Hosting Overnight Guests: Gendered Unpaid Work as a Solidarity Mechanism of Migrants in the Process of Urbanization in Turkey

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This article addresses overnight guest hosting, which is a widespread solidarity practice among rural-to-urban migrants in Turkey. The fieldwork, based on in-depth interviews with 28 first-generation migrant women, reveals that it was mostly the young migrant women who shouldered hosting tasks as gendered unpaid work, which deepen their time poverty and reinforce their dependence on family. The analysis highlights the links between intersectional disadvantages of young migrant women and poverty, the failure of the welfare state to provide social assistance for migrants, and the familialist character of social policy during the peak years of migration.

Introduction

E: Who else stayed long-term [with you]?

A: For example . . . [a young man] stayed for a season. He studied engineering. People are poor . . . They do not have enough means. They can't rent a house. Dormitories are not enough. Where will these people go? . . .

E: Did you invite them?

A: No, they usually came by themselves because our name was heard. They come under the pretext of staying for a few days. Of course, because they do not have any place to go, we eventually say, "stay along". For example, we have a relative, a teacher. His daughter got

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accepted to the medical school. Six months. At the time, I had ten male students in the apartment. And she was the only girl. I had her stay in my bedroom. Then six months later, her parents moved to İstanbul ... Most of them were [university] students. For example, ... [a close relative of her husband, a young man]. I took care of him for four years ...

E: So, they are adults. They were old enough to take care of themselves. Did you take care of them, cook their food, wash their clothes?

A: Only ... [a young man]. He washed his underwear and socks himself. He was ashamed to hang them. "Aslı could you hang these" he would say. Other than that I washed everything. For a while with my hands, then we got a roller washing machine.

E: Did you also cook the meals?

A: Of course. I did everything. Everything.

E: Did they make their own beds?

A: One day my brother-in-law did this. The living room was full of beds. He said to the young people, he laid down a rule: No one will get out of the bed and stay with their pajamas. Everyone will get dressed and get out of the room. When you get up in the morning everyone will fold the bed sheets and put them aside.

E: Were you doing that until then?

A: Until then I was doing it. After the rule, they folded bed sheets/ mattresses and put them aside. Then I carried the mattresses to my bedroom because I had no place to sit [in the living room]. (Aslı, July 2019, Balıkesir)[1]

Aslı (68) hosted and—in her words—took care of [baktım] dozens of student guests in their two-bedroom İstanbul apartment from the 1970s until the end of 1980s alongside her husband and three children. Her labor-intensive hosting work—including cooking and serving food, washing dishes, washing guests' clothes, sewing mattresses, making guests' beds, sewing quilt covers, washing sheets, ironing, and cleaning—has not been remunerated or even counted as work although such services require considerable time and effort and are established as paid services in other contexts. The guests were all from her spouse's village in Artvin—a relatively deprived region of the country. Some of the guests stayed for a few months, others stayed longer until they graduated.

The experience of Aslı is an example of a widespread practice among rural-to-urban migrant households in Turkey: overnight guest hosting. During the divergent and gradual processes of internal migration, having a free place to

stay in the city has affected people's migration decisions, conditions, and timing. Some rural households utilized this opportunity and invested in the future by sending their children to stay with a relative or acquaintance in the metropolitan areas. Some had the chance to stay with acquaintances while looking for jobs and/or to save up money until they were ready to move on independently. Some others benefited from being guests in the city in order to reach urban services such as healthcare whenever needed and were able to postpone their migration to a more suitable time. In this sense, hosting overnight guests is not only a form of gendered unpaid work but also an act of solidarity among migrants in the context of uneven distribution of public services, regional and rural–urban income imbalances, and inadequacy of formal social protection mechanisms for the poor in Turkey.

In the past decades, academic studies on rural–urban migration have also focused on migrant solidarity and explored the ways in which migrants used their social networks effectively and retained their hopes for upward mobility especially before the turn of the twenty-first century (Buğra and Keyder 2003; Kalaycıoğlu and Rittersberger-Tılıç 2000; Pınarcıoğlu and Işık 2008; Saraçoğlu 2010). The scholarship in the area argued for the vitality of effective migrant social networks for new migrants. Yet, the research on migrants' solidarity concentrated mainly on public space, i.e., collaborations in the job market, business partnerships, collaboration for building houses, and social solidarity organizations like *hemşehri* (fellow countrymen) associations (Akgiş and Karadaş 2018; Ayata 2008; Caymaz 2005; Erder 2002; Genç 2017; Işık and Pınarcıoğlu 2012; Kalaycıoğlu 2006; Kurtoğlu 2005).

Concurrently, the research on women's urban lives in Turkey has provided data on home-oriented routines of first-generation migrant women and their low levels of labor force participation, especially in the peak periods of rural–urban migration between the 1960s and 1990s (Dedeoğlu 2013; Ecevit 2003; Erman 1998). The vast majority of urban women are still prone to poverty as dependents on their families and their paid work is concentrated in precarious, flexible, or home-oriented jobs in the informal sector without legally secured employment rights (Dayıoğlu and Kırdar 2010; Dedeoğlu 2007; İlkkaracan 2012; Kümbetoğlu, User, and Akpınar 2010; Öneş, Memiş, and Kızılırmak 2013; White 2004). A number of studies that analyzed migrant women's home-oriented urban lives and low participation in the formal labor market have already pointed to some major factors such as (i) social/ patriarchal norms and honor code that limit women's mobility and interactions with strangers (Erman 1996, 1997, 2001; Erman, Kalaycıoğlu, and Rittersberger-Tılıç 2002); (ii) women's disadvantaged position in the labor market and in labor laws (Ecevit 2007; Erman 1997; Karadeniz 2011; Zeytinoğlu 1993); (iii) the specific ways in which Turkey has been integrated into global capitalism, the prevalence of house-based piecework, and small-scale family businesses (Balaban and Sarıoğlu 2008; Çınar 1994; Dedeoğlu 2007; Hattatoğlu 2011; Hattatoğlu and Tate 2016; White 2004); and (iv)

unequal intra-household allocation and intensification of unpaid household tasks (Bora 2005; İlkkaracan 2012; Memiş, Öneş, and Kızılırmak 2012; Öneş, Memiş, and Kızılırmak 2013; Özyegin 2010). In the past decades, researchers have also begun to understand the ways in which families retain their networks in urban settings together with women's role in this through proper guest hosting in women's daytime gatherings, dinner parties, and post-dinner gatherings (Ekal 2006; Kandiyoti 1977; Özbay 1999).

On the one hand, as the research on rural-to-urban migrants focused on solidarity practices in the market and housing by treating households as units of analysis, it lacked the perspective to assess intra-household inequalities and contributions of women's hosting work to the migration process. Women's guest-hosting labor and its role in retaining social networks have not received much attention within this literature. On the other hand, the literature on gender and labor in Turkey has provided rich data on migrant women's home-oriented urban lives, intensification of household tasks in urban settings, and network-building/retaining responsibilities, yet without a specific focus on their guest hosting tasks in their houses. The aim of the article is to bridge these two traditions and to address these gaps through an analysis of the hosting labor as an unpaid gendered form of work within the process of migration.

This is a qualitative study based on in-depth interviews with 28 first-generation migrant women in Turkey, who have hosted short-term and long-term overnight guests. Fieldwork data illustrate that the participants' gendered unpaid hosting labor has contributed to the well-being of their guests by alleviating their conditions and enabling their access to citizenship rights such as healthcare, education, and work. In this sense, the practice functions as a form of gift exchange between families and individuals contributing much to the constitution and preservation of kin and quasi-kin bonds, which were—as the migration research has pointed out—vital for migrants' survival and well-being in Turkey. Yet, the labor burden of the practice is unevenly distributed within communities and young migrant women shoulder the heaviest tasks especially in the first years of their urban lives. The accounts of participants illustrate some characteristics of the hosting work such as labor-intensity, indispensability, and irregularity, which have intensified gender inequalities, in many cases, through deepening their time poverty, restraining their autonomy, and limiting their financial independence and access to social rights.

The remainder of the paper is structured as follows: the first section introduces the theoretical perspectives and conceptual frameworks that inspired this research, followed by the overview of the literature in order to present the socio-political context of migration and home-oriented lives of migrant women in Turkey. Then, I will present the method and empirical scope of the fieldwork and briefly introduce the participants. This is followed by an account of the findings, and finally, I draw out the broader implications of the findings in conclusion.

Theoretical Perspectives on Gendered Forms of Unpaid Work

In capitalism, processes of social reproduction—activities of provisioning, caregiving, and interaction that produce and maintain social bonds—are, as Fraser (2016) points out, necessary to the existence of waged work and the economic system even if they are not remunerated or take place outside the market. In fact, the fixed boundaries of the modern definition of work as occupation have been subject to feminist criticism since the 1970s through questioning of the "non-work" status of domestic chores. This scholarship has also contributed much to our understanding of the power dynamics within households as units of political struggle through scrutinizing intra-household inequalities in accessing resources and highlighting women's unpaid work. There is, for instance, a vast literature on gender differences in the allocation of time between paid and unpaid work as a significant token of inequality and women's poverty (Antonopoulos and Hirway 2009; Ringhofer 2015) and also a discussion on depletion questioning how to measure gendered harm (Rai, Hoskyns, and Thomas 2014).

Drawing on the feminist emphasis on the significance of reproduction and recent discussions on contemporary sociology of work (Parry et al. 2005), I adopt an inclusive conception of work to comprehend migrants' overnight guest hosting as one of the gendered forms of unpaid labor. Micaela Di Leonardo (1987) developed the concept "kinwork" to emphasize such gendered tasks of network maintenance, which are distinguishable from both housework and childcare and work in the labor market. Kinwork covers a wide range of activities from visits, letters, calls, gift-giving, organization of gatherings, creation, and maintenance of quasi-kin relations to decisions to neglect/reinforce particular ties as well as the mental work of reflection about all these activities and the creation and communication of altering images of family and kin (Di Leonardo 1987, 442–43). Since households are not only units tied to larger social and economic systems but also to each other, acknowledging kinwork furthers our understanding of those ties through accentuating women's network-maintaining work. This network-maintaining function is not only relevant to guest hosting but is also a crucial aspect of the practice regarding the context of migration.

Intersectional perspectives on labor have contributed much to the visibility of unpaid gendered labor by linking occupational segregation, pay gaps, and domestic and reproductive work with the intersecting systems of stratification (Browne and Misra 2003; Collins 1998, 2015; Duffy 2007; Matthaei and Amott 1990). This scholarship has shown the interdependent systems of privileges and disadvantages that affect the social organization of labor. Miriam Glucksmann's (1995) concept "total social organization of labor" refers to the manner in which all the labor in a particular society is divided up between and allocated to different structures, institutions, and activities (p. 67). Such

an approach to labor takes into account interconnections between different work activities, which are entangled with different sorts of social relations and appear in a multitude of forms, and thus, enhances our understanding of the links between gendered unpaid work and other forms of work, services, and institutions in society (Glucksmann 1995; Mulinari and Selberg 2013; Parry et al. 2005). With this perspective, the article questions the interconnections between the social inequalities, public policies, and the overloaded responsibilities of young migrant women who host guests. In this sense, the analysis of guest hosting as migrant women's kinwork necessitates a contemplation of the political and social context that makes it essential for migrants to protect social networks. To clarify this connection, the next section will present the socio-political context of migrant women's unpaid hosting work in Turkey.

The Socio-Political Context

In the 1920s, less than 25 percent of the population of Turkey was living in urban areas; the majority was living in villages. This rural–urban population imbalance was largely preserved until the mass labor migration of the 1950s (Özbay and Yücel 2001; Pamuk 2007). After the first wave of migration in the 1950s, the population became overwhelmingly urban in approximately thirty years. This migration process, which is still continuing at lower rates, has been gradual and progressing at different regional paces with the exception of the forced migration in the late 1980s (Akşit 1998; Işık and Pınarcıoğlu 2012; Özbay and Yücel 2001). This process of chain migration contributed significantly to industries and the service sector as migrants provided cheap labor and also contributed to the national market as consumers (İçduygu 2006; İçduygu, Sirkeci, and Aydıngün 1998).

Turkey's welfare state has often been classified as a corporatist model—resembling the Southern European models—which privileges certain groups with a fragmented and hierarchical structure (Buğra and Keyder 2006; Dedeoğlu 2013; Grütjen 2008; Kılıç 2008; Powell, Yörük, and Bargu 2020). In this system, health and pension benefits were hierarchically tied to job positions in the formal labor market in a labor market structure, where the majority are either self-employed or informal workers (Buğra and Keyder 2006; Kılıç 2008). The spatial distribution of services has also been unequal as the public health services/expenditures and higher education institutions (which are critical for social mobility) have concentrated in a few metropolitan centers. In the peak years of migration, given the features of the labor market and spatial distribution of the population, this structure of social policy failed to provide social protection for rural-to-urban migrants who relied on informal social networks for protection (Buğra and Keyder 2006; Kılıç 2008).

Another key characteristic of Turkey's welfare model is familialism considering the scarcity of state provisions for child, disability, and elderly care

(Akkan 2018; Dedeoğlu and Elveren 2012; Eder 2010; Erder 2002; Gal 2010).
Familialist social policies assume the availability of women as caregivers
within low-income families or informal networks as a source of such labor
(Akkan 2018; Dedeoğlu and Elveren 2012). Within this system, women's
access to social rights is mostly tied to family as unpaid and/or informal work-
ers. Additionally, women were eligible for social security when they are head
of households, which was possible only in the absence of a man in the house-
hold until 2003 (Ecevit 2003). In the early 2000s, with the latest series of
reforms implemented for European Union accession purposes, the legislative
framework has been transformed for the gender equalization of benefits.
However, this new regulation caused a large split in women's position in legal
texts and the labor market without active policy measures to bring those
changes into low-income women's lives (Dedeoğlu 2013).

The migration process created substantial changes in women's education
levels, social positions, and responsibilities (Eryar, Tekgüç, and Toktaş 2019),
yet did not increase migrant women's access to the formal labor market
considerably as the majority are still dependent on their families and prone to
poverty as housewives and workers in the informal sector. Ferhunde Özbay
(1999) compared women's workloads in rural and urban settings and noted
that, in urban settings, women undertake less diverse and more home-
oriented tasks and cooperate with each other to lesser extents. Thus, following
migration, many women become sole performers of household tasks and
childcare without adequate public services or support of female kin who
remained in the villages.

Housing policies also had an impact on women's urban lives as many rural
migrants first settle in self-built peripheral neighborhoods, which are relatively
isolated from the city. Especially, in the rapidly expanding urban centers such
as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Adana, and Bursa, migrants built their own houses
and their own neighborhoods often without municipal services, sewer sys-
tems, and adequate public transportation (Dedeoğlu 2007; Kalaycıoğlu 2006).
In this context, most of the migrant women became spatially bound to their
neighborhood spaces (Erman 1996). The research of Tahire Erman and
Süheyla Türkyılmaz (2008) on neighborhood effects illustrated that social and
physical isolation of the site, limited access to urban institutions, and the
growing risk of crime have a negative impact on women's lives as structural
constraints and distance women from the opportunities of the city. Most
of the participants of this study have had such neighborhood-limited
urban lives.

Finally, another significant dynamic of low formal labor market participa-
tion is related to Turkey's pattern of integration into global capitalism with
low levels of foreign direct investment and the concentration of female
employment in myriad of marginal jobs such as home-based piecework
and work in small-scale family businesses (Dedeoğlu 2007). Likewise, many
services, cleaning, and agricultural jobs near the cities, which are not recorded

statistically, have also been a major source of income for first-generation migrant women such as the participants of this study.

Methodological Reflections

This study adopts two intersectional methodological principles. The first one is granting "epistemic privilege" (Mohanty 2013) to marginalized voices (Chadwick 2017; Collins 2000, 2015). As a perspective rooted in social justice activism, intersectionality is attentive to social inequalities and prioritizes marginalized voices as an analytical tool to grasp new angles of vision and decolonize the dominant modes of thinking (Chadwick 2017; Collins 2000; Mohanty 2013). Consequently, many intersectional researchers favor narrative analysis as a way to gain new perspectives on different articulations of power without starting with predefined/reified social categories in research (Buitelaar 2006; Chadwick 2017; Cole 2009; Ludvig 2006).

The second methodological principle is the necessity of combining macro and micro levels in the analysis (Anthias 2013; Bilge 2010; Collins 2000, 2015; Winker and Degele 2011; Yuval-Davis 2006). Instead of limiting the analysis to the interpersonal level and women's experiences in daily life, I utilized them to grasp new ways of thinking about social inequalities and structural dynamics. Narratives also give us a starting point to interrogate the material context and structural constraints within which these narratives are embedded and enabled (Chadwick 2017). With these concerns, I focus on the guest-hosting narratives of migrant women to shed light on the multiple forms of intersecting inequalities operating both at national and interpersonal levels and to question the intersections of social hierarchies based on age, migration status, class, and gender with respect to the guest-hosting practice.

I started the fieldwork in June 2019 by contacting three independent acquaintances who have been living in peripheral migrant neighborhoods of Adana (*Onur* and *Gültepe*) and Bursa (*Mimar Sinan*).[2] Within two months, following the diverse social networks of informants with the snowball technique, I met and conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with 28 first-generation rural–urban migrant women who reside in Adana, Bursa, Ankara, Kocaeli, Balıkesir, and Mersin. In the first series of neighborhoods, I asked the participants to introduce me to their neighbors and friends who have rural-to-urban migration history. In some cases, participants directed me to their friends and relatives in other cities, who are known to host over-night guests in their respective communities. In the end, the research achieved a rich variety in terms of age (between thirty-seven and ninety-six), marital status, and migration routes of the participants.[3] The interviews cover a range of issues from participants' childhood, family and migration history, marriage, daily life and responsibilities, work history and social lives, the homes they lived in, hosting experiences, and their take on the practice.

As a general pattern, most of the participants migrated either with their families or to join their husbands in the city. Their households typically have steady but low income provided by the spouse's work as manual workers, clerks, civil servants, drivers, and self-employed small-business owners and/or retirement salaries. The majority of the participants either never worked full time or did not have a steady work history outside the home. Yet, most of them have been occasionally involved in income-earning activities such as home-based piecework, house cleaning, picking, processing, and selling leaves, lacework, sewing, catering, daily-waged agricultural jobs around the city, working in family-business such as small shops. Some of them regularly spend their summers in their spouse's village as unpaid agricultural workers. They often hosted (or in their words [*baktım*] took care of or looked after) various overnight guests alongside these paid and unpaid work, housework, and child-care duties.

To specify the scope of the analysis, I must note that the informants are not intended to be representative of migrant women in Turkey. Additionally, by guest hosting, I exclusively refer to urban households that host overnight guests although there are also other migrant cohabitation forms. On a final note, I would like to acknowledge a shortcoming of the conceptual framework of both the literature on migrant women and this study, as it is gender binary. I used the term "women" to refer to the target group of the study who are *ciswomen* with a marriage history.

Long-Term and Short-Term Guest Hosting

Participants' guest-hosting experiences are varied, ranging from long-term guests such as students, spouse's siblings, relatives, sick, and elderly to shorter visits of relatives and acquaintances. The guests are predominantly young men and/or adult couples, principally from the husbands' social network, relatives, and acquaintances from their hometowns, which are villages or small towns.

Metropolitan areas have been attraction centers offering access to health and education institutions, the justice system, income-earning activities, city life, and consumer items, which seem to increase the frequency and the motivations of visit. Short-term guests are mainly those who came to visit, sightsee, get treatment, follow official processes such as court cases, apply/look for jobs, and so on. For example, Lale (2019, 56) recalled guests who came for treatment in hospitals: "We had many guests who came for surgery. People we do not even know. Not relatives or something. Acquaintances. They were coming, having surgery. You took care of them a week, ten days. Then, they go away" (June 2019, Adana).

Students usually stay long term. Apart from students, some of the participants hosted their spouse's siblings and other relatives throughout the first years of their married lives. One of them was Lale (56). I met her in Adana

when a common acquaintance kindly introduced and left us in her apartment for the interview. She got married at the age of sixteen years and moved to Adana from her village in Kayseri, and spent the first years of her marriage as the chief caregiver of a very crowded house:

E: How was your first home? Was it rental or your own house?

L: ... Yes it was ours but what a home. Two sisters-in-law. They were working. With us. A brother-in-law, working. Staying with us. The daughter of one sister-in-law was going to high school. Her son was going to high school. They were with us. As a bride, I came to such a house.

E: Their spouses?

L: No spouses. But that year, a man from the village came and stayed with us throughout the winter. We lived in the same house.

E: Did you take care of that house?

L: Of course I did. And I got pregnant immediately, dear.

E: How many people were you?

L: Two sisters-in-law. Another sister-in-law came from the village that year to help me, as I was alone. So three sisters-in-law, the daughter, the son of one. Five. My husband, myself. Seven. And a brother-in-law. We were eight. Then, someone else came, a man from the village. He came to work. Then, nine. Apart from these, we definitely had two–three overnight guests every evening. That house was in circulation day and night.

E: Why are they coming?

L: They come to Adana to work; they come to hospital, or come to visit. Or they come to visit their relatives but stay with us. Those were all from ... *[a village close to Adana]*, from my husband's side. Not from Kayseri. My mother and father came to visit me once a year. That is all. My brother comes once a year. Those are all from my husband's side ... We lived like this for seven years. (Lale, June 2019, Adana)

After the first year, Lale singlehandedly shouldered all of the housework/care of this crowded two-bedroom apartment for seven years until they moved to a new place with her husband and two children leaving behind his relatives. Gülce (45) had endured a similar process in the first years of her marriage:

G: I was sent as a bride to my husband's village *[Adana]*. We stayed there for 15 days. Then we came to the city. We came into the house of siblings. Then, I took care of my brothers-in-law ... We lived with

them. We got them married. One was studying. One was working. I took care of all three of them. I was 20 years old. I took care of them for three–four years. Meanwhile, I had a child. (Gülce, June 2019, Adana)

In the literature, this cohabitation type is categorized as "transient extended family" in which husband, wife, and unmarried children live together with widowed parents and/or unmarried siblings (Heisel 1987, 84). However, I prefer using the term guest hosting instead of transient extended family since participants perceive this togetherness as a temporary situation where they host their spouse's siblings in their own homes. Participants stressed that it was their spouses who provide the main income of the household, whereas the others were their guests who are either students or workers just saving up money to have enough means to leave. Additionally, when one of the brothers-in-law gets married and moves out, the other siblings usually move to the new household, absolving their former hosts from their responsibilities, which further indicates the temporariness of the stay. The participants' depiction of the stay as guest hosting sheds light on the gendered labor structure of migrant households, young siblings' long working hours in the informal sector without social assistance or working rights, and familial responsibility in providing basic needs.

Time Poverty and Competing Responsibilities

The data of the first national time use survey in Turkey provide insights about the impact of poverty on gender differences in the allocation of time between paid and unpaid work (Öneş, Memiş, and Kızılırmak 2013). The research on work-time uncovers the links between poverty and inequalities in the intra-household allocation of time and shows that the effects of time poverty are felt more severely by women as poverty further increases the unpaid work of women (Memiş, Öneş, and Kızılırmak 2012; Öneş, Memiş, and Kızılırmak 2013). These researches are illustrative of the links between class and gender concerning women's unpaid work burden in Turkey, as in the case of time poverty of the participants of this study. Aslı's story (in the introduction) is one of the examples of time poverty as she links her daily struggle between competing responsibilities with her lack of social rights:

I do not have a pension. I never had the chance to work outside. I took in work from a bank. I sewed envelopes at home. I took textile jobs. I sewed covers for bed mattresses at home, in our tiny house. I was waiting for the guests to sleep, and then I was working. I made sweaters . . . Once, I was making sweaters for a store. Handcraft. The store was too far. I used to carry that bag on my back. I went there a few times with my husband to get my weekly money from the cashier. The

woman, the manager of the store, told my husband "Let this woman come here and work for three months to initiate her social security. Later, she can make her own payments". My husband responded: "But, who will take care of the household?" We had two children. There were five students staying with us at that time. The woman replied, she said to him, "Will they *[the students]* look after her in the future?" I will never forget this moment . . . (July 2019, Balıkesir)

As Di Leonardo (1987) pointed out, women perceive housework, childcare, market labor, care of the elderly, and kinwork as competing responsibilities. Parenting tasks frequently came up during the interviews as a task competing with guest hosting. Lale (56), as many others, expressed guilt over her lack of control over their time in the early years of their marriages, which they perceived as a failure in motherhood because they could not connect with their children, prioritize them, and their needs:

Children were crying. I couldn't tend to them. There were times I beat my children a lot . . . Kids cry. Were they hungry, thirsty or wet? You cannot even know. You can only yell. I felt as if . . . I was neglecting the guests if I was taking care of my children. Chores are left undone. They are neglected. You got behind. I got behind. My husband will come in the evening. If the dinner is not ready, he will complain. There is also that . . . My youth is gone while serving the guests, my beautiful days are gone. I wish I had a better time with my husband. I wish I had a better time with my children. I have never been a good mother to my children . . . (Lale, June 2019, Adana)

From the children's perspective, another participant, Bilge (96), mentioned her daughter's resentment, claiming that they (as parents) prioritized guests over her education and utilized her labor to host overnight guests (August 2019, Kocaeli). She claims to be neglected because while her brother had his own room and was eventually sent to university, her parents did not let her go to school after primary school and made her sleep in the living room together with all the guests for several years.[4]

A Labor-Intensive Form of Work

Migrants' guest hosting and/or looking after requires various labor-intensive tasks such as cooking, serving, washing, making beds, taking guests to hospitals, inviting and serving their common acquaintances, preparing the spaces for hosting purposes, and so on. The participants depicted guest hosting as an extra task distinct from domestic work since it requires extra effort and outsiders are involved characteristically. Although those considered as outsiders vary among participants, they unanimously used the word guest

[*misafir*] to describe the visitors from their spouses' hometowns whether they are close relatives or acquaintances.

Hosting also involves planning and designing as women often perform these tasks in limited spaces. Most of the participants have been living in two-bedroom apartments or houses. To host guests in such substandard urban houses of Turkey, women need to convert living spaces to sleeping areas and readjust, clean sheets, and prepare a social environment for people to interact and chat. At the same time, they should design secluded spaces for intimacy to prevent unwanted interaction between members of the household and guests.

Differences between the workloads of participants from different generations indicate that industrial development and market integration transformed the labor requirements of hosting work. First-generation migrant women commonly recall unstitching, washing, and re-sewing duvet cases after each guest before their access to affordable bed linen. Older participants also recall being responsible for the production and preservation of floor mattresses and pillows in the past. Then, beginning from the 1980s, the convertible sofa [*çekyat*], as an effective item for transforming daytime living rooms to nighttime guest or child bedrooms, started to replace floor mattresses. In an earlier research, Özge Çelikoğlu (2011) stated that the development of the furniture industry and its core best-seller product, the convertible sofa, is related to the process of rapid urbanization and the needs of low-budget urban households. Every single household I visited for this project had living rooms furnished with convertible sofas, and the participants stated that they use these sofas both as guest beds and as living room furniture.

Even though practices such as sewing duvets are no longer needed, it is hard to argue that younger generations of participants put lower levels of effort into hosting their guests. In fact, younger participants try to provide a more elaborate service to their guests compared to their older counterparts who are content with serving what is already at their disposal. For younger generations of hosts, guest hosting is not only physically demanding but also stressful, as proper service to guests is very much tied to their social prestige. They expressed stress as a factor influencing their daily routines since they must always be prepared to host new guests.

Age dynamic appeared as an important theme in migrant women's experiences of guest hosting. The number and frequency of their guests usually decreased over time, compared to the early years of their marriages. In some cases, this is because guests head for the households of younger couples. In others, their share of guests decreased due to the availability of new hosts in the city, as a result of chain migration.

Many participants linked the practice to the conditions of the past marked by poverty/deprivation, which gave them no other choice. Some acknowledge their inability to say no in the past compared to today. Elçin, for example, has hosted different kinds of guests such as visitors, students, sick, and elderly for

a considerable part of her life. She reported no control of the flow of guests in the early years of her marriage as recalls the period with bewilderment: "That still astonishes me. How we lived, how we suffered that much" (Elçin, June 2019, Adana). Women generally define their current situation in terms of guest hosting with more positive terms except for older participants (above ninety years) who had a rather nostalgic view of the practice as it reminds them of a time of togetherness and solidarity in contrast to their loneliness today.

An Indispensible and Irregular Form of Work

Similar to other gendered forms of work, migrant women's hosting labor has been embedded in a myriad of social relations. Embeddedness of work in social relations has also been widely discussed in the social anthropology literature through such concepts of gift economy and moral economy illustrating intertwinedness of social, religious, judicial, moral, and economic spheres in societies (Eriksen 2001; Mauss 2002). The notion of gift was introduced by Marcel Mauss ([1950] 2002) in his groundbreaking book as a society constitutive practice, which is voluntary in theory but given and reciprocated obligatorily in reality (p. 3). Migrants' guest-hosting functions as a form of gift exchange between families and helps to preserve a much-needed social network during the process of urbanization.

Reciprocity is well established between host and guest families. Hosting households have expectations from the guests such as recognition, respect, loyalty, intimacy, bringing gifts (food), securing their share in agricultural income, and/or sometimes just leaving the relationship open and the other party indebted. When a person stays with a relative, the parties usually have a mutual understanding that the hosting family holds the right to ask for favors in the future. Reciprocity is thus established between families; yet, the labor burden is overwhelmingly on young married women who can have individual or collective expectations of return of the favor provided that they stay in the family.

The obligatory nature of guest hosting shapes the conditions under which women perform these tasks. It was not only the labor time but also the irregularity of the practice and their lack of control over the flow of guests that affected these women's lives. The participants reported none or little autonomy over their hosting practice; they have been expected to be ready for hosting guests at any moment without notice, without knowing the time and duration of the stay. Participants usually answered the questions such as "Would they consult you before the visit?" or "Would you have any information beforehand" with grandiose face and hand gestures and phrases like "Of course not," "Never," "No never," "What are you talking about!" For example, Elçin (56) hosted one of her nephews for six years of his education. Yet,

prior to his arrival, she had no idea he was coming to stay with her: "I didn't even know. They [*his parents*] enrolled him in a school here" (June 2019, Adana).

Irmak (55), like many others, lays emphasis on her lack of control and exhausting workload while describing the guest hosting work especially in the first years of her marriage. I met her with the help of a mutual friend in her moderate self-built house in Adana. She grew up in a small village of Artvin, in northeast Turkey. After graduating from primary school, she moved to İstanbul with her brother and worked in textiles for a few years until she got married at the age of twenty to a fellow villager. The young couple relocated to a village of Adana where she lived with her in-laws in a crowded house of sixteen people and worked hard to manage the housework and rural tasks. She recalls that the transition from İstanbul to a village was not an easy one and that the tasks in the village ranging from milking cows to farming were never-ending. Nevertheless, she fulfilled her responsibilities for eight years before finally moving out with her nuclear family to a separate apartment in the city. Yet, within a short period of time, she realized that she had to host long-term guests:

I: My husband found a job. We [finally] moved out. In three months, three others came to live with us [Laughing].

E: Did they ask you?

I: They never told us [me and my daughters]. I mean . . . They enrolled one of the kids [her brother-in-law] to high school. Had they enrolled him together with my own kids, preparing meals would not have been a problem. But they enrolled him in the morning school . . . But my daughters were in the afternoon school; they were attending primary school at the time. They did not even ask about that. Then, another brother-in-law came and started working in a shift. Another of the brothers came and took a job. All three stayed with us.

E: How long did they stay?

I: They stayed for three, four years. I mean, we all lived with them all together. I have never lived a life with my husband and my children. Besides, there were also many others from the village who came and stayed.

E: Were those other guests giving notice?

I: Nah . . . They would inform each other, as in "We have arrived, and you should come so we can stay together". They would never tell us [laughing]. (June 2019, Adana)

The notion of obligation shapes the labor process so that while women perceive hosting tasks as indispensable, guests assume that they are entitled to women's labor in that household. Lale, for example, thinks that the guests did not appreciate or probably even remember her efforts because they assumed that they were entitled to her labor:

> E: Do you think you have contributed to your guests' lives?
>
> L: Of course. But if you ask them, they will say no. Because, you had to. It was like that back then, I mean.
>
> E: Um . . .
>
> L: But, my girl, nobody knows it now, they don't have a clue. I did, but no. We had to. We did, because we had to do it. This—our torment— started in our childhood. My *[maternal]* uncle had trucks. His driver, assistant and my uncle. Two of the trucks are pulled to the door *[of our house]*. We wash their shirts, we wash their socks. We wash their feet, by pouring water from the well. There is no running water at home. They are not satisfied, they are not happy. We started in our childhood . . . (June 2019, Adana)

Even though she is well aware of her contributions, she thinks that her efforts were invisible and unappreciated. The obligatory nature of the tasks, therefore, characterizes her labor, perspective, and life experience. In another example, when I asked Hale (2019, 80) about her work history, she remembered an occasion from her years in Germany when her boss was surprised that she had never worked in all those years before immigration. She felt shameful for being, in her words, "a freeloader" [*hazır yiyici*] (Hale, July 2019, Bursa). Yet, she actually had worked hard until then. When she was 16 years old, she was married to the youngest child of a neighboring family, in order to meet the household's labor demand. When her husband migrated to Germany as a worker, she stayed back with her much-older brother-in-law's family, who then migrated to the city. For years, she lived with them, raised her two children, and shared the responsibility of the mistress of the house. This house had a constant stream of overnight guests from the village. Hale remembers one occasion on which she had to prepare beds for the new guests on the balcony since the house was already full of guests as usual, and all were sleeping as it was the middle of the night. Hosting as gendered unpaid labor is thus a burden not only because it is financially unrewarded hard work but also because many women internalize the unworthiness of the tasks in the eyes of others and undervalue themselves accordingly.

Concluding Remarks

This paper aimed to further feminist contributions to Turkey's internal migration literature by analyzing the migrants' solidarity practice of guest hosting as labor-intensive gendered unpaid work. Through investigating the dynamics of such a peculiar form of gendered work, this study aimed to contribute to the existing research questioning gender inequality, unequal division of labor in the households, and low labor participation of women in Turkey. As guest hosting increases young migrant women's dependence on their families and limits their control over their labor/time, the practice must be considered as a factor deepening gender inequality, the gender gap in employment as well as the class gap among women in Turkey.

Migration research could benefit from recognizing guest hosting as a significant dynamic of migrant solidarity and an effective way to provide social assistance by retaining much-needed social networks. In the peak years of Turkey's urbanization, the large sections of the urban poor had been able to retain their hopes for upward mobility. In the last decades, however, following the processes of the neoliberal restructuring of the economy by the privatizations of public institutions and welfare provisions, social assistance mechanisms, and forced migration, scholarship in the area introduced new terms such as new poverty and ethnic poverty to highlight the changing character of urban poverty (Adaman and Ardıç 2008; Buğra and Keyder 2003; Eder 2010; Saraçoğlu 2010). The deep poverty following forced migration, and market liberalization has once again demonstrated the significance of the social networks to assist in the migration process alongside the rural–urban connections and urban housing opportunities.

The research was designed to learn from first-generation rural-to-urban migrant women with a specific focus on the experiences of guest hosting, which increased our knowledge of the social contexts and conditions shaping the home-oriented lives of migrant women. The accounts of the participants were illuminating about different patterns of hosting, labor dynamics, and processes, the ways in which their lives are affected, and their peculiar perceptions of the practice. Interviews reveal that young migrant women mostly shouldered the unpaid work burden of guest hosting in the early years of their marriages/migration with adverse effects on their well-being. The women's narratives reveal that guest hosting had adverse effects on their life as an indispensable, irregular, and labor-intensive work, which also was not appreciated, compensated, or even recognized in a social organization where unpaid gendered work has been taken for granted.

Migrant women's guest-hosting stories reveal that hosting contributed to alleviation of the conditions of guests through enabling their access to healthcare, education, the justice system, and work. Hence, women's labor compensated public assistance, which could be regarded as paid work and awarded with social rights in other social contexts. Yet, in this structure, it was an

unpaid and obligatory household task, which is reinforced not only by their families but also by the structural dynamics of inequality and social policy.

Women's guest-hosting stories are bound up with structural dynamics and historical conditions of the peak years of migration. The intersectionality of gender, class, and age hierarchies operated as a disadvantage for young migrant women who host overnight guests within a particular socio-political context. This context was shaped by regional, rural–urban, and intra–urban inequalities, a welfare system with familialist and corporatist inclinations reinforcing women's caregiving role and dependency on family and failing to provide adequate social assistance for migrants.

Such knowledge on intersectional disadvantages, i.e., unpaid labor burden and time poverty of young migrant women due to guest hosting in the process of migration, is critical to make policies targeting social justice more efficient. In fact, highlighting the links between the adverse effects of gendered unpaid labor on women, poverty, and the familialist social policy in the process of urbanization is particularly significant regarding Turkey's current gender policies. The social policy of the past decades offered little to alleviate the disadvantaged position of low-income women who are still prone to poverty both as unpaid workers and as sources of cheap labor for global and national companies. In fact, the conservative and neoliberal policies of the AKP government provided the continuity of this disadvantage both through fostering women's caregiving roles and through privatizations of public institutions and provisions, market liberalization, and deregulation of labor markets, which has been evident in the latest regulations in the social security system ensuring the disadvantaged benefits for atypical workers (flexible, home-based, part-time jobs), policies providing provisions for elderly, disabled, and sick care at home, calls for three children, and restrictions applied on abortion rights.

Notes

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1. Pseudonyms have been used for anonymity.
2. There were two reasons for preferring these neighborhoods as points of departure: although Adana has mostly been a regional attraction center, Bursa has historically been receiving migrants from all regions. Second, the process of gentrification of the housing areas has been relatively slow

in these regions. The stability of these neighborhoods provided me a social network to explore similar households in terms of socio-economic status.

3. Most of the interviews were carried out in the homes and neighborhoods of the participants. I first carried out twelve interviews in Adana in June 2019. Then I traveled back to Çanakkale and I conducted five interviews with women in Mersin by telephone. I also invited a participant who has been living in Ankara to my home and interviewed her there. In July, I traveled to Bursa for six interviews and also visited Balıkesir to meet an informant. Finally, in August, I traveled to Kocaeli to conduct three interviews. I (voice) recorded the interviews with their permission and transcribed.

4. Guest hosting had probably more adverse effects on daughters. For example, the children who are sent to stay with relatives as long-term student guests were mostly boys, which inevitably increased the gender gap in education within families. Yet, the participants rarely mentioned their daughters' help or disadvantage. This is partly due to the young age of their daughters at the peak of their need for help, as they shoulder guest hosting more heavily in the first years of their marriages. Additionally, women perceive accomplishing all the household tasks alone as a source of pride, which is reflected in their narratives.

Acknowledgments

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