally, culture prominently specifies the use of silence and endurance of being silent in the psychoanalytic sessions (Ronningstam, 2006). Consequently, there are some technical and theoretical differences between seeing silence as preservation or

regarding a defensive element or resistance. In the case of defensive silence, it is useful to interpret the function of silence as the unconscious sexual purposes or aggressive elements. On the other hand, if the silence functions to show the authenticity of the self as in the nonverbal form or it functions to preserve self-cohesiveness; distinct technical interventions are needed like a stepwise exploration of the dynamic (Ronningstam, 2006).

1.4 Kusmek (relational cutoff): a cultural form of silence

Kusmek, a culture-specific form of relational silence, can be defined as follows: to stop speaking to another person for a certain period of time, for years or even until death, due to ostensibly unresolvable conflict especially between intimates, family members and close friends (Fisek, 2009). It is an ancient phenomenon which can be observed between the heroes in Turkish epics (Naskali, 2017). The definition of *kusmek* can be seen in the oldest Turkish dictionary in *Dīwān Lughāt al-Turk* (Kashgari, 1075; as cited in Atalay, 1943).

In several cultures which promote relationality, including Turkey (Kagitcibasi, 1996), the familial self– an essential internal psychic construct that allows people to function well in a hierarchically organized society– is widely seen (Roland, 1988). Accordingly, cultural norms regulate relational conflicts without losing face, sustaining self-esteem as well as being self-righteous. As a relational act, *kusmek* exemplifies the concept of emotional cutoff in which some family members do not speak with each other (Bowen, 1993). Emotional cutoff is defined as a period of separation, withdrawal, running away and isolation from the family member with whom there is an unsolvable conflict. Even though *kusmek* shares some characteristics with emotional cutoff, it is not synonymous, complicated by elements

such as resentment, silent treatment, avoiding conflict and stonewalling (Ergul, 2017).

In the experience of *kusmek*, there is a hurtful act or comment that leads to an interpersonal conflict in which at least one of the parties is hurt, offended, or disturbed by the other. The person who is offended experiences a narcissistic injury coming from an intimate – a betrayal of intimacy and trust (Fisek, 2009). In response to this narcissistic injury, the offended person generally questions “How could s/he do this to me?” “How dare you?”. The offended person becomes silent by stopping speaking for a long period of time. Studies indicated that silence coming from narcissistic injury operates to conserve and regulate self-esteem. For example, Weinberger (1964) pointed out the defensive kind of silence that emerges when a person fears losing his prestige or self-esteem. According to Modell (1980), a person can construct a “cocoon” when he withdraws from the communication with another over an interpersonal conflict. In this “cocoon”, he omnipotently controls his vulnerable feelings resulting from the narcissistic injury. In this experience of “active non-communication”, *kusmek* is similar in this sense, the person does not speak in order to not lose the illusion of self-sufficiency. This cocoon state is triggered by the fear of intimacy and being swallowed by the threatening person (Modell, 1980). Shame is found as one of the reasons for being silent in the person who does not speak out after various unprocessed disapprovals (Coltart, 1991). This silence may symbolize the powerlessness and the feeling of shame. There is a dialectic condition such that when considering powerlessness, there is also a powerful side which may exert abuse (Ronningstam, 2006).

It is claimed that the offended person avoids open confrontation because this can give rise to a disruption of harmony and even a permanent rupture. Rather the

offended person becomes silent without proclaiming his discomfort but tries to convey his message of blame to the target person through non-verbal behaviors and mediators (Fisek, 2009). Weinberger (1964) reviewed the studies on a masochistic object relational style and argued that silence plays a defensive role to sustain relationships by abstaining from the overwhelming anxiety of object loss. For Modell (1980) in active non-communication, when the offended person feels a necessity to communicate but is not able to contact, he may find himself in a state of infinite hopelessness. In this case, the cocoon is like a jail to run away not a secure place.

Fisek (2009) thought that in the experiencing of *kusmek*, the offended person consciously stops speaking, and consciously communicates to noninvolved others around about the conflict between him and his interlocutor. However, the core motive and recognition of what did disturb is unconscious. Modell (1980) observed that some patients strongly desire to be understood but they cannot stand to communicate. He defined this position as involuntary communication of affect in which the origin of the emotions and the practice of communication persist unconsciously for the exhibitor however these emotions and messages are discerned by the target person. Zeligs (1961) pointed out the function of silence as turning off the approach of the external object. This action might be preferred consciously or it might be executed unconsciously in order to preserve the ego from real or projected dangers. Similarly, Weinberger (1964) described a kind of silence following a narcissistic injury as a regressive state in which the person perceives the world in a distorted way. Such silence reveals the original trauma, a meaningful loss with overwhelming narcissistic injury; therefore, the external reality is altered. Additionally, Weinberger (1964) thought that when there is a relational cut off, people lose the relationship not only an object. Because they always encounter this

lost internalized love object, they constantly mourn. The re-enacted old experiences might be lived through in each moment of life.

1.5 The present study

Contemporary developments in psychoanalysis have underscored the role of relationality in defensive processes. It might be argued that investigating relationality in defensive processes is more promising in the eastern than western context which is more likely to emphasize more autonomy and independence (Fisek, 2009). This study will be the first one that primarily aims to investigate the defensive characteristics of *kusmek* in the relational context. What kind of issues with whom give rise to this phenomenon will be analyzed. By studying a relational conflict from a psychoanalytic perspective of defense may contribute to the relational movement in psychoanalysis from a very culture-specific point of view.

A second objective will be to find out how a severe relational conflict is lived through in the mind of interlocutors, not just identifying emotions or thoughts but rather describing the process how it begins, what kind of changes occur and how the conflict ends if it does. Because *kusmek* is a relational move that influences relational distance, what kind of process is going on in the mind and in the external interaction can reveal the degree of this conflict in the relationship. Understanding the process of *kusmek* and its dynamics can contribute to the therapeutic process that focuses on relational conflicts. For example, in the treatment of man-made trauma and in conflictual relationships, one of the ultimate goals of the psychotherapy is forgiveness (Akhtar, 2002; Tylim, 2005).

Additionally, the present study was aimed to include different generations and genders to reveal differences and similarities in experiencing this phenomenon.

Divergent and convergent points related to different generations will be compared since relationality in eastern cultures—specifically dependency and independency—is debated recently for several reasons like the effects of globalization (Kagıtcıbası, 1996).

Finally, divergence and convergence between genders in both characteristics and experiencing kumek will be investigated to extend the knowledge on how relational dynamics in the family, in friendship, and in kinship influence this particular phenomenon. The power dynamic in the relationship will be specifically analyzed since Turkish culture has a hierarchic structure that regulates the interaction of people (Fisek, 2009).

CHAPTER 2

METHOD

A qualitative approach was applied to the research question for various reasons: (1) lack of research or a validated scale that aimed at understanding the experience of relational cutoff (Ergul, 2017); (2) the need to make sense of the process by which the phenomenon of relational cutoff takes place and its following steps (3) the need to grasp emotions, thoughts, and conflicts that emerge in the experience of relational cutoff, (4) to identify divergences, as well as similarities in how different generations and genders experience relational cutoff.

Even though relational cutoff is a kind of relational act that has been seen in Turkey, the studies on relational cutoff is so scarce. There is no study which aims to explore the phenomenon of relational cutoff from a psychoanalytic perspective. Thus, a qualitative study will be more useful for the purpose of looking up the themes derived from the narratives so as to describe and understand this little-studied phenomenon. Furthermore, it may contribute to the development of more systematic quantitative measures. Secondly, a qualitative methodology can enable us to analyze the process and relational context in which people cut off their relationships. Thirdly, because defensive elements are not conscious (McWilliams, 1994), exploring them in the experiences of relational cutoff requires capturing moments and changes during the interview (e.g. hesitations, incomplete sentences, the flow of the speech, changes of tone, conflicting emotions, and contradictory thoughts). Therefore, a qualitative approach accommodates these kinds of elements more than quantitative ones for the current study. Lastly, relational cutoff as a cultural phenomenon is linked to the relational dynamics of people in this particular society. Considering the

fact that the family dynamics of the Turkish society has been changing over time, and experiencing the sense of self is also changing (Fisek, 2018); a qualitative way of looking on how different generations express their relational cutoff processes will provide a richer perspective. The value of children related to their gender for their families (Kagıtcıbası & Ataca) and the parents' ways of relating to their children (Boratav, Fisek & Ziya, 2017) have been changing in the Turkish society. A qualitative approach will provide opportunities to explore differences and commonalities in experiencing relational cutoff between genders and across generations.

2.1 Participants

The study was conducted with 12 participants; 6 females and 6 males. Half of the participants, 3 females, 3 males, were university students who are over the age of 20. The remaining participants, 3 females, 3 males, were adults who are older than 40 years old. The age of participants varied from 21 to 68. While the student participants got credit for their courses, the adult participants participated in the study voluntarily. Some information about the participants can be found below.

Profiles of the participants

1. Nermin

Nermin is a 56 years old woman, she has two daughters. She has a degree of high school. She lives with her husband and daughters in Istanbul. She is a house maker woman who eloped to get married to her lover when she was 24. This led to 10 years of relational cutoff with her family. It was the main story, along with the others, that she expressed during the interview. It was seen that the effects of this story have lasted since she was emotional, cried more than one time when she was talking about these 10 years cut off. She mentioned six different relational cut off narratives. In those three, she herself cut off her relationship since she was offended. One was the major story that she was exposed to a relational cutoff. The last two narratives were those she witnessed not involved.

2. Firuze

Firuze is a 51 years old woman who is single. She is a science teacher. Additionally, she is a drama instructor who supports NGOs as an activist. She was

open and self-reflective during the interview. She spoke out six different relational cutoff narratives. In two narratives, she herself cut off the relationships. In one case, she was exposed to a relational cutoff. Finally, she mentioned three others that she observed.

3. Lütfiye

Lütfiye is a 47 years old woman who is married and having a daughter. She is a worker. She has tried to complete her distance education degree. At the beginning of the interview, she was hesitant to share her experiences related to the research topic. The consent form was reviewed again and ethical measures were explained one more time. She was informed that she can leave the interview whenever she wants. She told that she was feeling like revealing the family secrets. After she relaxed, she was open to sharing. Six different narratives were told; two of which she cut off her relationships, the other two were the ones she suffered from the relational cutoff, last two were those she witnessed.

4. Aydın

Aydın is 68 years old man who is married and having a daughter. He studied law and economics. He was really active during his professional life. In addition to working as an administration manager, he focused on business law. After he retired, he engaged in legal expertise. For more than 20 years, he has supported a local NGO. During the interviews, he mentioned problems of the Turkish society in an abstract manner rather than talking about his personal experiences related to the interview questions. Turning his attention to personal experiences was really hard and achieved partially. He revealed three distant narratives. In one case, he broke up the relationship. In the second one, he was exposed relational cutoff. In the final one, he witnessed the relational conflict.

5. Hüseyin

Hüseyin is a 62 years old man who works as a mechanic. He has one daughter and one son. When he was 19, he migrated to Turkey from Greece. Some of his relatives still live in Greece. He introduced himself as a wise man who tolerates relational conflicts and does not resent. He told that he did not cut off his any relationship. He mentioned two narratives that he observed in his extended family. Interestingly, he was the third party who involved these conflicts by supporting one side that, his attitude worsened the relational cutoff between other people. Besides, he mentioned a story that he was exposed to a relational cutoff. Finally, he told a story that he observed but did not take part.

6. Samet

Samet is a 52 years old man who runs a bakery. He studied physical education. He has 3 daughters. He came to Istanbul from a rural area in Anatolia. He expressed strong family relationships and familial identity. He was a masculine man whose relational cutoffs mostly related to masculinity. He expressed 4 distant relational cutoff narratives. Two of them were the ones in which he cut off his relationship. In one case while he suffered from a relational conflict, the other was a condition that he witnessed.

7. Çiğdem

Çiğdem is a 21 years old female student who studies economics. She came from an Anatolian city to Istanbul in order to study. She has a younger sister. At the beginning of the interview, she indicated that she is not a good participant for the present study because she does not prefer relational cutoffs rather she prefers to separate from her partner or friend when there is a relational problem. However, she revealed four different narratives in which she cut off his relationships when she

started to answer the questions. She did not specify any cutoffs that she witnessed or suffered. After the interview, she told that she was surprised by how she thought differently about herself before the interview related to the research topic.

8. Gizem

Gizem is a 21 years old female, she studies political science. She has an older sister, a younger brother, and a younger sister. Her family lives in another city. She indicated three different narratives; in two of which she cut off her relationships while in one she witnessed.

9. Bahar

Bahar is a 22 years old female student who studies management. She has an older sister. Her family stays in a different city. She described herself as friendly and hardworking. She was passionate, expressive, and emotional when talking about her own experiences. On the other hand, she was not comfortable when she was talking about her friends' relational conflicts. She was really careful not to name any of her friends even though informed consent was reminded. She reported 6 different narratives in half of which she cut off her relationships. The other three were the narratives that she observed.

10. Cenk

Cenk is a 21 years old male who studies management. He has a younger sister and he lives with his family. He represented himself as social, friendly, and engaging sports. He was excited and collaborative during the interview. He spoke out three distant narratives, two of which he cut his relations while in the one he observed the conflict.

11. Hayri

Hayri is a 22 years old male university student who studies engineering. Starting from high school, he has lived in a dorm. His family lives in another city. He reported four different stories. Two stories were related to ones that he cut the relations. It was observed that even though he was not emotional, he was uncomfortable to express treatments that led him to offend. His answers were really short and clear but provided rich information. He reported two other narratives that he witnessed.

12. Yasin

Yasin is a 21 years old male who studies political science in. He has an older brother and a younger one. He engages in literature and music. His speech was very abstract and complicated. He reported 3 different narratives. While in the first two he suffered from a relational cutoff, the last one related to the conflict that he observed. He did not reveal any story in which he cut his relations even though he described himself as a resentful person.

2.2 Materials

The data of the study were collected through in-depth interviews. A semi-structured interview which includes several guiding and probe questions was constructed in relation to defensive characteristics of the relational cutoff. In the pilot phase of the

study, 5 interviews were done with people from different generations and genders. Some questions were revised. The revised form was used for the data collection of the study (see Appendices A and B). The interviews lasted approximately 40 minutes ranging from 27 minutes to 61 minutes. There were 6 guiding questions regarding the research topics. Two additional questions were introduced; one is in the beginning as a warm up and the last one is for closure, giving space to the participants to add anything related to the interview. Firstly, the participants were asked to describe or define the phenomenon of relational cutoff in order to see how it is taken into consideration. Then, participants were asked to relate incidents of relational cutoff that they observed in their environment. Later, the participants were asked about their own experience with details. For Question 4, the participants were asked to tell the incidents of the relational cutoff. Then, the participants were invited to mention relational cutoffs to which they were exposed. Question 4 and question 5 were repeated when the participants finished their narratives related to the experience of the relational cutoff and shift to tell another story of relational cutoff. For example, if the participants told different stories of relational cutoff in which they cut off their relationship, question 4 was asked for each story. Lastly, question 6 was about the general observations of the participants related to relational cutoff.

2.3 Procedure

After receiving the ethical approval of Bogazici University Ethical Committee, data collection was started. Two different ways of sampling were applied to recruit participants. The participants who are university students were invited to participate in the study through an announcement on the bulletin board in the psychology department of Bogazici University. Snowball sampling was applied to recruit adult

participants to the study. Each interview was conducted in a silent room in which noone other than the interviewer and the interviewee was present. The same interviewer conducted all the interviews. A tape recorder was used to record each interview. Before the interview, a consent form was given to each participant (see Appendices C and D). Participants were informed that they can leave the study at any point during the interview. The student participants were informed that they will have their credit for the particular course even if they decided to leave the study. After each interview, each participant was thanked and debriefed about the study. The researcher transcribed the recorded interviews confidentially and records were kept in a closed cabinet.

2.4 Data analysis

The analyses were conducted on interviews of 12 participants. Grounded Theory which is a qualitative analysis method was used to analyze the interviews. The theory was formulated to utilize research in order to conceptualize theories rather than testing the implications of preconceived theories to support them (Charmaz, 2006). It operates to acquire a deeper understanding into the experience by gathering narratives of subjects and building themes stand on these narratives instead of discovering scientific facts and generalizing them into a whole population.

It can be claimed that Grounded Theory consists of three steps; collecting data through semi-structured interviews, coding these interviews, and building theory. In the first step, the coding phase aims to develop themes by coding the narration of participants incident by incident, line by line, or sometimes word by word. Next step in the coding phase is focused coding which proposes to build the most outstanding categories. The pinpointed categories and concepts are related to

each other and their subcategories in axial coding. Finally, composed associations between codes are consolidated the theory in the theoretical coding phase (Charmaz, 2006).

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

The analysis of the interviews displayed that following a timeline framework makes it more meaningful and understandable to present the themes of the study. Analyzing the themes in a sequential order allows exploration of the earlier relational conditions, during the incidence, and resolution phase. The themes are as follows

The first heading is the stage of the intimacy of the relationship which refers to what kind of relationality in which relational cutoff takes place.

The second heading refers to the reasons that lead to relational cutoff. There are two subheadings; the content of disruption and the timing of disruption. Content of disruption has two subthemes; reciprocal conflict, maltreatment. Similarly, Timing of disruption has two subthemes; accumulation, suddenness.

The third heading is narcissistic injury which refers to the initial experiences of the offended person against the disruption. It was analyzed under three subthemes; emotions and thoughts, devaluation, and grandiosity.

The fourth stage is called relational counteraction having four subthemes. The first subtheme is to stop speaking and avoiding contact. Remaining subthemes are non-verbal communication, influences on the whole family, third parties, and hierarchy.

Stage five was named as relational evaluation in which the offended person assesses their relationship with the person who hurt them. The theme of relational evaluation was comprised of four subthemes; conflictual emotions, preoccupation and rumination, and feeling justified and resistance to resolution.

The sixth stage was called as resolution phase. It includes three subthemes; full resolution, partial resolution, and unresolved state. The full resolution was analyzed under the subheadings of forgiveness, defensiveness, and intermediaries. The partial resolution has a subheading of not as it used to be.

Lastly, there is a theme called unconsciousness that is not a particular stage in the experience of relational cutoff, it is rather a theme that falls into all the stages. These themes as placed under the time framework can be found in Figure 1.

3.1 Stage I: Intimacy of the relationship

Participants from all age groups and genders described an intimate relationship with the people with whom they experienced the incident of the relational cutoff. They mentioned a close relationship in which they spent a long time together. This relationship was described as one in which people relied on each other and interacted sincerely. They mentioned caring for the person who hurt them. Also, they felt cared for and valued by their interlocutors. The participants' narratives about relational cutoff reported partners, spouses, parents, roommates, and close relatives:

Ahmet was my close friend, really close one. We were so close like we were together through thick and thin. We had a harmonious relationship in terms of both emotional and intellectual and so on. A kind of boy, spend time together. (Yasin)

My older brother and my father had not spoken with me for 10 years after I eloped. (Nermin)

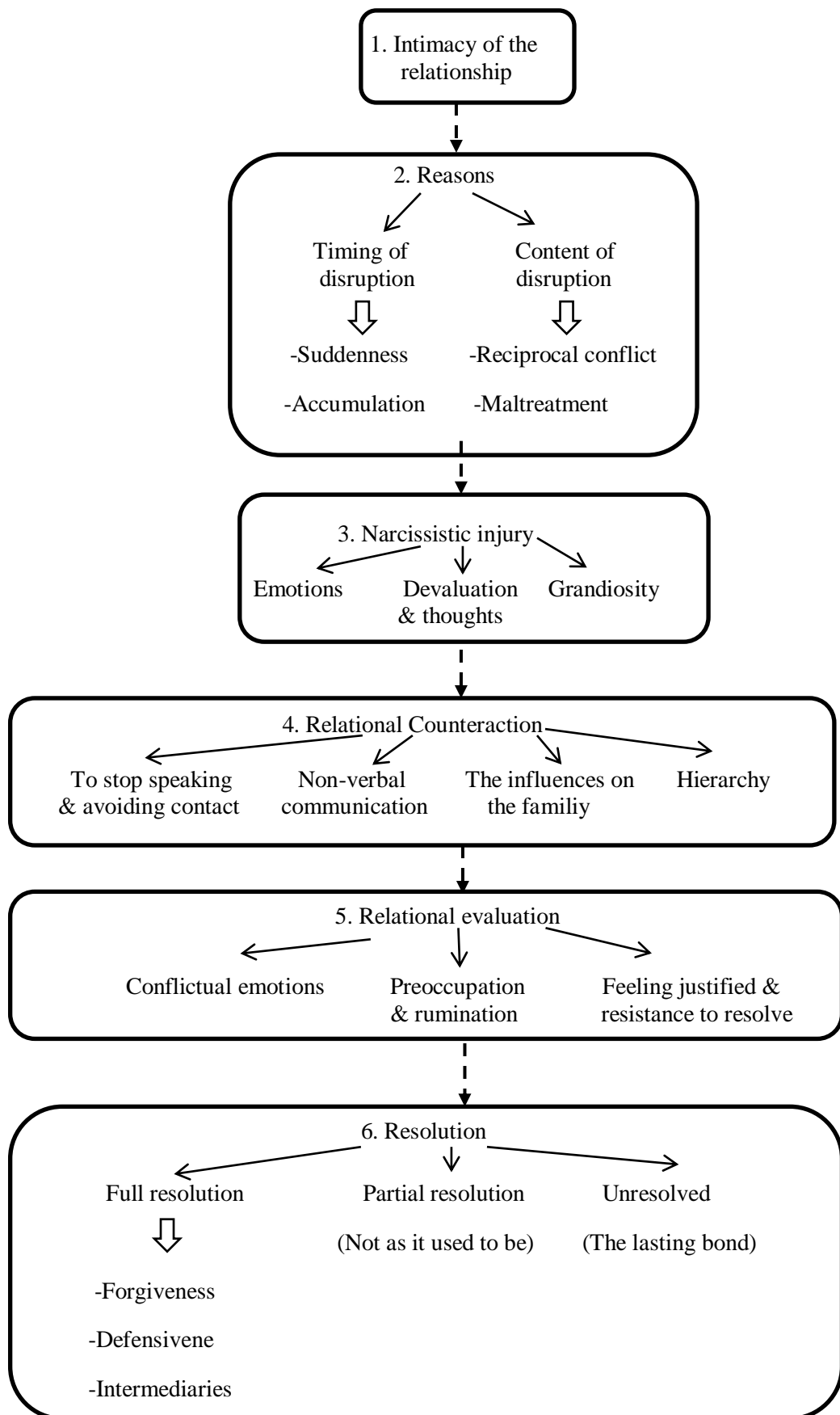


Figure 1. The process of relational cutoff

Participants revealed that if they had problems with a person but their relationship was distant, they gave up the relationship with that person rather than experiencing relational cutoff. They did not care about the person anymore:

I mean, if you are not close to a person there is no need for relational cutoff. You do not see him anywhere. You do not share the same place. You do not see him, that is it..but relational cutoff occurs between two people after their relationship reaches a certain point..(Cenk)

It hurt me a lot because he gets to know me very well. If someone else could say it, I do not care but when the person with whom I grew up together said, it really hurt me even it haunted for a week. (Hayri)

3.2 Stage II: Reasons

In this stage of the process of relational cutoff, participants mentioned the disruption that leads to relational cutoff. Themes in this stage were explained in two crossing subcategories: content of disruption, and timing of disruption. Two subheadings were included in the first subcategory: reciprocal conflict and maltreatment. The subcategory of types of disruption constitutes two subheadings: accumulation and suddenness.

3.2.1 Content of disruption

3.2.1.1 Reciprocal conflict

Analysis of the narratives indicated that conflict of interests in terms of both moral and material issues gave rise to relational cutoff. Student participants pointed out that their families value something other than their emotions and thoughts. Their parents

expected their children to show respect for their tradition, for the dignity of the family, and their way of living religion. On the other hand, student participants expected to have a space to express their sides about a disagreement rather than getting blamed and receiving advice. The analysis of the reports showed that both parents and children may be offended, hurt, and stop speaking to their interlocutors in this kind of conflict:

After my mother came home, I told her what happened. I suppose that she was told by them (her friend and her friend's mother) before coming home. She was angry at me in these terms. How can my child behave disrespectfully to someone in her home? She got mad saying that 'you can let it all hang out but you have to be respectful to others in your home'. (Çiğdem)

More sophisticated conflicts were seen in adult participants' experience. They offended their friends and family members when they were confronted with unprincipled attitudes. For example, Firuze told that her older brother had stopped to talk with his younger sister when her younger sister tried to exert her influence on getting an appointment from a hospital. Adult participants expected to see that responsibilities are equally distributed in their both nuclear and extended family. Women suffered from having no space to make their voice heard and take part in the decision-making process in their home. This issue requires analyzing the power dimension of relational cutoff that the study will deal with in the following themes.

Nermin: I used to experience kusmek (relational cutoff) with him (her husband). What hurt me most is that he invites some guests but does not ask anything to me whether I am available or I have another program...One day I was invited to join the engagement ceremony of one of my friends but I stayed in the house because he invited some people without asking anything to me. At that time I got mad and did not speak with him after the guests left (laughing)....

Interviewer: What did you think at that time?

Nermin: Why? He does not see me as a human? or he does not show respect to me so that he wants to rule the house by only himself? Am I not an individual in this house?

The problems in the distribution of the material inheritance of a family were observed as a striking conflict underlying in the various experience of relational cutoff. Almost all participants reported an experience of relational cutoff related to material inheritance. While the student participants mostly reported the experiences of their families or relatives who went through this kind of conflict, adults described both their own memories and witnesses of the conflict.

My mother had two older brothers. One of my uncles and my mother were living here (Turkey). After my uncle who had lived in Greece was dead, the one who is alive repeatedly forced my mother to go to Greece and sell their assets and getting his share. My mother did not want to do this because my grandparents were alive and everyone could handle their own job. I did not know what he was planning to do...In the end, I sent my mother off to Greece in order to disclaim her own rights on the heritage...Because of all these, my uncle made my mom so sad, he did not speak with her, and he even did not participate in her funeral service. (Hüseyin)

3.2.1.2 Maltreatment

Regardless of gender and age, all participants reported an experience of relational cutoff when they were mistreated. Student participants mostly revealed an experience in which they were humiliated and ashamed in front of their friends or families. They could not argue with the people who hurt them. In some cases, they reacted to the mistreatment of their interlocutor, but they stopped speaking with them because of their unacceptable behaviors.

It happened at a football match. We were playing with the guys from the same department. He was yelling and criticizing me all the time because I was playing bad, you know 'fail on evil days'. When I felt

that he was exercising his ego on me, I made a lot of noise after the game was over. Then, I did not speak to him anymore. (Hayri)

Being excluded or ostracized from a group and spreading gossip about a person seem harsh misdeeds that gave rise to the relational cutoff on the side of the person who was exposed to this kind of behavior. Sometimes the misdeed takes the form of slander.

There were gossips about my older sister; her dressing style was modern. They (neighbors) were saying that ‘we saw your daughter with a man, they were doing something’, whatever. My mother stopped speaking with these neighbors because she was thinking that they slandered her’. (Aydın)

Disrespectful attitudes towards privacy, violation of personal boundaries and attacks on moral values were some other misdeeds that cause the act of relational cutoff.

He said something about my beliefs. I was always tolerating him but I guess it (belief) was my boundary...He said ‘are you an atheist?’. I replied yes I am...He said ‘you are a stupid person that’s why it is normal to see you like that’, he humiliated me. I did not do anything at that time but I did not see him for two years. (Hayri)

3.2.2 Types of disruption

3.2.2.1 Accumulation

It was revealed that when some relational problems, both reciprocal conflicts and maltreatment that happened in the past, were not processed; they might have accumulated inside of the person leading to him/her becoming more vulnerable to relational cutoff. In other words, the last problem that made people stop speaking was actually the straw that breaks the camel’s back. Sometimes, even the last straw itself was not so important; it was just an excuse for relational cutoff. In this type of disruption, people held their emotions like anger, resentments, and revenge inside of

themselves. When the burden was too heavy to carry, the people revealed it by withdrawing themselves physically from that relationship.

They do not speak, by no means. From their childhood, there has been the issue of full sister-brother and step sister-brother; actually, their father is the same but not the mother. Even my mother and her full sister and brother love the step ones, the others did not think much of them. There was something like a grudge, not being able to share love, I don't know. Then this problem broke out, I think they will not speak to each other until they die. (Bahar)

In their problem, something was used as an excuse. Some people provoked her (cousin) and said different things to her. There were people, I mentioned a third person just now, who said this person did not invite you to wive, did not invite you to his engagement, did not invite you to something like that. These accumulated, accumulated, accumulated and then she did absolutely everything to cause disagreeableness on the wedding night. She made this wedding miserable for them, the mothers and fathers. She made this wedding miserable for the mother and father of the groom rather than the bride. (Hüseyin)

3.2.2.2 Suddenness

The analysis of the interviews suggested that when participants were confronted with a treatment or an incident that they cannot imagine experiencing, they stopped speaking with the person who involved. These treatments were unexpected, a kind of shock for the participants. They evoked strong emotions such as anger, resentment, and frustration. Some topics that participants reported as a sudden disruption as follow: being exposed to injustice, being humiliated, being cheated, getting swindled, and have some important information that may cause vital problems concealed. For instance, Firuze, Aydın, and Bahar revealed an experience of cheating.

She was my girlfriend that I really trusted. I was planning to marry her during my university years. One day, I saw her with him (her previous boyfriend). She was saying that 'I don't see him and I will not'. I caught them out. (Aydın)

In the case of Nermin, the information that was not shared caused the death of her relative. It turned into not only a relational issue between two people but also a serious struggle between family lines.

My cousin and my husband's cousin were very close. It was said that my cousin was alone in his home because his family was sending his older sister off. He was around 15 at that time. My husband's cousin shot my cousin, maybe it happened accidentally. They (the family of her husband's cousin) did not mention to us about their son's condition (he has a severe mental problem). My father sued them because my cousin died. My aunt in law found her son's dead body. That's why the cut off between family lines took place (Nermin)

3.3 Stage III. Narcissistic injury

3.3.1 Emotions and thoughts

After a relational conflict with an intimate person or maltreatment coming from the intimate person was experienced, people painfully saw that their reality including their hopes, expectations, and thoughts about this particular relationship was not compatible with their interlocutors. In other words, the reality of their relationship collapsed. Frustration, resentment, and anger were the emotions the participants reported in common. Sometimes anger did not correspond to what was experienced; it rather could be named as rage. Hate was another emotion that several participants mentioned.

Then I got angry such that how he (boyfriend) did not show respect to me (laughing). I did not deserve this. In any case, I texted angrily that message... In general, I think I live through like that: disappointment, feeling offended, and anger. (Bahar)

I hated, I hated because, on my side, my older sister was something how can I say, I don't know. I lived in her home in the past. I did not remember anything positive related to her from those days. I was feeling like Cinderella in her house, you know it, she is serving. (Lütfiye)

People felt that they were degraded and felt abased. In their mind, they questioned why this happened and why the person mistreated them. Their trust of that person and their relationship were lost. They thought that their interlocutor did not value them. Therefore, they felt worthless. They struggled to handle what happened while feeling weak since they were not able to control the incident. They faced the risk of losing their self-esteem.

After a certain time, the same thing happened again, he (her friend) did not behave consistent with his responsibilities and so I felt embarrassed before some people. Then we told again and the same problem emerged after a while. I felt worthless and I thought he did not think much of me. (Firuze)

3.3.2 Devaluation

People questioned their love of an intimate one after a disruption or a conflict. In several cases, participants reported that they lost their love for their intimate. Similarly, some participants denied the value of the particular relationship and noted that the person was not worthy of them. They ignored what happened to them. They simply thought that they were not influenced.

After all, I saw that she (a friend of her) lost favor with me. (Bahar)

The person who hurt them was blamed. Memories related to the misconducts of the person were recalled. S/he was seen as worthless. In the minds of the offended people, the person who made them suffer was humiliated. Hayri indicated that he was seeing the person as a psychopath. Similarly, the person was accused of selfish and even a betrayer. It was seen that male participants devalue their interlocutors more intensely than female ones.

Besides, I did not ask for any money from him since he was a craftsman in this industrial zone. However, he was always a

materialist and a selfish person who prioritizes his own interest.
(Hüseyin)

I argued with that guy for him (his closest friend), but what he did is getting rid of me, exactly...he is a characterless person. We had been good friends for 10 years but what I saw that you cannot take a journey with him anymore. (Samet)

3.3.3 Grandiosity

It was indicated that in addition to devaluing their interlocutors, participants described a self-sufficient world in order to deal with difficult emotions that stemmed from the disruption or the conflict. In this self-sufficient state, participants thought that they did not need the person who hurt them. There was no more time to spend on the person. Actually, the person had needed them; such explanations were frequent. Therefore, the person lost their existence, supports, and advice. If there was a value attributed to that person, it was granted by them, s/he was not a precious person existentially.

She (older sister) had always told me about her problems. Somehow I could not tell her my problems; my time would not come... You had said your problems, I was not telling mine already...Therefore; what I was thinking could be described roughly as 'I do not need you'.
(Gizem)

3.4 Stage IV: Relational counteraction

3.4.1 Stopping speaking and avoiding contact

The offended people withdraw verbal communication with the person who hurt them. The duration of the verbal non-communication was not predictable.

Participants mentioned weeks, months, and even years of non-communication. Yasin reported that his grandmother has not spoken his grandfather for 37 years. In several cases, it lasted until the offended person died.

When I experience relational cutoff, I cut off all my interaction with that person. For example, I did not speak with my older sister for one and a half year. We were living in the same house....Once I argued with my cousin and I said that I do not need to speak with you. Then, I did not speak with her for 2.5 years. When her family was visiting us, I even did not say hello to her. (Gizem)

Offended people avoided contact with their interlocutor. They did not prefer to go to places where the person who hurt them might visit. If they had to share the same space like attending the same course or attending a funeral service, they simply ignored the person. They did not look at the person; behaved as if the person does not exist.

In each year, I had gone to our village but my father and my older brother did not see me. My husband's family has a house on the hillside of the village. My father and other members of my family have to pass this side to reach their house. They had walked away but did not look at me at all (cries). (Nermin)

3.4.2 Non-verbal communication

Even though stopping speaking cut off verbal communication, the relationship between parties persisted in the mind of offended people. The interaction between the parties continued in a different form, a non-verbal way communication. By withdrawing from verbal interaction, the offended people desired that it be seen that they were disturbed by the action of their interlocutor. Thus, this non-verbal interaction was a kind of reaction given in order to be understood. Paradoxically, by not speaking, participants thought that they aimed to express themselves to the other party. Some participants reported that it functions as a sign of their boundaries in the relationship. If it has been going to be violated, they would have been hurt.

It might be attracting attention. Rather than attention, there is a problem and so I am unhappy, suffering from this. Look and see this. Do something for it. I feel it expresses this. (Çiğdem)

The offended people were still interacting with their interlocutor. By nonverbally communicating to him/her, they were showing that the person was still a significant part of their life. They did not make an effort to convey their message otherwise. On the other hand, the receiver of the message sometimes did not understand what was conveyed or ignored the fact that he or she hurt an intimate one. When this happened, the offended people felt weaker and more frustrated. Samet indicated a Turkish idiom expressing this: *Tavşan dağa küsmüş dağın haberi olmamış*. It means that the offense is so weak that the object of it is ignorant of this fact.

The relational cutoff is showing your reaction. Kind of saying that how did you do this to me and why did you not value me...but it does not work at all for some people (laughing) because the interlocutor does not understand his mistakes. (Nermin)

3.4.3 Influence on the whole family

When a person experienced relational cutoff, stopping speaking to a certain person, the families of both parties were influenced by their problem. This dynamic was mostly observed in the experiences of adult participants. When the problem was between people who were from different families, family members of these people were forced or dictated not to interact and talk with people of the other family. Especially, when the men were crossed with each other, they enforced their wife and children to not communicate with the members of the other family. In some cases, the relationship between people from these families was continued but it takes place secretly, hidden from the people who forbid the interaction. Interestingly, some student participants reported that they have lately met some of their relatives in a

gathering like a wedding ceremony of their other relative. Before that, they did not know of the existence of those relatives since their parent/s have stopped talking.

Interviewer: Had not your aunt spoken to your father?

Aydm: My aunt had to take a stand on her husband's side. I remember that she came to us secretly several times but very secretly.

When two people of the same family had a disturbing experience that led to stopping speaking, the dynamics of that particular family and the content of the disruption specify how it will be handled. Again it was observed that men have the power of sanction. They could restrain other family members from relating to the person with whom they had a problem. Secret relationships took place especially among the women of the families. When all members of the family took the side of the person who stopped speaking, they all ostracized the other one.

They (his family members) had spoken to me a total of ten words for that month. They left my food in the kitchen...(Yasin)

Her family (Nermin's friend's family) had not spoken with her for years. She had not seen either her mother or her siblings because her father did not allow them. I was lucky because my younger sister was visiting me; her house in the village was close to mine. Once, my older sister called me saying that mom is coming to Adana, to her house. I went there and saw my mother. My father did not know this. I mentioned this, years later. (Nermin)

3.4.4 Hierarchy

Narratives revealed that the hierarchical position of the person who stopped speaking played a role in why s/he cut off verbal communication and how s/he was going to do anything related to this disruption. Several adult women and student participants reported that they did not confront their interlocutors and sustained the argument.

Rather, they gave up talking and left the space. Several adult women indicated that they were raised to obey and not challenge elders.

We had lived for 4 years with parents in law. When they gossiped about me a little bit, I felt offended and withdrew to my room. You could not talk back, you were hurt but you could not talk back. (Nermin)

Now, I show my reaction, I did not use to do in the past. For a long time, I had not expressed my answers because I was raised to the respect elderly, not speaking in response..to serve your guests...(Lütfiye)

When men who have a higher position in the hierarchy stopped their verbal interaction and experienced relational cutoff, they forced other people around them especially their family members not to relate to the person who offended them.

3.5 Stage V: Relational evaluation

3.5.1 Conflictual emotions

Analysis of the narratives showed that offended people who had stopped speaking with their interlocutors experience complicated emotions in their internal world.

They continued to think of their injuries and frustrations. They had feelings of anger, resentment, and disappointment. They blamed the offender and thought that s/he vitiated everything. In several incidences, their emotions were intensified and turned into hate and revenge. On the other hand, they were sad about what happened. Some participants admitted that they suffered from the loss of a particular relationship with their interlocutor.

I got mad. My first reaction was anger then anger and confusion. Later, I had a depressive mood. Then, my mood calmed down slowly and turned into melancholy and sadness. Of course, this process lasted a long time. (Firuze)

Several participants reported that they had tried to empathize with their interlocutor after their initial feelings especially anger calmed down. They had tried to make sense of why the other person could exhibit such a hurtful behavior in what kind of mood. For example, Firuze noted that she was trying to understand the intention of the person. If the hurtful act was done intentionally, she did not consider a future for that particular relationship. On the other hand, some participants reported their love about the person even though they considered that the person was a bad egg and misbehaved towards them intentionally.

I always think that he is not a good person. However, you could love him though he is not a good person. When you share a dormitory room for 4 years, naturally a bond is constituted. He is like your brother. You love your brother even though he is not a good person. My opinions about him have not changed, it was the same before.
(Hayri)

3.5.2 Preoccupation and rumination

Even though the external relationship was cut off, the relationship with the person who hurt the offended people was ongoing in their mind. Participants reported that they did not forget what happened to them. They were not able to desist from thinking imposed behavior and the person who did it. Their minds were preoccupied for days, months, and years. For instance, Hayri reported that the misbehavior of his friend stayed with him and he was obsessed with this for weeks. Similarly, Çiğdem indicated that she had constantly questioned her response to her friend for four months.

Offended people experienced the hurtful scene over and over again. They blamed the person considering that it wouldn't be like this if he or she acted differently. In their minds, they wrote different scenarios about their interlocutor's different reactions that s/he could exhibit without making the issue out of nothing.

I was thinking that couldn't they (his siblings) come together and save me from that position, couldn't they take care of my problem? At least they could come to me and ask what is wrong with you? What happened to you? I would even be happy with it even if they do not give me money. I wish they had come. (Samet)

In their minds, offended people did not only feel an interest in their interlocutor's misconducts but also ruminated about their behaviors that took place during the incident. They played possible scenarios by changing their interlocutor's attitudes that were not exhibited at the time of the incident. They sometimes accepted their own mistake but they thought that it was not such a big deal so that what they were exposed was extremely unequal treatment.

My reaction was clear. In the back of my mind, however, I was thinking something like if I made a mistake. I thought that maybe he said all of this since there were some mistakes belonging to me. Then, I said such a speech (she was exposed) is not be made. Possibilities..they were confusing my mind. (Bahar)

3.5.3 Feeling justified and resistance to resolution

When the offended people's conflictual emotions and preoccupation of the incidence persisted, they felt right to not contact verbally with the person who hurt them.

Though they questioned their side, they reduced the verbal non-communication to an unquestionable or unchangeable characteristic of themselves. For instance, Cenk reported that he questioned his side and mistakes and concluded that what was done was done, this was his trait he's an incongruent person. Similarly, Çiğdem noted that she did not regret how she reacted against her older sister. She added that she was who she was. Interestingly, several participants evaluated their reactions as faulty when they consider the incident now. However, they were somehow feeling justified thinking that circumstances in the past required them to react in that way.

When I consider now, I am thinking that what I did was not a mistake but it was not appropriate as well. At that moment, it was right for me but when I look at the past now I developed myself to not be too hard on conflicts. (Gizem)

Participants from all groups indicated that they were obstinate in not to speak with the person who offended them. Since they ruminated the moment of incidence and felt frustrated over and over again, they persisted in rejecting to communicate verbally. Gizem, Nermin, and Çiğdem pointed out that after some point their reaction turned into being obstinate to not interact with the person. Similarly, Gizem, Hayri, Cenk, and Nermin noted that they saw their family members as being stubborn when these family members crossed with someone else.

3.6 Stage VI: Resolution

3.6.1 Full resolution

3.6.1.1 Forgiveness

Participants reported that resolution comes from forgiving the person who hurt them. Forgiveness was a process that takes place through the changes not only in the object relational representational world of the offended people but also in the external interaction between two parties. In this phase, memory played an important role. Lengthy preoccupation with the hurt and rumination about the incident ultimately served to a relative diminishment of the narcissistic injury. Memories of past good experiences with the person reemerged and enabled a gradual sense of internal forgiveness. For example, Firuze stated that her love for the person outweighed her offends about him/her. Furthermore, Samet admitted that he was looking for the possibility of seeing and talking with the person after he started to forgive the person in his internal world.

Offended people calmed down in time. They tried to acknowledge what happened to them. The reactions of their interlocutor and the reasons behind these reactions were reflected on more calmly. In other words, the offended people started to think about the incident in a more complex way instead of just looking from in their own side. They empathized with the other person and try to understand in which circumstances s/he hurt them. For example, Lutfiye said that after she calmed down, she was able to see her mother in law's reasons. She acknowledged that she could do the same thing if she was her mother in law. Similarly:

When you empathize with the person, relational cutoff disappears...Also when I hurt someone else by reacting in a similar way to the person who did the same thing to me; I realize that I have reasons to react like that. Maybe the person who hurt me had also reasons for what s/he did. Now I can be a forgiver. (Bahar)

When it comes to external interactions that led to forgiveness, the apology of the offending person about his/her behavior seemed very important. Offended people expected that the offender should be sad and regretful about what happened. Well-intentioned efforts from the person played role in the resolution of the relational cutoff. For example, Lutfiye told that her husband's apology was important for her in forgiving him. Parallel with this, Firuze mentioned different ways of apology in which the person shows s/he is sorry and still interested in his/her interlocutor.

It was seen that some important days and happenings enabled resolution. Religious holidays including holy nights, feasts, and rites and ceremonies such as weddings or funerals served to carry the message of peace directly or indirectly for both parties so as not to persist in the conflict further and stay together. Additionally, it was revealed that some disasters like fire and serious illnesses of one of the parties

or a common intimate person are times when people start to talk to each other and overcome their issue.

I suppose it was the kandil (a holy night in Islam). Both my sisters told to each other and the problem was resolved as nothing happened. (Lutfiye)

My uncle called my father when he (my father) was hospitalized and they told him. Then they started to visit each other and talk. (Nermin)

3.6.1.2 Traditional defense mechanisms

Analysis of the narratives displayed that participants tried to suppress the hurtful incident after it was fully resolved. Several participants had difficulty in remembering the incident. For example, Nermin stated that she might try to erase the incident from her brain. She added that she forgot lots of details about the incident. Similarly, some participants, especially those who saw the relational cutoff as an unnecessary and childish reaction, rejected naming their experience as a relational cutoff. However, after they reported the incident they admitted that it was an experience of relational cutoff.

Recently, my younger sister and I stopped to speak. Instead of relational cutoff, I rather see it..no I should admit that it was relational cutoff. (Çiğdem).

Some participants remembered their incident of relational cutoff after the interviewer asked for some details and directed them to comment on the incident. Remarkably, when they were asked to remember, a long silence took place before they spoke.

Interviewer: You said that my mother used to stop speaking. Did not you have any experience with her?

Mm yes, let me think (silence). Yea, once she stopped to speak with me, it happened just once. Right, I did not remember this by myself. (Bahar)

Another defensive operation that helped people to process the hurt and to achieve the resolution could be splitting. When participants were asked to tell about an incident in which they caused the experience of relational cutoff, more than half of the participants especially student did not report that kind of incident. Those who mentioned this kind of experience and admitted their mistakes distanced themselves from the time they took the action. Instead of talking about their mistakes or regretful feelings, participants just quickly mentioned what they did. For example, Gizem expressed that she did not see herself as the person who hurt her older sister. Several participants mentioned an incident in which they offended their interlocutor as being misunderstood and they did not mean what they did. Similarly, they were prone to attribute the incident to the sensitivity and vulnerability of their interlocutor. For instance, Yasin interpreted the reason for relational cutoff with his friend as his friend's panic attack problem. When it comes to defensive splitting related to their own experience of relational cutoff, participants tended to split the bad part of the interlocutor and displaced it to a third person. For example, Nermin thought that the reason why her father had not spoken with her for ten years was her older brother's attitude. She thought that he was counseling her father to not forgive her. Similarly:

I found out later third parties had provoked him (his uncle). They escalated his attitudes saying that 'you have right on that pension'. As I said, third parties caused that trouble. (Hüseyin)

Rationalization and moralization can be seen as other defensive operations that took place during the resolution of relational cutoff. For example, after Firuze mentioned being fired from her job by her close friend and his following

mistreatment on her. She stopped speaking with him. Later in the interview, she stated that her friend might discharge her from the position because of some financial problem even though her friend did not specify anything about the financial situation of the company. This idea was crossing in her mind during the resolution phase. She was trying to justify why she was fired. Furthermore, Lutfiye revealed that the attitude of her mother in law, forcing her son (Lutfiye's husband) to borrow money for her another son, might be a duty of a mother. The heart of mothers could not resist seeing her child's sufferings. Thus, Lutfiye may herself do it if she were her mother in law.

3.6.1.3 Intermediaries

Participants' narratives showed that resolution sometimes was reached through the efforts of an intermediary who knew both parties. For some cases, the person who hurt his/her intimate asked the intermediary for help in order to resolve this relational problem. The intermediary conveyed the message of sorrow and apology of the offending person to the offended one. Actually, the intermediary worked on creating a peaceful condition and bringing the conflictual parties together. Sometimes, people embraced the role of intermediary without any request by the conflictual parties. They tried to moderate both parties by relating the sadness of one party to the other one and vice versa.

In a day, our common friend, Hatice, brought Ruya into my house. Hatice asked for getting by saying that Ruya is so sad etc.(Çiğdem)

In the beginning, my older brother did not want to make peace with me. Then, his wife told him 'she came to our house, you have to speak to her'. Thereby, he started to speak with me too. (Nermin)

3.6.2 Partial resolution (Not as it used to be)

Offended people might have started to talk with their interlocutor but the issue is not resolved fully in their mind. There was verbal communication but not forgiveness. The offense has not been processed entirely, but the offended people felt diminished resentment and disappointment. Even though they tried to justify and accept the hurtful incidence, they were not able to get over it. Reflecting on their side in the incident was not very likely. In their mind, they sometimes reproached their interlocutor for the hurt they caused. For instance, Firuze mentioned that she is in touch with her ex-boyfriend verbally. She still finds him to be in the wrong but she is not acting with as she used to. A majority of participants described their relationship with the hurtful person as ‘not as it used to be’. The relationship is limited and distant, not as intimate as it was in the past.

After that, I started to talk with him (his friend) but it never reached the intimacy as it used to be. (Hayri)

Of course, it (the relationship with his friend) is not warm and close as it used to be. For example, I have always visited my crafts friends and have had a tea...I have not visited him after this issue...When I saw him, I was saying just hello or have a nice day...(Hüseyin)

Similarly, Samet underlined the effect of the conflict on his current relationship with his friend such that they used to meet more often but now they see each other rarely. Since the disruption was not removed fully and the offended people were afraid of another betrayal of their trust in that relationship again, they hesitated to invest in it.

Nowadays, we (she and her cousin) do not talk and share too much. We see each other once or twice in a year. That’s it. Hello, how are you, fine, me too and so on. (Cigdem).

3.6.3 Unresolved (The lasting bond)

Analysis of the narratives showed that the relationship with the hurtful person was not likely to end in the mind of the offended people. Several participants reported that they have witnessed a relational cut off that persisted until the death of one of the parties. For instance, Hasan reported that his maternal uncle did not talk with his mother until she died. It does not mean that the issue resolved when one party died. His uncle did not join the funeral of his mother. Similarly, Aydın indicated that his aunt's husband did not speak with his father until his father died. This is not because the hurtful person has been completely forgotten or given up in the offended person's mind. The incident stayed in their mind. It still has influenced the mind of the offended people even though years have passed. Their narcissistically injured self has not been repaired, their memories of the incident are still very alive with full of emotions.

Interviewer: When you think about it, where does it stand in your mind now?

Aydın: It was the first thing that comes into my mind, therefore its effect has not gone down. Do you know what it is: a sense of defeated and being left despairing.

Outstandingly, the incident that Aydın described above took place more than forty years ago. The relationship with the hurtful person was ongoing in the mind of the offended person though there was no verbal or nonverbal interaction between the parties. Participants indicated that they would not touch the person with a ten-foot pole. For instance, Firuze stated that she wants to see that the person gets his or her just deserts from God. The offended people followed up the person and his or her life especially focusing on his or her failures and sufferings. They wished to defeat their interlocutor in many areas of life. This might bring a narcissistic recovery of their injuries stemming from the incident.

Now, she studies in Izmir and I study here. This makes me a little bit...the shoe is on the other foot. (Bahar)

Bahar mentioned above her offender is less successful since Bahar studies in a better university. Similarly, Samet told that his friends with whom he has stopped to talk had conflicts with each other. He thought that their friendship did not go well. Cigdem stated that she wants to be far from her offender and also wishes that the offender is unmasked by people around her. Additionally, she admitted that she does not want her to be happy.

The effects of the incident can be seen in the emotional state of the offended people. In fact, frustration and anger as preliminary emotional reactions against the incident could be exacerbated and turned into hate, grudge, and rage. Intensified emotions against the other maintained the relational tie with the offender. For instance, Yasin stated that he has felt hate and frustrations for years when he experienced relational cutoff. Similarly, he also expressed that his grandfather has not spoken with his grandmother for thirty years. Even though his grandparents got divorced thirty years ago, his grandfather still feels rage and hate toward his grandmother. However, he has not refrained from sending the message of peace via intermediaries and inviting her to turn back to him.

Interviewer: How do you feel now?

Samet: Hateful, hateful yes I can even say grudge because perfidy cannot be forgiven. This insult is perfidy.

When there was an apology by the offender, the offended person did not accept it. Indirect attempts of the hurtful person obtained no result either. The offended person refused the intermediaries who brought the words of the hurtful

person. Nermin indicated that her father declined her message of forgiveness which was brought by her uncle and her husband's relatives. The offended person blamed the offender in front of intermediaries and showed that peace attempts would not be taken into consideration. In time, intermediaries gave up the role of peacemaker and hesitated to mention one of the conflictual parties in the presence of the other. In fact, they actually avoided bringing them together. For example, Yasin told that his family does not say anything about his grandmother when they spend time with his grandfather and vice versa. Similarly, in Hüseyin's experience, his relatives pay attention to not invite conflictual parties at the same time.

3.7 Unconsciousness

Some materials that participants revealed implied the existence of unconscious elements in the process of the relational cutoff. As it was discussed in detail under the theme of 'not as it used to be', sometimes forgiveness was partial so that the relationship did not return the original state. Even though the offended person might start to interact verbally, he struggled to forgive totally because of unknown reasons in his mind. For instance, Bahar stated that a rupture took place. Though she accepted the apology, something like unfulfilled desire remained in her mind. This point was seen more clearly in unresolved conditions. The offended person was not aware of what was really hurtful.

I think that people do not bear such injury, being overwhelmed I mean being overwhelmed internally. In my opinion, some people are not aware of why they stopped to speak. (Yasin)

The reason for why the offended person withdrew seemed as unknown by him or her. Participants' reports showed that they lost their control over their reactions. Bahar indicated that she did not plan what to do when she was offended. She said she was acting automatically without being forced into doing something. Similarly, Hayri said that he was acting involuntarily; he did not mean to change something in his relationship or do something about it. He put that it was as if his body was responding automatically. When Hayri was talking about another relational cutoff with his friend, he described his retreat with the following narrative:

I was really upset. I'm moving people away from myself in spite of myself. I want to talk again with that person but for some reasons, my body does not allow...However, I keep behaving unavoidably. (Hayri)

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

4.1 Summary of the findings

The analysis of the results indicated that following a time line framework is useful in understanding the themes and the process of the research topic comprehensively.

When it comes to gender differences in experiencing relational cutoff, the results indicated that the only difference between the genders was observed regarding the power dynamic in relational cutoff. Men, who have a higher hierarchical position in Turkish society, can ostracize their offender and exercise influence over their other ties. Men can manipulate and enforce the people around them to stop relating or sustaining the relational tie with their offender.

Overall, the study did not reveal significant differences between the generations in experiencing relational cutoff. The process including reactions, feelings, and thoughts is quite similar across the generations. This is an overview of the process of relational cutoff as based on the results.

The beginning of the process is some kind of behavior on the part of an intimate that offends and hurts the individual very seriously. Romantic partners, parents, close friends, and relatives are the intimates who involve in the relational cutoff. The hurtful behavior is exhibited as related to a mutual conflict or it is a sort of maltreatment against the individual. The offense on the part of the individual can be as a result of a sudden disruption or it can take place because of the accumulated disappointment as related to relational conflicts and repetitive maltreatment coming from the intimate. Some examples from the results as follow: Nermin mentioned that

her father and her mother had not told to her for 10 years because she eloped to get marry with her lover who was not seen a suitable candidate of groom by her family. In another case, Hayri described a relational cutoff experience with his very close friend. He indicated that he was always tolerating his friend's misbehaviors against him. When they were talking their own religious beliefs, his friend humiliated him saying that he was a stupid person because he was an atheist. Hayri did not see his friend for two years because he was offended.

The next step in the process of relational cutoff is called narcissistic injury in which the offended people feel disappointment, resentment, and anger in response to hurtful behavior of their intimate. They question the incident. Feeling weak, facing the risk of losing self-esteem, and losing trust in the relationship with the offender are experienced. The offended people devalue their intimate by distancing themselves. On the other side of the coin, the offended people react with somewhat defensive self-sufficiency and omnipotence by considering that they do not need the offender in their life. Contrarily, they think that the offender is in need for their support and advice. To illustrate, Bahar's experience of relational cutoff can be taken into consideration. Because her boyfriend revealed that he wanted to be in an open relationship -non-monogamy- with her, she felt disrespected. She thought that she did not deserve this. She described a pattern about how she experienced this relational cutoff: feeling of disappointment, being offended, and anger. She admitted that she felt worthless and questioned her weak sides especially her beauty. On the other hand, she expressed that who was in the need of this relationship was her boyfriend because she refused his attempts to contact with her.

In the following stage of relational cutoff, narcissistically injured people develop some counteractions in response to the hurtful behavior of the offender.

They stop speaking with the offender and avoid contacting him or her in any place. The offender is purely ignored and treated as if he or she is not present. On the other hand, the offended people try to convey their message of blame towards the offender via nonverbal communication. That is to say, to stop speaking paradoxically aims to communicate the message of being hurt and the need to be seen and acknowledged by the offender. When the receiver of the nonverbal messages does not see what is conveyed, the offended people feel further frustrated. For example, Çiğdem expressed that by stopping speaking she was aiming to show that there was a problem and she was unhappy, suffering from it. She expected to be seen and taken care of.

People especially families and intimates of the offended and the offender are also influenced because the conflictual parties expect them to not relate and speak with the other person. When a man is offended by a family member, he could enforce the other family members not to communicate with the offender. The other family members especially women sustain their relationships with the offender secretly. For example, Aydin indicated that because his father and his aunt's husband cut off their relationship after an argumentation, his aunt had to take a stand on her husband's side. He noted that his aunt visited his family a few times but very secretly. Thus, power is seen as a significant dynamic in the experience of relational cutoff. While men who have a higher position in the hierarchical system of the family exert their power on the offender by influencing the other relationship of the offender, people who have a lower position in this system do not confront the offender openly. Results indicated that in Turkey, most women are raised to conform and not to argue with older people or their husbands. Thus, women and children generally avoid serious argument; they rather give up and cut off the verbal interaction with their offender.

The next step in the process of relational cutoff is the evaluation of the relationship with the offender. This evaluation process is very hard to pursue. It includes very conflictual emotions against the offender, preoccupation and rumination with the incident, and resistance against forgiving the offender. On the one hand, the offended people feel frustration, resentment, and anger towards the offender. Sometimes, these feelings are intensified and developed into more destructive emotions like hate and wish for revenge. On the other hand, the offended people feel sad since they suffer from the loss of an intimate person and the relationship with him or her.

Over time, the relative diminishment of the emotions can enable the offended people to develop empathy towards the offender and to question the intentions of the offender calmly. The relationship with the offender continues in the mind of the offended people though the external relationship between them is cut off. The hurtful scene in which misconduct took place is experienced on and again. They are preoccupied with that hurtful scene for quite a long time, and mentally write scripts in which the offender acts differently than the original incident. They feel justified as a victim of the incident. The offended people feel right to not communicate with the offender. Results revealed that they reduce his or her verbal non-communication to unchangeable characteristic of themselves. That is to say, the offended people thought that they are who they are. Parallel with this, the consistent rejection of verbal interaction develops into being obstinate about refusing to relate to the offender.

When it comes to the resolution phase of relational cutoff, results showed that it varied in accordance with the degrees of the interaction of the offended person with the offender after the incident. The interaction refers to not only the observable

relationship between two parties but also the internal representation of the relationship in the mind of the offended person. Forgiveness could be seen as a result of both kinds of interaction.

Considering the external interaction of both parties, results showed that the apology of the offender is very prominent in the process of forgiveness. The offender's expression of sadness and regret related to the incident is expected by the offended person. Well-intentioned efforts by the offender have a positive impact on the process of forgiveness. For some conditions, the offender consults an intermediary person to convey his or her message of sorry and apology and the intention of creating peace in the relationship with the offended person. Sometimes, a person who is close to the conflictual parties takes the responsibility of being an intermediary himself or herself without any demand of the offender.

Regarding the object relational world of the offended person, changes about the representation of the offender can take place. Prolonged preoccupation with the hurtful action and rumination about the incident finally contribute to a relative decrease of narcissistic injury. The offended person tries to acknowledge the hurt. Reflection on the incident calmly, thinking the problem and the reasons of the offender in a more complex way, and empathizing with the offender are seen as interactions which are ongoing in the mind of the offended person during the process of forgiveness. An example from the results is that Bahar said that after she calmed down a bit, she was able to empathize with her friend (the offender) and saw that she herself behaved like her friend in different times and context. It can be claimed that religion and culture are also seen as mediatory means to resolve the relational cutoff. Religious holidays including feasts and holy nights and ceremonies like weddings and funerals convey the message or teaching of peace directly or indirectly for

conflictual parties in order not to sustain the cutoff anymore. Additionally, a crisis like fire or a serious health problem of the offender or offended person can bring them together and serve to speak with each other in order to overcome the cutoff.

When the cutoff is overcome and the offender is forgiven, the offended person tries to suppress the hurtful incident and its details. Difficulties in recalling the incident and a long silence before speaking out were observed during the interviews. Much more difficulties are experienced when participants are revealing the cutoffs that took place because of themselves. Hesitation to talk, expression of the incident non-exhaustively, distancing themselves from the time the incident took place, and blaming the interlocutor can be considered as the mechanisms of splitting. Additionally, rationalizing the action and the circumstances of the offender and moralization the offender's actions are the means of the offender in order to process hurt and sustain the peace with the offender.

Sometimes, the resolution of the offense is achieved partially. There is verbal interaction between the conflictual parties but the relationship between them is not as it used to be. Even though the offended person's feelings of anger, resentment, and frustration are dampened, it can not be called simply as forgiveness. The relationship is distant and the offended person refrains from investing in it further.

As far as the unresolved relational cutoff is considered, it does not mean that the offended person gives up the relationship with his or her offender. It is a lasting bond in the mind of an offended person though there are no verbal or nonverbal interactions are ongoing between two parties. Memories of the hurt and emotions related to it can be very alive even they could develop into a rage, hate, and grudge. A very striking illustration can be seen in Aydın's experience of relational cutoff. He

mentioned that even though forty years passed, the first memory about a relational cutoff that came into his mind in the interview was his relational cutoff experience with his girl friend in his university years. He noted that its effects, a sense of defeated and being left despairing, have not gone down.

In the unresolved condition, the peace attempts coming from the offender directly or through the intermediaries are rejected. When the offended person is interacting with third parties, he or she blames and curses on the offender. The life of the offender is followed by detail. The offender's failures and sufferings are focused on because the offended person does not want to see the offender as being happy and successful. The problems in the life of offender can mean the narcissistic recovery of the hurt for the offended person.

Results indicated that some unconscious elements could involve in the process of a relational cutoff. As discussed in full resolution and a partial one, there is an effort to suppress the incident and its maladies. It reported as unknown why the relationship is not as it used to be. The motivation of the offender which could be the protection of self-esteem or self-cohesiveness is not being aware of. Similarly, it was revealed that the actions of the offended person such as withdrawal of verbal interaction were not under the control of him or her. They rather described as automatically or involuntarily exhibited.

4.2 Can relational cutoff (kusmek) be defined as a classical defense?

The term defense was described distinctively by several psychoanalytic schools (Çavdar, 2014). Classically, the term defense was defined as all operations of the ego in order to diminish anxiety by maintaining unconsciousness of forbidden wishes and impulses (Freud, 1926). Although later psychoanalytic theorists emphasized different

roles and features of defenses, there are some common grounds which were accepted.

To begin with, defenses take place unconsciously so that the person is not aware of this process (Vaillant, 1992; McWilliams, 1994). A preliminary search of psychoanalytic literature about silent treatment indicated that it could be used as a defense against unacceptable thoughts and phantasies, castration anxiety, and sexual desires in the psychotherapy process (Fliess, 1949; Fuller & Crowther, 1998). The results of the present study showed there are unconsciousness as well as conscious elements process in the experience of relational cutoff. Stopping speaking with the offender is consciously decided when a mutual problem is confronted or maltreatment was exposed. Additionally, while the offended person consciously avoids interacting with his or her offender, he consciously communicates with third parties, forces them to not relate to the offender. The findings revealed that preoccupation with the hurt and rumination about the incident are also conscious, at least in part. On the other hand, the underlying motivation of withdrawing from verbal communication is not conscious so that the offended person is not aware that he or she cuts off communication in order to protect his or her self-esteem and self-cohesiveness against a relational threat (Fişek, 2009).

Another function of defenses is avoiding or regulating some overwhelming and dreadful emotions. While Freud (1926) and ego psychologists proposed that defenses ward off anxiety; the British object relations school emphasized the role and vitality of defenses against the grief that stems from individuation and separation process (McWilliams, 1994). The operation of defense against envy (Klein, 1957) and shame (Lansky, 2005) were stressed as well. According to Fişek (2009), kusmek as a relational cutoff may function defensively against anxiety and guilt. She

proposed that an offended person may need to avoid from overwhelming anxiety related to possible and complete estrangement and loneliness. She claimed that the estrangement caused by *kusmek* does not necessarily mean an absolute cutoff. Moreover, rejecting to talk over the conflict may enable the offended person to not confront his or her role in the conflict and hence to avoid the potential feeling of guilt (Fişek, 2009). The present study failed to observe anxiety and guilt, but it indicated that relational cutoff may give rise to more destructive emotions including rage, hate, and grudge. This discrepancy might stem from the methodological difference of the present study and the other. While the other study was a case study as being able to analyze the process of relational cutoff longitudinally and more intensely, the present study was applied as qualitative research relying on one-time semi-structured interview. Therefore, the materials that were revealed could have some differences in nature. Steiner (1996) claimed that when a person is hurt or feels wronged unfairly, he or she can develop the feelings of vengeance which is attended by destructive emotions like hate and grudge. Since directly expressing these destructive emotions is too dangerous, they are controlled and disclosed in an indirect way (Steiner, 1996). In the experience of relational cutoff, it can be alleged that destructive emotions including rage, hate, and grudge stemmed from the narcissistic injury could be warded off defensively and conveyed in indirect ways like stopping speaking. Considering the Turkish culture, it can be claimed that it is better to stop speaking than to fight because open confrontation harms the harmony of the relationship.

Another characteristic of defenses is that they can be both adaptive and maladaptive (Vaillant, 1992). Cramer (2012) claimed that the frequency of the usage of defense and the age at which it is used specifies the adaptiveness of defenses. For example, Anna Freud (1936) claimed that while denial is an adaptive defense

mechanism during early childhood, it is maladaptive in adulthood. Because this study did not include various age groups, the adaptive side of the relational cutoff related to age at which it takes place was not explored. The present study proposed that the offended person shows his or her reaction by taking into consideration of norms in the Turkish culture and tries to sustain relational ties as much as possible. On the other hand, it can be also claimed that when it is not resolved, the relational cutoff can give rise to both somatic and psychological problems in offended person and the offender (Zadro, Arriaga, & Williams, 2008). In addition to losing someone who is intimate, the social life of offended person might be restricted and he or she can feel isolated. Hence, it was argued that the person who is using the silent treatment to the offender can lose his or her control over it and feels powerless about stopping speaking (Zadro, Arriaga, & Williams, 2008).

4.3 Considering defensive characteristics of relational cutoff in the light of relational psychoanalysis and intersubjectivity

In relational psychoanalysis, defenses are considered as interpersonal means used by a person against negative affect, stemming from the external world or from threatening interpersonal outcomes of a desire, so as to regulate both the self and the relationship (Stolorow & Lachmann, 1980). Instead of formulating defense as being generated in a closed system, defenses were reviewed as co-created in the relational context so that the other has involved and influenced (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992; Hoffmann, 1991). It was noted that rather than operating unconsciously in a closed system, defenses take place unconsciously in a relational matrix (Stolorow & Atwood, 1992).

Firstly, it was discussed that to qualify a phenomenon as a defense, it has to help a person to preserve a cohesive sense of self and self-esteem (McWilliams, 1994). In addition to avoiding unpleasantness, defenses are also dynamic structures to maintain a cohesive sense of self and self-esteem when the self is threatened, by maltreatment, insult, and hostility from people whom the person loves and feels an intimate (Knox, 2003). The results showed the process starts with a sort of narcissistic injury coming from an intimate as part of a conflict or maltreatment in the beginning phase of the relational cutoff. The offended person feels humiliated and ashamed in front of his or her friends and relatives.

The findings revealed that the offended person feels that intimacy and trust in his/her relationship with the offender is betrayed. This betrayal is very hurtful since the intimate is experienced within the offender's sense of familial self which implies a sense of permeable boundaries between the self and intimate other. Hence, the reciprocal conflict or maltreatment destroys not only the offended person's sense of self but also the relational matrix in which relational trust is a fundamental matrix (Fişek, 2009). It can be argued that devaluing the offender and feeling grandiose help the offender to protect his self-cohesion and self-esteem, while avoiding verbal communication with the interlocutor enables avoiding arguing about the disruption and possible loss of self-esteem. Similarly, Fişek (2009) discussed that by stopping speaking the offender escapes facing his or her own roles in the conflict. This can also be regarded as another effort to preserve self-esteem.

Another characteristic of defense is that it regulates affect and the relationship (Stolorow & Lachmann, 1980). Regulating distance in a relationship is an influential way for the regulation of emotions since they are very much reliant on the interactions in the relationship with intimates (Knox, 2003). For Lansky (1986),

disengagement is a type of transpersonal defense following a narcissistic injury in a relationship. Instead of binding a relationship, it does not offer a reciprocal way of resolving the conflict. The offended person regulates his or her overwhelming negative emotions and relational distance by manipulating the relationship with the offender and devaluing the interlocutor (Lansky, 1986).

Various studies suggest that collectivistic cultures promote social harmony and underline avoiding direct aggression and open confrontations (Forbes, Zhang, Doroszewicz & Haas, 2009) and Turkey is no exception. Considering the narcissistic injury resulting in anger, hate, and grudge, relational cutoff might be a way to ward off these emotions rather than showing direct aggression to the offender because he or she is still an intimate, and taking revenge by showing direct aggression is not acceptable to the society.

In the experience of relational cutoff, the offended person avoids open confrontation since it may cause a permanent cutoff. The offended person devalues his or her offender and withdraws from verbal interaction with the interlocutor since he or she experiences resentment, anger, and loss of self-esteem overwhelmingly. He or she conveys his/her hurt and blames to the interlocutor through non-verbal ways. This is not a total cutoff so that the person positions himself in between moving away or moving too close to the offender. If he positions very far from the offender, he may lose the intimate one who affirms the value and the meaning of his existence. On the other hand, if the offended person stays too close, he may feel vulnerable since his hurt is not seen and taken into consideration by the offender (Lafarge, 2006).

Lastly, the relational psychoanalytical approach proposed that defenses can be regarded as unconscious communicational processes seen both in psychotherapy and in couple systems (Fişek, 2009). Defensive configuration of distance regulation in the relationship is internalized and reserved in implicit memory which is not accessible to consciousness. Nevertheless, it is not simply a tendency but it consists of representations as being intensely symbolic and having a pervasive constructing influence on feelings, thoughts, and behaviors by staying unconscious in itself (Knox, 2003). It was claimed that defensive operations start from conscious awareness of the conflict and goes to unconscious reactions. At the beginning of the process, avoiding overwhelming emotions and experiences may be conscious and chosen as suppressing those materials. However, it turns into unconscious and involuntary as developed into repression so that those materials are split and become separated from consciousness and from each other (Knox, 2003). The results showed that while some participants seem to be aware of stopping speaking with the offender, others suggest that they withdrew from verbal interaction involuntarily. Interacting with the third parties about the issue and ruminating on the hurtful scene are conscious. On the other hand, as Fişek (2009) asserted, the underlying motivation which is protecting the cohesion of the self and self-esteem in response to narcissistic injury seems to be unconscious.

4.4. Clinical implications

The present study indicated that in unresolved conditions, some relational injuries are not forgiven and relational cutoff can persist for years and sometimes a whole lifetime. Another argument might be that some people cannot forgive. They feel rage, hate, and grudge. According to Akhtar (2002), some people are unable to

forgive. They feel grudge and hatred chronically. He maintained that some severe psychopathologies specifically paranoid personality, malignant narcissism, and antisocial personality can be observed in this group of people. As a result, it might be argued that exploring the experience of relational cutoff in clinical practice may contribute to diagnoses of these personality disorders. However, the cultural norm should be taken into consideration seriously before assessing relational cutoff. In Turkish culture, relational conflicts may not be managed easily so that open confrontation is avoided in order not to disrupt the harmony in the relationship. Nevertheless, emotions caused by the conflict may not be handled even though they were conveyed in indirect ways (Fişek, 2017).

When relational cutoff is unresolved, the offended person maintains his bond with the offender painfully. Neither the relationship is totally cut off, nor the offender is forgiven. It was argued that forgiveness as being an essential component of grief is fundamental for psychological growth. Accepting and forgiving the offender's hurtful behaviors are vital for keep going in his or her life (Akhtar, 2002). The present study showed that in relational cutoff, people may evaluate their relationship and feel conflictual emotions against their offender such as sadness and hate. Working through these emotions in the psychotherapy may be considered as increasing relational complexity of the patient so that he or she may realize the hated person is also the loved one. Achieving the integrate love and hate promotes the raising tolerance of his or her own failures or badness and other people's failures (Tylin, 2005).

Lastly, this study may contribute to working on relational problems in the psychotherapy process. Patients may apply psychotherapy some relational problems in which relational cutoff take place. Additionally, a patient may be offended to a

psychotherapist in the transference relationship which refers to the projection of relational patterns, feelings, and thoughts about significant others onto the psychotherapist (Mitchell & Black, 1995). Also, the therapist might be offended to the patient as a countertransference reaction that is the therapist's reactions or feelings in response to the patient's story or the therapist's reactions to the patient in related to his or her own psychodynamics (McWilliams, 1994).

4.5. Limitations and future direction

First of all, this study is a very first step to explore the concept of kusek in the field of not only psychology but also other social sciences. There is no study which explores the phenomenon of kusek theoretically. Further research is immensely needed to explore the concept. In addition to research in clinical psychology, studies in social psychology and anthropology will definitely shed light on the concept further.

The study collected the data through a semi-structured interview since there is no established scale or measure to study on the subject of the present research. This might be seen as limited so that the interview questions were applied for the first time even though a pilot test was done before collecting the data for the present study.

In this study, the collected data may be limited to a certain extent since some themes especially unconsciousness may need to be explored in a more intensive way. Case studies in clinical psychology can contribute more with details about these themes because they can analyze the process of kusek both longitudinally and immediately rather than retrospectively.

Future studies can contribute to exploring possible generational differences in experiencing relational cutoff by focusing on distinct ways of relating to people used by different generations. A prime example is the use of social media. Online reactions between people in a relationship especially for younger generations can be explored when comparing generational differences in relational cutoff. Younger generations may stalk their offender by using fake accounts which might be a way of maintaining a lasting bond. Additionally, they may delete their posts which are related to the offender or they may express their thoughts and emotions through online platforms as a response to narcissistic injury.

The present study did not aim to classify variations in relational cutoff in terms of their intensity or duration of not speaking. Future studie may focus on these characteristics to explore whether relational disruption might be experienced as a minor narcissistic injury and resolved in a short time while others might be a consequence of real maltreatment and last a long time or forever.

Finally, the present study consisted of two age groups, participants who were university students and above the age of twenty years old and those who were adult and above the age of forty years old. Therefore, it is limited to include participants with different age groups. Future research can extend the age groups. This may especially make a contribution to exploring the adaptiveness of kusmek as a defense in childhood.

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

- 1.) What would you like to tell me about yourself?
- 2.) How could you define relational cutoff?
- 3.) Have you ever witnessed any relational cutoff which was experienced by the people around you? Could you mention about it?
 - Is there any relational cutoff between your family members? Was there any relational cutoff between your family members? Could you mention about it?
- 4.) Have you ever experienced any relational cutoff in which you are offended?
 - Could you tell me about the process of relational cutoff?
 - What did you think about the person / people whom you cut off your relationship in that process?
 - What kind of emotions did you feel in that process?
 - Did you think anything about ending this process?
 - Where does it stand in your mind?
 - Have you experienced any other relational cutoff in which you are offended?
- 5.) Has anyone ever experienced a relational cutoff with you?
 - Could you tell me about the process of relational cutoff?
 - What did you think about the person / people who cut off the relationship with you?
 - What kind of emotions did you feel in that process?
 - Did you think anything about ending the process?
 - Where does it stand in your mind?

- Has anyone experienced any other relational cutoff with you?
- 6.) In what kinds of situation do people cut off their relationship?
- Why people cut off their relationship?
 - Who cuts off the relationship with whom?
 - What kind of process is going on? How does relational cutoff start / continue? If it ends, how could it happen?
 - What do you think about the function/s of relational cutoff?
- 7.) Sometimes people cut off their relationship with some groups, organizations, or institutions rather than a person. Have you ever experienced something like that?
- 8.) Would you like to add anything?

APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (TURKISH)

1. Kısaca kendinizden bahsedebilir misiniz?
2. Küsmek deyince aklınıza ne geliyor?/ Küsmeyi nasıl tanımlarsınız?
3. Her insanın hayatında irili ufaklı küslükler olabiliyor. Sizin çevrenizde gözlemediğiniz küslükler oldu mu?
 - Ailenizde gözlemediğiniz küslükler oldu mu/ var mı?
4. Sizin hiç birisine küstünüz mü?
 - Süreci anlatır mısınız?
 - Küstüğünüz kişi/ler ile ilgili o süreçte neler düşündünüz?
 - Ne tür duygular hissetmişiniz?
 - Bu durumun sonlanması ile ilgili düşündüğünüz şeyler oldu mu, anlatır mısınız?
 - Yaşadığınız bu durum son olarak zihninizde nasıl bir noktaya geldi?
 - Bu olaydan başka anlatabileceğiniz bir küsmek ile ilgili başınızdan geçen bir olay oldu mu?
5. Birisi size hiç küstü mü?
 - Süreci anlatır mısınız?
 - Size küsen kişi/ler ile ilgili o süreçte neler düşündünüz?
 - Ne tür duygular hissetmişiniz?
 - Bu durumun sonlanması ile ilgili düşündüğünüz şeyler oldu mu, anlatır mısınız?
 - Yaşadığınız bu durum son olarak zihninizde nasıl bir noktaya geldi?
 - Birisinin size küstüğü başka bir deneyiminiz oldu mu?

6. Siz başınızdan geçen deneyim/lerden bahsettiniz, bu konudaki genel görüşlerinizi de merak ediyorum. Sizce insanlar nasıl durumlarda birbirine küser?
 - Neden insanlar birbirine küser?
 - Kimler kimlere küser?
 - Sizce nasıl bir süreç işliyor, nasıl başlıyor ve nasıl devam ediyor, bitiyorsa nasıl sonlanıyor?
 - Sizce küsmenin nasıl bir işlevi var?
7. Bazen insanlar kişilere değil de bazı gruplara, kuruluşlara veya derneklere küsebiliyorlar. Sizin hiç böyle bir deneyiminiz oldu mu?
8. Eklemek istediğiniz başka şeyler var mı?

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (STUDENT)

Arařtırmayı destekleyen kurum: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi

Arařtırmanın adı: Kúsmenin sosyal bağlamda benliđin korunmasındaki rolü

Proje Yürütücüsü: Doç. Dr. Serra Müderrisođlu

Arařtırmacının adı: Metin Koçyiđit

Proje konusu:

Bireyler iliřkilerinde çeřitli sorunlarla karřılařmakta ve bunlara farklı davranıřlarla karřılık verebilmektedir. Bu arařtırmanın amacı kúsme davranıřının ne tür durumlarda ortaya çıktıđını ve bireyler tarafından nasıl deneyimlendiđini anlamaya çalışmaktır. Bu çalışma Boğaziçi Üniversitesi İnsan Arařtırmaları Etik Alt Kurulu (INAREK/SBB) onayı ile gerçeleştirilmektedir. Gerekli gördüğünüz durumlarda bu kurula bařvurarak bilgi alma hakkına sahipsiniz.

Onam:

Arařtırma yaklaşık olarak 60dk sürmektedir. Görüřme boyunca çeřitli açık uçlu sorularla karřılařacak ve bunlara cevap vermeniz beklenecektir. Cevap vermek istemediđiniz soru/ları sebep belirtmeksizin cevaplamayabilirsiniz. Bu arařtırmaya katılım karřılıđında PSY 241 dersinden 1,5 kredi alacaksınız. Katıldıđınız takdirde çalışmanın herhangi bir ařamasında bir sebep göstermeden onayınızı çekmek hakkına da sahipsiniz. Arařtırmadan çekildiđiniz takdirde katılım karřılıđında alacađınızı kredi etkilenmeyecek, arařtırmayı tamamlamıřsınız gibi kredinizi alabileceksiniz. Görüřmeye devam etmek istemediđiniz durumda o ana kaydedilen görüřme silinecek, size ait veriler arařtırmada kullanılmayacaktır. Arařtırma katılımcılar için herhangi bir risk içermemektedir.

Bu araştırma bilimsel amaçlarla gerçekleştirilmektedir ve katılımcı bilgilerinin gizliliği esas tutulmaktadır. Görüşmelerde ses kaydı alınacaktır. Araştırma süresince bu ses kayıtları kilitli bir dolapta tutulup, araştırma bittikten sonra imha edilecektir. Verilerin analizi aşamasında katılımcıların ifşa olmasına neden olabilecek bilgiler (örneğin; isim, soyisim) kullanılmayıp anonim tutulacaktır. Araştırma sona erdikten sonra yapılacak yayın ve ya sunumlarda katılımcılara dair isim/soyisim gibi tanımlayıcı bilgiler kullanılmayacaktır. Araştırmaya dair daha fazla bilgi almak için proje yürütücüsü Doç. Dr. Serra Müderrisoğlu (serra@boun.edu.tr) ve/veya araştırmacı Metin Koçyiğit (metin-kocyiğit@live.com) ile iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz için teşekkür ederiz.

Ben,, yukarıdaki metni okudum ve katılmam istenen çalışmanın kapsamını ve amacını, gönüllü olarak üzerime düşen sorumlulukları tamamen anladım. Çalışma hakkında soru sorma imkanı buldum. Bu çalışmayı istediğim zaman ve herhangi bir neden belirtmek zorunda kalmadan bırakabileceğimi ve bıraktığım takdirde herhangi bir olumsuzluk ile karşılaşmayacağımı anladım.

Bu koşullarda söz konusu araştırmaya kendi isteğimle, hiçbir baskı ve zorlama olmaksızın katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Formun bir örneğini aldım / almak istemiyorum .

Katılımcının Adı-Soyadı:.....

Yaş:

İmzası:.....

Telefon No :.....

Tarih :...../...../.....

Araştırmacının Adı-Soyadı:.....

İmzası:.....

Tarih:...../...../.....

APPENDIX D

INFORMED CONSENT FORM (FOR ADULTS)

Araştırmayı destekleyen kurum: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi

Araştırmanın adı: Küsmenin sosyal bağlamda benliğin korunmasındaki rolü

Proje Yürütücüsü: Doç. Dr. Serra Müderrisoğlu

Araştırmacının adı: Metin Koçyiğit

Proje konusu:

Bireyler ilişkilerinde çeşitli sorunlarla karşılaşmakta ve bunlara farklı davranışlarla karşılık verebilmektedir. Bu araştırmanın amacı küsmeye davranışının ne tür durumlarda ortaya çıktığını ve bireyler tarafından nasıl deneyimlendiğini anlamaya çalışmaktır. . Bu çalışma Boğaziçi Üniversitesi İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Alt Kurulu (INAREK/SBB) onayı ile gerçekleştirilmektedir. Gerekli gördüğünüz durumlarda bu kurula başvurarak bilgi alma hakkına sahipsiniz.

Onam:

Araştırma yaklaşık olarak 60 dk sürmektedir. Görüşme boyunca çeşitli açık uçlu sorularla karşılaşacak ve bunlara cevap vermeniz beklenecektir. Cevap vermek istemediğiniz soru/ları sebep belirtmeksizin cevaplamayabilirsiniz. Bu araştırmaya katılmak tamamen isteğe bağlıdır. Katıldığınız takdirde çalışmanın herhangi bir aşamasında bir sebep göstermeden onayınızı çekmek hakkına da sahipsiniz. Görüşmeye devam etmek istemediğiniz durumda o ana kaydedilen görüşme silinecek, size verileri araştırmada kullanılmayacaktır. Araştırma katılımcılar için herhangi bir risk içermemektedir.

Bu araştırma bilimsel amaçlarla gerçekleştirilmektedir ve katılımcı bilgilerinin gizliliği esas tutulmaktadır. Görüşmelerde ses kaydı alınacaktır. Araştırma süresince

bu ses kayıtları kilitli bir dolapta tutulup, araştırma bittikten sonra imha edilecektir. Verilerin analizi aşamasında katılımcıların ifşa olmasına neden olabilecek bilgiler (örneğin; isim, soyisim) kullanılmayıp anonim tutulacaktır. Araştırma sona erdikten sonra yapılacak yayın veya sunumlarda katılımcılara dair isim/soyisim gibi tanımlayıcı bilgiler kullanılmayacaktır. Araştırmaya dair daha fazla bilgi almak için proje yürütücüleri Doç. Dr. Serra Müderrisoğlu (serra@boun.edu.tr) ve/veya araştırmacı Metin Koçyiğit (metin-kocyiğit@live.com) ile iletişime geçebilirsiniz.

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul ettiğiniz için teşekkür ederiz.

Ben,, yukarıdaki metni okudum ve katılmam istenen çalışmanın kapsamını ve amacını, gönüllü olarak üzerime düşen sorumlulukları tamamen anladım. Çalışma hakkında soru sorma imkanı buldum. Bu çalışmayı istediğim zaman ve herhangi bir neden belirtmek zorunda kalmadan bırakabileceğimi ve bıraktığım takdirde herhangi bir olumsuzluk ile karşılaşmayacağımı anladım.

Bu koşullarda söz konusu araştırmaya kendi isteğimle, hiçbir baskı ve zorlama olmaksızın katılmayı kabul ediyorum.

Formun bir örneğini aldım / almak istemiyorum (bu durumda araştırmacı bu kopyayı saklar).

Katılımcının Adı-Soyadı:.....

Yaş:

İmzası:.....

Telefon No:.....

Tarih :...../...../.....

Araştırmacının Adı-Soyadı:.....

İmzası:.....

Tarih :...../...../.....

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