NARRATIVES ON TRAUMATIC LIVED EXPERIENCES AS PATHWAYS TO DECOLONIZATION OF GENDER: A STUDY OF VULNERABILITY, RISK AND AGENCY OF IRAQ'S YAZIDI

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submitted by **IŞINSU ACAR** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Science in Middle East Studies, **the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Sadettin KİRAZCI
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences _____

Asst. Prof. Derya Göçer AKDER
Head of Department
Department of Area Studies _____

Asst. Prof. Derya Göçer AKDER
Supervisor
Department of Area Studies _____

Examining Committee Members:

Assoc. Prof. Şerif Onur BAHÇECİK (Head of the Examining Committee)
Middle East Technical University
Department of International Relations _____

Asst. Prof. Derya Göçer AKDER (Supervisor)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Area Studies _____

Asst. Prof. Huriye Gökten DOĞANGÜN
METU Northern Cyprus Campus
Department of Political Science and International Relations _____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last name: Işınsu ACAR

Signature:

ABSTRACT

NARRATIVES ON TRAUMATIC LIVED EXPERIENCES AS PATHWAYS TO DECOLONIZATION OF GENDER: A STUDY OF VULNERABILITY, RISK AND AGENCY OF IRAQ'S YAZIDI

ACAR, Işınsu
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Almost nine years have passed since the Yazidi community of Iraq lived through the latest wave of gross human rights violations in their history. The long-term physical and psychosocial impacts of the genocide in August 2014 were thoroughly explored in parallel to an interrogation of dynamics behind caricatured portrayals of lived experiences. This thesis problematized voices that are left behind and symbolically amplified. Narratives that apply the framework of resistance, empowerment, and recovery were also visited to explore the tension between power and agency and offer a balanced representation of reality. Sources were identified based on a criterion of selected keywords, language, format, political leanings, and quality. The final list of samples included twenty-six news content and thirty academic studies published between 2014 and 2023. Narratives were analyzed through the lens of textual and feminist analysis with particular attention on vocabulary and grammar to identify trends in portrayals, argumentation, and tone. Research findings confirmed reliance on oriental and patriarchal discourses, typically visible through the promotion of female characters as victimized or liberated combatants. Current storytelling practices in media were particularly found vulnerable to a complex set of motives relating to

psychology, politics, and security, while academic studies tended to prioritize the needs, aspirations, and well-being of Yazidis by highlighting justice, self-defense, education, technology, art, religion, and social support. These results illustrated the potential of narratives in challenging beliefs, values, interactions, and structures. It suggested engaging with discourses is ordinary magic in the sense of redefining power and encouraging solidarity.

Keywords: Genocide, Yazidi, Orientalism, Empowerment, Recovery

ÖZ

TRAVMATİK DENEYİMLER ÜZERİNE ANLATILARDAN CİNSİYETİN SÖMÜRGESİZLEŞMESİ: IRAK YEZİDİLERİNİN SAVUNMASIZLIK, RİSK VE EYLEMLİLİK BAĞLAMINDA BİR İNCELEMESİ

ACAR, Işınsu
Yüksek Lisans., Orta Doğu Araştırmaları
Tez Yöneticisi: Dr. Öğr Üyesi Derya Göçer AKDER

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Irak Ezidi toplumunun tarihindeki en son ağır insan hakları ihlallerine maruz kalmasının üzerinden neredeyse dokuz yıl geçti. Ağustos 2014'te gerçekleşen soykırımın uzun vadeli fiziksel ve psikososyal etkileri, yaşantıların karikatürize edilmiş tasvirlerinin ardındaki dinamiklerin sorgulanmasına paralel olarak kapsamlı bir şekilde araştırıldı. Bu tez, ihmal edilen ve sembolik olarak görünürlük elde eden sesleri sorunsallaştırdı. Güç ve eylem arasındaki gerilimi keşfetmek ve gerçekliğin dengeli bir temsilini sunmak adına direniş, güçlenme ve travma sonrası iyileşme çerçevesini uygulayan anlatılar ziyaret edildi. Kaynaklar seçilen bir dizi anahtar kelime, dil, format, politik eğilimler ve kaliteye ilişkin kriter üzerinden belirlendi. Nihai örneklemde 2014 ile 2023 yılları arasında yayınlanan yirmi altı haber içeriği ve otuz akademik çalışma yer aldı. Metinsel ve feminist analiz merceğinden analiz edilen anlatılarda tasvirler, argümanlar ve üsluptaki eğilimleri belirlemek için kelime ve dilbilgisine dikkat edildi. Araştırma bulguları, kadın karakterlerin tipik olarak mağdur veya özgürleşmiş savaşçılar olarak portre edilmesi üzerinden oryantal ve ataerkil söylemlere duyulan bağımlılığı doğruladı. Özellikle medyada hikâye anlatımına dair pratiklerin psikoloji, politika ve güvenlikle ilgili karmaşık bir dizi faktöre savunmasız

kaldığı gözlemlenirken, akademik çalışmaların adalet, savunma, eğitim, teknoloji, sanat, din ve sosyal desteği vurgulayarak Yezidilerin ihtiyaçlarına, özlemlerine ve sağlık durumlarına öncelik verme eğilimi sergilediği bulunmuştur. Bu sonuçlar, anlatıların inançlara, değerlere, etkileşimlere ve yapılara meydan okumadaki potansiyelini göstermiştir. Söylemlerin yeniden inşasına odaklanmak gücü yeniden tanımlama ve dayanışmayı teşvik etme anlamında sıradan sihir olarak öne sürülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Soykırım, Ezidi, Oryantalism, İyileşme, Güçlendirme

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POSITIONALITY STATEMENT

I remember resorting to uninterrupted seances of daydreaming as an escape mechanism ever since early years of childhood. In this world that I have constructed phenomena such as fear, sadness and violence were strange and meaningless. Visitors were strictly unallowed as they could have 'polluted' architectural inputs with their preconceived judgements.

Over time, establishing long-lasting friendships, presence of supportive family members, and guarantees that a middle-class family can provide in accessing bachelor's and higher education, participating in study and work arrangements in international settings and enjoying a healthy life standard aside all the traumatic life experiences have taught on kindness, intelligence, self-worth, and imperfectionist nature of humanity.

Studying as an undergraduate student was a breakthrough as far as widening my horizon on global affairs. Upon graduation, I had very high hopes and dream to return all the knowledge and skills that I have accumulated over the years. I was ambitious and motivated to collaborate with students and marginalized groups. It took less than a few months to grasp reality. Who did I think I was in a place where corruption and patriarchy were ingrained in minds and bodies! This time, no amount of chocolate and professional accomplishments or the time spent in social networking, playing with pets or long and peaceful walks in nature could have function as a coping and rehabilitation mechanism. The sarcastic and melancholic attitude slowly poisoned and gave way to disillusionment and disbelief.

In search for an hope to promote freedom, gender equality and recovery in contexts that are characterized by symptoms of ongoing or/and post-traumatic disorder, I have encountered countless life stories of girls and women in Iraq, Rwanda, Sierra Leone and Bosnia and Herzegovina. The variety of claims over truth with conflicting storytelling practices in media and academia has fueled motivation in identifying

dominant discourses, investigating alterative versions and comparing results on the ways that knowledge is generated on survival and growth.

Before embarking on a journey to study a highly sensitive topic and population, acknowledging privileges relating to social status, skin color, formal education, language, ability, gender, sexuality, religion and political views was taken as a starting point in addressing potential risks of reproducing bias and exacerbating power dynamics. This followed a continuous self-assessment of identity, life history, experience, values and beliefs as they interfered in the research process. Meaningful reflection on labels such as middle class, white, educated, able-bodied, women, heterosexual, agnostic, feminist, and liberal was ensured by an exposure to a wide range of materials that were written by psychologists, psychiatrists, professors, lecturers, research assistants, Ph.D. candidates, graduate students, editors, journalists, lawyers, project coordinators, gender and conflict analysts, nurse practitioners, and ethnomusicologists with different standpoints.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CRSV	Conflict-related sexual violence
CTS	Continuous traumatic stress
YJÊ	Êzîdxan Women's Units
ICC	International Criminal Court
ISF	Iraqi Security Forces
ISIS	Islamic State of Iraq and Syria
KDP	Kurdistan Democratic Party
KRG	Kurdistan Regional Government
PKK	Kurdistan Worker’s Party
PUK	Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
YPG	People’s Protection Units
PMF	Popular Mobilization Forces
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
YBŞ	Sinjar Resistance Unit

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Narratives are described as chain of thoughts, events, experiences and/or actions that inform about the construction of knowledge-power relations via reflection of feelings, perspectives, value systems, beliefs and attitudes on words, sentences and paragraphs. They offer an examination of different representations of social and cultural phenomena while highlighting the role of gender, ethnicity, religion and other aspects of identity in shaping stories. This research approaches analysis of narratives as a powerful tool to challenge hegemonic understandings around traumatic lived experiences of the 'Other'. It focuses on factors or conditions beneath the reproduction of oriental and patriarchal discourses in news and attempts go beyond criticism of fixed, superficial and one-sided representations of social reality by exploring alternative discourses in reference to exceptional media outlets and academic articles. Narratives not only reveal history, culture and politics around expectations, myths and contested truths but also signify a noteworthy potential in promoting justice and equality through amplifying voice of the marginalized.

The inspiration of this research is grounded on the experiences of Yazidis, an ethnoreligious minority group in Iraq who survived and thrived against the brutality of an exhaustive history relating to mass atrocities. Although historical records point out to 73 massacres or *Firmans* up until 2014, the genocide campaign of the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) is by far among the best-documented and publicized cases of genocide in history. As frontline actors in sharing information on lived experiences during and after the genocide, women have held a key position in leading to the recognition of a breach in Genocide Convention (UNODC, 2019, p. 145). The detailed coverage of acts of torture, murder, massive displacement, destruction of cultural and religious sites, forced conversion, forcible transfer, conscription of children, and the systematic rape and sexual slavery of Yazidi girls and women has proven a deliberate

intention to destroy group members. It has also paved the way in challenging conservative cultural codes, taboos on conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV) and the caste system.

1.1. Research Questions

Early narratives about Yazidis are encountered in ethnographic studies and travelers' tales in the mid-19th century (Fisher & Zagros, 2018, p. 202). These narratives played out an extensive focus on religion and origins with portrayals of Yazidis as Satan-worshippers and enemies. This hostile tone began to change in the 20th century where a plethora of academic studies began to offer in-depth analysis of culture, ethnicity, rituals, language and history. The last shift has been triggered by the genocide in August 2014. Although media outlets typically engaged in reporting of genocide from an oriental and patriarchal point of view, academic circles increasingly began to focus on the gendered nature of violence, long-term physical and psycho-social consequences of genocide, and unethical practices in journalism. Given a stark difference in storytelling practices in media and academia, analyzing narratives from a time period of 2014 to 2023 is expected to shed light on quality of interactions, potential for growth and lessons for the future in promoting objective, empowering and respectful knowledge production. In addition to a heightened(!) sensitivity on ethical journalism, this research expects to find out individual and communal dynamics that grant an 'exceptionality' in survival and moving forward. It specifically focuses on historical experiences of structural violence and discrimination, status of Yazidis as ethnic minority and elements of faith in explaining the case of an alleged breakthrough in women's empowerment and recovery.

This thesis argues that narratives can promote the process of empowerment and recovery as well as it is capable of encouraging commodification, exoticization, exploitation, disempowerment, dehumanization, and retraumatization of girls and women. It approaches storytelling as an act of performance and power that involves cultural and political struggle over social reality and seeks to answer the following questions to offer a comprehensive analysis on narratives of trauma, resistance, resilience empowerment, and recovery with a specific focus on the lived experiences of the Yazidi girls and women.

Question I: How are narratives constructed and served as commonly accepted knowledge?

Sub-question: Whose ideas and experiences are valorized, normalized and acknowledged? Who is left out?

Sub-question: Under what circumstances narratives on resilience, empowerment, resistance, and recovery gain visibility? Why do they receive little attention in contrast to an emphasis in the own narratives of the Yazidis?

Question II: Why the persistence of colonial, stereotypical, romanticized, and unethical narratives?

Sub-question: Who are the individuals, communities, and institutions that benefit from these narratives?

Reflecting on these questions is primarily expected to highlight the role of interactions and structures in constructing the 'Other'. Pressing on the urgency of investing on credible, ethical and positive stories can change the landscape of humanity as decolonization often reaffirms itself through everyday use of language. Locating rich narratives about resilience, resistance, empowerment and recovery strategies would contribute to this process of facilitating critical look into what is taken as self-evident and true, while celebrating these build a foundation for Yazidis, non-Yazidi girls and women and practitioners in proposing treatment or policies that mitigate risk and address trauma.

1.2. Paradigmatic Stance

Incorporating gender analysis was seen fundamental to understand the root causes of power imbalances, create awareness of specific vulnerabilities, needs and aspects of agency, and reflect on the greater role of Yazidi women in public sphere as storytellers, NGO leaders, advocates, lawyers, humanitarians and female combatants.

Feminist thinking criticizes processes where knowledge is constructed through the hegemonic manifestations of social and political forces (Wood, 2009, p. 3). The claim of a universal and objective truth is problematized in relation to the power dynamics that associate men with rationality, mind, primary and the public sphere and *everyone else* with passiveness, emotion, secondary/inferior and body. While policies, agendas and portrayals in media has been traditionally determined by a selected group of *elite* men, addressing different channels of communication has been utilized as an effective strategy by the feminist movement as early as first-wave feminism took hold. Media has become an essential resource to examine how social identities, relations, roles, responsibilities, interests, opportunities, privileges, expectations, and limitations articulate and regulate differences. It has given a platform to reflect on root causes and consequences of undervalued gendered lives where women can break down traditional concepts and oppressive walls between private and public space. As ideas traveled across continents, opportunities for raising awareness, encouraging solidarity and reimagining safe, equal and inclusive spaces for the future emerged. A feminist lens requires that knowledge contribute to the struggle for the liberation and transformation of women's lives (Çakır, 2011, pp. 506-507). Different forms of media provided a means to exercise agency as capabilities in promoting own narratives underscored control over lives.

Classical feminist standpoint theory approached men as powerless figures who can't make sense of the connection between interactions, structures, norms and frameworks with violence, whereas women were argued to have the perspective of the dominant and oppressed. This epistemological privilege was believed to be accessed through a shared understanding of womanhood arising out of acknowledgement that women suffer from similar collective experiences as a group. Post-modern feminist theory recognized the limitations of classical standpoint theory over (a) creating a class of women that implies legitimization of the perspective and experience of one versus the 'Other' and (b) restricting engagement of men who can make meaningful contributions to feminist theory. Their solution to the reinforcement of old power dynamics was emphasizing on locality, partiality, contingency, instability, uncertainty, and ambiguity (Hekman, 2004). Nevertheless, postmodern theorists had their fair share of critical remarks as refusing possibility of an objective, universal reality created

obstacles in developing practical responses against injustices and abuses of power and limit consistency of theorizations with feminist philosophy, politics and ethics.

Contemporary feminist standpoint scholars recognize the existence of many different standpoints in relation to culture, history, disability, age, race, class, gender, and sexual orientation. Knowledge of the oppressed is not superior to 'Others', but going along with the relativist position that all visions are equal is similarly problematic. Collins (1990) points out that women both carry self-actualized standpoints that consist of self-definition, value, respect, survival, resistance, and empowerment and are constrained by systemic factors. Hallstein (2009, p. 37) further rejects the binary logic that views subjects as either fully oppressed or fully free and defines 'constrained agency' to demonstrate how an individual can both belong to an oppressed group or dominant group, or simultaneously exist in both ways.

The coexistence of sites of oppression and resistance is further encountered in the writings of postcolonial feminism and intersectionality. The former has been developed by women from former European colonies in reaction to the hegemonic positioning of Euro-American feminism that is responsible for strengthening understanding about women from the Global South as merely passive victims of primitive, religious, and patriarchal structures. They emphasized on local knowledge and connected systems of inequality in analyzing various forms of social, political or economic enslavement in a society and acknowledging individual experiences of women all around the world (Fabian & Nielsen, 2020, p. 3). Intersectional theory similarly calls attention to an in-depth look into differences and overarching experiences as part of an effort to avoid stereotypical explanations and fall into the trap of victim hierarchy (Crenshaw, 1995).

Finally, this research borrowed a concept called survivor-centered approach to recognize the plurality of situated knowledges in the context of different strengths, resources, and coping mechanisms of survivors of conflict-related sexual violence (CRSV). Other than serving as a guideline to respect the choice of survivors, this approach has also stood vital in complying with international human rights standards in confidentiality, safety, and non-discrimination. The systematic analyzation of narratives across a range of outlets served to celebrate cultural specificity, recover

marginalized histories, and encourage political alliance within women and between women and men.

1.3. Methodology

Qualitative research refers to collecting and analyzing non-numerical data on subjective views, emotions, opinions, concepts, values, experiences, attitudes, and human behavior. It helps to explore ill-defined or complex problems by amplifying voice and breaking down knowledge into manageable parts. This research systematically collected in-depth information about storytelling practices relation to generational trauma, survival, empowerment, and recovery. The use of an interpretivist approach has been justified on the grounds of a motivation to understand meanings attached to narratives. As opposed to traditional positivist approach resting on universal scientific laws and objective realities, reality was approached as a socially constructed phenomenon that is established through the 'language, consciousness, meanings, and instruments' (Myers, 2008). In other words, knowledge was argued to be inseparable from time, context and value. The bottom-up logic of inductive reasoning has enabled exploring probabilities and expanding the knowledge base throughout the research process.

The collection of data began in March 2021 by using the following combination of keywords: Yazidi women and men, trauma, peace, resilience, resistance, recovery, empowerment, education, sports, art, economy, justice, and revenge. A second round of query was performed in the search bar of each website to ensure adequate and fair selection of content. Since longitudinal studies are time-consuming, a certain criterion had to be established to assist in the selection of sample size. Pre-identified factors included (a) language: English, (b) format: news item, (c) material: text, (d) political leaning: right, center, or left, and (f) identity: Western and Arab sources. Data was collected at multiple points in time. The systematic review of content between 2014 and 2022 enabled tracking changes in the tone of narratives. Repeated observation of the same phenomenon over time provided better insight into the cause-and-effect relationships and chain of events and excluding unobserved individual differences. Data collection was concluded once the results returned duplicated content. Information on finalized list of samples was provided below:

- Guardian is a British daily newspaper that is part of the Guardian Media Group of newspapers, radio stations, and print media. It is considered a newspaper of record, a reputation given to newspapers with substantial circulation whose editorials and news are regarded as reliable and unbiased. While a charitable foundation called the Scott Trust Limited is known as the main source of financial support, funding also comes through membership subscriptions, think tanks, and other corporate foundations. Guardian editors and readers are typically mainstream left-wing liberals. In addition to an international ombudsman delving into corrections, an annual audit of social, ethical, and environmental behavior is conducted. Editorial guidelines refer to accuracy, privacy to keep personal data safe, finance, fairness in the sense of opportunity to reply, confidentiality, accountability, independence, and minimizing harm. It also offers a roadmap for coverage of cases involving grief or shock, children, hospitals, crime, harassment, and victims of sexual assault. Warnings include non-identification of victims unless there is adequate justification and legal freedom to do so. Guardian was especially criticized for its heavy focus on left issues, biased content, and encouragement of political correctness.

- Daily Mail is United Kingdom's highest-circulated daily tabloid newspaper and news website. It is owned by a multinational media company called the Daily Mail and General Trust. According to the results of a recent survey, Daily Mail had one of the oldest average readerships at 58 years old and reached more female readers than male ones (Taylor, 2014). The political stance in editorials and news is widely known to align with the right wing. The news website provides a list of rules for readers who would like to reflect on any given content. These rules concern diversity, language, abuse, privacy, advertising, and copyright infringement. Additionally, a privacy policy is detailed in the context of sharing and storing sensitive information. Daily Mail has been criticized for publishing printing sensationalist and inaccurate stories, low reliability, and engaging in plagiarism and copyright infringement.

- Voice of America (VOA) is a state-owned news network and international radio broadcaster in the United States of America. It is funded by the U.S. Government through the U.S. Agency for Global Media. The target audience

of VOA is described as non-American. In terms of political stance, outputs are aligned with the center. The principles and mission of VOA are summarized as producing reliable, accurate, and objective news, and presenting a comprehensive and effective understanding of American public opinion, policies, and institutions. While the firewall policy refers to fighting against propaganda, the two-source rule aims to ensure the validity of a story through two independent sources or a staff correspondent as a witness to the event. Reception of the publications have been mixed. On the one side, accusations concern that VOA reinforces an American agenda and exacerbates conflict in other regions. On the other hand, some think that the platform amplifies their voice and a sense of empowerment.

- Al-Monitor is a news website that is based in Washington, DC. Al Monitor LLC owns the website and it partnered with North Base Media in 2018. Their main source of revenue is advertising. The website provides reporting from and about the Middle East. Its target audience is Western. Story and word selection implies left leaning. The website provides information on privacy policy, which touches upon security, consent, and rights. Submission rules for journalists include newsworthiness, original work, length, local context, sources and facts, self-edit, and appropriate language. Reception of the Al-Monitor is generally positive with a balanced representation of mainstream and marginal voices.

- Rudaw Media Network is a media group in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. It is funded and supported by Rudaw Company. The network produces written, visual and audio content and disseminates that through its website, radio, newspaper, and television. News and opinion essays on the digital platform primarily address Kurdish issues. Terms and conditions underline responsibility regarding the use of abusive language or misconduct, referring, visiting, or clicking third-party material, and any damages, claims, submissions, or legal issues arising from the content. The website additionally mentions a privacy policy as a guideline for submitting personal information and comments. Rudaw was previously accused of partisan reporting and considered an extension of the KDP due to close relations with Nechirvan

Barzani, President of the Kurdistan Region. Further criticism included provoking violence and hate and disturbing social peace and security. At the same time, news has been credited as a reliable and objective source in a region where press freedom is more than limited.

- Al Jazeera English is a news channel owned by the Al Jazeera Media Network, which is a Qatari state-owned public media conglomerate headquartered in Doha. The news channel receives significant funding from the monarchy government of Qatar but claims that it is editorially independent. News and programs reach out to the European, African, Asian, Oceanian, and American markets, and compete with well-established institutions such as CNN and BBC in the context of coverage of the Middle East and the Maghreb. The English and Arabic versions of the Channel differ from each other in terms of the target audience, content, and tone. The reader demographic is generally stated to range between the ages of 18-35 and opinions have a right-leaning. The English website presents a code of ethics and editorial standards. They touch upon values of honesty, fairness, independence, impartiality, transparency, accuracy, privacy, respect, and diversity. Editorial standards further refer to rules regarding the technical structure of news items and coverage of violence, natural disaster, terrorism, elections, religion, and various social groups. Although the English version has been argued to have a more neutral tone than the Arabic one, both have faced accusations of having an anti-American bias. At the same time, supporters of Al Jazeera point out how the network revolutionized the political landscape in the Arab world by ensuring easy access to information and amplifying voice of the marginalized.

- Jin News Agency (JİNHA) has been world's first female news agency. The staff is comprised entirely out of women journalists, camerawomen and photographers who highlight women's struggles at home and work. They offer a platform to raise voice, encourage solidarity, and change the masculine and militarist language in media. The center of JİNHA was in Diyarbakır, Türkiye. It has been targeted by the Turkish government based on allegations of identification with the Kurdish movement and feminist critique and closed on October 29, 2016.

- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) is a United Nations agency tasked with helping countries achieve sustainable and human development. It advocates developing local capacity toward long-term self-sufficiency and prosperity. The news center of UNDP offers multimedia press coverage and in-depth information on development-related issues. Funding comes from voluntary contributions from UN Member States, multilateral organizations, the private sector, and other sources. Governing principles include accountability, professionalism, integrity, transparency, results orientation, mutual respect, transparency, and partnership. UNDP was primarily criticized for limited indicators, statistical quality, and methodological soundness of a variety of tools including the Human Development Index and Gender Development Index.

A second set of data was extracted from academic articles, books, policy papers and theses conducting ethnographic fieldwork to find out Yazidi women's daily life experiences about trauma, recovery, justice and media. Preliminary sources were identified by conducting an internet search of the same keywords in free databases such as Google Scholar, Academia, Semantic Scholar, and ResearchGate. Access to JSTOR, PsycARTICLES, SAGE Journals, Science Direct, Taylor & Francis (Informaworld), and PubMed Central has been granted through University partnerships. Complexity of the research question required analyzation of a significant amount of work in gender, psychology, and media studies. Background of the authors covered a wide range of disciplines including peace and conflict; terrorism, conflict-resolution, prevention and peacebuilding, mental health; trauma, migration, humanitarian assistance, disaster resilience, social work, anthropology; religion, language; pedagogy and sociolinguistics, identity, public and maternity health, narratives; oral history, justice; therapy, reconciliation, international criminal law, and international humanitarian law, Middle East; Kurdish studies, and democratization with a particular focus on gender, children, youth, elderly, and refugees. Articles written in any language other than English and Turkish were excluded. The title and abstract screening process helped to exclude articles irrelevant to the research topic. The remaining studies were full text screened for eligibility. The quality of studies was evaluated through (a) compliance with ethical guidelines, (b) sound argumentation, (c) strong objectivity, (d) reputation of the publisher, and (e) number of citations. Any

study that did not meet the criteria above was assigned an exclusion. Further readings were identified by going over the reference list. Saturation was used as a reference point to end the process of collecting articles.

The next stage of the research process involved noting down sample characteristics (e.g., size, age, and gender), time, setting and details of ethical standards (e.g., seeking relevant approval) in a Word document. A combination of textual and discourse analysis was found the most convenient in consideration of easy accessibility to in-depth data, inexpensiveness, time limitations and minimizing the risk of retraumatizing Yazidis. A feminist approach proved particularly valuable in exploring trends, developments and contradictions in narratives. Examining the portrayal of female and male characters, gendered use of language and attitude of the author served to inform on patterns of thought, behavior, values, and power. Content was reviewed under the guidance of the following questions:

- What is the meaning, function, purpose and effect of the text?
- What types of roles do women have in the text?
- What do grammar, spelling, and punctuation emphasize and miss?
- How does the author structure the argument?
- Is the evidence credible?
- What is the relation between the text and the underlying historical, political, and cultural context in which it was produced?

Word choices gave an overall idea of the tone and structure of the argument. One area of discussion concerned whether several topics were covered one by one, or narratives overwhelmingly relied on a specific discourse. It was further questioned what roles and responsibilities were associated with femininity and masculinity. Vocabulary checks referred to the choice of terminology in relation to the use of formal, colloquial, or slang language. Grammar checks included exploring frequently used pronouns and passive or active phrases. The latter was particularly emphasized to find out if authors chose to hide protagonists or antagonists in narratives. While analyzing the use of exclamation marks, capital letters and other details of punctuation highlighted emphasized points, presence and absence of phrases such as ‘of course’ and

‘obviously’ served to hint whether common sense was taken as a guidance, or the evidence lacked credibility.

1.4. Limitations and Ethical Considerations

This research paid particular attention to consent, honesty, protection, objectivity, carefulness, openness, respect for intellectual property, accountability, and transparency. Informed consent refers to participants knowing the purpose, benefits, risks and funding behind the study. Possible approaches to delve into the issue of consent includes: (a) name people already mentioned in the news or academic articles to acknowledge voice(s) and incident by reasonably assuming the consent of subjects or (b) hide personally identifiable information such as names, physical characteristics, residence and family affiliations. Applying pseudonymization is a common technique to minimize harm and respect the dignity and privacy of research subjects. Nevertheless, resorting to the fabrication of data would also breach the principle of honesty, objectivity and protection. The selection of fake names often implies bias and undermines trust in the credibility of stories while inattentive use of language result in triggering negative emotions such as shame and anxiety, encouraging stigma and hiding resistance to violence (Coates & Wide, 2007). In consideration of these risks and challenges, this research has chosen to interchangeably address Yazidis as victims, survivors, interviewees or respondents unless they were identified as well-known public figures. The non-disclosure of sensitive data did not require an ethical review from a Committee.

Acknowledging cultural nuances mattered in outlining strategies for engagement with men, tribal leaders and religious authorities. Previous studies focusing on campaigns and advocacy activities of civil society organizations in Jordan, Armenia, Serbia, Türkiye, Pakistan, Myanmar, Nicaragua, and Nepal found out that narratives and sessions on gender equality were more effective when framed as ‘vocational development, child development, and democratic school environment’ as they were perceived less radical and threatening (Viswanathan, 2021, p. 22). Knowing when and how uncomfortable conversations can take place in a fragile context stood out as an important competency to reduce the potential of social, psychological and all other

types of harm. The *right* language was understood as the language that is most familiar to and trusted by the community.

Secondary data analysis stood out advantageous in relation to high replicability of study findings and access to an abundance of ethnographic research that eased the process of tracing and highlighting Yazidis' own words, conceptualizations and frames. Longitudinal study designs are notoriously time-consuming that require the elimination of a great deal of data. While Yazidi communities in Syria, Türkiye, Georgia and Syria were briefly touched upon, this research chose to emphasize Yazidis living in Iraq. Selecting a small sample from a large group of easily accessible samples provided an opportunity for generating in-depth and generalizable information at the same time. Moreover, big sample sizes and statistical tests were more associated with quantitative studies that did not fit into the nature of the research problem in this study.

Constraints over time, language and financial resources were one of the greatest limitations as they got in the way of authentic exploration of narratives on genocide and trauma, as well as protective and healing factors employed by Yazidis. Relying on secondary data also carried the risk of reproducing bias and other limitations in previous studies, while conducting a case study presented challenges in ensuring objectivity and generalizability.

Since validity (i.e., when a concept, measurement, or conclusion is well-founded, meaningful, and relevant in the real world) and reliability (i.e., reaching similar results in repeated measurements) hardly found any correspondence in qualitative research due to their emphasis on universal laws, measurable facts, objectivity, single truth, deductive reasoning, and statistics, this research has turned into credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability as an indicator of trustworthiness (Guba and Lincoln, 1985, 1989). Addressing these concepts required following through the strategy of providing detailed explanations of the research context, sample size, research instruments, data analysis, and interpretation, ensuring methodological consistency, and justifying key decisions that are reflected in research practices, analysis, and conclusions (Cypress, 2017, p. 256; Davies & Dodd, 2002; Ghafouri & Ofoghi, 2016, pp. 1917, 1919). Transferability was specially enhanced through observation of oriental and patriarchal narratives in the context of narratives about

Arab and Muslim women and how sources of resistance, empowerment and recovery were noted as rooted in our everyday lives.

Additional consideration was given to screening each text more than once and applying the method of triangulation by extracting data from various media outlets and scholarly texts and utilizing three major theoretical frameworks. Prolonged engagement and persistent observation in the form of observing, identifying, collecting, and analyzing narratives written over eight years helped to recognize patterns and make projections. Remaining open to new themes while going over texts also helped to expand the scope and ensure the relevance of the data. Finally, addressing reflexivity was essential to identify and acknowledge any potential bias that could affect the findings of this study. A positionality statement was written as part of a critical self-reflection on privileges, assumptions, beliefs and biases.

CHAPTER II

YAZIDIS

This chapter begins with an introduction of the Yazidis by touching upon geographical presence, population density, debates over identity and belonging, religion, livelihood, and gender norms. A review of the history of massacres delves deeper into causes and consequences of marginalization at the social, political and economic level with a specific focus on the development of coping and thriving mechanisms of women. It encourages maintaining a just approach in making sense of survivors' experiences. The necessity for conducting background research derives from helping readers fully understand the research problem and significance of the investigation. Beyond providing an introductory exploration of the historical, gender, political, social, and cultural elements that needs context, terms, concepts, and ideas that may be unfamiliar are additionally explained.

The chapter ends with a detailed description on the impact of traumatic life events across in three dimensions: individual trauma directly caused by ISIS attacks; collective trauma that manifests across the social-cultural, physical environment and economic environment, and transgenerational trauma developed over centuries of persecution (Kizilhan & Noll-Hussong, 2017; Davis, Pinderhughes & Williams, 2016, p. 13). An emphasis is placed on negative and positive transformations in the community to fill a gap in literature and improve the quality of analysis and findings.

2.1. Geography and Population

Yazidis are an indigenous population living in the geographical region including parts of Iraq, Syria, Türkiye, and Iran. Their leading settlements are known as Sheikhan and Sinjar located in the governorates of Duhok and Nineveh in northern Iraq. While Sheikhan is considered a sacred site due to the holy temple of Lalish, Sinjar is a historic homeland for Yazidis, Assyrians, Mandaeans, Turkmen, Shabak, and Kaka'I (Atto &

Barthoma, 2021, p. 357). It is estimated that around 500,000 to 700,000 Yazidis live in Iraq. Only the *qewwal* (religious musician) families of Ba'shiqe-Behzane speak Arabic. An overwhelming majority speak the Kurdish dialect of Kurmanji. Religious texts, books, songs, and prayers also refer to Kurmanji (van Zoonen & Wirya, 2017, p. 8). Settlements in Syria are concentrated around Afrin and Aleppo, whereas the population in Türkiye is scattered to provinces in the southeast Anatolian region and the eastern Anatolia region. In both countries, immigration to Europe resulted in the shrinking and declining influence of Yazidis communities. Today, Germany is home to the second largest Yazidi population, which is followed by Russia, Armenia, and Belgium by a wide margin (p= 200,000 versus 40,586; 35,272 and 35,000 respectively).

2.2. Ethnicity

The geographical and linguistic connection with Kurds has long created confusion over whether Yazidis should be recognized as a sub-group under the overarching identity of Kurds or a separate ethnoreligious group. Genetic studies point out that Yazidis in northern Iraq have a 'non-significant genetic distance' with Northern Iraqi Arabs, Kurds, Syriacs, and Turkmens, as well as those from Albania, Cyprus, Iraq, Iran, Lebanon, Italy, and Türkiye (Dogan et al., 2017, p. 17). On the other hand, ethnographic fieldwork informs on a visible increase among Yazidis who talk about identity and belonging as a separate ethnic group in relation to (a) the status of Yazidis as a minority group in the fragmented political and security landscape of Iraq that has complicated political representation and protection and (b) the genocide in 2014 that reminded of a long history of mistrust and marginalization and collapsed what remains of peaceful coexistence (van Zoonen & Wirya, 2017, p. 13; Ayhan, 2019, p. 69). Just as protection was used as leverage to pressure the Yazidis into aligning with the central government in Baghdad or the Kurdish Regional Government (KRG) in Erbil, political representation depended on supporting major political parties. According to Nicolaus and Yuce (2019, p. 99), most of the Yazidis in northern Iraq who identify themselves as Kurds, ranging between 5 to 10 percent, do so because they receive paychecks and protection from the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP) or the Kurdish military forces of the KRG, the Peshmerga. In return for embracing Yazidis and their religion Yazidism, Kurdish authorities attempt to secure support for their political parties, bring

an end to the issue of disputed territories, and mobilize international support for the formation of an independent Kurdistan (Savelsberg, Hajo & Dulz, 2010, p. 105). The genocide campaign of ISIS witnessed one of the latest examples of the Kurdish 'policy of co-optation and symbolic empowerment', which involved ongoing threats, intimidation, discrimination, and targeted violence on the one hand and emphasizing Yazidi victimhood as a form of Kurdish victimhood on the other (Tezcür, Kaya & Sevdeen, 2021, p. 3). Finally, the withdrawal of KRG troops from Sinjar during the ISIS offensive maximized distrust and saw the spread of a betrayal narrative.

2.3. Religion

Religion is a defining element of the Yazidi identity. Over the centuries, beliefs and practices have been passed down orally from one generation to another through hymns, storytelling, prayers, and poetry. Therefore, the authenticity of the two holy books of Yazidism remained questioned to this day. While the Yazidi Black Book addresses the creation myth and introduces a list of taboos on foods and verbs associated with Satan, the Yazidi Book of Revelation discusses the qualifications and tasks of Tawûsî Melek, otherwise known as Peacock Angel in English, and contains teachings and advice to the foreigners and the pious (Şengül, 2015, p. 113, pp. 137-138, pp. 164-165).

In Yazidism, God can only be perceived if revealed in the form of Peacock Angel, Sultan Êzîd, or Sheikh Adi. The Peacock Angel was often misunderstood or deliberately portrayed inaccurate by indicating the Satan in Islam who similarly refused to bow down to Adam and fall from God's grace. Nevertheless, little attention was given to how Satan is characterized by sinful pride whereas the Peacock Angel is characterized by a true love for God. The two narratives further differ in that the Peacock Angel receives forgiveness from God after crying for seven thousand years and extinguishing the fire of Hell (Şengül, 2015, p. 113). It is believed that the Peacock Angel is responsible for determining the fate of the following year along with six other angels. The significance of the Peacock Angel is seen through the ritual of praying to God through peacock-shaped banners. With his origins being unclear, Sultan Êzîd is sometimes considered identical to the Peacock Angel.

Sheikh Adi b. Musafir enjoys a respectable position in the community as a figure who is widely regarded as the founder of Yazidism. Sheikh Adi is believed to have formed the Adawiyya sect in the 12th century upon gathering with murids from Baghdad and Kurdish Sufi scholars. In addition to the appeal of a solitary life, Sheikh Adi's miracles lead to a substantial increase in the size of the community. Some of these miracles included controlling wild animals, creating water in the wasteland, opening the eyes of the visually impaired, becoming invisible, shortening distances, and talking to the dead (Şengül, 2015, pp. 129-130).

While Sheikh Adi's doctrine emphasizes *taqwa*, humility, and Sufism, some Yazidis prefer to trace the origins of their faith to Zoroastrianism, Islam, Judaism, and Christianity. They point out the closeness of the word Yazidi, also spelled as Yezīdī, Azīdī, Zedī, Izadī, Êzidî, or Yazdani, with the Persian God Yazd and regard the concept of holy bread and holy water as indicators of a pre-Islamic Persian origin (Adsay, 2014, p. 56). The fact that Yazidis worship the sun, heavens, and moon has been identified as another linkage with the ancient Iranian religion (Goodman et al., 2020, p. 614). At the same time, religious celebrations and concepts such as pilgrimage, qibla, Zamzam water, and holy Friday indicate an influence of Islam. Each Yazidi is obliged to fast three days per year and take part in an annual pilgrimage once in a lifetime. Places of worship include tombs, altars of fire, houses of religious figures, trees, bushes, caves, rocks, and springs (Şengül, 2015, p. 153). The tomb of Sheikh Adi, the Spring of Zamzam, and the White Spring are located at the holy temple of Lalish in northern Iraq. The baptism ritual that takes place here is a symbol of 'creation, purification, preservation, resilience, renewal, and community cohesion' and is linked with Judaism and Christianity (Fisher and Zagros, 2018, p. 212). On top of the fact that Iraq is often regarded as a cradle of civilization due to its rich cultural heritage, Guest (1987, p. 28) argues that internalizing new faiths while preserving ancient traditions has been a rational decision of the Yazidis to enhance survival skills. This strategy may have provided protection, as well as flexibility and creativity to adapt in the face of external shocks.

2.4. Social Class

Social hierarchy among the Yazidis is based on the caste system. In this system, the *Mir* (Prince and secular leader) and family members of the Mir occupy the highest position. Responsibilities of the Mir include mediation between representatives of Yazidi groups, Muslim communities, and the Christian clergy. The position of *Mir* passes to the eldest son. Executive power belongs to a spiritual leader called *Baba Sheikh*, who is expected to lead a devout and humble life.

Directly below Mir and Baba Sheiks are the *Sheikhs* (teachers) who educate the Murids (lay people) about Yazidism. Sheiks participate in rituals such as the birth, marriage, and death of their followers. They are also responsible for arranging celebrations and conducting hymns at the Sheikh Adi temple (Şengül, 2015, p. 139). *Pirs* (elders, priests) have the same function and status as Sheikhs but are politically less relevant. Subgroups within the clergy cast include Peshimam who blesses marriages and conducts semi-Islamic religious ceremonies, Baba Gawan who advises Baba Sheikh, Fakriyes who are a group of virgin women serving in the Sheikh Adi temple, Feqîrs who are a fraternity group of men that act as a role model in virtue, Koçeks who are people with skills of fortune-telling, healing or miracle, qewwals, and other people who hold the positions as caretakers of shrines and teachers (Şengül, 2015, pp. 142-145).

Murids make up most of the population. They are comprised of chiefs, landowners, shepherds, peasants, and common workers who support the 'religious superstructure' (Guest, 1987, p. 35). Farming and animal husbandry are noted as the main livelihoods of Yazidis.

The myth of chosen people as descendants of Adam supports the stance that the purity of the blood should be preserved (Adsay, 2014, p. 58). Thus, marriage outside the confines of the community is strictly punished. Intra-caste and inter-caste marriages are also regulated. For example, members of the Mir family are only allowed to marry within the family. Marriage between Pir and Sheikhs is forbidden. Finally, Murids cannot marry Sheiks or Pirs. The chieftains and elders of the Yazidi tribes played an important role in dispute resolution. If chieftain was unable to settle a dispute, a higher

caste sheikh would intervene (Akhavan et al., 2020, p. 89). This mechanism sidelined women's participation, expression, and decision-making.

2.5. Gender

The male-dominated aspects of the Yazidi culture can be seen through the limited agency of women in making strategic life choices such as socialization, employment, and marriage. Limited financial independence, rural lifestyle, and lack of education reduce their existence to the domestic space (Akhavan et al., 2020, p. 31; Adsay, 2014, p. 123; Şengül, 2015, p. 29). Yazidis living in Sinjar tend to be more conservative and young women do not enjoy the same range of freedom that the elderly does (Adsay, 2014, pp. 116, 109). Women who take part in exogamy are disproportionally affected by social sanctions and are more likely to get ostracized than men.

Encounters with female warriors and leading figures are rare in Yazidi history. Mayan Khatun is a significant exception to Yazidi women's engagement in political or social activism. Born into a noble family, Mayan Khatun married Mir's brother Ali Beg at the age of 18. Her first power struggle took place alongside Ali Beg against Ismail Beg, who made plans to become the next Mir. After the death of Mir Ali Beg in 1913, Mayan Khatun rose to power and became the first female Mir. She maintained influence even after Prince Said and her grandson Tahsin Beg became the next Mir. In a detailed study about Yazidi tribes and villages Mayan Khatun was described as wise, intelligent, far-sighted…forgiving, depriving, rewarding, withholding, permitting and forbidding' (Damluci, 1949, as cited in Guest, 2001, pp. 292-293). She was credited for the survival of the community during the turmoil at the end of World War I (Şengül, 2015, p. 88).

Another notable figure is noted as the daughter of Ismail Beg, Princess Wansa. Literacy was allowed only to a particular group of Sheiks until the end of the 20th century because learning the texts of Muslims and engaging in dialogue would risk exposing the community to assimilation or religious persecution (Atto & Barthoma, 2021, p. 369). Strict rules against formal education began to soften after Ismail Beg send his children to missionary schools in Baghdad and Mosul (Drower, 1941, p. 2).

In this way, Mira Khatun Wansa became the first woman to receive an education in the Yazidi community.

It needs to be paid attention that both Mayan Khatun and Princess Wansa benefited from their family's status in accessing and enjoying opportunities that would have been considered a privilege for the Yazidi women at that time. The only other instance when Yazidi women are acknowledged in the public sphere is in the context of religion when women act as keepers of holy sites or contribute to weddings and funerals with laments, traditional hymns, and other songs (Maisel, 2021, p. 288). Paradoxically, gender norms both trap women into stereotypical roles, responsibilities, and discourses and empower them as storytellers, better representatives of culture, and a force of reconciliation with the past (Goodman et al., 2020; Adsay, 2014, p. 126).

2.6. History

Providing a historical background of collective experiences relating to structural violence and mass atroticities deserves a seperate section. This section is designed to explore the traits of Yazidi community beyond traditional pointers of identity, but rather highlight the relation with surrounding communities and colonial forces, disparities in lived experiences on the basis of ethnic identity, gendered bodies, political and religious affiliations, coping mechanisms, and evolvement of the Iraqi society in terms of women's empowerment. Contextual analysis further helps to process the relationship between events, causes and consequences, recognize patterns, and bring critical perspective on past, present, and future. This strategy may have provided protection, as well as flexibility and creativity to adapt in the face of external shocks.

2.6.1. Early Accounts of Mass Atrocities

The rapid expansion of the Yazidis in the 13th and 14th centuries has been evidenced by (a) the conversion of a great number of Muslims and Christians and (b) the fact that they have become Mirs of the Jazira region in northeast Syria and controlled up to 30 major tribal confederacies (Izady, 2015, p. 157; Erdener, 2017, p. 61). The first examples of violent attacks were launched with the intent of undercutting Yazidis'

growing political and military strength. These attacks were justified by spreading the word of community members as heretics. Subsequent attacks were going to transform the Yazidis from a unified large group into smaller tribes. From the 15th century and onwards, survival depended on forging alliances with other tribal groups and neighbors and manipulating these to their advantage (Şengül, 2015, p. 72). Early protection mechanisms referred to isolation in the form of living in mountainous regions of Iraq and restricting access to formal education.

2.6.2. A Tale of Survival and Resistance: 17th - 19th Century

The period between the 17th and first half of the 19th century were characterized by continuous raids of the Ottoman governors of Baghdad, Mosul, and Diyarbakir, and the Kurdish leaders of the semi-autonomous Duhok (Tezcür, Kaya & Sevdeen, 2021, p. 3). During a period of centralization reforms called Tanzimat (1839-1876) in Ottoman Empire, Gülhane Hatt-ı Şerif was adopted as a first measure to preserve the unity and stability of the Empire against ethnic minorities (Şengül, 2015, p. 82). While the *millet* system allowed confessional communities to rule themselves by their laws, Yazidis were excluded and imposed a military conscription in 1849. Diplomatic intervention initiated by a British officer granted exemption to Yazidis until 1872. Once the privilege was taken away, Yazidis wrote a petition that listed fourteen reasons why they can't participate in military service (Schneider, 2021, p. 407). The petition was a success and Yazidis were exempted from military service in 1875.

The fact that Yazidi chiefs were able to obtain political positions within the administration of the Ottoman Empire further indicated signs of skill in coalition-building and negotiation (Schneider, 2021, p. 405; Guest, 1993, pp. 67-69). At the same time, historical documents have recorded migration as a common fixture of Yazidi community that was developed as a coping mechanism in response to the enforcement of pan-Islamic policies, heavy tax debts, raids, and destruction of religious sites. Findings of interactive maps and infographics suggest migrating nearby or distant areas for safety was a common response to escape persecution or massacre (Maisel, 2021, p. 293). Schneider (2021, p. 408) clarifies that while Yazidis in Sinjar were keener on demonstrating resistance, those residing in Sheikhan often sought

shelter in the mountainous Sinjar. Socio-economically marginalized members of the community often returned to their ancestral land and engaged in reconstruction. Others migrated to nearby countries and European destinations.

2.6.3. Independence Era and Emergence of Feminist Consciousness

In the aftermath of the World War I, Yazidi homeland was partitioned within the borders of Iraq, Türkiye, Iran, and Syria. While Sinjar leaders preferred to coordinate with the British authorities under the mandate system, the Mir family and religious circles in Sheikhan aligned with Arabs (Şengül, 2015, p. 92). Discussions on Iraqi identity saw the early signs of the women's movement. In addition to establishing female-led non-governmental organizations that tackle education, suffrage, and entry into the labor force, Iraqi women contributed to the independence struggle by engaging in a series of demonstrations (Al-Ali & Pratt, 2009, p. 23). Despite a heightened sense of cultural and social awareness of taboo issues and enforcement of relatively progressive legislations, the nature and degree of women's freedom depended much on families' social status.

2.6.4. The Reign of Ba'ath

The 1990s were characterized by recurring cycles of conflict and violence. Ideologically rooted in Arab nationalism, anti-imperialism, and socialism, the Arab Ba'ath Party came to power after a coup d'état in 1968 led by Iraqi politician Saddam Hussain. The Iran-Iraq War of 1980-88, the Gulf War of 1990-91, and the subsequent international sanctions made the Ba'ath regime more reliant on 'militarism and hegemonic masculinity' (Kaya & Makki, 2021, p. 28). First, a demographic engineering campaign was launched to achieve Arab domination in northern Iraq. The Arabization campaign not only targeted members of the Kurdish national movement but also non-Arab minority groups who could support Kurds (Savelsberg, Hajo & Dulz, 2010, p. 101). Yazidis were resettled in collective villages to create a distance from the Kurdish communities. Around 413 Muslim and Yazidi farmers were recorded to lost possession of their lands after their villages got repopulated by Arabs or destroyed (Schneider, 2021, p. 411). While the socio-economically challenged Yazidis returned to their ancestral villages, a significant number sought asylum in Europe.

Kurdish women were particularly vulnerable to the reinforcement of conservative gender norms and sectarianism compared to non-minority women due to tribal societal structure, poverty, unemployment, poor social services, and underdeveloped infrastructure. Yazidi women were also exposed to a different level of victimization. Accessing education facilities required traveling long distances and navigating threats and intimidation. The official curriculum did not recognize the history and culture of Yazidis (Salloum, 2013, p. 199). On top of this, Kurdish and Arabic Muslims in Iraq refused to 'share food from a common plate, use washed dishes and glasses previously touched by a Yazidi' or buy food from them (Nicolaus and Yuce, 2019, p. 94).

2.6.5. The Rise of Kurdish Administration in Southern Iraq

The Yazidi lands were partitioned once again after Kurdish leader Mustafa Barzani founded KRG in 1992. While Sinjar and southern Sheikhan remained under the control of the central government in Baghdad, Yazidi communities in Duhok and northern Sheikhan fell under the Kurdish leadership. Thanks to the subsidization of cultural activities and encouragement of Yazidism in school curricula, the de facto independence of the Kurdish Autonomous Region introduced a relatively peaceful life to the Yazidis (Şengül, 2015, pp. 94-95; Schneider, 2021, p. 411). Kurdish women's activism within the Kurdistan Worker's Party (PKK) gained momentum as female cadres began to challenge the hierarchy within the organization and pushed liberation as an agenda item.

2.6.6. A Landscape of Iraq Amid the Rise of Militant Islamist Groups

Following the overthrow of Saddam Hussein by a United States-led coalition in 2003, a process called de-Ba'athification of Iraqi civil and military services began. The Ba'ath regime was replaced with a sectarian quota system, which forced minority parties to align with stronger patrons for political representation and influence. Although there were several positive developments such as the representation of the Yazidis in the Parliament and in ministry positions for the very first time in history, deteriorating security conditions eventually made them more dependent on the KRG (Salloum, 2013, p. 75; Tezcür, Kaya & Sevdeen, 2021, p. 3). Decades of conflict, sectarian politics, and corruption weakened the state institutions. A vacuum in governance and security paved the way for a growing influence of 'unregulated and

unaccountable sectarian militias under Iran's supervision (Carter & Dietrich, 2017, p. 7-8). In addition to the traumatization and radicalization over the past twenty years, unaddressed grievances relating to lack of basic services, a collapsed economy, and corrupt, tribal, and autocratic structure of administrations in Bagdad and Erbil exacerbated disillusionment towards the political elite (Dirik, 2014, para. 13). The de-Ba'thification particularly alienated the Sunni sect. In this atmosphere, discrimination, killings, and kidnappings by fanatical Muslims increased to an alarming level.

The violent fanaticism of ISIS targeted Assyrian Christians, Shia, Turkmen, Kakai, Shabak, and the ideologically opposed Sunnis. When Mosul was captured on the 10th of June, minorities were given the options to receive protection in exchange for loyalty and payment of the jizya tax, convert to Islam, or face death (van Zoonen & Wirya, 2017, p. 10). Yazidis were only given the latter two options.

Settlements in Sinjar were particularly in a vulnerable situation as they were encircled by Sunni Arab settlements who supported radicals and the Baath ideology (Savelsberg, Hajo & Dulz, 2010, p. 106). Yazidi villages were surrounded by ISIS on the 3rd of August. The highest rank of the caste system was among the first ones to escape as they owned cars (Erdener, 2017, p. 65). Those without any vehicles had to flee to the Sinjar Mountain on foot. An estimated 50,000 got trapped on the Mountain during ISIS's siege and hundreds died from starvation, dehydration, and other injuries (Zaccagnino, 2016).

After the Iraqi government requested humanitarian assistance, American, British, French, and Australian armies dropped food, water, and aid. The international community aided PKK, its Syrian affiliate People's Protection Units (YPG), and the Sinjar Protection Units (YBS) in creating a corridor that would enable the Yazidis to seek shelter and safety. Some Sunni Arab tribes, notably the Shammar who are located on both sides of the Iraqi Syrian border, also helped the Yazidis to cross Iraqi Kurdistan (Abouzeid, 2018, pp. 5-6). Around 15,000 Yazidis crossed into Syria and at least 30,000 into Türkiye (Atto & Barthoma, 2021, p. 359). Some 250,000 Yazidis found temporary shelter in informal settlements. These included schools, community spaces, and unfinished buildings in the region controlled by the KRG. Internally displaced people (IDPs) were gradually transferred to camps.

Yazidis captured by ISIS were separated by gender and age respectively. Young Yazidi men and boys were most likely to be forcibly recruited and enforced to attend Koran schools (Akhavan et al., 2020, p. 3). Elder women and older boys were executed. Young women and girls were transferred to slave markets in Iraq and Syria or 'advertised' on WhatsApp, Telegram, and other encrypted apps (Maisel, 2021, p. 296). They were referred as *sabaya*, which roughly meant captive women, female prisoners of war, or sex slaves. Slave markets were more than a source of revenue for fighters. They were designed to bring dishonor and shame to men, break morale, establish dominance, and fracture families and the social fabric in a society where women are regarded as instruments of biological, cultural, and social reproduction whereas idealist notions of masculinity correspond to family, protection, and safety (Carter & Dietrich, 2017, p. 19). ISIS exploited the conservative gender norms to discourage resistance and justified the treatment of women as weapons of war was on religious grounds in the 4th Issue of the Dabiq Magazine (Buffon & Allison, 2016, p. 7). An often-ignored dimension was the high proportion of female recruits within ISIS who contributed to propaganda, raised children for the caliphate, and helped man in the sexual enslavement and rape of Yazidi girls and women.

Resistance strategies of the Yazidi often included the use of negative coping mechanisms. For starters, the practice of early marriage increased during ISIS offensive to provide safety, access to services and livelihood opportunities for the entire family (Carter & Dietrich, 2017, pp. 16-17). Other common acts of resistance included pretending to convert, feigning madness and disability, escaping from captivity, speaking Kurmanji, committing suicide, altering appearance by scratching body or drawing pinpoint red dots on skin, rubbing mud on face, and dressing as a boy (Akhavan et al, 2020, pp. 29, 31; Ringrose, 2021, p. 184; Abdulah et al., 2023, p. 12; Minwalla, 2014, para. 8; Bandler, 2016, para. 9; Vale, 2020, p. 15). Some Yazidis also exploited Islamic dress code to move without the risk of identification, blend in with female Sunni civilians and reduce the likelihood of engagement with male group members (Vale, 2020, p. 8). These strategies were seen not only useful for protection, but to preserve dignity, independence, and identity.

2.6.7. Physical, Mental and Social Consequences of the 74th Firman

Common physical health outcomes of the genocide include pain, insomnia, neurocognitive disorders, hypertension, musculoskeletal disorder, diabetes, gastrointestinal disorder, malnutrition, dizziness, genital and pelvic pain, lacerations, unwanted pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, and maternal mortality. Examination of mental health symptoms reveals post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, psychosomatic illnesses, anxiety, dissociation, psychosis, dissociative episodes and flashbacks, nightmares and lack of sleep, cognitive impairments, suicidal thoughts, and feelings of anger, shame, worthlessness, guilt. The loss, deterioration, or positive transformation of norms, values, and practices concerning religion and gender equality refers to the social consequences.

Age, gender, educational status, residential area, and specific experiences of violence determined the type of mental and/or physical trauma that will occur. In addition to the traumatic experience of the genocide, displacement and SARS-CoV-2 (COVID-19) served as additional stress factors by exacerbating the poor living conditions across health service, education, employment, shelter, clean water, electricity, and food security (Kizilhan & Neumann, 2020, p. 3; Abouzeid, 2018, p. 8). Issues within the education sector included heavily damaged schools, long distances, overcrowded facilities, and a shortage of qualified teachers, textbooks, and teaching materials (UNHCR, 2019, p. 6).

Lack of quantifiable experience other than in construction and agriculture challenged many Yazidis in securing a regular income. Environmental issues and geographical limitations such as dry climate, drought, poor soil, and water shortages strained families' ability to take care of themselves in the long run. Accessing basic services was particularly troublesome for those who have lost their identity documents during the genocide. Finally, an extensive list of insecurities included bombings, abductions, the presence of extremists and other armed groups, sexual violence, recruitment, feelings of unsafety at the schools, on streets, or in mountains, explosive remnants of war that are littered across Sinjar, and fear that the conflict will never end (Save the Children, 2022, p. 3). Table 1 summarizes the findings of previous studies that explored the mental and physical dimensions of the consequences of genocide.

Table 1: Mental and Physical Health Consequences of the Genocide

Study	*Sample Characteristics*	*Symptom(s)*	*Percentage*
Tekin et al., 2016	N=238 IDP migrants Türkiye	*Major depression* *PTSD*	39.5% 42.9%
Kizilhan, 2018	N=296 Female Yazidi survivors, Germany	Somatoform disorder Depression PTSD Anxiety Sexual dysfunctions	67% 53% 49% 39% 29%
Hoffman et al., 2018	N=108 Resettled female Yazidi captives, Iraq	Complex post-traumatic stress disorder (CPTSD) PTSD	50.9% 20.0%
Ibrahim et al., 2018	N= 416 Yazidi women and girls, Iraq	Worrying about marriage prospects Worrying about communal judgement PTSD for enslaved women vs non-enslaved women Depression for enslaved women vs non-enslaved women	32.3% 49.2% 62.5% versus 47.5% 45.3% versus 35.7%
Abdulah & Abdulla, 2019	N=14 Yazidi female survivor, Iraq	Suicidal ideation Suicide attempts	Using art therapy, decline in suicidal ideation score (16.71 → 6.50, p=0.002) Passive/active suicide attempts halt (p=0.012 and p=0.005)
Kizilhan, 2020	N= 268 Yazidi women survivor, Iraq	PTSD for women living in a refugee camp versus who lived in a household in the city	66% versus 52%
Akhavan et al., 2020	N=1000 IDPs, Iraq	Loss of hope	'many of the female survivors'

Richa et al., 2020	N= 150 Yazidi, Christian and Muslim refugees, Iraq	PTSD	70% of Yazidi participants 44% of Muslim participants 32% of Christian participants
Cook et al., 2021	N= 35 Yazidi survivors, Iraq	Hopelessness Fear Loss Grief Distrust Shock Guilt	'commonly experienced negative emotions'

Feelings of guilt often manifested through self-blame for the loss, while hopelessness for the future was discussed in the context of recalling the collective memory of earlier genocides and massacres (Cook et al., 2020, p. 395; Omarkhali, 2016, p. 153). Reflecting on past experiences created a sense of constant insecurity and affirmed the fragility of existence. Atto and Barthoma (2021, p. 372) warned that building the present and future on past led to a strong sense of victimization. It served to trap the Yazidis in an oriental discourse and prevented the healthy processing of trauma.

The destruction of the social support system has fueled mistrust and hate within the family and between neighbors. For those who were under ISIS captivity and wish to return to the community, communal rejection is a lingering concern. The willingness to reintegrate the survivors usually does not extend to children who are born as a result of sexual enslavement (Ayhan, 2019, p. 71: Abouzeid, 2018, p. 8). Distrust of neighbors is reflected by a halt to cross-community visits, security clearances on non-Yazidis that concern investigating movements during the genocide, and the use of words such as 'traitors' when defining relations with the Arabs and Kurdish Sunnis (Dulz, 2016, p. 143; Mercy Corps, 2021, p. 13; Abouzeid, 2018, p. 9; Nicolaus & Yuce, 2019, p. 99). Yazidis particularly accused the Imteywits, Jahaysh, Khatoonys of taking side with the extremists and conducted several retaliatory attacks, even though some members of these tribes resisted ISIS while trying to help the Yazidis.

Feelings of anger and frustration were not only found relevant in relations with neighbors, but extended to the national judicial institutions, KRG, Peshmerga, the Iraqi government, and the Yazidi communal leaders. According to the results of structured

questionnaires complemented by unstructured interviews with more than 1,000 IDPs, the Iraqi Supreme Court is the least trusted actor (3.29) in comparison to the Kurdistan regional tribunal (11.43) and the International Criminal Court (ICC), which received 81.71 (Akhavan et al., 2020, p. 26). The first reason that national mechanisms fall behind is that the Iraqi Constitution performs poorly in providing basic protection for minority groups and how the systematization of using acquaintances ensures preferential treatment (van Zoonen & Wirya, 2017, p. 15). Since Iraq is not a party of the Rome Statute, war crimes, crimes against humanity, or genocide are not criminalized in the legal system. Prosecutions of ISIS fighters are carried out in line with the Federal Anti-Terrorism Law, which lists a set of crimes that meets punishment by the death penalty. This approach is viewed by some to only perpetuate the cycle of violence (Abouzeid, 2018, p. 27). The emphasis on revenge rather than truth-seeking prevents acknowledgment of the genocide as it complicates the process of finding missing people and leaves little room for Yazidi participation (Mahler, 2021, pp. 19-20). Relying solely on the criminal prosecution of ISIS fighters in the background of a discriminatory and outdated legal system has convinced the Yazidis that accountability will be symbolic at best. As in the national courts, - there is minimal trust in the trials that take place in the autonomous region of Kurdistan as they are interrupted by political groups and tribal leaders. Finally, some Yazidis express disappointment with the political and religious leaders in their community by criticizing their passiveness during the genocide. Interviews with displaced and non-displaced Yazidis further highlight suspicion that community leaders are in a pragmatic relationship with the KRG (Ayhan, 2019, p. 71). Since the Yazidis are caught between the competing interests of the KDP; the Peshmerga; the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK); the PKK and its affiliates; the central government in Baghdad and affiliated ISF and PMF, there is considerable disagreement as to who the official spokesperson or representative of the community should be.

The most striking developments in the social realm in the post-genocide period concern religion, language, education, and gender. On the one hand, there was an interruption of the traditional tour of the Peacok *sanjaq* around Yazidi villages and a decline in the number of people who talk about Yazidism and recite sacred texts (Spät, 2020, pp. 2-3). On the other hand, religion served as a mechanism to defy ISIS and bring comfort and hope in the face of an existential threat. Thus, Yazidism gained

heightened interest and appreciation (Spät, 2020, p. 10). Despite some Yazidis forgetting or never learning Kurmanji or the negative association of Arabic with ISIS, some children got exposed to education for the first time in their lives in refugee camps. Spät (2020, p. 6) described illiterate parents were proud and appreciative when talking about their children's education, providing significant evidence that societal perceptions and values about formal education have begun to change. Since the latest genocide was experienced and felt by every single member of the community, rigid rules of the caste system lost their appeal, credibility and function (Kizilhan, 2017, p. 336). Communal acceptance of female survivors and their children turned out as one of the most important steps in overcoming silence around taboo issues.

2.7. Conclusion

This chapter focused on outlining essential information about the Yazidis in a historical context. First, it addressed to the literature concerning debates on the population and geographical distribution, ethnic identity, socio-cultural values and belief system. These provided an idea on the visibility of the Yazidis in a physical sense, identity consciousness, and the norms, values, attitudes and behaviors determined by the subject-structure relationship. It has been observed that the Yazidis' interest in defining themselves as a separate group heightened especially after the genocide in 2014, how religious beliefs and practices were intertwined with social class, and women were squeezed into the roles and responsibilities that patriarchy allowed. A second body of literature referred to the violent campaigns that the Yazidis have been subjected to since the 13th century. It was understood that these campaigns originated from political or financial motivations that were disguised by addressing religion as a cover. Yazidis were demonstrated to have the capacity to resist, rather than simply being framed as members of a minority group that have no choice other than being victims of genocides. Challenges and opportunities were specifically examined in relation to women's movement that identify needs and achievements across Iraq. Historical review of atrocities committed against the Yazidis ends with a description of the ideology and crimes of ISIS. The content and direction of the literature on the Yazidis greatly transformed after 2014. Many articles began to focus on the physical, mental, and social harm inflicted by the genocide. The chapter ended with an attempt to touch upon mental, physical and social symptoms of trauma

encountered in the post-genocide period and the promising developments or transformations that give hope for contemplating and designing the future.

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL APPROACHES TO NARRATIVES IN MEDIA

This study explores *by whom* and *how* narratives covering traumatic lived experiences around genocide are constructed in news and academic articles to shed light on what trauma looks like from the eyes of journalists, academics and ultimately Yazidis. It also investigates what factors determine the richness of storytelling to make sense of pathways to resilience, resistance, empowerment and recovery. The use of a secondary research, interdisciplinary approach and longitudinal study design was argued among key strengths that maximize the potential in making sense of social realities. This chapter is designed to outline key arguments and valuable insights in previous studies focusing on narratives relating to portrayal of Muslim, Arab and Yazidi women. It summarizes points of agreements and limitations that led to the emergence of this study. Further research is invited to build on the findings here to advance existing theories on human communication and propose a treatment or develop targeted and evidence-based policies to strengthen the role of women in social, political, and economic spheres in life and beyond.

3.1 Identifying Mainstream Narratives in Media

The concept of trauma used to be understudied throughout much of history. Traumatic experiences of women were discussed around desire and fantasy, if not ignored at all. Symptoms were regarded as a sign of individual weakness as did not conform to the ideal expectations of masculinity (Clark, 2018, p. 802). Together with the institutionalization of secular democracy in the 19th century and the anti-war movement at the beginning of the 20th century, women's liberation movement brought significant changes in trauma studies (Herman, 2016, p. 40). From consciousness-raising groups grew an expanding network of activism that delved into advocacy and public campaigns.

The earliest works of feminist media activists tackled gender stereotypes and pornography in journalism. They focused on issues of power, voice, agency, hierarchy, and representations in discourses where proponents of mainstream and marginal articulations of reality competed (MiniÊ, 2007, p. 296). Some studied oriental discourse to understand how Western hegemony structured norms, identity, and experiences. They revealed how knowledge and power dynamics divided people and societies into 'rational, developed, humane, superior' West and 'aberrant, undeveloped, inferior' non-West (Edward Said, 1987, p. 300).

Media outlets served as a platform to reaffirm the cultural and political superiority of the West by exploiting the white savior complex. They engaged the target audience through the construction of a 'narcissistic sense of global intimacy' based on feelings of guilty and pity (Chouliarki, 2006, p. 2). Those who had power, authority, and privilege were invited to contribute to the great civilization mission in a business-as-usual manner while no clue being provided on local context other than stereotypical portrayals and shallow understanding of vulnerabilities. At the end of the day, risks were minimized by comforting that extreme atrocities would only happen in other parts of the world. The prevalence of narratives that serve 'disaster pornography' were also linked to benefits gained by media outlets and non-Western actors. The former was able to optimize financial gains via advertising revenue over an increased number of readers or provide moral justification for military or political control (Recuber, 2013, p. 30; Eskandari, 2018, p. 49). Meanwhile, non-Western individuals and institutions would give consent to play the *Other* to gain recognition and position in the Western-dominated global order or maximize the chance of getting attention and help (Kobayashi et al., 2019, p. 161; Clark, 2018, p. 805).

3.1.1 An Imaginary World of Victim and 'Emancipated' Women

Hegemonic narratives that are rooted in unequal power relations between the Oriental and Occident tend to go back and forth between the idea of a 7/24 state of victimization and emancipated or escapee women. This section delves into particularities of common ways in promoting orientalism and patriarchy based on the analytical framework of Kahf (2009, para. 2-9). Although victimization and liberation are typically understood in opposite direction, there are many parallels in relation to how

the former promotes representation of a voiceless and objectified women, whereas latter focuses on stories of empowerment via symbolic champion of gender equality.

3.1.1.1. Mute Marionette

This framework refers to the portrayal of women as uneducated and oppressed. The need for intervention, support and saving is justified on the grounds that Oriental women are clueless about their best interest and unable to speak for themselves. Silencing is exercised through denying voice, manipulating word choices, and the use of explicit images. If not completely silenced, tokenistic attitudes surface in the name of equality and democracy. Readers are exposed to a circulation of generalized and stereotypical understanding of lived experiences that are interpreted through the eyes of those who have power in society. This often implies consumption of a Eurocentric, white, male point of view. The recurring portrayal of women as victim sustains power relations in favor of a group that is reluctant to give away their privileges.

3.1.1.2. Meek Mother

Narratives within the framework of Meek Mother tend to reduce mothers, sisters, grandmothers, and friends to 'gendered slaves' (Ayotte & Husain, 2005, p. 112). Identity, voice, hope, aspirations, and skills are erased from history. There can be no meaningful relationship between women. An apparent neglect of local feminist movements and vibrant subcultures is accompanied by the understanding that gender equality and human rights discourse is a product of the West.

3.1.1.3. Forbidding Father

Stereotypes are established through generalizations. While women are typically associated with vulnerability, men are seen as the driving force of tyranny and misogyny. Positive figures are rarely encountered. The interaction between men and women is simply read through the lens of violence and discrimination. Victimization of women rationalizes intellectual, political, and cultural dependence on the West. It is depicted as an 'honor' to save brown women from brown men.

3.1.1.4. Rotten Religion and Vile Veil

Complex issues are explained by placing the ultimate responsibility on Islam. Symbols such as mosque and veil are utmost manifestations of oppression. Everyday life of a Muslim is governed by strict rules and regulations under religion. It is unimaginable to explore how a non-Western religion can play a role in comforting/healing, reconciliation, and equality. Disconnection with religion is celebrated as a reform and an indicator of emancipation.

3.1.1.5. Cruel Country

Non-Western societies are entirely problematized as backwards, tribalistic, oppressive, spiritual, and like-minded entities. They occupy an inferior status in terms of culture, language, and mentality so that legitimacy and domination of the Occident can be affirmed. Binary thinking is widely adopted in images, words, metaphors, idioms, and discourses. Knowledge about the realities of another are acquired through categorization, classification, generalization, and simplification.

3.1.1.6. Stifled Sexuality

Narratives about the lived experiences of women excessively emphasis on female genital mutilation and honor killings. Everyday exposure to violence is caricaturized as a surreal experience and introduced peculiar to Oriental societies. Another example of portrayal under this framework is the objectification of women via reference to their character attributes and physical appearance as the exotic alien. The paradox of pornographic hypervisibility and invisibility eventually leads to assertion and denial of humanity simultaneously.

3.1.1.7. Brave Battler of A Bad Birthright

The shortcomings of existing narratives required the invention of a new character that would accurately reflect the experiences and voices of women. This saw a growing reference to the concepts of resilience, resistance, empowerment, or healing with female combatants as a popular feature in news media. Ironically, oriental and patriarchal discourses continued to operate in the background by framing bravery

through trapping women into a battle against ethno-sectarian divisions and limiting focus on the charismatic aspects of physical appearance. Majority of the narratives that were supposed to promote the four concepts above are often disturbed by the understanding that women have an inferior status in relation to men. The realm of peace and conflict is traditionally recognized as a male-dominated sphere that encourage portrayals of female combatants as exceptional or almost-men figures. At the same time, emphasis is put on feminine qualities (e.g. pacifism, fragility, and innocence) as opposed to the depiction of extremist fighters as barbarians and monsters (Santoire, 2022, pp. 3, 7). Finally, motivations for guerilla engagement are left aside or at best unexplored beyond themes such as anger, vengeance, and love. Oversimplification of complex realities cheapened a legitimate struggle (Dirik, 2014, para. 2).

3.1.1.8. Uncle Sam Will Set Her Free

The bottom line is that Oriental societies are enforced to find a place in the hegemonic discourse of liberalism, democracy, and rule of law that is defined in line with the norms, values, and principles of power houses. Women can only be saved through liberal interventions and an individual empowerment approach (Kahf, 2009, para. 13-18; Mohanty, 1998). Existing coping strategies are understudied or delegitimized as harmful. Only Western actors are seen as capable of achieving peace and prosperity and thus carry the moral burden or divine duty of sharing their know-how with *underprivileged* nations.

3.2. Case Studies on Representation of Yazidi

Studies examining the portrayal of Yazidi women in the context of genocide revealed a heavy focus on rape and enslavement. An examination of 190 UK newspaper articles discovered trends in narratives as the following: victim (n=59 articles), sex slaves (n=130 articles), and (rape) survivors (n=58 articles) (Sarac, 2020, p. 71). Arab media was similarly found to approach female survivors by asking ‘how’, ‘who’, and ‘how many times’ about their personal experience of sexual violence and frequently using words such as ‘slave’ and ‘sexual violence’ (Mansour, 2020, pp. 20, 30). Several studies pointed out how claiming Yazidis as the ultimate, passive victims of ISIS served *marketing* of Yazidi women as a genre that is entirely based on salvation and

rescue (Dirik, 2015, para, 4; Ringrose, 2021, p. 88; Minwalla, Foster & McGrail, 2022, p. 753; Buffon & Allison, 2016, p. 9). Victimization was also promoted by Yazidis as they engaged in a power struggle over accessing and being represented by influential media outlets. Maisel (2021, p. 292) noted that political, spiritual, and social division in the community regarding representation found reflected in media outlets over who is more victimized and should speak for the rest. Most of the narratives were written through a male lens. The disproportionate focus on Yazidi girls and women was accompanied by a silencing of the Yazidi men. Reports rarely focused on the experience of men as victims, survivors, or fighters (Buffon & Allison, 2016, p. 15).

Further issues in news coverage were identified as being misled by journalists, promises of money, aid, or protection in exchange for detailed accounts of trauma, language barrier, and lack of consent (Foster & Minwalla, 2018; Minwalla et al, 2022, p. 758; Akhavan et al., 2020, p. 24). Most of the articles were not concerned with raising awareness about the political, historical, or social factors behind the genocidal attacks. Fifty-five of them did not provide any information on interventions about GBV, while none mentioned stories of resistance and recovery. Fifty articles did not involve consultation with qualified experts, which partially explains the prevalence of interviews in an inappropriate or unknown setting (n=37 articles), insensitive attitudes, comments or questions (n=25 articles), incorrect use of terminology (n=9 articles), and judgmental language (n=7 articles). Thirty-six articles placed survivors at risk of shame and stigmatization. Revealing identifiable information such as name, origin, and residence and using images that detailed the physical appearances of survivors, children, and relatives compromised their safety. A recent study examined camera angles during the live confrontation between Yazidi survivor Ashwaq Hajji Hamid and ISIS militant Abu Humam on the Iraqi television station Al-Iraqiya in 2019. Findings drew attention to a general disregard for the well-being of Humam and her family for the sake of winning the audience's sympathy (Ammar & Alwawi, 2021, p. 379). An emphasis on the vulnerability of Hamid is accompanied by sidelining and forcing the ISIS militant to seem apologetic. Denying a chance for the perpetrator to self-express was equally problematic as it took away an opportunity to address the root causes of violence (Phillis, 2018, p. 12). In the end, the confrontation was characterized by

distress, embarrassment, humiliation, and re-traumatization rather than empowerment, healing, and justice.

3.3. Looking Beyond Oriental and Patriarchal Discourses

This section informs on interaction between media and academia by exploring linguistic differences in operationalization and application of the following concepts: resistance, resilience, empowerment and recovery. It examines strengths, limitations and interconnectedness to find out factors that contribute to oriental and patriarchal discourses and potential areas for mutual nourishment.

3.3.1. Conceptualization of Resistance

Resistance is typically applied to a range of groups including women, low-skilled workers, migrants, gay/queer people, Palestinians, minorities, and peasants. Everyday resistance is perceived to be the most common form of resistance to oppression. *Weapons of the Weak* (Scott, 1985) describe everyday acts of resistance as quiet, scattered, disguised, informal, and non-organized. They include common behaviors like foot-dragging, escape, sarcasm, passivity, laziness, misunderstandings, disloyalty, slander, avoidance, or theft to stop, prevent, expose, challenge, stand against or refuse to cooperate with any form of violence. The idea behind everyday resistance is engagement with power relations that has the potential to undermine oppression for survival and agency (Vinthagen & Johansson, 2016). It is a powerful political tool in driving social change for women. Strategies of consciousness-raising, campaigning, lobbying, fundraising, protests, marches, and blockades are crucial in women's movement in resisting power relations that are codified in norms and structures.

3.3.2. Problematic Aspects of Resilience

Resilience has been popularized in the 1970s after a forty-year-long study on Hawaiian children who come from low socioeconomic backgrounds found that one-third of participants did not engage in destructive behaviors in their later teen years (Werner, Bierman, & French, 1971). The concept came to adopted in a range of disciplines over time. Gender studies discussed resilience in the context of identifying protective factors and mitigating risks, whereas psychologists and ecologists focused on the

capacity of individuals, communities, environment, or institutions to cope with high-risk status, chronic stress, or trauma, and maintain a peaceful function (Egeland, Carlson & Sroufe, 1993, p. 517; Cadell et al., 2001, p. 9; Metre & Calder, 2016, p. 7). Well-established measures of psychological resilience agree on testing positive emotions such as purposeful life, perseverance, self-reliance, and calmness, an individual's ability to exercise control, adapting to change, and social support.[1] A key problem with resilience has been the observation of a tendency to fetishize and romanticize women as if they are equipped with 'supernatural coping mechanisms' (Skwaikh, 2021, para. 3). Narratives promoting resilience discourse often carry a message that it is possible to endure and overcome any hardships in life although many academic studies have relied on self-reported traits of interviewees. Criticism towards the concept was also raised over dilemma in identifying resilience as a last resort or recognizing as an indicator of choice, control, and power. Finally, extensive focus on individuality was argued to draw attention away from institutions, structures, laws, and policies that perpetuate colonization, racism, misogynistic culture, chronic poverty, and religion-related violence (Scrine, 2021, p. 6).

3.3.3. Healing After Trauma

Recovery is understood as the rate of return to a normal state of health, mind, or strength from harsh events (Kimhi & Eshel, 2009, p. 72). The concept has been applied to survivors of transportation accidents, natural disasters, medical issues, war, rape, sexual assault, child abuse, and other life experiences such as relationship breakdown, parental divorce, bereavement, and emigration. Several studies approached healing as a significant, positive change in emotional and cognitive functioning. They measured a range of items including relation with others, openness to new possibilities, personal strength, spiritual change, appreciation of life, conscientiousness, self-esteem, hope, and awareness.[2] Ongoing disagreements concern difficulties of measurement due to

[1] See Ego Resiliency Scale (Block & Kremen, 1996), The Hardiness Scale (Bartone, Ursano, Wright, & Ingraham, 1989), The Psychological Resilience Scale (Windle, Markland, & Woods, 2008), The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale (Connor & Davidson, 2003) and The Brief Resilience Scale (Smith, Dalen, Wiggins, Tooley, Christopher, & Bernard, 2008).

[2] See Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996), Changes in Outlook Questionnaire (Joseph, Williams, & Yule, 1993), Stress Related Growth Scale (Park, Cohen, & Murch, (1996), and Perceived Benefit Scale (McMiller & Fisher, 1998).

fluidity of the phenomenon. For example, a mechanism that promotes protection and well-being in one area of life may not be applicable in another. Another possibility is that this mechanism may lose relevance at another point in time.

3.3.4. The Empowerment Agenda

Empowerment was first coined by Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1973) upon discovery of the ways that the official curriculum neglected social and cultural barriers. His philosophy emphasized hope, conscientizing, inspiration, and critical thinking as central elements to empowerment. The following years saw enrichment in the theorization of empowerment and a consensus around the importance of resources and agency. The capabilities approach referred to resources and agency as determinants of valued ways of 'being and doing' (Sen, 1985b). British economist Naila Kabeer (1999) argued 'power to' as an ability to make strategic life choices that are enhanced by resources, 'power with' as an ability to act on those choices or exercise of agency, and 'power within' as an ability to reverse the effects of oppression (Dominguez, et al., 2001, p. 19). Empowerment is largely concerned with systemic change of institutions and structures that perpetuate gender, race, and class oppression in order to create a more equal distribution of resources and power.

3.3.4.1. Common Pathways to Gender Equality

Opportunities and constraints in experimenting with resistance strategies and healing are ultimately connected to the idea of agency, control, power, will, capacity, skills, and character traits. They can occur along the individual, community and environment level, and the interaction between these determine the quality, meaningfulness, and availability of resources. These resources have been identified to exist across the familial, socio-cultural, leadership, health, psychology, political, legal, economic, and human development dimension (Goulart et al., 2021, p. 2). The model has been advanced by combining seminal studies on the subject. A review of the component of each dimension was provided in separate sections.

3.3.4.1.1. The Familial Dimension

The familial dimension captures decision-making over marriage, childbearing, contraception, abortion, and freedom of domestic violence. Research has shown that

women demonstrate a tendency to share their experience of violence with their immediate social circle rather than applying to official institutions or non-governmental organizations (Kaylı & Şahin, 2016, p. 92). Supportive family figures, friends, partners, and mentors are considered integral for developing a critical sense of security, safety, belonging, and self-esteem (Werner, 1989; Goodman et al., 2020, p. 619; Hartup & Stevens, 1999; Walsh, 2002, p.130; Herman, 2016, p. 77; Clark, 2018, p. 812). The struggle for gender equality primarily starts in households where the establishment of fair share of roles and responsibilities and encouragement of interests, skills, and aspirations provide valuable assets for a sense of agency.

3.3.4.1.2. Socio-Cultural Aspects of Strength

The socio-cultural dimension is concerned with cultural norms, rituals, and attitudes. Religion has been associated with inner peace, self-esteem, psychological and spiritual growth, and greater cooperativeness (Banerjee & Pyles, 2004, p. 62; Pargament et al., 1998, p. 721). An in-depth look into experiences of seven women after physical, emotional and/or sexual violence in South Africa revealed that spirituality gave them the strength to leave their abusive partner and survive after leaving the relationship (Gopal & Nunlall, 2017, p. 65). At the same time, this research maintained a critical eye toward the extent of positive role that religious norms, thoughts, behaviors, and relationships play in driving resilience, resistance, empowerment, or recovery. Manchanda (2005, p. 4740) warns that rituals are closely linked with everyday experiences of subordination. Religion can both function as a resource that catalyze the agency of women and reinforce traditional stereotypes via reducing visibility to showcases of grief, sacrifice, and motherhood via women's bodies.

3.3.4.1.3 Leadership

The dimension of leadership refers to leadership qualities, networks, and community engagement. Social behavior that benefits other people or society is either triggered by (a) the magnitude of the event and repeated exposure to trauma, (b) an attempt to find meaning in experiences that transcend personal tragedy, or (c) a desire to prevent future atrocities via educational, legal, or political efforts. The former relates to how collective suffering can reinforce connectedness and mobilize cooperative and supportive behavior (Mancini et al., 2015, p. 403; Cook, et al., 2021, p. 388). Shared

experiences of oppression provide the basis for a rediscovery of identity and solidarity. Prosocial behavior is also argued to be motivated by a search for acceptance, love, care, and justice (Herman, 2019, pp. 261-263; Puvimanasinghe et al., 2014, p. 4). In a study investigating ways of coping with traumatic life events among twenty-three women, many of the interviewees said they saw themselves as creators or volunteers, philanthropists, authors, advocates, or artists who were giving back to their communities, the world, or to women who had experienced similar traumas (Phillis, 2018, pp. 40, 133, 140). Survivor networks typically support empowerment and healing process by raising empathy and awareness through an exchange of ideas and information. They facilitate establishing truth, amplifying the voice of the marginalized, rebuilding social networks, and restoring a connection to identity (Pinderhughes, Davis & Williams, 2015, p. 23). These networks prove particularly vital when grounded in feminist leadership and organization. Evaluation of the Pathways of Women's Empowerment programme highlights that projects with an emphasis on empowerment across Afghanistan, Argentina, Bangladesh, Brazil, Costa Rica, Egypt, Ghana, India, Nigeria, Palestine, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Sudan, and the UK had become transformative in a feminist background as it provided resources and support for critical thinking, self-reflection and connectedness with other women (Cornwall, 2016, pp. 347, 351).

3.3.4.1.4. Health and Psychology

The health dimension is concerned with bodily autonomy, health perceptions, life expectancy, mortality, fertility, nutrition, communicable diseases, and access to services. The psychological dimension differs in focus on knowledge, self-perception, self-efficacy, self-esteem, capacities, skills, creativity, imagination, optimism, mastery, self-determination, perceived thoughts, feelings and aspirations, community belonging and engagement, social support, and faith (Zimmerman, 1995, p. 588; Sprague & Hayes, 2000; Rappaport, 1987; Staples, 1990; Boehm & Staples, 2004; Fetterman, 2002; Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996; Linley, 2004; Koenig, 1998). Engagement in physical activity is a cross-cutting theme in health and psychology. Exercise is argued to ‘reduce muscle tension…improve self-esteem and mental health generally… strengthen the heart, and improve the quality of sleep’ (Schiraldi, 2000, p. 78). Self-defense is also associated with a sense of strength, independence, and pride.

Healing takes place as a system of action sequence is recovered (Herman, 2016, p. 250). Women in combat also actively get to challenge social, cultural, and psychological barriers to gender inequality and the reconstruction of narratives.

3.3.4.1.5. Politics

The political dimension is concerned with participation, the right to vote, local campaigns, and representation. Verbalization of traumatic experiences is often considered a therapeutic and political act. Herman (2016, p. 90) argues that women who recover most successfully refuse to hide and remain silent, insist that sexual violence and rape should be part of public discourse, demand social change, and create their living monuments. Memorialization of events via artistic expressions such as storytelling, drawing, sculpture, dance, music, language, essays, poetry, film, theatre, and photography provides an opportunity to express, understand and control emotions and build trust with fellow survivors. Storytelling is linked with the discovery of resistance and healing through acknowledgment of name, face, and incident and humanization of the self and the Other (Senehi, 2002, 45; Al-Hassani, 2021, p. 514; Ringrose, 2021, p. 130; Zucker & McGrew, 2020, p. 185). A sense of empowerment is brought as survivors began to see themselves as agents of change rather than victims. Recalling trauma and mourning enables making peace with the past and renewal of energy and hope (Herman, 2016). This process follows a change in mentality as the survivor begins to see the world as a creative project to participate in rather than a problem to cope with (Mieth, 2018, p. 25 as cited in Joy, 2011, pp. 20-21). An experimental study of rituals with 25 women who experienced incest, rape, battery, or psychological abuse found that disclosing experiences and emotions in a safe space increases a sense of power and improves overall mental health. Follow-up interviews at intervals of three and six months revealed that feelings of empowerment lasted for half the respondents for more than a few weeks and eight women over a month (Jacobs, 1989, p. 275). Art forms other than storytelling were also found valuable in helping to unlock memories or express feelings that are too complex for words. For example, music can stimulate images, emotions, memories, and body sensations, develop creative and problem-solving skills and foster young people's resistance and collective consciousness-building (Schiraldi, 2000, p. 269; Scrine, 2021, pp. 8-9).

3.3.4.1.6. Technological Infrastructure

Digital infrastructure has been recognized as a key resource in sharing stories, exchanging information and news, and discussing sensitive issues that cannot be touched upon in a face-to-face setting due to taboos, insecurity, or remote locations (Mark, 2009, pp. 692, 696; Schraldi, 2000, p. 232). The technological dimension supports the legal dimension as it offers a platform to educate communities about past and current injustices (Pham & Aronson, 2019, p. 2). In the context of crimes against humanity such as genocide that aim to political silencing and erase the footprints of a particular nation or ethnic group from history, storytelling features as a powerful tool to collect and present evidence (Goodman et al., 2020, p. 616).

3.3.4.1.7. What Kind of Justice?

The legal dimension refers to laws, policies, and security. Restorative justice focuses on specific cases, whereas transitional justice is typically implemented in a context of transition from violence to peace and rule of law. It aims to address injustices at a larger level and change the system. The key elements of restorative justice and transitional justice are accountability, truth, reparations, reconciliation, conflict resolution, and democratic participation (O'Mahony & Doak, 2012, p. 305). Accountability is party ensured through criminal prosecutions, which concern charging someone with a crime, bringing them on trial and fair and adequate punishment. Truth-seeking aids this process by helping to hold perpetrators accountable, empower survivors of crimes, and encourage healthy inter and intra-community relations. Symbolic reparations include apologies, monetary compensation, medical and psychological support, health care, educational support, return of property or compensation for loss, official public apologies, building museums and memorials, and establishing days of commemoration (UNSC, 2020, p. 8). Reconciliation refers to an ability to confront past atrocities, demonstrate a desire to peacefully co-exist, and formulate a shared vision for the future (Baghdadi, 2008, p. 8; Kizilhan & Neumann, 2020, p. 3; van Zoonen & Wirya, 20117, p. 5). Integral to reconciliation is the idea of forgiveness, which is described as a change from negative emotions and thoughts about the perpetrator such as anger, resentment, and desire for revenge to more positive ones (Staub, 2016, p. 886). Forgiveness should be characterized by the equal participation of victim and perpetrator, authenticity of

apology, acknowledgment, trust, shared truth, and justice. Otherwise, forgiving can lead to a cycle of abuse and violence. Kimberly (2017, p. 77) notes that forgiveness is often experienced as an inward process. It enables survivors to regain control and move forward. People more forgiving and open to reconciliation are argued to be less likely to suffer depression, anxiety, anger, and other PTSD symptoms (Kizilhan & Neumann, 2020, pp. 5-6). A final dimension of justice is reforming laws and institutions. Primary concern is preventing the occurrence of similar atrocities in the future (i.e. guarantees of non-recurrence or non-repetition) by protecting human rights, maintaining peace and respect for rule of law (Kizilhan & Neumann, 2020, p. 7).

3.3.4.1.8. Economy and Human Development

The economic dimension captures employment, financial literacy, decision-making, access to credit and markets, ownership of assets and land, and engagement in local trade associations as pathways to resilience, empowerment, and recovery. A closely related dimension is human development that is concerned with educational and vocational training. Education is recognized as a key component of the economy as it has the potential to secure formal jobs. These jobs offer regular income and stability that help navigate shocks (Kabeer, 2011, p. 10). Few studies point out that higher academic standards and positive schooling environments are associated with resilience (Kaplan et al., 1996; Gopal, 2017, p. 64). Quality education in a safe space improves living standards and builds self-esteem, independence, and relationships of solidarity (Cornwall, 2016, pp. 347, 352). Education also takes place in households where women protect children from forced recruitment and radicalization or serve as informal education providers in the context of school closures, physical distance or inaccessibility due to cultural and economic barriers.

3.4. Conclusion

This chapter started with an examination of the mainstream portrayals of Muslim and Arab women in media. The general tendency has been revealed to depict women as victims or as so-called empowered figures with motivation stemming from political ambitions, psychological factors such as guilt and comfort, and/or boosting financial profits. Borrowing theoretical framework from previous studies, particular ways in presenting narratives on victimization and empowerment to the reader were explored.

Oriental women were argued to made headlines either through a status of victimhood in relation to reporting of GBV and conservative dress code or a symbolic sense of empowerment through shallow focus on her role as a combatant in frontlines. Truth was suppressed by silence of women and denial of diversity. Men were disallowed from taking part and gaining any credit for their work in advancing society. In a world where only black and white exists, Islam was regarded as the culprit of all things that are evil. In case when women created, accessed, and enjoyed opportunities they couldn't before, narratives still resorted to reducing lived experiences to name, age, and physical appearances. Female combatants were branded as extraordinary heroes who complimented the civilization mission of the West.

The following section examined representation of Yazidis in media with a sample consisting of BBC, CNN, DW, France24, Guardian, Sydney Morning Herald, NBC News, Atlantic, Daily Mail, Independent, New York Times, Daily Telegraph, Financial Times, New Statesman, Global Post, The Week, National Review, International Business Times, ALAan TV, Annahar Newspaper, Al Arabiya, Al Jazeera, and Sky News Arabia. One study stood out as an exception by referring to narratives in advocacy sites including Action Yazidis, Amnesty International, Free Yezidi Foundation, Genocide Watch, It's On U, The Liberation of Christian and Yazidi Children of Iraq, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, Yazda, Yazidi American Women's organization, Yazidi Human Rights Organization International and Yazidis International. These were aided by a few studies exploring perceptions of Yazidis on media ethics and justice by engaging with IDPs, women, men, young and elderly and conducting key informant interviews with experts and civil and religious authorities. Particular attention was given to protecting the dignity and privacy of survivors, obtaining ethical approval from the relevant population and authorities, and addressing existing guidelines on ethical journalism where needed. Findings pointed out the prevalence and persistence of oriental discourse via the creation of a mythology around desperate rape victims or brave and beautiful heroines. The devaluation of lived experiences and perspectives of women and unbalanced representation between community members also signaled the promotion of patriarchal discourse. Data and analysis were found limited as far as consideration of how resistance, resilience, empowerment, and recovery were incorporated into narratives.

Final sections of the chapter outlined the characteristics of resistance, resilience, healing, and empowerment. Resilience has been found problematic due to an overemphasis on inspirational elements and individualism that overshadow complexities of human nature and systemic issues. On the other hand, agency has been a recurring theme in resistance, recovery, and empowerment without necessarily falling into the shortfalls of resilience. A strong correlation between the concepts were noticed over a summary of *ingredients* including social support, women's leadership and movement, art, technology, education, religion, laws, policies and institutions, physical exercise, self-defense, and livelihood initiatives for the development of peaceful individuals and communities.

CHAPTER IV

RESEARCH FINDINGS

This research focuses on the coverage of traumatic lived experiences of Yazidis in media and academic outlets by highlighting social realities around power, justice and ethics. It exposes oriental and patriarchal discourse in narratives to contribute an ongoing wave of genuine efforts in transforming storytelling practices and discusses manifestations of acts of resistance, empowerment and recovery to advance theorizations, policy and practice concerning risk factors and protective mechanisms pertaining to gender equality. The chapter presents key research findings based on data extracted from eight media and twenty-seven academic outlets. Total years of analyzed content covered 2014-2022 in former and 2014-2023 in latter. While textual analysis concerned analyzing specific words, tone, style and structure of a narrative, discourse analysis referred to the use of language in social context. The combination of these methodologies helped to identify patterns and themes and learn about identities, norms and power relations. Analysis of narratives were carried out by noting down word choices, main argument, portrayals, attitude, structure and cultural or social background. The chapter concluded with an evaluation of the meaning and signifance of findings.

4.1. Ethnic and Gendered 'Others' in Media

This section will explore data extracted from Guardian, Daily Mail, Voice of America, Rudaw, Al-monitor, Al Jazeera, Jin News Agency and UNDP news. Seven out of eight outlets were previously criticized for producing biased and pornographic content, committing plagiarism or provoking violence. Those based in Middle East and US were more likely to receive mixed reception, whereas Jin News Agency was the only outlet recognized with the potential to challenge manifestations of masculine language that dominates the landscape of media. Feminist theory offered an avenue to challenge

established understandings and practices around trauma by discussing sensitive topics with a critical lens and encouraging brainstorming sessions on reform in storytelling.

4.1.1. Victimization of Yazidi

The findings of this research underlined that news headlines function as a first opportunity to capture the attention of target audience and briefly expose them to the main argument of the story. More than half of the articles were found to reduce Yazidi girls and women into 'sex slaves', 'jihadi brides', 'ISIS captives', 'rape victims', or 'widows' in headlines. Authors engaged in cherry-picking the words from survivors' testimonies that had the greatest potential to shock. Some headlines disclosed the age of survivors and talked about the 'price' of sexual enslavement. Most of the articles followed a similar structure of argumentation by introducing the Yazidis and the main characters in the story in the first few paragraphs and then moving into the details of the experiences during and *after* ISIS.

Eighteen out of twenty-one articles were content with limiting the background of Yazidis as a minority religious sect that is influenced by Christianity, Islam, and Zoroastrianism. One touched upon the historical context only by reducing it to strict rules, honor killings, and frequent exposure to violence (Graham-Harrison, 2017). Only one article provided a comprehensive narrative by touching upon the history of violence alongside religion and culture (Underwood, 2017). Another article stood out by highlighting the 'Kurdishness' of Yazidi women rather than introducing them as a separate community (Mazher, para. 1, 2015).

After a dramatic introduction that lacked any depth of understanding of the lived experiences of the Yazidis, readers were taken back to the raiding of Yazidi villages in August 2014. This date was widely regarded as the beginning of the ISIS campaign. The cause(s) of the genocide has been explained in all articles as branding of the Yazidis as devil worshipers or infidels in relation to their belief in Peacock Angel and taboos on food. The emphasis on distinctiveness and 'mystique' elements of the Yazidi faith almost *qualified* the Yazidis as the most victimized religious minority.

The reader was slowly prepared to face guilt and fear as the story dug deeper into the segregation of Yazidis based on sex and age. Significant space was reserved to detailing beating, abuse, bullying, insult, threat, starvation, forced conversion to Islam, forced marriage, and rape in slave markets, prisons, or training camps. Authors preferred to walk through the personal experiences of the survivors rather than reporting cold hard facts. The frequent use of quotes attempted to remind the audience that the narratives heavily relied on testimonies. Yet, most did not hesitate to direct the audience by resorting to stereotypical, inhumane, unjust, and retraumatizing portrayals that promote orientalism and patriarchy and underpin disregard for the mental well-being and privacy of survivors. Many news and opinion items described the appearance and emotional state of survivors as crying, pitiful, calm, smiling, serious, fierce, desperate, or miserable as they recounted their memories (Reşavayî, para. 18, 2014; Calderwood, para. 4, 2015; Bajec, 2022). Voices, experiences, identities, and existence of Yazidi girls and women was reduced into the warfare terminology of 'spoils of war', 'war prize', and 'war loot'. In addition to collocations like 'nightmare imprisonment', 'desperate plea', 'horrific tale', and 'horrific sexual and physical abuse', idiomatic expressions like 'as young as' [insert an underage here] or 'as little as' [insert an *agreeable* amount of American dollar here] denied acknowledging diverse voices of women and neglected their history of resistance (Calderwood, 2015; Reşavayî, para. 5, 2014; Pleasance, para. 1, 2014; Graham-Harrison, Para. 9, 2017; Stoter, 2016). These word and grammar choices felt as if there was a power- and profit-driven standard in deciding who is more traumatized, capable of invoking shock and capturing attention. Another problematic aspect concerned the reporting of negative coping mechanisms (e.g., suicide) without providing warning of sensitive content ahead (Graham-Harrison, para. 49, 2015).

The disproportional focus on girls and women's experiences was found to be accompanied by the appearance of men in three different characters. The most common encounter with men in texts were ISIS fighters, who were associated with guns, the color black, and Arabic. Despite efforts to create a certain image in mind, some Yazidis preferred to make a distinction between fighters who engaged in rape, beating, and assault and others who refrained from such acts and thus considered *not as bad as* the rest. Lesser-known men were the victimized Yazidis who were massacred and 'dumped' in mass graves and boys who went under military and

ideological training to be 'brainwashed' by ISIS fighters (Stoter, para. 3, 2016). In contrast to the villain, somewhat villain, and helpless portrayals of men, narratives also mentioned the rescuer men who sacrifice and pay the price of an 'extraordinary act of heroism and generosity' (Graham-Harrison, para. 2, 2015).

As readers approached to the end of the story, information was provided that the main character was liberated either by their efforts or with the help of smugglers. Nearly half of the sources touched upon ongoing issues after the defeat of ISIS in 2017. They discussed the fear of social stigma, silence, taboo, legal challenges around abortions, lack of data, living conditions at the refugee camps, loss of language, and lack of proper education (Mazher, 2015; Hussein, 2016; Sini & Ghaedi, 2019; Underwood, 2017). While one text used the term 'progress' in relation to the Yazidi Women Survivors Law[3], it also highlighted issues such as the narrow scope and exclusion of men, boys, Christians, Shabaks, and Turkmens (Snell, para. 2, 2021). The main idea was to ensure that attention is not lost in a world where there are countless protracted and novel crises to focus on and urge taking humanitarian, development, and peace-related action. This required the continuation of a narrative that emphasized victimization, extinction ext.

4.1.2. Oriental Women 2.0: The Female Combatant

A third finding of the study was a growing reference to resistance, resilience, empowerment, or recovery within the theme of self-defense that incorporated an interplay with oriental and patriarchal discourse. A total of four news material touched upon the theme of self-defense. Women fighters considered their sheer existence as an act of resistance in relation to challenging belief among ISIS militants that those killed by women cannot go to heaven/paradise in the afterlife (Graham-Harrison, 2017). Another Yazidi survivor said battling 'relieved' some of her trauma (Robinson, 2017). Reconciliation was fostered through connecting with fellow Yazidis in challenging

[3] The Yazidi Survivors Law (YSL) was passed by the Iraqi government on 1 March 2021. YSL acknowledges the sexual violence perpetuated by ISIS. It provides financial support in the form of a monthly salary and a piece of residential land. Women and children obtain special education and employment opportunities, as well as medical and psychological support. YSL rules coordination for the search of missing people, excavations of the mass graves, and prosecutions of ISIS. Protecting survivors during trials is fundamental and amnesty for perpetrators of kidnapping or enslaving Yazidis is denied. Finally, YSL recognizes the 3rd of August as a national commemoration day of the genocide.

patriarchal norms, beliefs, and rules within the community and investing in peacebuilding. Finally, being able to protect oneself rather than depending on others provided a sense of control (Vickery & Khalel, 2015, para. 2).

Self-defense also had a linkage with engagement in sports. One source mentioned the Boxing Sisters project launched at Rwanga refugee camp by Lotus Flower, a British non-profit organization, to improve the physical and mental health of women. A beneficiary named H reported that boxing brought joy and a sense of empowerment, as well as connecting with girls that have been through conflict and sexual violence (Sini & Ghaedi, para. 14, 2019).

Despite alleged hints of slight change in the tone of narratives, portrayals continued to deny voice, identity and agency for women. In the context of stories about self-defense, women were introduced as brave/strong/fierce or exotic heroines who either engaged in 'extraordinary' acts to defend the liberal Western values of democracy and gender equality, or 'revenge the raped, beaten and executed' (Graham-Harrison, 2017; Robinson, 2017). These accounts provided little understanding of agency as defined by own terms of Yazidi.

4.1.3. Religion and Art

One source coined the term 'revolution' in explaining how changes in rituals have contributed to the process of healing for women. The most important development was viewed as former Baba Sheikh Khurto Hajji Ismail's statement in September 2014, which welcomed abducted women to facilitate efforts of rejoining to the community (Hussein, para. 15, 2016). The statement was widely praised in its capacity to provide a locally driven solution for the reintegration of survivors. That spiritual leaders have taken a positive step in a community that is widely known for its strict conservative rules led to the rapid adoption of the development as reform in the international arena. On a negative note, interrogation of dynamics that paved the way for a *reform* has been understudied within a historical perspective in relation to the experience of 73 Firmans and survival of cultural elements without any notable change.

Another source called attention to the role of music in preserving identity and encouraging healing. The author detailed motivation and outcomes of a project led by the AMAR foundation in teaching Yazidis their ancient music, techniques, and instruments. A participant described how the project helped to forget the brutality and remain hopeful (Ridgwell, 2020, para. 11). Roots of strength was traced back to an ancient heritage of diversity and openness that is reflected in storytelling and music. At the same time, emphasis was placed on themes such as existential threat, fragility and vulnerability to mobilize international support. The risk of re-traumatization continued through resorting to repeated portrayal of girls and women as sex slaves that suffered unimaginable abuse (Hussein, 2016; Ridgwell, 2020).

4.1.4. Women's Leadership and Movement

The story of Pari Ibrahim, a Yazidi woman who established the Free Yezidi Foundation to share information about the genocide, has been subject to one narrative. The text described activities of the foundation including opening centers for Yazidi women and children in Iraq, bringing trauma specialists, lobbying with governments to raise awareness, and assisting prosecution efforts by gathering evidence about foreign fighters involved in the conflict (Stoter, 2016). Another narrative informed about the formation of a women's council by mothers in the mountains of Shingal. It explored the function of the council including taking the first step in forming self-defense units and organizing meetings to share stories and provide psychological support. The text went on to mention the evolution of a women's council to the Yazidi Free Women's Movement and an expansion of agenda to education, economic empowerment, and changing patriarchal mindset (Roz, 2022). A legitimate concern with narratives about women's leadership and movement has been rising importance of women figures in relation to their experience of genocide as it has been victimization that has *granted* them visibility in the first place in international outlets. In this sense, stories about empowerment have been insincere and rather served to renew the power dynamics of us versus 'Other'.

4.1.5. Economy

Eonomic empowerment and rehabilitation of basic services is often linked with early recovery and resilience. In 2015, a small cake business was opened in northern Iraq

with initial support derived from the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The bakery was stated to be run by women who were displaced by ISIS ("Yazidi women find", 2016, para. 5). Another story mentioned the establishment of a small business inside the Sharia Camp for IDPs in Duhok via a project that gave asset grants to 150 beneficiaries. The project was argued to be key in supporting families, improving quality of life, and preventing deterioration of post-crisis situations ("Economic Empowerment", 2019). The main idea of these narratives was to convince the readers that initiatives of such could provide jobs, decent work, and a sense of dignity. Nevertheless, promotion of traditional occupations for women or an apparent neglect of exploring avenues for transformative engagements and projects has been a fundamental shortcoming in realizing true economic empowerment. The audience is discouraged questioning how small businesses such as cooking and tailoring can reproduce social and economic barriers and inequalities for marginalized women and prevent design and implementation of meaningful and durable solutions for empowerment and recovery.

4.1.6. Justice

News items about justice were contrasting as they either focused on an international neglect of Yazidis, failures in preventing the genocide, slow progress in ensuring justice, and recommendations on what can be done or the progress thanks to efforts of the German courts and UNITAD. Ongoing issues of justice were highlighted to ensure that the case of Yazidis is not forgotten. This was achieved by reducing life stories of Yazidis to slaughtered, forced conversion, and sexual violence (Bajec, 2022; "Six years on", 2020). German courts regularly made headlines for handling prosecutions under the international legal principle of universal jurisdiction. There was hope in the overall tone that each case could serve as a milestone for further action (Johnston, 2021; Shakir, 2021, "German Court Convicts", 2021, "Suspended Sentence", 2022).

4.1.7. Ethics

An accompanying narrative was a heightened interest in ethical journalism, which was triggered by psychologists, activists, academics, and Yazidi foundations in criticizing the sensational coverage of the genocide. While Johnston (2019) paid attention to causes of reliance on media as lack of trust towards local actors in ensuring justice,

Harb (para. 13, 2018) reminded that journalists have an ethical responsibility to 'give voice to the voiceless' while operating inside the ethical realms of journalism. The fact that news about unethical journalism received attention in media as late as 2018 underlined poor communication between academics and journalists beyond blindness and failure of compliance of the latter with its own standards, values and guidelines.

4.2. Narratives in Academic Outlets

This section discussed data extracted from narratives in academic articles, books, policy papers, and theses. It touched upon justice, self-defense, technology, education, art, social support and religion in demonstrating how accounts of reality varied, contradicted and overlapped with those in media. The chapter ended with suggestions for future research.

4.2.1. Justice

Justice, security, reparations were often stressed as priorities by Yazidis (van Zoonen & Wirya, 2017, p. 14). Interviews with 91 women (and some men) activists, civil society representatives, journalists, legal experts, and academics in Iraq revealed that cooperation with religious clerics and tribal leaders can be crucial in promoting women's rights, but the number of those that are open to gender equality were noted small. The general impression was that traditional authorities were hard to work with due to their reliance on male-biased customs and traditions that limit women's access to justice, reconciliation, and leadership. Some Yazidis also mentioned that communal leaders were fueling sectarianism, discrimination, violence, extremism, and conflict. In this sense, accessing traditional justice mechanisms were more of a source of disempowerment and prolonged traumatization. Many Yazidis also had little faith in Baghdad or Erbil to ensure their safety. They referred to necessity of international protection to guard themselves against interference from stronger patrons (Abouzeid, 2018, p. 20).

Most interviewees explained they primarily referred to retributive justice, which is concerned with criminal prosecutions, punishment of perpetrator(s), and preventing recidivism (van Zoonen and Wirya, 2017, p. 15). Only one study that interviewed 1,000 IDPs that are primarily Yazidi found that around 20 percent of Yazidi

respondents qualified revenge as justice (Akhavan et al., 2020, p. 21). Even greater emphasis was put on restorative and transformative justice. Visions for peace included restoring social cohesion, establishing truth and remedying uncertainty of missing and captive Yazidis, locating mass graves, guarantees of non-recurrence, creating a safe and secure environment, psychological support for survivors, reopening schools, creating a court in Sinjar, and financial support to overcome conflict-related debts and losses (Kaya & Makki, 2021, p. 78; Akhavan et al., 2020, pp. 15, 20; Pham et al., 2019, p. 545; Mahler, 2021, pp. 42, 57, 59; Ayhan, 2019, p. 69; Abouzeid, 2018, pp. 14-15).

4.2.2. Self-defense

A common path in ensuring justice stood out as engagement in self-defense. The Sinjar Alliance was founded in October 2015 as a joint command of the Sinjar Resistance Units (YBŞ), Êzidxan Women's Units (YJÊ) and Êzîdxan Protection Force (HPŞ) to protect the Yazidis in Iraq and in the Autonomous Region of Kurdistan against Islamist attacks (Oehring, 2017, pp. 40-41). Mainly composed of Yazidi women who survived ISIS enslavement, YJÊ is known to have played a crucial role in defending the Yazidi people and lands. HPŞ left the alliance in 2017 citing ideological differences with the PKK-backed YBŞ and YJÊ. Female combatants are trained in accordance with the ideology of PKK and its feminist rhetoric of jineology. Many Yazidi women also joined the Women's Defense Units (YPJ), which is an all-female militia involved in the Syrian war. Politically aligned with the Democratic Union Party (PYD), a Kurdish left-wing political party established as a Syrian branch of the PKK in 2003, YPJ provides military training and teachings of Öcalan including jineology. Other women joined the intelligence agency of Asayish or the autonomous self-administration in high-ranking positions (Maisel, 2021, p. 288).

Women's role in countering terrorism and extremism were best observed through providing coordinates for ISIS leadership, sheltering former soldiers of the Iraqi or Syrian national armies, and arranging rescue operations through smugglers (Vale, 2020, p. 13). Female combatants also get to redefine traditional gender roles in conflict zones and develop a sense of control over their own fate (Erdener, 2017, p. 67). The idea of self-defense was narrated as a success story providing access to a broad base of rights for women who were previously systematically marginalized.

4.2.3. Technology

Technological infrastructure emerged as a critical resource in amplifying voice and addressing survival, solidarity and recovery in the community. Apps and maps helped communication and coordination with families, informed public Western opinion about developments in Sinjar, recreate an image of the past, mobilize assistance, and prevent future attacks (Maisel, 2021, pp. 283, 288, 297). Verbalization of experiences, needs, and demands in public via Western media and social media accounts has been seen as part of a desire for recognition and validation that would bring justice and aid to the community (Akhavan et al, 2020, p. 24). Numerous studies described giving testimonies, writing books, making public appearances, and engaging in advocacy as an act of 'great personal courage', 'political subjectivity', 'claiming agency', and 'developing an idea and awareness of autonomy' (Maisel, 2021, p. 290; Atto & Barthoma, 2021, p. 365; Buffon & Allison, 2016, p. 2; Kizilhan & Wenzel, 2020). These acts weakened taboos on talking about sexual violence, raised awareness of the crimes, mobilized support for the recognition of the genocide, and strived to ensure that no such atrocity would happen in the future. Some of the prominent figures were noted to include Nobel Peace Prize Laureate and activist Nadia Murad, human rights activists Lamiya Haji Bashar and Nazik Barakat, member of Iraqi parliament Vian Dakhil, author Farida Khalaf (pen name), and human rights lawyers Leyla Boran and Faika Deniz Pasha. Studies on attitudes towards verbalization concluded that the majority preferred to speak about their experiences of the genocide. The Head of Commission on Investigating and Gathering Evidence, a KRG government office responsible for documenting atrocities against Yazidis, said most female survivors were eager to speak about their experience before the judge (Ayhan, 2019, p. 70). Another study capturing the understanding of justice via structured questionnaires and unstructured interviews found that approximately 57 percent of respondents associated speaking in public with healing in comparison to 39 percent who said it won't (Akhavan et al., 2020, p. 22).

Several studies made warnings over how verbalization can become associated with reinforcement of anxiety and pain. This especially holds for collective-oriented communities that are characterized by the existence of a shame culture, in which avoidance and suppression emerge as better coping strategies to avoid stigma,

burdening the family, and other insecurities (Kizilhan, 2017, pp. 337-338). Talking about fresh or ongoing trauma can especially violate to do-no-harm principle (Glass et al., 2019, p. 245). It is suggested that remaining silent can even function as a form of radical, transformative political act (Altınay & Andrea, 2016, p. 11). In light of this knowledge, recognizing differences in coping and therapeutic mechanisms and rejecting one-size-fits-all approach in identifying pathways to gender equality stood out a critical task in any further research.

4.2.4. Education

One ironic research finding related to how experiences of genocide and displacement have opened new avenues for girls and women with a notable development being noted as the weakening of the caste system. People who come from a certain economic and cultural background started to exercise less authority and influence over murids. Attitudes towards formal education also began to change. Some community members became aware of the opportunities that education can provide such as employment and protection (Tezcür et al., 2021, p. 15; Adsay, 2014, pp. 21, 133-134). What was once characterized as a discriminative and elitist process gradually evolved into a ‘mass culture of learners and contributors’ (Maisel, 2021, p. 296). The magnitude of genocide in 2014 led to increased awareness, community cohesion, and reform as a strategy to overcome adverse effects, maximize chance of survival and resist terror campaign.

4.2.5. Art

Those who preferred to keep a low profile or choose silence were either (a) prevented or interrupted by families to share their experience, (b) attempted to demonstrate a sign of respect for the wounded women, or (c) avoid retraumatization by thinking or talking about events (Erdener, 2017, p. 68; Ayhan, 2019, p. 70; Erdener, 2017, p. 68; Kizilhan, 2020, p. 6). In these cases, art-based interventions turned out useful in empowerment and recovery of survivors. Paintings allowed to talk about difficult and taboo subjects. They reflected destruction, loss of home, friends, and relatives, journey to the Sinjar mountain, and sexual enslavement alongside symbolization of hope for the future in the form of painting wings and sewing the body together (Abdulah et al., 2023, p. 3). Started in 2011 to engage children who have fled violence in projects of education,

healthcare, psychosocial services, and social cohesion, the STEP program (Seeking To Equip People) later expanded to paintings of life before and after ISIS. Art-based intervention gave a chance for participants to express their pain and hope, share their inner lives, and receive recognition (Demo, 2016).

Musical activities with young Yazidi refugees who had lived in a Greek camp for over a year were similarly found to provide access to feelings that are contained or hardly expressible. Field notes, observation, and interviews during guitar lessons and signing workshops revealed an association between music and positive emotions. One participant described how music helped to process negative emotions and make them more understandable and manageable. Music also helped to improve relations within and across cultural groups, inform each about individual experiences, retain a sense of being over time, and vision potential futures (Millar & Warwick, 2018, pp. 72-73-74).

4.2.6. Social Support

Social support has been a widely recurring theme in all the examined materials. Survivors of GBV often rely on own coping mechanisms, family, friends, and community for psychosocial support. In the case of Yazidi, social support encompassed assistance in the form of shelter, money, and logistics by Arab, Muslim, and Yazidi neighbors and a demonstration of willingness to reintegrate survivors (Akhavan et al., 2020, p. 33). The former concerned how families paid large amounts of money or risked their own lives to rescue Yazidi women and children. The latter referred to the role that family, friends, or neighbors can play in reintegration of survivors and resolving disputes.

A significant turn for the community is often regarded as the statement given by former Baba Sheikh in which honor of Yazidi women and men who survived forced conversion and sexual violence were declared to be unquestionable. The statement was described to give hope to girls who were ‘terrified’ of returning to their community (Fisher & Zagros, 2018, p. 210). Value and respect given to female survivors was further confirmed by 48 interviews with Yazidis, activists, religious leaders, NGO staff, political representatives, Kurdish doctors, psychologists, and social workers (Ayhan, 2019, p. 70).

When spiritual authority fell incapable alone of convincing those that have been skeptical of communal acceptance, conservative members of the community were *sold* the idea that welcoming survivors would help to resist and defy ISIS. Soon came a revision of rebaptism ceremonies in Lalish that solidified steps toward reintegration and reconciliation. These ceremonies were marked with innovation, adaptability, and resistance that ensured the preservation of Yazidi identity while remaining open to reforms within the tradition (Fisher & Zagros, 2018, p. 212). An example of this vitality was provided by a study exploring experiences of Yazidi women in the Diyarbakir refugee camp, which referred to solidarity among women through morning rituals (Erdener, 2017, p. 67). Reviving and sharing through rituals facilitates processing feelings and experiences, finding meaning and solidarity, grieve losses, and develop healthy thoughts and behaviors.

Just like rituals, reconstruction has been found to serve a similar function. Six in-depth semi-structured interviews with Yezidi men and women from Iraq revealed the 'remarkable resilience' that Yazidi people have in connection to returning to their homeland and reconstruction of religious sites (Isakhan and Shabab, 2020, p. 17). Numerous articles argued that the reconstruction of temples and shrine helped to preserve identity, keep 'memory, history, and community' alive and provide relief in times of hardship and distress (Savelsberg, Hajo & Dulz, 2020, p. 103; Shabab, 2020, para. 6-7).

The idea of social support also extended to specialized support provided by a network of civil society actors, government authorities, volunteers, intergovernmental organizations, and UN teams. An interview conducted with Olivia Wells, director of Programs and Partnerships of Nadia's Initiative, highlighted that Yazidi survivors particularly felt empowered and restored their agency, pride, and capability when livelihood projects enabled them to take care of themselves and their families (Mahler, 2021, p. 38). In another case, regional manager of a charity in Duhok shared observations of a spike in reports concerning domestic violence after the second and third years of work in refugee camps. Vian Ahmad attributed this development to the creation of a "supportive community outside of families" (Ghaedi, 2021, para. 18). Two studies touched upon how KRG authorities established an office in Duhok to

rescue female captives and led diplomatic efforts in recognition of attacks against Yazidis as genocide (Abouzeid, 2018, p. 25; Tezcür et al., 2021, p. 11). The Yazidi Rescue Office has been noted to complement the work of the Commission of Investigation and Gathering Evidence (CIGE), the International Commission on Missing Persons (ICMP), and the United Nations Investigative Team to Promote Accountability for Crimes Committed by ISIL in Iraq and the Levant (UNITAD) in collecting witness statements, analysis of forensic and digital evidence, identification of mass graves, and recovery of human remains. The burial of human remains was remarked critical to finding out the fate of the missing, expressing grief, and linking evidence with the crimes committed against the Yazidis. Mahler (2021, p. 32) underlined that UNITAD's work was considered positive by several Yazidis. Three studies also touched upon efforts in Germany and Türkiye in detail. Two of them discussed the Special Quota Programme of Germany that brought over more than 1,000 Yazidi women from refugee camps in Iraq and offered specialized mental health care, language courses, and social, recreational, and cultural activities (Atto & Barthoma, 2021, p. 367; Gellersen et al., 2021, p. 10). Another study detailed life on a refugee camp in Diyarbakir via discussing a range of services including health care, education, training on sewing and handicrafts, recreational activities, health seminars¸ gender equality awareness workshops, English and Kurdish reading and writing courses, music classes, film screenings, choir, and volleyball tournaments (Pasha, 2018, pp. 25-27). What's noteworthy in a broad range of these projects has been an emphasis on restoring a sense of identity, connectedness, justice and capacity to take care of families through a return to activities that were part of everyday life before ISIS and a widespread exposure to education, trauma-informed care and contact with lawyers, journalists, health care specialists, and academics that contributed to transformation in the community.

4.3. Conclusion

This chapter presented findings on the key themes and discourses in narratives across eight media outlets. Analysis of the data found support for initial observations in this study and conclusions in previous studies. Stories of victimized Yazidi girls and women targeting emotions of the audience to lure them in the media outlet (=profit) and provide justification for a humanitarian, legal or military action (=satisfy ego and

ideological appetite). Another finding concerned the portrayal of Muslim men as barbaric ISIS fighters versus Yazidi men who were victim or rescuer of victim women. Majority of the narratives provided little to no background of the history of Yazidis. Genocide was only viewed through the angle of sexual violence. Despite a growing interest in highlighting or narrating stories of resilience, resistance, empowerment and recovery that informed on skills, resources and capacities at the individual and communal level, most continued to refer oriental and patriarchal discourse hinting old power structures intact. In comparison, narratives in academic outlets suggested that there is hope, strength, and unity as much as pain, loss, and destruction. They outlined a total of nine theme as resources that facilitate the process of raising awareness, challenging norms, brining comfort and solidarity and claiming more agency.

The next chapter will conclude the study by summarizing the key research findings in relation to the research aims and questions. While the strengths of the study will be explored through its value and contribution, limitations will inform and inspire proposing opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This research has set out to understand how ideology, class, ethnicity, culture, and gender-related positions influence the process of storytelling. It has questioned the power dynamics behind reports on genocide by asking (a) to what extent Yazidi women can control the tone and direction of stories about their lived experiences and (b) how oriental and patriarchal discourses remain as a primary source of reference in acquiring knowledge. In connection with these questions, an in-depth investigation was carried out on whose ideas and values receive attention and credit, benefits of perpetuating existing order, outcomes of stereotypes and paradoxes, and discovery of unlocked potentials in narratives.

Feminist standpoint was taken as a guiding philosophy to understand the role of social constructs in dictating norms, explore patterns of patriarchal dominance, uncover hidden text, examine subjective realities, and influence social and political change. Majority of the ideas were borrowed from black feminist thought and postcolonial feminism over demonstration of interconnectedness between different identity categories, diversity of perspectives and experiences, multiple categories of analysis, and acknowledgement of simultaneous existence as victimized and empowered subjects. These two schools of thoughts were also influential in reconsidering a critique of Western ideologies and importance of locating knowledge in Yazidi community.

Several limitations identified throughout the study concerned disadvantages of conducting a qualitative research, longitudinal study design, small sample size, and criterion sampling. The negative aspects of individual decision-making were addressed by discussing the rationale behind each choice, using triangulation,

maintaining reflexivity, and ensuring coherence between research question and methodology.

The second chapter provided information of characteristics of community and brief history of mass atrocities. Turbulent relations between Yazidis and Kurds were evident through the presence of a relatively peaceful dialogue in connection to the shared geography, language, and experiences of oppression accompanied by feelings of mistrust, exploitation, and betrayal. Oral tradition was identified as the most important tool in preserving identity. Women played a key role in the transmission of cultural heritage but did not enjoy access to education and employment other than a few notable examples. The caste system was heavily informed by ritual beliefs and practices, which has absorbed concepts from Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Islam, and Judaism. Social class was broadly defined as a group of people who provide religious teaching and followers of spiritual authorities. Yazidis' worship of Peacock Angel and a series of taboos in oral tradition has been used as a cover for centuries to organize raids, massacres, and genocide.

Strategies of survival varied from isolation to diplomatic contact with tribal leaders and empires. Marginalization of Yazidi community continued during the Ba'ath movement that lasted from late 1940s to 2003. Ethnic minorities were heavily suppressed as part of a campaign to Arabise Iraqi Kurdistan, while feminist circles were crushed by the disproportionate effects of patriarchy, radicalization, and poverty. In the summer months of 2014, these two groups were targeted once again by a militant Islamist group that follows the Salafi jihadist branch of Sunni Islam. The genocide by ISIS involved murder, human trafficking, forced recruitment, and rape among many other gross violations of human rights. Yazidi girls and women shown resistance by converting, pretending illness, changing appearance, committing suicide, and escaping from captivity. The literature provided a detailed analysis of consequences of traumatic experiences as gynecological problems, chronic pelvic, injuries, permanent disabilities, anxiety, fear, shame, guilt, hopelessness, loss of self-esteem, social stigma, withdrawal and isolation, revenge, poverty, loss of livelihood, and disappointment with slow progress in justice.

The following chapter approached to the topic of how genocide is covered in media. It has argued that the commercial and politicized use of traumatized voices and faces has served to legitimize power and control over the Orient. A typical way in consolidating orientalism and patriarchy has been the portrayal of women as victim or exceptional female combatants. Authentic representation of experiences was widely disregarded by limiting focus on cases of sexual violence or stories of bravery with an emphasis on physical appearance. Men and Islam were identified to be treated as root causes of oppression and backwardness. These arguments were confirmed by findings of a range of studied on Yazidi representation in media, which called attention to disrespect for confidentiality, safety, and mental well-being of survivors via promotion of a language based on victimization.

Reliance on resilience in media was particularly criticized due to an overemphasis on individuality and disconnection from reality. Resistance was understood as silent and informal as well as organized acts that can take the shape of consciousness-raising groups, campaigning, advocacy, and protests in feminist movement. Recovery either referred to returning or exceeding previous state of health while empowerment concerned agency and resources in accessing and enjoying opportunities that were previously denied. The operationalization of these concepts formed the basis for a comparison of narratives between media and academia.

This research analyzed subjective views, emotions, opinions, and value systems. An internet search was conducted with key words relevant to the research topic. Sources that were not written in English in a news format with text-heavy outlook were eliminated through criterion sampling. The result was selection of Guardian (left wing), Daily Mail (right wing), VOA (center), Al Monitor (left wing), Rudaw (left wing), Al Jazeera (right), Jinha (left wing), and UNDP news (left wing). All sources had ethical guidelines with majority being previously criticized for producing biased content. A second set of data concerned academic articles, books, policy papers, and theses that evaluated first-hand experiences of Yazidis with the effects of genocide. Feminist and textual analysis was carried out in interrogating meaning, motivation, effect behind words and exposing common representations of women and men that help answer what the text tells us about the real world.

Findings of the research pointed out to dramatization of stories in relation to a silent consensus that stories with tears, violence, and pain or extraordinary braveness are more valuable. Repetition of salacious headlines indicated an implicit power play between the authors and a community of readers. Victimization of women was detected over the use of a highly emotional tone as evidenced by an emphasis on word choices such as sex slave, rape victims, horror and nightmare that attempted to invoke a sense of hopelessness and guilt. The main body of text was almost always reserved for detailed descriptions of age, physical appearance and nature and extent of abuse, threat and sexual violence. Limited focus on the needs, demands, aspirations, motivations and agency of women was accompanied by a neglect of cultural, structural or economic violence. Men were briefly encountered in narratives existing either as evil ISIS militants, victim Yazidis or brave figures who rescue sisters, mothers and wifes. The binary thinking of 'good' versus 'bad', 'victim' versus 'perpetrator', and 'us versus 'them' served to encourage readers to sympathize with the idea of taking a side.

Neither political stance nor strengths of existing guidelines on ethics was detected to make any difference in the tone and style of narratives. Some narratives gave surprising results by providing information on ongoing challenges for Yazidi community. These included social stigma, insufficient amount of data, poverty, identity crisis, and lack of proper means of education. They also touched upon how self-defense, religion, art, women's leadership and movement and livelihoods opportunity can pave the way for resistance, empowerment and healing. Nevertheless, stories of combatant units kept being based on vengeance and commodification of women, whereas examples of leadership and small businesses seemed to favor power structures that victimize women. News not only prevented access to objective, fair and diverse truths, but also failed in delivering injustice. Commercial media and it's monetizable audiences preferred reacting to sufferings but refraining from incorporating solutions of forward-looking mindset in stories.

Academic outlets took a different direction by challenging established understandings around trauma and addressing concerns around visibility, local capacity, evaluation of intervention strategies and improving mental health care provision. They provided a balanced representation of lived experiences by drawing attention to the struggles of

Yazidi women without falling into the trap of caricaturization and romanticization. Initial results confirmed the hypothesis that an exhaustive history of mass atrocities and status as an ethnic minority defined individual and communal dynamics in survival and thriving. The genocide campaign perpetuated by ISIS recalled past experiences of suffering and fostered a sense of connectedness and mobilization to prevent future attacks.

Narratives in articles, books, reports and theses also provided support for the empowering and healing functions of faith. Further resources were identified as self-defense, technology, verbalization, art, social support, reconstruction and livelihoods. Priority of Yazidis were highlighted as rebuilding social relations, truth-telling, locating mass graves, guarantees in preventing systemic violation of human rights, offering psychological, educational and livelihood support in a safe environment, and progress in criminal prosecutions. Self-defense emerged as an important strategy in taking control over own lives and deliver justice. Assuming a role in YJÊ, PKK, YPJ and Asayish has given an opportunity to preserve identity and challenge patriarchal mentality simultaneously. Technological resources were also identified critical in accessing justice, raising awareness and encouraging healing. Majority of the women found verbalization helpful in accessing solidarity, hope, pain, anger and grief. Some resorted to painting or music to express their inner world, while a small number has chosen silence as a therapeutic and political stance. These findings served to demonstrate each individual journey is different and exemplify why one-size-fits-all approaches fail. Yazidis are deeply connected to their ancient homeland, cultural tradition and rituals. Therefore, repairing relations with family, friends, neighbors and communal leaders were found integral to regain a sense of value, respect, trust and hope. Social support from immediate circles complemented efforts of specialized staff in mitigating potential risk factors and identifying avenues for healing.

The findings of this research are important in highlighting how narratives can deteriorate symptoms of trauma at the expense of mobilizing attention and 'securing' aid, justice and security and revealing possibilities of reversing a cycle that reproduces more harm than good. Trauma and growth are central to our everyday existence. The tabloidization or sanctification of these phenomena presents an implicit reality, reproduces a dangerous liaison between knowledge and power and sets surreal

expectations. Following an exposure of narratives that promote victimization, commodification, dehumanization and retraumatization of Yazidi girls and women, this research highlighted urgency in deconstructing oriental and patriarchal discourses via application of a feminist analysis. It has shown the intricate connection between resilience and orientalism and referred to individual and communal strengths as *ordinary magic* in relation to the transformative potential of resources that are rooted in everyday lives. Future research is invited to involve Yazidis in research design by conducting a qualitative study in the field. Remaining questions concern (a) daily interaction between trauma, empowerment and recovery with an emphasis on the linkage between the individual and the communal, (b) coping mechanisms of Yazidis who cannot access resources addressed in this research, (d) accountability mechanisms concerning relation between story providers, journalists and academia and (d) possibilities of observing long-lasting positive transformation in women's empowerment.

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APPENDICES

A. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Yakın zamana kadar Ezidiler hakkında bilinenlerin bir avuç otantik çalışmayı geçmediği tahmin edilmektedir. Ana vatanı Irak Kürdistanı olan bu etnik dizi azınlık grup en fazla dini töre ve gelenekleriyle seyyahlar ve misyonerlere merak konusu olmuş, rekabetçi bölgesel güçlere tarafından ise hedef olarak görülmüştür. Yüzyıllar boyu süregelen yıldırma kampanyalarına karşın kültürünü muhafaza eden Ezidi halkının dönüm noktası Ağustos 2014 olmuştur. Bu tarih itibariyle toplumdaki cinsiyet rolleri ve sınıf ayrımına yönelik katı kurallar esnemiştir. Irak-Şam İslam Devleti'nin (IŞİD) yürüttüğü soykırım kampanyası pek çok din azınlığı ve üyelerini etkilemiştir. her kesimi etkilemiştir. Ancak ataerkil bağlamın olanak sağladığı cinsiyete dayalı şiddet belki en büyük dönüşümün kadınlar tarafından hissedilmesine ve yaşanmasına neden olmuştur. Kamusal alanda görünürlük kazanmak adına kullanılan en efektif araçlardan biri medya olarak göze çarpmıştır. Haber siteleri tarafından yayınlanan içerikler uluslararası çapta ilgi toplayarak adalet arayışını hızlandırmış, farkındalık yaratmış ve kadınları barış ve çatışmanın ana aktörlerden biri haline getirme sürecini desteklemiştir. Aynı zamanda oryantal ve ataerkil söylemleri tekrarlayan dinamiklerin tanımlanması etik standartlardan bağımsız işleyen bir sektörün varlığına ilişkin eleştirilerin çoğalmasını beraberinde getirmiştir.

Yukarıdaki bağlamdan yola çıkarak haber içeriklerinin arkasındaki yazar ve okuyucuların 'öteki' olarak tasvir edilenlerin travmatik yaşam deneyimlerine nasıl yaklaştığı temel araştırma konusu olarak belirlenmiştir. Anlatılar, günlük hayatta gerçeklikleri oluşturma görevi üstlendiğinden düşünceleri, seçimleri ve eylemleri etkilemektedir. Normlar, değer yargıları, ideolojiler, etnisite ve cinsiyete dayalı pozisyonlar çeşitli söylemlerin kökenlerini oluşturmaktadır. Paylaşılan hikayeler, deneyimler ve mitler insanlık tarihinin bir parçasını oluşturmakta ve geleceğe ışık tutmaktadır. Her metin içerinde yer alan üstü kapalı mesajlar temsil edilen ve yok

sayılan birey ve gruplar işaret etmektedir. İnsan deneyiminin karmaşıklığını derinlemesine inceleme fırsatı sunmanın ötesinden benzersiz bakış açıları yakalanmaktadır. Desen kalıplarının ve paradoksların detaylandırılması öznel gerçekliklere vurgu yapmakta, çelişen pratikleri anlamlandırılmakta ve sosyal ile siyasi dönüşümün yaşanabileceği potansiyel yolları belirlemektedir.

Araştırmada kullanılan temel teoriler oryantalizm ve feminizm olmuştur. İlk teori akıl/duygu, gelişmiş/az gelişmiş, üstün/değersiz, ilerleyen/değişmeyen, heterojen/homojen, adil aile ilişkileri/köleler, düzen/kaos ve batılı/doğulu gibi ikili düşünce yapısının hâkim olduğu anlatılarla ilişkilendirilmiştir. Dil bazında inceleme Doğu kültürleri, toplumları ve insanlarına ait Batı perspektifini gözler önüne sermiştir. Geçmişteki ilişkileri anlamaya yardımcı olan oryantalizm, günümüzdeki kültürel, siyasi ve ekonomik bağlantıları anlamlandırmak için de işlevli bir araç olarak karşımıza çıkmıştır. Siyasi ve sosyal ilişkiler üzerine eleştirel bir çerçevenin ele alınması stereotipileri ortadan kaldırmak, önyargıları kırmak, dünya görüşünü ve felsefeyi zenginleştirmek ve saygın ile objektif bilgi üretimi için kilit rol oynamıştır. Medya çalışmalarında oryantalizme sıklıkla eşlik ettiği görülen feminist dalga içerisinde spesifik olarak siyah feminist düşünce ve post kolonyal feminist teoriden esinlenilmiştir. Bu tercihin belirlenmesinde farklı perspektif ve deneyimlerin kabul görmesine yönelik argüman ve çoklu kimliklere bulunan atıf yer almıştır. Feminist teori kapsamında kullanılan temel kavramlar ataerkillik, güç, ayrıcalık, eylemlilik, hiyerarşi, görünürlük, temsil, sosyal kimlikler, roller, sorumluluklar ve kesişimsellik olmuştur. Bu kavramlar kadınların toplumsal, siyasi, ekonomik ve kültürel olarak eşit hak ve fırsatlar sahip olmasının önündeki engeller ve potansiyelleri anlamlandırmak için kullanılmıştır. Feminizm kapsayıcı, eşitlikçi ve adil bir toplumun oluşumunu desteklemek adına sosyal normlar ve yapıları sorgulattığı gibi aşağıdan yukarıya bilinçlenme hareketi ve bilginin geri kazandırılmasıyla da ilişkilenmiştir.

Araştırmanın başında Ezidilerin günlük hayatına dair bilgiler toplayarak geçmiş ile günümüz arasında süregelen ve uyum sağlayan kimlik öğeleri hakkında köprü kurulmasına öncelik verilmiştir. Böylece ilerleyen bölümlerde tartışılacak olan anahtar kavramlar ve olaylar için bağlam hazırlanmıştır. Zerdüştlük, Hristiyanlık, İslam ve Yahudilikten beslenerek ortaya çıkan Yazidizm dini kast sistemine dayalı toplumsal sınıfın oluşturulmasında kilit rol oynamıştır. Bu sınıfları oluşturan temel unsurlar

siyasi liderler, dini öğretiler sağlayan figürler ve geniş halk kesimi olarak tanımlanmıştır. Kadınlar tipik olarak sözlü geleneğin gelecek nesillerle aktarılması yoluyla ön plana çıkabilmiştir. Bunun en yaygın örneklerinden biri dini ritüeller olmuştur. Ancak eğitim ve istihdam konusunda eşit olanaklara sahip olunamamıştır. İbadetlerinin siyasi hırslar ve ekonomik rekabet adına bilinçli veya mistik öğelerin yorumu üzerinden bilinçsiz olarak çarpıtılması nedeniyle tarih boyunca 74 soykırıma maruz kalan Ezidiler kimliklerini muhafaza etmek için izolasyondan diplomatik temaslar kurmaya kadar farklı hayatta kalma stratejileri izlemiştir. Irak Kürdistan'ın oluşumu sonrasında ortak coğrafya, dil ve zulüm deneyimleri gibi faktörler göreceli olarak barışçıl bir ortamının gelişmesine zemin hazırlamıştır. Ancak siyaset, güvenlik ve kimlik üçgeninde sömürü, ihanet ve şüphe gibi duyguların varlığı süregelmiştir.

Ezidilerin hedef alındığı son soykırım kampanyasında açlık, susuzluk, kölelik, taciz, cinsel istismar, zorla askere alma ve işkenceyi kapsayan bir dizi insanlık dışı eylem gerçekleşmiştir. Milyonlarca insan yerinden edilmiş ve mülteci olarak yaşamaya başlamıştır. Süreçte çocukların ve kadınların yaşantıları uluslararası toplumda büyük yankı uyandırmıştır. Haber içerikleri Ezidiler ile gerçekleştirilen temas sonucu soykırımın hatlarını detaylı bir şekilde ortaya çıkarmıştır. Bir yandan da akademik literatür zenginleşmiş ve travmatik deneyimlerin sonuçları olan jinekolojik sorunlar, kronik pelvik yaralanmalar, kalıcı engellilikler, kaygı, korku, utanç, suçluluk, umutsuzluk, özsaygı kaybı, toplumsal damgalanma, izolasyon, intikam, yoksulluk, geçim kaybı ve adaletin yavaş ilerlemesi gibi konulara dair ayrıntılı bir analiz sunmuştur. Birtakım araştırmalar direniş stratejilerine örnek olarak fiziksel deformasyon, hastalık taklidi, intihar ve esaretten kaçmayı örnek vermiştir. Ancak kadınların tarihsel perspektif içerisinde şiddeti nasıl tanımladığı ve güç dinamikleriyle günlük etkileşiminden doğan çeşitli reaksiyonlara dair yeterli sayıda çalışma yapılmamıştır.

Takip eden bölümde geniş çapta bir literatür taraması yapılarak 'öteki' olarak konumlandırılan insanların soykırıma ilişkin deneyimlerinin medyada nasıl ele alındığına odaklanılmıştır. Travmatize olmuş ses ve yüzlerin ticari ve siyasi kullanıma dikkat çeken bu bölümde güç temasına değinilmiştir. Alanında önde gelen araştırmaların ortak kanısı oryantalist ve ataerkil bakış açısının konsolidasyonu için 'öteki' kadınların sıklıkla mağdur veya olağanüstü dişi savaşçılar spektrum içinde yer

alan tasvirler içinde rastlanması olarak not edilmiştir. Fiziksel şiddet vakaları ve eşi benzersiz cesaret hikayeleri arasında gidip gelen anlatılarda kadınların dayanakları, endişeleri, arzuları ve motivasyonları göz ardı edilmiştir. Erkeklere ancak baskı ve şiddetin açıklamasına inmek söz konusu olduğunda yer verilmiştir. Gerçeklerin çarpıtılması ve gizlenmesi yoluyla 'biz-onlar' ve 'öteki' kavramları ortaya çıkmıştır. Algı operasyonun bir sonucu olarak sahteliğe dayalı düşünce ve ilişkiler ile eski güç dinamikleri yenilendiği gibi travma geçiren insanların zihinsel sağlığı ve güvenliği riske atılarak güveni zedelenmiştir.

Araştırmanın temelini oluşturan merak unsurlarından biri geleneksel anlatıların dışına çıkmak olmuştur. Bu anlamda dayanıklılık, direnç, güçlendirme ve iyileşme konseptlerinin zaman içinde nasıl tanımladığına ve kimlere uygulandığına değinilmiştir. Araştırmanın başında travmatik olaylar sonrası birey ve toplum bazında normal yaşama geri dönme veya büyümeyi tanımlamak adına dayanıklılık referans alınmıştır. Ancak post kolonyal teori dayanıklılığın romantikleştirme, egzotikleştirme, yanıltma ve gerçeklikten koparma potansiyeli konusunda ufuk açıcı bir uyarı sunmuştur. Bu doğrultuda dayanıklılık oryantal veya ataerkil söylemler içinde var olabilecek bir kavram olarak esas alınmıştır. Direniş kavramı Ezidilerin IŞID beraberinde toplamda 74 Firman'a karşı koyması ile doğrudan ilişkili bulunmuştur. Özellikle yapısal şiddet altında geliştirilen direniş taktiklerinin sessiz ve gayri resmî boyutlarına değinilmiştir. Feminist çalışmalar bu taktiklere örnek olarak bilinç yükseltme grupları, kampanyalar, savunuculuk ve protestolar vermiştir. İyileşme ve güçlendirme son derece yakın kavramlar olarak tespit edilmiştir. İlki spesifik olarak sağlık durumununda kaydedilen normale dönüş veya gelişmeye işaret etmektedir. Güçlendirme ise daha kapsamlı bir bakış açısı getirerek siyaset, adalet, ekonomi, teknoloji, beden ve zihin sağlığı ve eğitim gibi dallara eğilmiştir. Gerek direniş gerek iyileşme ve güçlendirme için temelde kaynakların içeriği, erişim, özgürlük ve bilinç gibi noktaların önemi göz önüne serilmiştir.

Nitel araştırma yöntemi ve yorumlayıcı yaklaşımın belirlenmesinin ardından örneklemin tanımlanmasına ilişkin bir grup anahtar kelime belirlenmiştir. Bunlar Ezidi (kadın, erkek), soykırım, kurban, adalet, direniş, iyileşme ve savaşçı şeklinde ifade edilmiştir. İnternet üzerinden tespit edilen haber kaynakları arasında İngilizce olmayanlar elenmiştir. Formatın yazı olmasına dikkat edilmesine ilaveten toplanan

verilerin kapsayıcılığını maksimize etmek üzere farklı ideoloji, kuruluş amacı, coğrafi mevcudiyet ve uzmanlık iddia edilen konuları içeren sitelerin hesaba katılmasına dikkat edilmiştir. Sonuç olarak Guardian (sol kanat), Daily Mail (sağ kanat), VOA (merkez), Al Monitor (sol kanat), Rudaw (sol kanat), Al Jazeera (sağ kanat), Jinha (sol kanat) ve UNDP (sol kanat) haber siteleri seçilmiştir. Tüm kaynaklarda gazetecilikte etiğe dair temel kuralların sıralandığı rehber not edilmiştir. Ancak pek çoğu sitenin önyargılı ve kışkırtıcı içerik üretmekle eleştirildiği dikkat çekmiştir. Bu manada 2014'den günümüze dek Ezidilerin deneyimine ilişkin anlatılarda süregelen ve farklılaşan pratiklerin keşfedilmesi çalışmanın önemli bir boyutunu oluşturmuştur. Akademik makaleler, kitaplar, politika belgeleri, raporlar ve tezler veri toplanan ikinci bir grubu temsil etmiştir. Ağırlıklı olarak Google Scholar, Academia, Semantic Scholar, ResearchGate. JSTOR, PsycARTICLES, SAGE Journals, Science Direct, Taylor & Francis (Informaworld), ve PubMed Central isimli veri tabanları ve dergilerde yayınlanan çalışmalar incelenmiştir. Akademik yayınlarda farklılaşan tutum, odak noktası, dilin kullanımı, karakterler ve metotlar hikâye anlatımı ve etik uygulamalara ilişkin karşılaştırma yapılmasına vesile olmuştur. Böylece anlatıların mutlak potansiyeli gözler önüne serilmiştir.

Metin ve söylem analizinin bir arada uygulanması toplanan verinin anlamlandırılma aşamasında kapsamlı bir inceleme yapılmasına olanak sağlamıştır. Metin analizi cümle ve paragraflarda kelime seçimi, cümle yapısı, dilbilgisi, yazım kuralları ve anlama odaklanarak vurgulanan noktaların ve tekrarlanan tema ve desenlerin tespit edilmesini içermiştir. Böylece egemen ifadeler ve düşünceler üzerine kavrayış geliştirilmiştir. Söylem analizi dilin sosyal bağlamda kullanımını inceleyerek metindeki gizli olanı ortaya çıkarmaya ve günlük hayattaki güç ilişkilerinin nasıl inşa edildiğine dair fikir sunmuştur. Anlatılarda sık karşılaşılan kadın ve erkek portreleri ile meşrulaştırmaya çalışan mesajlar tartışılmıştır. Böylece metnin anlamı, işlevi, amacı ve etkisine yönelik ipuçları gözler önüne serilmiştir. Toplumun değerleri, normları, inançları ve sosyal yapılarına dair sosyal, kültürel, siyasi ve psikolojik bağlam oluşturulmuştur. Güç dengelerinin sorgulanması söylemlerin nasıl oluşturulduğu ve kimliklerin nasıl temsil edildiğine ilişkin iletişimin anlamı ve etkisine dair deri bir kavrayış sunmuştur. Böylece mesajın hangi toplumsal grubu hedef aldığı ve hangi ideolojileri desteklediği açıklanmıştır.

Araştırmada yer alan başlıca sınırlamalar nitel araştırma yönteminin uygulanması olarak tespit edilmiştir. Özellikle küçük örneklemin sunduğu sınırlı genelleme, araştırmacının önyargı ve görüşlerine dair rolü ve zaman ile kaynak ihtiyacı nedeniyle çeşitli dezavantajlar göze çarpmıştır. Bu dezavantajların üstesinden gelmek adına yeni bilgiyle karşılaşılan her aşamada yansıma ve üçgenleme yöntemi kullanılmış, öznel seçimler tartışmaya sunulmuş, argümanlar, teoriler ve yöntemler arasındaki tutarlılığa dikkat edilmiş ve olabildiğince farklı yaşantılara dair portreler sunabilecek çalışmalar incelenmiştir. Bahsedilen stratejilere ek olarak araştırma öznelerini yeniden travmatize etmemek adına dilin kullanımına ve hassas bilgilerin paylaşımına dikkat edilmiştir. Önde gelen etik kaygılardan biri haberlerde veya akademik yayınlarda ismi geçen Ezidilerin tekrarlanıp tekrarlanmaması sorunsalı olmuştur. Kamuoyunda tanınmış figürler olmadıkları sürece katılımcıların mağdur, hayatta kalan, görüşülen veya yanıt veren olarak adlandırılmasına karar verilmiştir. Ayrıca toplumun geleneksel yapısına saygı duyan ve cinsiyet eşitliği alanında toplumsal dönüşümü destekleyen bir dilin kullanılmasına özen gösterilmiştir.

Araştırma bulguları haber sitelerinde gözyaşı, şiddet, acı ya da olağanüstü cesaret içeren anlatıların daha değerli olduğuna dair algıyı gözler önüne sermiştir. Dramatize edilmiş ve provokatif başlıklar tekrarlı olarak Ezidi kadınlarını seks kölesi veya tecavüz kurbanı olarak resmetmiştir. Böylece okuyucunun kafasında yer alan ‘doğrular’ sistematik biçimde onaylanmaya çalışılmıştır. Metnin ana bölümünde genellikle istismar, tehdit ve cinsel şiddetin doğası ve boyutuna ilişkin ayrıntılı açıklamalara yer verilmiştir. Deneyimlerini paylaşan Ezidilerin fiziksel görünümleri ve yaşı paylaşılmış, isimleri çoğunlukla gizlenmiş olsa da bazen açıkça verilmiştir. Kültürel, yapısal veya ekonomik şiddete dair gerçeklikler tablodan silinmiştir. Erkekler ya kötü IŞID militanları ya mağdur Ezidiler ya da kız kardeşleri, anneleri ve eşleri kurtaran cesur figürler olarak kısa süreli görünürlük kazanmıştır. Anlatılarda sık sık ‘iyi’ ile 'kötü' ve 'mağdur' ile 'suçlu' gibi zıt kutupları içeren kısıtlayıcı bir bakış açısı işlenmiştir. Böylece okuyucuların taraf tutması ve açıkça ahlaki olarak doğru olan yönde aksiyon alması hedeflenmiştir. Anlatılar yeterince üzücü olmadığı takdirde dikkat çekmeyeceği, dolayısıyla maddi kazanç veya insani yardım ve adalet gibi konular etrafında mobilizasyon sağlayamayacağına dair hakim bir inanış mevcut bulunmuştur.

Bazı anlatılarda Ezidi toplumun karşılaştığı güncel zorluklara ilişkin bilgi vermiştir. Bunlar arasında sosyal damgalama, yetersiz veri, yoksulluk, kimlik krizi ve uygun eğitim olanaklarının eksikliği gibi konular yer almıştır. Haber kaynaklarından toplanan veriler sonuncunda ortaya çıkan en ilgi çekici sonuçlardan biri savunma, din, sanat, kadın liderliği ve hareketi ile geçim olanaklarının direniş, güçlenme ve iyileşme için yol açabileceği konulara değinilmiş olmasıdır. Bu temalara değinen anlatılarda toplumda var olan unsurların verdiği güce ilaveten yeni gözlemlenen olgular üzerinden gelişen dayanışmanın ve mücadele ruhunun altı çizilmiştir. Bir yandan savaşta yer alan kadınlara dair hikayeler intikama odaklanmaktan öteye gidememiştir. Anlatılarda kadınların fiziksel görünüşüne detaylı şekilde yer verilmeye devam edilmiştir. Mücadele ruhu yeni bir olgu olarak pazarlanmıştır. Egzotik kadın savaşçılar anlatısı sözde Ezidilerin eylemliğini onaylamıştır. Liderlik ve örgütlenme gücüne dair anlatılar haber içeriklerini zenginleştirmiş ve Ezidi toplumundaki dönüşüm noktalarından birine işaret etmiştir. Ancak içeriklerde kurban anlatısı işlenmeye devam etmiştir. Geçim kaynakları ile ilgili içerikler belki en az rastlanan tematik alanlardan biri olmuştur. Bu araştırmada incelenen içerikler kadınların küçük işletme sahibi olmaları üzerinden geliştirdikleri başa çıkma ve koruma mekanizmalarına değinmiştir. Terzilik ve gıda üretimi gibi dalları içeren küçük işletmelerle ilgili en büyük endişelerden biri geleneksel güç kalıplarını yıkmaya yönelik efor sarf edilmemesi olmuştur. Ataerkil ve savaş çalkantısı içinde olan toplumlarda kadınların çeşitli profesyonel kollarda ve yüksek pozisyonlarda temsil edilmesi hayli zor bulunmaktadır. Ancak geçim sağlamak üzere negatif veya geleneksel mekanizmalara başvurulmasının olumlu olarak okunması sorunsallaştırılmalıdır.

Farklı ideolojik görüşler ve etik rehberler anlatıların tonu, tarzı ve ana mesajı hakkında herhangi bir fark yaratmamıştır. 7/24 kurban ve egzotik savaşçılar arasında gidip gelinen anlatılar aynı zamanda 2014'ten günümüze dek süregelmiştir. Ancak eril dili yapı söküm'e uğratmayı öncelik ve misyon haline getirmiş olan ve yerel gazeteci ve aktivistlerden oluşan Jin haber deneysel bir çalışma sürdürebilmiştir. Bunun haricinde medya kanallarının acıya karşı tepki yaratma ötesinde bir efor kaydetmediği görülmüştür. Anlatılarında hiçbirinde çözüm sunulmamış veya ileriye dönük düşünce tarzı görülmemiştir. Adaleti sağlamak için başvurulan kaynaklar nesnel, adil ve farklı gerçekliklere erişimi engellemekle sınırlı kalmadığı gibi Ezidi toplumunu travmatize etmiştir. Önyargılı temsiller, kültürel çarpıtma ve olumsuz ve basmakalıp portreler

içeren oryantalizm medya yoluyla yayılmış ve kökleşmiştir. Doğu ötekileştirilir ve yabancılaştırılırken Batı'nın üstünlüğü vurgulanmıştır. Medya aynı zamanda toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine dair yaygın inanışları pekiştirmiştir. Farkındalık yaratma ve toplumsal değişimi teşvik etme potansiyeline sahip olan medya kadınların başarı hikayelerine yer vermemiş ve cinsiyet temelli sorunlarda onları cinsel objeler olarak resmedip stereotipik rollerin dışına çıkarmamıştır. Bireysel yetenekler, güçler ve motivasyonlar göz ardı edilmiştir. Bu araştırmada feminist ve oryantal teorinin uygulanması (a) kadınların iyileşmesi ve güçlendirilmesi ile kadın hakları konularının gündeme getirilmesi, (b) normların sorgulanması, (c) önyargıların kırılması ve (d) egzotik, gizemli, kurban, farklı ve geri kalmış temsillere meydan okunması açısından önem arz etmiştir.

Haber içeriklerine kontrast olarak akademik yayınlarda travma hakkındaki yerleşik anlayışlar sorgulanmıştır. Çalışmalar özellikle travma boyunca ve sonrasında kadınların görünürlüğü, yerel kapasitenin geliştirilmesi, kültürel dönüşümler ve müdahale stratejilerinin değerlendirilmesine eğilmiştir. Genel anlamda kaynaklar barış ve çatışma, travma, göç, sosyal hizmet, antropoloji, din, sağlık, kimlik, adalet, toplumsal cinsiyet ve tarih konularına değinmiştir. Yaşanmış deneyimlerin dengeli bir temsili sunularak Ezidi kadınlarının karşılaştığı zorluklar ve verdiği mücadelelere dikkat çekilmiştir. Böylece çeşitli alanlarda hayat kalitesini iyileştirmeye yarayacak politika önerilerinin temeli hazırlanmıştır.

Makalelerde, kitaplarda, raporlarda ve tezlerde yer alan anlatılardan elde edilen ilk sonuçlar neticesinde tarih boyunca süregelen soykırımların ve etnik bir azınlık olarak yaşamanın hayatta kalma ve adapte olma süreçlerinde belirleyici rol oynadığını doğrulamıştır. IŞİD tarafından gerçekleştirilen son soykırım kampanyası beraberinde geçmişte yaşanan acı deneyimler hatırlanmış ve gelecekteki saldırıları önlemek adına birlik ve beraberlik hissiyatı oluşmuştur. Bir yandan kadınlar topluma entegre oluyormuş hissiyatı verilirken diğer yandan toplumsal dönüşümün önde gelen aktörleri olduğu görülmüştür. Şiddetin tarihsel birikimi ve kümülatif deneyimi üzerine 74. Ferman'ın toplumda şok etkisi yaratarak tabuları yıktığına şahit olunmuştur. Bu etkinin ne kadar uzun soluklu olduğuna dair cevabın saha araştırmasında aranması tavsiye edilmiştir. Tarihsel süreç ve sosyal statü kadar önemli olan bir diğer unsur Yezidizm inancı olmuştur. Röportajlarda Ezidiler dinin güçlendirici ve iyileştirici

işlevleri konusunda hemfikir olmuşlardır. Ritüeller hem aidiyet duygusunu pekiştirmiş hem de duyguların aktarılmasına vesile olmuş ve hoşgörüyü arttırmıştır. Bunun yanı sıra savunma, teknoloji, sözlü ifade, sanat, sosyal destek, rekonstrüksiyon ve geçim kaynaklarıdestekleyici faktörler olarak keşfedilmiştir. Ezidilerin öncelikleri arasında sosyal ilişkileri yeniden inşa etmek, gerçekleri açığa çıkarmak, toplu mezarlara ulaşmak, insan haklarının sistematik ihlalini önlemeye yönelik güvenceler sağlamak, psikolojik, eğitim ve geçim desteği sunmak ve davalarda ilerlemek ortaya çıkmıştır. Savunma kadınların kendi hayatları üzerinde kontrol sağlayabilmesi ve adaleti teslim etmesi için önemli bir strateji olarak yer almıştır. YJÊ, PKK, YPJ ve Asayiş'te rol almak aynı anda kimlikleri korumak ve ataerkil düşünceyi sorgulamak ve sorgulamak adına fırsat vermiştir. Teknolojik kaynakların önemi farkındalığı arttırmak, sesini duyurmak ve iyileşmeyi teşvik etmek üzerinden görülmüştür. Kadınların çoğunluğu dayanışma, umut, acı, öfke ve üzüntüye erişim için teknolojinin kilit bir rol oynadığı sözlü ifadenin yardımcı olduğunu belirtmiştir. Bazıları iç dünyasını ifade etmek için resim yapmaya veya müziğe başvururken, küçük bir grup siyasi ve terapi odaklı bir duruş olarak sessiz kalmayı seçmiştir. Bu bulgular, her bireysel yolculuğun farklı olduğunu ve tek tip yaklaşımların hayatları iyileştirmede neden başarısız olduğunu kanıtlamıştır. Öte yandan, toprağına, kültürel geleneklerine ve ritüellerine derin bağlar hisseden Ezidi toplumunun hemen her üyesi için aile, arkadaş, komşu ve topluluk liderleriyle ilişkileri düzeltmenin değer, saygı, güven ve umudu yeniden kazanmak için hayati olduğu belirlenmiştir. Yakın çevreden gelen sosyal destek ve uzman kadroların çabaları beraberinde potansiyel risk faktörleri hafifletilmekte ve iyileşme yolları keşfedilmektedir.

Travma ve büyüme insan varoluşunun merkezindedir. Medyada bu olguların sansasyonel hale getirilmesi veya kutsanması, bilgi, deneyim ve güç arasında var olan tehlikeli ilişki türlerini yeniden üreterek dünyanın işleyişine dair yanıltıcı lensler sunduğu gibi günlük düşünce ve aksiyonlarımızı zehirlemektedir. Bu araştırma feminist ve oryantal teoriden yardım alarak anlatıların insani yardım, adalet ve güvenliği güvence altına alma serüveninde travma belirtilerini kötüleştirebileceği gibi döngüyü tersine çevirebileceğine dair olasılıklar ve yöntemler gözler önüne serilmiştir. Bir yandan kurban ve ‘özgürleşmiş’ savaşçı temalarını içeren hikayeler mümkünken, diğer yandan objektif, insan onurunu koruyan ve farklı gerçeklikleri yansıtabilen bilgi üretiminin mümkün olduğu kanıtlanmıştır. Hikâye anlatım teknikleri ve etik

uygulamalar bakımından medya ve akademi arasındaki uçurum gözler önüne serilmiştir. Oryantal ve ataerkil söylemlerin çözümlenmesi için gereken aciliyet vurgulanmıştır. Araştırma sadece güç dinamiklerini sergilemek ile kalmamış ancak Ezidilerin sesini yükseltmek ve tarihlerini geri kazandırmak amacıyla direniş, iyileşme ve güçlendirme temalarına da değinmiştir. Böylece halihazırda var olan alternatif anlatıların rol model alınabileceğine dair görüş ortaya koyulmuştur.

Travma boyunca veya sonrasında gösterilen direniş, iyileşme ve güçlendirme dönüştürücü potansiyeli nedeniyle umut aşılamaktadır. Bir yandan da süreci destekleyen inanç, sosyal destek, teknoloji, sanat, savunma ve daha araştırmada adı geçen daha nice kaynakların günlük hayat içinde bulunuyor olması sebebiyle realist bir yaklaşım söz konusudur. Bu nedenle Ezidi örneğinden yola çıkarak dayanıklılık yerine 'sıradan sihir' kavramının kullanılmasına karar verilmiştir. Araştırma sonuçlarının öncelikli amacı güncel hikâye pratiklerini sorgulayarak ve reform potansiyelini tespit ederek daha adil ve eşit bir dünyanın gelişmesine katkı sağlamak olmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra Ezidilerin ve Ezidilerin yaşamlarını iyileştirmeye yönelik program tasarlayıcı ve uygulayıcıların sahadaki düşünce, tutum, davranış ve stratejilere yönelik yansıma içine girmeleri beklenmiştir. Araştırmanın temelinde Ezidilerden ilham alınmış ancak benzer yaşam öykülerine sahip kadınların rehber niteliğinde başvurabileceği bir kaynak geliştirilmesi umut edilmiştir. Böylece kadın hakları üzerine diyalog için platform ve yeni fikirler sunulmaya çalışılmıştır.

Gelecekte yürütülecek olan akademik çalışmaların Ezidileri araştırma sürecine dahil etmek için sahada nitel bir çalışma yürütmeye davet edilmiştir. Bu bağlamda incelenmesi gereken konular arasında (a) birey ve toplum arasındaki bağlantı üzerinden travma, iyileşme ve güçlendirme arasındaki günlük etkileşim, (b) kaynaklara ulaşamayan Ezidilerin başa çıkma mekanizmaları, (c) hikaye sağlayıcılar, gazeteciler ve akademisyenler arasındaki ilişkilere yönelik hesap verebilirlik mekanizmaları ve (d) kadınların güçlendirilmesinde uzun vadeli olumlu dönüşümü gözlemleme yer almaktadır.

B. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU

ENSTİTÜ / INSTITUTE

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YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname : ACAR
Adı / Name : Işınsu
Bölümü / Department : Orta Doğu Araştırmaları / Middle East Studies

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