

**IBN HALDUN UNIVERSITY
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY**

MASTER THESIS

**CHANGING EXPERIENCES OF MARRIAGE AND
MASCULINITY IN TURKEY: TURKISH MEN'S
TRANSNATIONAL MARRIAGES TO INDONESIAN
WOMEN IN THE BLACK SEA REGION**

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**THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. RAMAZAN ARAS**

ISTANBUL, 2024

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by

ZAHİDE ŞEYDA KARABATAK

**A thesis submitted to the School of Graduate Studies in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in
Sociology.**

**THESIS SUPERVISOR
PROF. RAMAZAN ARAS**

ISTANBUL, 2024

APPROVAL PAGE

This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Art in Sociology.

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This is to confirm that this thesis complies with all the standards set by the School of Graduate Studies of Ibn Haldun University, Istanbul.

Date of Submission

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I hereby declare that all the 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 conducts, I have fully cited and referenced all materials and results that are not original to this work.

Name Surname:

Signature



ÖZ

TÜRKİYE'DE DEĞİŞEN EVLİLİK VE ERKEKLİK DENEYİMLERİ: KARADENİZ BÖLGESİNDE TÜRK ERKEKLERİN ENDONEZYALI KADINLARLA ULUSÖTESİ EVLİLİKLERİ

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Bu çalışma, Giresun'daki Türk erkeklerinin Endonezyalı kadınlarla yaptıkları ulusötesi evlilikler boyunca değişen evlilik ve erkeklik deneyimlerini ve bu evliliklere ilişkin erkeklik performanslarını araştırmaktadır. Çalışma, Türk erkeklerinin Endonezyalı kadınlarla evlilikleri sırasında nasıl bir erkeklik ya da erkeklikler sergilediklerini ve Türk kadınlarına yönelik algılarını anlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, Karadeniz Bölgesi'nde Giresun'un çeşitli ilçelerinde yürütülen etnografik bir araştırmaya dayanmaktadır. Bu araştırma, ulusötesi evliliklerde güveni belirleyen sadece bireysel tercihler değil, aynı zamanda ve daha büyük olasılıkla kıta genelinde kurulan evlilik ağları ve dindarlık algısı ve güvenilir bir milliyet gibi çeşitli sosyo-kültürel faktörler olduğunu iddia etmektedir. Çalışma ayrıca, evlilik ve erkeklik ideallerinin Türk erkekleri tarafından hangi dinamikler üzerine inşa edildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Ayrıca, toplumsal cinsiyet ve erkekliğe ilişkin mevcut algıların Endonezyalı kadınlarla yapılan ulusötesi evlilikler yoluyla hem sorgulandığını hem de yeniden teyit edildiğini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu çalışma, kadınlara ve kadınlık performanslarına odaklanmaktan ziyade, ulusötesi evlilik bağlamında erkek pratiklerine ve erkeklik performanslarına odaklanması bakımından önem taşımaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Erkeklik, Eş Seçimi, Etnografi, Güven, Ulusötesi Evlilik.

ABSTRACT

CHANGING EXPERIENCES OF MARRIAGE AND MASCULINITY IN TURKEY: TURKISH MEN'S TRANSNATIONAL MARRIAGES TO INDONESIAN WOMEN IN THE BLACK SEA REGION

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This study investigates the changing experience of marriage and masculinity throughout Turkish men's transnational marriages to the Indonesian women in Giresun and their masculinity performances with respect to these marriages. The study aims to understand how Turkish men perform masculinity or masculinities during their marriages to Indonesian women and their perception of Turkish women. This study is based on ethnographic research conducted in several districts of Giresun in the Black Sea Region. This research claims that it is not only the individual choices that make the trust over the transnational marriages but also more likely the established networks of marriage across the continent and the several socio-cultural factors such as the perception of religiosity and a trustworthy nationality. Besides, the study reveals the dynamics on which the ideals of marriage and masculinity are constructed by Turkish men. It also reveals that the already existing perceptions of gender and masculinity are both challenged and reaffirmed through the transnational marriages of Indonesian women. Rather than focusing on women and the performance of femininity, the present study carries significance as it primarily focuses on male practices and masculinity performances in the context of a transnational marriage.

Keywords: Ethnography, Masculinity, Mate Selection, Transnational Marriage, Trust Ethnography.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this study to all the Turkish-Indonesian couples in Giresun. Their unwavering support and companionship have been instrumental throughout my fieldwork and thesis writing process.

In particular, I extend my deepest gratitude to Widya, Fitri, Devi, Sisca, and Arum, whose presence, encouragement, and guidance have uplifted me emotionally and spiritually during the research journey, making this thesis possible. Additionally, I sincerely thank to my uncle Cafer our neighbors Hacı Ömer and Hasan Hoca, whose willingness to assist me with every aspect of the research process has been invaluable. Without their genuine support, this fieldwork would not have reached its completion.

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With deepest gratitude,

Şeyda Karabatak

Istanbul, 2024



TABLE OF CONTENTS

ÖZ	iv
ABSTRACT	v
DEDICATION	vi
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	vii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
LIST OF TABLES	xii
LIST OF FIGURES	xiii
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER II METHODOLOGY AND FIELDWORK	8
2.1. Introduction.....	8
2.2. Can I Study Masculinity?	10
2.3. An Ethnographic Fieldwork on Marriage.....	17
2.3.1. In-depth Interviews	20
2.3.2. Participant Observation	24
2.4. Self as a Starting Point: Reflexivity, Positionality and Personality in Ethnography.....	29
2.4.1. Dynamism Between the Insider and Outsider Positionalities.....	33
2.5. Conclusion	38
CHAPTER III CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THE RELEVANT LITERATURE	39
3.1. Introduction.....	39
3.2. Marriage and Mate Selection.....	40
3.3. Transnational Marriage and Masculinity.....	48
3.3.1. Marriage as a Market: Gendered Routes for Marriage Migration.....	49
3.3.2. Global Hypergamy to Explain Transnational Female Marriage Migration.	50
3.3.3. Transnational Marriage and Mobile Masculinities.....	52

3.3.4. Non-Migrant Husbands of Transnational Marriage	54
3.3.5. Transnational Marriage in the Turkish Context.....	58
3.4. Conclusion	63
CHAPTER IV MAKING TRUST ACROSS A CONTINENT.....	66
4.1. Introduction.....	66
4.2. A Chain of Transnational Marriage.....	72
4.3. Religious Sensitivity, Trust, and Tawakkul: “I Trust Allah”	79
4.4. Collective Trust of Turkish Men on Indonesian People.....	87
4.5. Conclusion	104
CHAPTER V TURKISH MEN AND THE OTHER: TURKISH WOMEN, INDONESIAN WOMEN AND INDONESIAN PEOPLE	105
5.1. Introduction.....	105
5.2. Marrying an Indonesian Woman: A Failed or Successful Masculinity?.	106
5.3. Glorifying the Indonesian Women Against the “Degenerated” Turkish Women.....	110
5.4. Scheme versus Innocence and Purity	114
5.5. Turkish Woman's Disobedient Characteristic versus the Indonesian Woman's Submissive Nature	116
5.6. Quarrelsome and Aggressive Attitudes versus Friendliness and Refinement	119
5.7. Materialistic and Greed Habits versus Contentment and Satisfaction.....	120
5.8. Conclusion	124
CHAPTER VI NEGOTIATING AND REAFFIRMING THE PATRIARCHY: CHANGE IN THE GENDERED DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD LABOR	125
6.1. Introduction.....	125
6.2. Local Insights into the Gendered Division of Household Labor in the Rural Black Sea Region	130
6.3. Kitchen and House as a Negotiated Space in the Indonesian-Turkish Households.....	139

6.2. Conclusion	156
CHAPTER VII CONCLUSION	158
REFERENCES.....	161
APPENDIX	171
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	172



LIST OF TABLES

Table 2.1. List of Male Interlocutors	24
Table 2.2. List of Female Interlocutors	25



LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1. Chain of Transnational Marriage in Güce and Espiye	77
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The rapidly increasing communication and transportation facilities of the contemporary world lead to surprising encounters between people and cultures from different origins. People of different countries and nationalities encounter each other in global metropolitan cities or in the transit zones of global migration. Due to the increasing globalization, it can be perceived quite normal that multiple trans-localities and cross-border spaces or intercultural encounters emerge in the frontier towns or metropolitan cities of a country. However, it is not very accustomed to see such encounters in a rural locality that is placed far from such transit zones or doesn't have the facilities that a metropolitan city can offer. This study focuses on the transnational marriage cases in a rural locality where the intensity of transnational migrations or cross-border mobilization is not intense and could be more active in terms of such intercultural encounters. Intriguingly, the transnational marriages between Indonesian women and Turkish men from Giresun, a small city in the Black Sea region, mark important insights into this global interconnectedness and its reflection on local practices.

Being the two small towns in the rural Black Sea region, Güce and Espiye host twenty-five Turkish-Indonesian marriages. It seems an interesting case that the people from these two different places, Indonesia and Giresun, unite in the context of marriage. Also, when it is thought that communication and compatibility, even between couples from the same locality and culture, are not very easy to achieve, a successful marriage between a Turkish man from the Black Sea Region and an Indonesian woman looks quite difficult. The fact that they don't share a common language to speak, and more importantly, the different characteristics and cultural backgrounds of the two parts might create a huge incompatibility. Furthermore, the long distance between the two regions and the expensive travel costs make it even more difficult to imagine a series

of transnational marriage cases between Turkey and Indonesia in Giresun, which is a small city in the Black Sea Region.

On the other hand, all these questions and inferences are somewhat misleading and problematic to understanding the lived experiences of Turkish-Indonesian couples who are practicing these marriages and currently live in various districts and villages of Giresun because they marginalize and otherize the very subjective experiences that would be revealed through this ethnographic inquiry. The preconceived notions surrounding marriages between Turkish men and Indonesian women, often deeming them as challenging and somewhat implausible due to the cultural and spatial disparities, inadvertently contribute to marginalization and the creation of an "othering" effect. This perspective implies that the individuals involved are making irrational or unconscious choices when deciding on these unions.

Trying to avoid such marginalization and romanticization of the transnational marriage cases between Turkish-Indonesian people in Giresun, I aimed to understand the lived experiences, self-representations, and perceptions of Turkish men with regard to their marriages to Indonesian women. Through an ethnographic gaze, I aimed to reveal how the Turkish men experienced and perceived their transnational marriages with Indonesian women, what kind of masculine ideal they constructed in the context of marriage, and how they understood and responded to the changing dynamics of marriage and gender in the local community.

To achieve this objective, I conducted ethnographic research in Giresun, spanning over a period of more than two years, with intermittent periods of fieldwork. I made various in-depth interviews both with the Turkish husbands and the Indonesian wives as well as informal interviews with the local community, asking about their perceptions over these marriages. Additionally, I pursued participant observation by attending the planned or spontaneous meetings of the Indonesian women or the familial meeting of the couples.

Here it is important to highlight that these marriages are not happening through international matchmaking agencies or a mail-order bride organization but through intermediary networks. The relationship between the Turkish men and the Indonesian

women is first established through a number of intermediary people, most of which are those who are already involved in these marriages. The most common scenario was that a Turkish man who wants to get married and has been looking for a wife for a long time, after hearing about marriages with Indonesian women in the neighborhood, contacts one of these couples and asks them to arrange one for him. This can be seen to be similar to Indonesian women. An Indonesian woman who learned of her friend's marriage to a Turkish man may ask her friend to arrange a match for her as well. In this case, the two candidates are matched. If there is no match on the other side, the person asking for a match is directed to various marriage websites and promised to mediate after they find a suitable match by themselves. After this match, ranging from a few months to a few years, they keep their communication before deciding to marry through social media and messaging applications. There are about twenty transnational marriage cases within the borders of these two districts. In most of the cases, the Turkish husbands are above the age of forty, and they are divorced from their early marriages with Turkish women due to death or dissension. Almost all of them were looking to marry again, not necessarily to a foreign woman but to a Turkish one who would accept them with their marital status, who would become a friend in the house in which they lived alone, and also who would take care of them by taking the responsibility of some little house chores like cleaning and cooking. In this search, it is not only the men themselves who are looking for a wife but also their family members and friends who want to mediate the men for marriage.

Additionally, they mostly use Google Translate to establish communication with each other both during this engagement process and after they get married because, in most cases, they don't have a common language to speak. Among the interviewees, one can speak English, and also his wife is an English speaker, so they can communicate through that language despite some limitations of their language proficiency. However, there is no common language between the others, which causes their relationship trouble from time to time.

Another pivotal aspect underscoring the background of this research is that while all of the Turkish men included in the study are from Giresun and live mainly in Espiye and Güce districts, Indonesian women come from different regions and cities. In addition, the sociocultural background and socio-economic status of both Turkish and

Indonesian participants differ. A notable observation reveals that nearly all the male participants engage in agricultural activities, primarily hazelnut farming, spanning from small to large scales. This demographic comprises individuals aged over 40, with one being a university graduate, five holding high school diplomas, and the remaining eleven having completed primary education. Their occupational spectrum encompasses trades such as construction masonry, craftsmanship, machine operation, and retirement. Also, only two of the interviewed men were embarking on their first marriage with an Indonesian woman, whereas the remainder were in their second or third unions.

As far the Indonesian women, although it is difficult to elaborate with numerical data due to the fact that only the nine of the Indonesian women were interviewed and some of these interviews were not systematic, it was noted that almost all of the women interviewed had a salaried job before their migration to Turkey. Only three of them stated that they had worked in textiles for a while, while the others were noted to have various jobs, such as officers, secretaries, bankers, and teachers. An important point to note regarding the socio-economic status of both Indonesian women and Turkish men is that not all of these marriage migrations imply upward mobility in terms of socio-economic status and well-being for Indonesian women.

Given this background, the present study aims to understand the experiences of Black Sea Turkish men in relation to marriage and masculinity as well. This exploration encompasses their previous marriages with Turkish women or adherence to local gender and marriage norms, as well as their current marriages with Indonesian women. In line with this objective, the research delves into inquiries such as how trust is established among Turkish-Indonesian couples in the decision-making process for transnational marriages. What kind of masculinity ideals are constructed in the context of these marriages, and what kind of masculinity is performed by the Turkish men engaged with the Indonesian women? How do Turkish men in these marriages experience their relationships with Indonesian women? How are the cultural and household dynamics enacted by their Indonesian wives, and how do these interactions align with local socio-cultural and gender norms regarding marriage? The examination of these research questions is pivotal to comprehensively understanding the intricate

intersections of marriage, masculinity, transnational interactions, and local and global norms of gender.

In pursuit of these research objectives, first and foremost, it is found out that trust is an important element of the decision-making process of these marriages, and it is based on pre-existing networks and references, as well as some pre-assumptions shaped by the social and cultural factors between the two societies, rather than being an individual orientation brought about by mutual relationships. In the case of Indonesian women and Turkish men's marriages, prospective couples secure their trust through a network of marriage that is being built through the advice and references of already married Indonesian-Turkish couples. In addition, the prospective groom's representation of himself as being religious, his trust in the religiosity of his prospective spouse, and his belief in the "divine province" are important factors affecting trust and decision-making in these marriages.

Secondly, it has been brought to light that the Turkish men construct an ideal of masculinity and marriage based on their experiences with the two *others*, mainly their previous marriage or engagement experiences with the Turkish women and their marriages with the Indonesian women. Concurrently, these men embody a perception of successful masculinity in contrast to their own interpretation of a less successful or failed masculinity within the local community, and they attribute the failure in the case of marriage to the Turkish women and their bad characteristics. Their construction of a masculine ideal and the performance of masculinity intertwined with a juxtaposition of the "evil" portrayal of Turkish women and the "virtuous" depiction of Indonesian women.

Thirdly, it is revealed that these transnational marriages with the Indonesian women and the encounter with a different culture of the household make the gendered expectations from marriage and the household division of labor challenged and reaffirmed at the same time. While cooking, cleaning, and ordering in the household and some of the agricultural works are accepted as feminine chores traditionally, within the context of Indonesian-Turkish marriages, it is seen that such division of labor is challenged by the Indonesian women and their household cultures and the Turkish men are more involved in such feminine chores. On the other hand, this

challenge doesn't imply a complete change in the gender and household norms but rather a recalibration driven by the unique dynamics introduced by transnational marriages with the Indonesian women.

The subsequent chapters of this thesis will delve deeper into the complexities of transnational marriages in Giresun. Chapter 2 outlines the research methodology employed, justifying the chosen approach and highlighting its suitability through a self-reflexive lens. I delineate the research context, intertwining it with a self-reflective narrative to articulate my connection to the research field. Subsequently, I delve into the ethnographic methodology employed in this research endeavor, opening up specific inquiries for discussion. These include considerations such as the impact of the ethnographer's gender when studying masculinity, the complexities of native and familial positionalities, and the challenges inherent in investigating deeply intimate subjects such as marriage and love relationships.

Chapter 3 offers an exhaustive examination of pertinent literature, serving as a precursor to the forthcoming analysis. It encompasses a thorough review of literature pertaining to marriage and mate selection within both the Turkish context and global perspectives. Additionally, it delves into the scholarly discourse surrounding transnational marriages, exploring the intersectionality of gender dynamics within this context with a specific focus on masculinity. The review also encompasses an exploration of existing studies focused on Turkish cases of transnational marriages, providing a nuanced understanding of the complexities inherent in such unions.

Chapter 4 delves into the intricate dynamics of trust formation within Turkish-Indonesian unions, exploring both the collective and individual dimensions. It aims to unravel the mechanisms through which these cross-cultural marriages are not only initiated but also sustained, shedding light on the various agents and channels involved in this process. After providing a concise sociological overview of trust, it first embarks on a detailed analysis of the intricate networks facilitating transnational marriages between Indonesia and Giresun. Central to this investigation, then it moves to the exploration of how religious sensitivity, faith, and perceptions of religiosity intersect to nurture trust within these unions. It delves into the significance of concepts like destiny and *tawakkul*, which serve as crucial navigational tools in navigating the

inherent risks associated with such relationships. Furthermore, it examines how Turkish men's collective trust in the Indonesian people is shaped by their shared cultural narratives and historical memories of interactions with foreign women and Indonesians alike. Through this exploration, it aims to uncover the complex interplay between socio-cultural and political perceptions, collective memories, and interpersonal dynamics that underpin trust within these cross-cultural bonds.

Chapter 5 is dedicated to unraveling the construction and performance of masculinity among men involved in transnational marriages. It seeks to delve into the intricacies of how these men perceive and enact masculinity both in the pre-marriage phase and throughout their marital journey. Central to this exploration is the question of how men engaged in transnational marriages interpret and negotiate their identities within the broader framework of societal masculinity norms. This chapter opens up discussions on both failed and successful representations of masculinity, shedding light on the complexities inherent in navigating gender roles within the context of transnational unions. It offers insights into how Turkish men establish their ideals of gender through a critical examination of the femininity displayed by Turkish and Indonesian women, drawing comparisons to inform their own perceptions and performances of masculinity.

Chapter 6 undertakes an in-depth analysis of the division of household labor, exploring both local and transnational contexts. It examines how expectations and experiences surrounding household labor division are both challenged and reinforced within Turkish-Indonesian marriages. Beginning with an overview of local insights into the gendered division of household labor in the rural Black Sea Region, the chapter then shifts focus to the construction of the kitchen and household as negotiated spaces within Indonesian-Turkish households. Through this exploration, it aims to uncover the intricate dynamics at play in the distribution of domestic responsibilities, considering the cultural, social, and relational factors influencing these arrangements.

Chapter 7 synthesizes the results, draws conclusions, and outlines potential implications.

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY AND FIELDWORK

2.1. Introduction

My research topic and the possible research questions were quite certain while I was shaping my research plan and the proposal at the beginning: What are the multiple motives directing Indonesian women to transnational marriages with Turkish men in Black Sea region and how those motives are affecting the decision-making process of marriage migration? These questions were not just academic inquiries but were also coming out of a non-academic curiosity. One of the most common questions I got was “Could you learn why these women come here?” and of course, together with my personal curiosity about those women, the question shaped the research frame and the content. I started to interview the Indonesian women that I could reach in Giresun - mainly two districts Güce and Espiye, and several villages connected to these districts, all of which are located in the rural areas of the city- and tried to figure out their motives, experiences and what does it mean to achieve a transnational marriage within their own socio-cultural context. Right here, I faced a couple of problems and limitations that hampered the research process.

First of all, I couldn't speak *Bahasa Indonesia*¹ and seemingly didn't have time or opportunity to learn it, and the Indonesian brides couldn't speak Turkish except for a few basic words. The only common language among us was English, but only six women among twenty knew it, so I had to arrange another English-speaking Indonesian woman for each interview. This was possible but not easy because it was already difficult to convince the women and their husbands for the interview, and when I tried to arrange a translator, in most cases, it made the interview complicated as more people got involved in the process. Behind this, I observed on some occasions that the

¹ It literally means *Indonesian Language* but people in Indonesia don't prefer to use *Indonesian Language* to call their language because they consider the word “Indonesian” political and call their language as *Bahasa Indonesia*.

translator was speaking more than the actual interviewee by adding her own thoughts and experiences on the issue, and I was not able to assess the conversation as I couldn't understand what the interviewee was saying.

Secondly, I noticed that in order to have a complete understanding of Indonesian women's motives and experiences of these transnational marriages, I need to know more about Indonesian society and each woman's local marriage culture. However, it was quite difficult and insufficient to access this knowledge through literature reviews and interviews with a few Indonesian women, and unfortunately, I didn't have the opportunity to conduct a fieldwork in Indonesia. More importantly, when I asked the Indonesian women about their motives and decision-making process for this marriage migration to Turkey, I came to the realization that their standard response, "I don't know, it is about God and His will," did not fully satisfy me that I was conducting successful research and that I was unable to contextualize this data within the context of Indonesian society, about which I knew very little.

Meanwhile, as a part of my participant observation, I was doing some other interviews and small talks with the Turkish men who are married to Indonesian women. I found that I was able to contextualize the data from these interviews more easily as there was no language barrier that I had with some of the Indonesian women and also I had grown up here and was, therefore, had more acknowledgment about these Turkish men than I have about the Indonesian people. Also, while I was doing the literature review on transnational marriages, I realized that there is an excessive amount of study on women's motives, experiences, and various strategies within these marriages, on the contrary, there are very few on men and their experience of transnational marriage. All these let me to think about the local Turkish men and their experience of a transnational marriage instead of the Indonesian women and their motives for marriage migration, and I started to inquire more about masculinity studies.

Here, I would like to mention the first thoughts and questions when the idea of conducting this research as a masculinity study came to my mind and my personal experiences during this process because I think that these thoughts and experiences themselves have a gender significance and importance for the self-reflexivity in this ethnographic research.

2.2. Can I Study Masculinity?

I asked myself: “What if I approach this transnational marriage case from the men’s point of view and focus on their experience of achieving a foreign marriage in a rural community and being an international husband to an Indonesian woman?” Not contradicting the existing gender norms, I automatically thought, “If I were to carry out this study as a man, it would be very good and productive work,” but I still googled “Can women study masculinity?” to see some examples of female academicians who has done research on masculinity carrying similar concerns with me while she is studying men and masculinity.

Being a veiled woman who can define herself as a religious Muslim and also not very extroverted in her relationships with the people around her, it might not be very easy for me to access men in a relatively conservative environment and convince them to share their experience of marriage which is a truly private area of the daily life. I would realize soon after I started the interviews that these concerns were just some of my prejudices, but the concerns such as the reliability of my study, its conformity with the norms of the society I live in, and the limits of my own communication capacity with the men would remain on my agenda as a question mark throughout the time I conducted this research.

Credibility was a question mark for me because I might not be objective towards men, and they might not tell me their experiences or their thoughts on their Turkish or foreign wives as they are because, after all, I was a woman, too. I was going back and forth between whether these concerns were right or baseless, and I noticed that it was not only me on this inquiry. Maya Lefkowich, who carried out a study on men's health and masculinity in her master's thesis, with her “white cis female researcher” identity notes that she has often been questioned about the credibility of her work on her “ability to access men’s spaces, understand men’s experiences, and analyze data about men.”² She states that:

² Maya Lefkowich, “When Women Study Men: Gendered Implications for Qualitative Research,” *International Journal of Qualitative Methods* 18 (January 1, 2019): 1.

“Once, I was asked by an anonymous peer reviewer to justify my role in a project about men by providing evidence of other female researchers who successfully study men without imposing their bias. These lines of inquiry presume that being a woman inherently challenges the credibility of my work with men and about masculinities.”³

Very interestingly, during the process that I framed and conducted my research, I was on very similar “lines of inquiry” and was frequently asked firstly by myself, my peers, friends, and family members about my capacity to access the Turkish men because they are less likely than Indonesian women to agree to be interviewed. Even if they do, they might not want to share their private lives, personal experiences, or thoughts on women because they might not see me as close enough to talk to. They might not want to share their thoughts on the grounds that I would not understand them, or they might look down on me and not find my work credible as a woman researcher. More importantly, I was not a male at all and not very close to men in my family and friend circles. Being raised in a quite conservative family, I generally spent time with my female friends or female family members in my daily life. So, I would say that I did not find it very natural to communicate with men and thought that this might make it difficult for me to understand their experiences and feelings.

Moreover, I also questioned whether, as a Muslim female researcher, interviewing male members of a Muslim family was in line with the social and religious norms of the place, because, again, having grown up in the area and in a religious family, I was well aware that there are some boundaries between men and women who are not intimate with each other. For example, at a dinner or tea where different families or neighbors meet, women and men gather in separate rooms, or even if they are in the same room, they are in different conversation circles. In such a situation, I would be expected to spend most of my time together with women in a feminine space, for example in the kitchen, and it would be frowned upon for me to be in the company of men. Indeed, I once experienced a situation where crossing these boundaries was a bit difficult for me. At an iftar⁴ event in one of my relative’s house in 2022, there were three Turkish-Indonesian couples and me, and this is an excerpt from my notes on that night:

“When we went there, I had already decided that I wanted to work as a man, so I wanted to sit with men rather than women, but you know the haremlik-selamlık issues. After iftar, my relative, Asım, and Yunus sat on the balcony

³ Lefkovich, 1.

⁴ The name of dinner for breaking fasting in the Islamic culture.

during tea time and we were inside. Of course, I couldn't have iftar with my uncles, but I wanted to accompany them at least during tea. After chatting with the women for a while, I got permission from Yuni and Widya and went out on the balcony; actually, I should mention that there are not very strict boundaries here, it was not a big deal for me to go out on the balcony, but I could still see the surprise and tension in Asim very clearly. We had never met him before, he knew me as my uncle's niece who was studying at the university and what I wanted to do was probably like homework for him, so it should not be something to do with him, but of course, I could ask his wife a few questions.”⁵

As I have written in this field note, there was no clear boundary between women's and men's household spaces, nor was there a strict rule that women could not be in the same room with men or talk to them, yet the embarrassment I felt in a such situation and the nervousness of the participants showed the limits of my research and the studying masculinity as a woman. My access to men's space or involvement in men's talk was probably more limited and difficult compared to male researchers. Indeed, Yi'en Cheng, a male researcher who works on masculinity within the transnational marriage context, found out that “his own masculinity serves as an important resource for soliciting information. For instance, the husbands were more willing to talk about their marital experience when Cheng framed interview conversations as ‘men’s talk’.”⁶ In fact, as a young female researcher, I was not able to create an environment for the men's talk or somehow be involved in it, and I believe this was a limitation of my research.

However, the claim for a scientific research and labeling some researchers as being subjective in their scientific work due to their certain identities such as gender, skin color, or religious identity is a way of othering and marginalization within the academic borders.⁷ Lefkowich argues that “Cis, White, male scholars, by contrast, are often normalized as neutral experts and are rarely investigated along the same lines.”⁸ which is related to masculinity as much as it is related to gender inequality in academia, and adds that “Many scholars feel pressured to adopt this masculinized voice to demonstrate trustworthiness in their research proposals and solicit competitive

⁵ Fieldnotes, 09.04.2022, Direkbükü.

⁶ Yi'En Cheng, Brenda S.A. Yeoh, and Juan Zhang, “Still ‘Breadwinners’ and ‘Providers’: Singaporean Husbands, Money and Masculinity in Transnational Marriages,” *Gender, Place & Culture* 22, no. 6 (July 3, 2015): 872, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0966369X.2014.917282>.

⁷ Lefkowich, “When Women Study Men,” 2.

⁸ Lefkowich, 2.

funding.”⁹ In contrast, she promotes “uncertainty, collaboration, humility, and curiosity” as the very central values in scientific research.¹⁰ Based on this statement, during my research, I tried to listen to various uncertainties and the very personal curiosities, and also tried to carry out my work in collaboration with the participants of the study. Sometimes, I observed that too much uncertainty and even, in some cases, too much humility made it difficult for me to understand what kind of a research field I’m in and has pushed me into a state of knowing nothing and also not being able to interpret my own observations. On the other hand, being reflexive on what I’m experiencing in that research field as both an insider and an outsider, being aware of the limits, uncertainties, and complexities of my research capacities, and acknowledging my certain prejudices and personal curiosities increased the accountability and trustworthiness of this research project. It made me more careful about not including my prejudices and personal curiosities that I had at the beginning of the project in the research.

As opposed to the claims that men will be unwilling to share their life experiences with female researchers, Lefkowich argues that it is more likely that they will be willing to collaborate with the female researcher as they won’t perceive her as a threatening or dominant figure against them.¹¹ Through a gender performance of “nurturance,” “patience” and “passivity,” the female researchers can encourage the male participants to express their feelings and share their thoughts which are traditionally perceived as feminine behaviors.”¹² Although I was an outsider to the male participants in my research and had some disadvantages in accessing the men’s spaces and participating in men’s talks, I had many other opportunities for female gender performance, which a male researcher might not have.

For many of them, I was in the position of a young sister or daughter who could listen to their problems and sufferings from their past and current marriages without judgment and who would not reappear in their everyday lives to make them embarrassed about what they shared with me. Also, some of them saw me as their young unmarried daughter whom they would advise not to be such a woman and wife

⁹ Lefkowich, 2.

¹⁰ Lefkowich, 2.

¹¹ Lefkowich, 4.

¹² Lefkowich, “When Women Study Men.”

in the future, as the men who had experienced many problems in their marriages with the Turkish women and found the source of these problems mainly in the women being over-demander, disobedient, and troublemakers. My interview with Yılmaz was a good example of such a case. He was strictly against his wife and himself be interviewed and rejected my first request for an interview through his wife. Later, when he recognized me at a lunch gathering of Indonesian-Turkish couples, he graciously introduced me to his wife and, upon my request, agreed to be an interviewed. During our conversation, he openly shared his experiences in transnational marriages and his insights into contemporary marital challenges. He particularly emphasized the issue of Turkish women's perceived demanding and materialistic attitudes in relationships. As a piece of sisterly advice, he stressed that I shouldn't base my decision on a prospective husband's financial status and encouraged me not to make it a determining factor.

“It's about you, too. Today you are single; tomorrow you will get married, you will see some things... (...) If you want, you can do *istiharah*¹³ before you get married, there are things like that. However, let me tell you this, never make the others' wealth a thing for you, that is, if one own the whole world, I will tell you not to look at it. Because you don't know how he earned his money, where it came from, it might come from something haram. You can't know why and when you get into it, what will come from that money? It may give you things (things that are haram). It takes away your peace of mind, it takes away everything.”¹⁴

I need to highlight that it was more difficult for me to access the Turkish men and make them convince to be interviewed compared to the Indonesian women, however; when I managed to introduce myself and build rapport, I observed that they were quite willing to share their experiences with me and wanted to be listened to about their problems with their past and current marriages. When the topic comes to women, especially Turkish women, they need to express their thoughts by excluding me, like, "You are a woman too, but I keep you out." or "Don't take it personally," etc. In such cases, sometimes as a spontaneous reaction and sometimes as an interview strategy, I remained silent and nodded my head as if I agreed with the participant's assumptions about gender inequality and his degrading thoughts and attitudes towards women.

¹³ *Istikhara* literally means Prayer of Seeking Counsel. It is a prayer practiced by Muslims who are in search of guidance from Allah when they are facing a pivotal decision in their lives.

¹⁴ Interview with Yusuf, May 19, 2022.

Even with some of their opinions with which I did not agree at all, I tried to hide my disagreement with small gestures of surprise.

This approach could be interpreted as an "engaged and sympathetic interaction between two individuals," as Kathleen M Blee discusses in her study on the Ku Klux Klan organization in Indiana and its terrorism against African Americans, Catholics, and Jews.¹⁵ Drawing from her experiences in oral history with Klan members, who are associated with hate groups, she raises the question of whether "it's possible to say nothing of desirable, to create an empathic environment when interviewing Klan members?"¹⁶ In her interviews with the members of Klan members, she chose not to maintain rapport with the interviewees and didn't shy away from controversial topics.

It's essential to emphasize that Blee's interviewing strategy is specific to her research context, and it is a valid approach. In my own fieldwork, I must acknowledge that I had moments of self-doubt, particularly when I had to adopt a silent and approving stance toward the men's aggressive and degrading discourse about women. However, in contrast to Blee's study, my interviewees sometimes struggled to express their thoughts about their marital experiences, especially those who perceived themselves as socially and psychologically vulnerable.

Some of my interviewees faced challenges in fulfilling the expected financial provider role in their past marriages, often due to pressure from their prospective wives, their families, and society in general. These individuals were more sensitive about their experiences than others. In such cases, where a more sympathetic and supportive interview was necessary, I chose not to engage in arguments, even if I strongly disagreed with their generalized negative experiences with women. I maintained silence as part of my interview strategy to protect the sensitivity of the situation. As a final note on this, I would say that despite the limitations and difficulties in interviewing men as woman, I was able to encourage them to talk about their experiences of past and current marriages and their relationship with the men around

¹⁵ Kathleen M Blee, "Evidence, Empathy, and Ethics: Lessons from Oral Histories of the Klan," *The Journal of American History* 80, no. 2 (1993): 604.

¹⁶ Blee, 604.

through an interviewing strategy and a gender performance of being silent, patient and listening.

Moreover, I think men cannot always be considered as the most suitable interviewers in masculinity studies as well. That is, it is also possible to talk about some cases in which male participants may feel uncomfortable talking and sharing their experiences with another man whom they might see as superior, judgmental, and threatening, especially if they are being interviewed on an issue that they contradict with the hegemonic norms and values of the society such as an unsuccessful marriage and the stamp of being an incompetent husband.

Likewise, in the transnational marriage case between the Indonesian women and the Turkish men, the local people considered this marriage as an extraordinary way of starting a family and saw it as problematic in terms of the cultural and linguistic differences and the long distance between the two countries. Although men didn't adopt such a perception about their own marriage, they are aware of it. During the participant observations and in-depth interviews that I have done with the husbands, I observed that they were more comfortable talking about the problems of their past and current marriages with me compared to a male relative or friend. I can say that in some cases when I was in the field with my mother, I often observed that in a room where the participant, his wife, myself, and my mother were present, the participant was open to talk about his experiences, but when another man from my or the participant's relative entered the room, he preferred to end his narrative or change the subject entirely. The interview I had alone with Zeydi in the backyard of the house while my mother, Zeydi's wife, and two other Indonesian women were sitting inside the house is actually a very good example I would like to mention. When Zeydi was talking about the problems with his previous marriage, the taxi driver who brought us there started to wander around us, and we needed to include him in the conversation. After he came, it was very clear that Zeydi was not comfortable like he was before, but we could still continue the interview. However, when another man, whom Zeydi knew, appeared a little ahead of us, he hinted that he did not want to continue, and our interview ended there.

In conclusion, I would like to say that we cannot come out with an argument that female researchers would be unsuccessful on masculinity studies and their research with men. All generalizations that female researchers might have limited access to men's space or they might have prejudices against men, and their authority as researchers might be challenged by their gender remain unsound when these are examined within the research context. Such limitations emerge as advantages rather than disadvantages or can be turned into advantages through research strategies such as gender performance as in this case. Lefkowich argues that the reasons why and what behaviors and attitudes women researchers are subjected to during their research and how they respond to and challenge these behaviors should also be taken into consideration during the research process.¹⁷ Based on these discussions, during my research process, I have tried to be reflexive on the fieldwork experiences I had as a woman and tried to overcome certain difficulties that I encountered throughout the fieldwork by using various research strategies. For example, in cases where it was difficult for me to conceive the male participant to be interviewed, I tried to involve key informants or a relative who was acquainted with that participant. As another interviewing strategy, I tried to remain silent and passive against the interviewer's aggressive and degrading words towards the women, and even in some cases, I tried to perform as if I were their young sister or daughter who was open to their counseling.

2.3. An Ethnographic Fieldwork on Marriage

Among the various methodologies and methods in quantitative and qualitative research, ethnography would be the most suitable and productive one for this research project through which I aimed to understand the change in the local experiences and the perspectives on marriage and transnational marriage in a particular location in the Black Sea region rather than the changing ratio of such transnational marriages in the region. Although numbers and quantitative data have a great importance in measuring the extent of change in the marriage practices in this locality, they also remain limited to show how this change is experienced by the local community. In line with this, I have used the numerical data to understand the quantitative aspect of change in all cases of transnational marriage in Turkey, in general, and Turkish-Indonesian marriages in particular, and to contextualize the Turkish men's marriages to

¹⁷ Lefkowich, "When Women Study Men," 6.

Indonesian women within this general framework. But more importantly, I adapted ethnography as the methodology of this research case in order to have a better and more comprehensive understanding of Turkish men's experience of a transnational marriage and being a husband to an Indonesian wife; their use of digital platforms to sustain the pre-marital relationship with their Indonesian fiancée; their motives to achieve these marriages, etc.

Here, I would like to talk about how I conducted my ethnographic research and explain which specific methods I preferred to apply to achieve the research objectives. In the most general sense, ethnography can be defined as a systematic and exploratory approach in qualitative research, aiming to have a comprehensive understanding of a certain group of people's cultures, experiences, lives, daily practices, rituals, belief systems, or socio-political structures. To achieve this comprehensive understanding of a particular group they study, the ethnographer spends a significant amount of time among them, observes their way of living, and conducts in-depth interviews with the people. Such an approach and methodology enable the ethnographer to gather firsthand data and offer a closer lens to understand people's lived experiences. Margaret Diane LeCompte and Jean Schensul summarize this as "Much like naturalists, ethnographic researchers learn through systematic observation in the 'field' by interviewing and carefully recording what they see, hear, and observe people doing while also learning the meanings that people attribute to what they do and the things they make."¹⁸ An important point to note in this definition is that as well as their own observations, the ethnographer should prioritize the meanings that subjects give their own experience and practices. In other words, "Ethnography takes the position that human behavior and the ways in which people construct and make meaning of their worlds and their lives are highly variable and **locally specific**."¹⁹

Historically, ethnography emerged in the late 19th century within the discipline of anthropology as being both a process of data collection and participant observation and a product of research findings.²⁰ "Anthropologists began to use the term

¹⁸ Margaret Diane LeCompte and Jean J. Schensul, *Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research: An Introduction*, 2nd ed, The Ethnographer's Toolkit 1 (Lanham, Md: AltaMira Press, 2010), 16.

¹⁹ LeCompte and Schensul, *Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research*. *Bold in original

²⁰ Sharan B Merriam and Elizabeth J Tisdell, "Qualitative Research: A Guide to Design and Implementation," n.d., 29.

ethnography for descriptive accounts of the lifeways of particular local sets of people who lived in colonial situations around the world.”²¹ Franz Boas, and later A. R. Radcliffe-Brown and Bronislaw Malinowski were the hallmark figures of qualitative studies in that period with their “encyclopedic approach” to the field research and data collection.²² Their research was mainly on the data that was acquired from demographic accounts of a particular community, regional maps, narratives of local history and accounts of the daily life in that locality. More importantly, Boas adapted cultural relativism into this research methodology by recognizing the differences in different local settings and making face-to-face interactions with the local community to gather first-hand data. Additionally, after his prolonged fieldwork in the Trobriand Islands, Malinowski developed a more inclusive approach based on the local’s own perspectives on their everyday lives and cultures.²³

Above Boas’s efforts to get the data from the locals themselves and Malinowski’s endeavor to bring their point of view into the study just to verify the objective observation, contemporary ethnography prioritizes the protection of ethical considerations, sensitivity, and care in the context of its relationship with the participant rather than gathering the first-hand data. Also, rather than the long duration fieldwork that aims to comprehend all aspects of social life in a community as the pioneers of ethnography did, the contemporary ethnographers choose to conduct short-term but repeated fieldwork that aims to understand more specific topic or problem related to a specific community.²⁴

Another aspect of contemporary ethnography that should be mentioned here is its self-acknowledgment of the limited resources, time, and capabilities to achieve ethnographic research but, at the same time, the utilization of the ability to produce an achieved final product with the existing opportunities and resources. This kind of approach to ethnographic research is named "good-enough ethnography" and was also adapted by Nancy Scheper-Hughes, who is another prominent name in cultural

²¹ Frederick Erickson, “A History of Qualitative Inquiry in Social and Educational Research,” in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln (Thousand Oaks, California: SAGE Publications, 2018), 90. *Italics in original.

²² Erickson, “A History of Qualitative Inquiry in Social and Educational Research.”

²³ Erickson, 92–93.

²⁴ LeCompte and Schensul, *Designing & Conducting Ethnographic Research*, 18.

anthropology and ethnography. According to her and many other contemporary figures,

cultural anthropology was, is, and will always be flawed or imperfect, and that vigorous internal debate and criticism are "normal" and beneficial. While recognizing that at any given time we are limited by the current state of knowledge and theory, we remain committed to fieldwork as our primary method, and still aspire to the production or creation of "good enough" or approximately right ethnography capable of presenting "adequate explanations" of human and social behavior which are "adequate to the times we live in."²⁵

Being an ethnographer of contemporary times, I also tried to pursue a "good-enough-ethnography" by recognizing the limits and the capacities of my research project and trying to achieve meaningful expression of the lived experiences of the participants as well as possible. To do so, I preferred to use the in-depth interviews, participant observation, and field notes as the basic methods of my ethnographic study. In the following paragraphs, I will present the limits and capacities through which I initiated and maintained this research process and how I got access to the field and the interlocutors. Besides, I will elaborate on how I engaged with my interlocutors, how I positioned myself in the research space, and which ethical concerns I carried out during and after the fieldwork period. To sum up, I will try to give an overview of how I conducted this research and how I experienced the fieldwork process in general.

2.3.1. In-depth Interviews

First of all, to gain a deeper insight into the participants' experiences of marriage, masculinity and everyday life, I conducted in-depth interviews with open-ended questions and utilized the interviewing techniques of the oral history methodology. In-depth interviewing is an extremely important method in ethnographic research in that it facilitates the process for the researchers to access unbiased information and a non-processed set of data. It allows the participants to talk about their experiences and thoughts without any direction from the interviewer. The in-depth interview technique involves highly flexible, open-ended questions rather than closed-ended, structured, multiple-choice survey questions. The fact that the boundaries of the participant's answers to the questions are not strictly defined is also important in terms of opening

²⁵Antonius C. G. M. Robben and Jeffrey A. Sluka, "Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology: An Introduction," in *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader* (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2007), 23.

new areas of exploration for the researcher. In addition, the in-depth interview technique brings the relationship between the researcher and the participant from formality to a more lively and positive setting.²⁶ However, the participant is not directed by the interviewer or the flexibility of the interview itself doesn't mean that the researcher is a passive figure during the interview. Rather, "a good exploratory in-depth interview calls for an alert mind, logical thinking, and excellent communication skills" and necessitates the interviewer to be watchful in keeping the participant on the topic, making meaningful relations and asking further questions, and also making sure that the participant is clearly expressing his/her ideas.²⁷

During my in-depth interviews, I also tried to be alert and watchful in all of these and asked the participants open-ended questions about their past and current marriages, and their relationship with their spouses, and their everyday lives. For example, instead of the yes/no questions or the questions starting with "what", I chose to ask questions relating to how they realized, experienced, or processed their marriage or how they think about a particular issue. In the whole research process, I observed that such an approach allowed me to develop my questions after an interview as I came across new and different topics that should be examined. As an example, after noticing that they were eager to talk about their thoughts on Turkish women and to compare the Indonesians to Turks, I started to ask them how they saw the differences between Indonesian and Turkish women in the next interviews.

Additionally, I followed some particular techniques of the oral history to have more comprehensive and detailed understanding on the participants' life stories. Oral history interviews are also open-ended and flexible in terms of allowing the participant to talk about their experiences without being interrupted or directed. However, oral history offers a more "complex" and "multi-vocal" narrative, drawing on the past memories and current experiences of the individuals or groups involved in the research.²⁸ In this context, oral history interviews reveal the connections and transformations between the past, present, and futures of the participants, where memories are transformed into

²⁶ Jean J. Schensul and Margaret Diane LeCompte, *Essential Ethnographic Methods: A Mixed Methods Approach*, 2nd ed, Ethnographer's Toolkit, Book 3 (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2012), 135–36.

²⁷ Schensul and LeCompte, 137.

²⁸ Ramazan Aras et al., "Documenting and Interpreting Conflict through Oral History: A Working Guide." (New York: Columbia University Libraries and TAARII, 2013), 2.

narratives and new narratives are produced.²⁹ Following this pattern of pasts, presents and futures of the participants, my questionnaire started with the questions about their childhood and youth experiences; their first marriages, if they got married before; and their memoirs with their parents.

During this fieldwork, I reached a total number of twenty Turkish-Indonesian couples, with ten of them residing in Espiye- a small coastal town in Giresun. Additionally, one couple was located in Tirebolu, another in Yağlıdere, and the remaining eight couples were distributed among various villages connected to Güce and Espiye districts. All three couples were divorced, and these Indonesian women went back to Indonesia. In one of these divorce cases, the Turkish husband married again to another Indonesian woman. Considering the age range of the participants, sixteen of the men are in ages btw 40-60, two of them are in their 70s, and one is 85. Four Indonesian women are in their 30s, twelve of them are in ages btw 40-60, and two of them are above 60. Transnational marriage cases mark the second or third marriage for sixteen Turkish men and the second marriage for ten Indonesian women. Only three of the men and four of the women were single prior to their marriages with Indonesian/Turkish spouses. While I lack specific data on the income levels, my observation regarding the education, occupation, and social lives of both male and female participants indicates that they predominantly fall within the lower-middle class social status. The majority of the male interlocutors were engaged in farming and husbandry activities alongside their professional jobs. Female interlocutors, on the other hand, mostly stated that they were working in a company or factory. Among the below-listed male and female interlocutors, I could reach out to seventeen men and fifteen women in person. I conducted in-depth interviews with sixteen men and seven women.

²⁹ Aras et al., "Documenting and Interpreting Conflict through Oral History: A Working Guide."

Table 2.1. List of Male Interlocutors

Pseudonyms	Age	Job	Educational Background	Date of Marriage w/ Indonesian Wife	Number of Children	Previous Marriages, if applicable	Number of Children from Previous Marriages
İsmet	60+	Farmer	Elementary School	2019	No	Married once	4
Sami	70	Farmer	Elementary School	2018	No	Married once	5
Yunus	63	Farmer	High School	2019	No	Married once	4
Sinan	55+	Welder, Germany	High School	2023	No	Married once	3
Osman	64	Construction worker	Primary School	2019	No	Married once	3
Zeynel	50	Tradesman	Primary School	2021	No	Married once	No
Hacıemin	85	Worker, Germany	Primary School	2023	No	Married once	3
Mustafa	48	Farmer	Bachelor's Degree	2022	1	Married twice	No
Hamdi	58	Farmer	Primary School	2022	No	Married once	3
Remzi	53	Craftsman	Highschool	2013	1	Married once	1
Kemal	52	Worker	Highschool	2020	No	Married twice	3
Yılmaz	43	Shopkeeper	Highschool	2017	2	No	-
Mahmut	40	Machine operator	Highschool	2019	1	No	-
Nuri	70	Constructor	Highschool	2019	No	Married once	4
Hikmet	60	Cook, farmer	Primary School	2022	No	Married once	6
Asım	58	Sailor	Primary School	2022 divorced	No	Married once	4
İbrahim	60	Farmer	Primary School	2023	No	Married twice	4
Salim	48	Farmer	Bachelor's Degree	2021	Expecting baby	No	-
Seyfi	42	Shopkeeper	Highschool	2019	Expecting baby	Unknown	Unknown

Table 2.2. List of Female Interlocutors

Pseudonyms	Age	Educational Background	Job while in Indonesia	Number of Children	Previous Marriages, if Applicable	Number of Children from Previous Marriages
Melati	58	Highschool	Textile worker	No	No	-
Winda	68	Master's Degree	Officer	No	Married Once	1
Fatima	50+	Master's Degree	Officer	No	Married Once	No
Salma	48	Highschool	Shopkeeper	No	Married Once	2
Lina	50	Bachelor's Degree	English teacher	No	Married Twice	No
Mawar	52	Bachelor's Degree	Secreteriat	No	Married Once	1
Mariam	64	Unknown	Careworker	No	Married Once	Unknown
Cahya	45	Bachelor's Degree	Unknown	1	Married Once	1
Lestary	35	Highschool	Textile worker	1	Married Once	2
Sarwendah	46	Highschool	Exhibitor	1	No	-
Waty	40	Highschool	Housewife	No	Married Once	2
Annisa	35	Highschool	Bank officer	2	No	-
Wulan	53	Highschool	Cook	No	Married Once	-
Anny	53	Bachelor's Degree	Textile worker	No	Married Once	1
Farah	49	Highschool	Secretariat	No	Married Once	3
Nurul	45	Bachelor's Degree	Unknown	No	Married Once	Unknown
Aisha	30	Bachelor's Degree	Hotel worker	Expecting Baby	No	-
Hajar	35	Highschool	Unknown	Expecting Baby	Unknown	Unknown
Yasmin	38	Highschool	Unknown	1	Married Once	1

2.3.2. Participant Observation

In addition to the in-depth interviews, I also conducted short-term but repeated participant observations to increase my engagement and immersion with the field and the participants. Participant observation is defined as a “process of learning through exposure to or involvement in the day-to-day or routine activities of participants in the research setting.”³⁰ According to Schensul and LeCompte, most of the ethnographic research begins with a participant observation because it enables the researcher to

³⁰ Schensul and LeCompte, *Essential Ethnographic Methods*, 83.

establish relationships that will initiate the research process and to grasp the socio-cultural and political structure of that locality as well as the relationships among the people living there.³¹ Participant observation necessitates an active involvement and engagement in the events, rituals, conversations, and daily practices and also a watchful investigation of social behavior, habits, and socio-political structuring etc. In the meantime, it provides a rich setting in that the researcher can conduct informal interviews or have small talks with the locals, which will immerse the researcher into the field more easily and enrich the data-gathering process.

During the fieldwork, my participant observation generally included settings like the Indonesian brides gathering to read Qur'an or to cook and eat Indonesian food together, accompanying them in shopping in the bazaar or the market, or the family and neighbor meetings in which the other Turkish-Indonesian couples and the local community members are invited. I tried to actively participate in such meetings and observe the relationships among the couples in particular and the whole community in general. Being an effective tool to establish and sustain the continuity of network within the field and to "get access to information that is difficult to get otherwise," small talk is a hard way of communication both in the social and fieldwork contexts.³² During my fieldwork experiences, it was quite hard for me to keep up with the small talks and informal interviews with my participants because in most of the cases, I could have limited access to the men's daily lives because of the difficulties related to gender and a limited chance to make small talks with the Indonesian women because of the language differences. Still, I tried to create ways of further relations with them, such as keeping communication through social media accounts and messaging applications and inviting them to my family house for tea or lunch together with their families.

Another important issue in the course of participant observation is the access to the key informants and the gatekeepers. In closed or open research settings, gatekeepers are the people who are in a position to control access and allow the researcher to conduct the research in a specific place or community and to interview the necessary individuals and groups. In most of fieldwork research, the "initial access" to the

³¹ Schensul and LeCompte, 83.

³² Henk Driessen and Willy Jansen, "The Hard Work of Small Talk in Ethnographic Fieldwork," *Journal of Anthropological Research* 69, no. 2 (June 2013): 250, <https://doi.org/10.3998/jar.0521004.0069.205>.

research setting sustained by the gatekeeper person, thus, the researcher needs to find out and contact the gatekeeper to ask for permission to initiate the research process.³³ Besides, key informants are defined as the people who “understand the research and can identify other participants, places and situations that will be helpful to the research project.”³⁴ They are extremely important figures in terms of the progress of the research as they can send the researcher to pinpoint places and people, on the other hand; they the researcher should be critical in that the key informants have the potential to (mis)direct the research process overall.³⁵

Acknowledging the importance of the gatekeeper and key informant persons to have access to the research setting and interview the key participants, my first step was to contact the gatekeeper person who knows most of the Indonesian-Turkish couples around this locality and ask him if my research is convenient for them and if he could introduce me to the other couples. Yunus himself was married to an Indonesian woman, and more importantly, he was in a matchmaker position who is able arrange such marriages between Turkish men and Indonesian women as he could speak English and visited Indonesia before he married to his wife. Like Yunus, his wife Fatima also spoke English and a bit of Turkish; having lived here for five years, she was in contact with other Indonesian women in the region and was in a position to mediate in case of any problems between the Indonesian women and their Turkish husbands or relatives. Therefore, this couple was both a gatekeeper and key informant for my research case and during my observation, I noticed that they were helpful, but at the same time they didn't want me to conduct interviews without their information and to participate in the Indonesian women's meetings all the time. At a meeting of Indonesian women, Fatima was mad at me because I had contacted another Indonesian woman who was going to attend the meeting instead of asking her, but the actual reason why I passed by her is the possibility that she could turn me away. Such cases were happening with Yunus in cases that I wanted to interview the Turkish men or Indonesian women whom he was not in favor or whom he considered useless for research. As a result, I had to exercise caution and approach their guidance and opinions on marriages critically, even though I frequently sought their assistance as

³³ Alan Bryman, “Ethnography and Participant Observation,” in *Social Research Methods* (Canada: Oxford University Press, 2019).

³⁴ Bryman.

³⁵ Bryman.

intermediaries between myself and other participants. As my fieldwork progressed and I developed closer relationships with other couples, I deliberately distanced myself from the Yunus-Fatima couple to avoid any potential biases or misleading information during the research.

One last note on this topic would be the importance of the relationship that is established with the interlocutors during the fieldwork process. According to Jeffrey Sluka,

The success of ethnographic fieldwork is in large measure determined by the ability to establish good rapport and develop meaningful relations with research participants. When fieldwork fails, it is generally due to a failure to either establish rapport and good relations or maintain them over time. These relations range from friendship to hostility, and may be influenced by ethnicity, religion, class, gender, age, and whether the field researcher is alone or accompanied by family.³⁶

The earliest examples of ethnographic research were more concentrated on collecting firsthand data through face-to-face interaction with the local people and producing an explanatory and descriptive narrative of this data. This form of ethnographic research is later challenged by the new approaches that emerged in contemporary ethnography. Instead of sustaining the power relation between the investigating subject and the investigated object; contemporary anthropologists and ethnographers aimed to establish more reciprocal and collaborative relationships with the participants. “(...) Their relationships with the local members are governed by a commitment to the people, to work with them, i.e., not for them and not about them...”³⁷ Establishing - and of course maintaining- friendships with a few participants during the fieldwork opens up a space for the researcher to expand his/her network in the field and overcome culture shock more easily.³⁸ “It is these friends who often become his best informants.”³⁹ Following this pattern of the contemporary anthropology, I tried to find ways to establish friendship relations with the participants and maintain it after the fieldwork.

³⁶ Robben and Sluka, “Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology: An Introduction,” 121.

³⁷ Annette Kuhlman, “Collaborative Research Among the Kickapoo Tribe of Oklahoma” *Human Organization* 51, no. 3 (1992): 277, as quoted in Robben and Sluka, 21.

³⁸ Robben and Sluka, 121.

³⁹ Hortense Powdermaker, *Stranger and Friend: The Way of an Anthropologist*. (New York: Norton, 1966): 420, as quoted in Robben and Sluka, “Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology: An Introduction.”, 121.

Following this pattern of contemporary anthropology, I tried to pursue an inquiry that has more reflexivity on the work that I am doing, more attachment and conversation rather than the mere interviews, and more reciprocal relationship with the participants like serving them for their various needs as much as I am able to do. It was more challenging to build friendships with the male participants, but I was able to develop stronger and intimate relationships with the Indonesian women, especially those who could speak English. Being a key informant, Widya was one of my close friends during this process. She was very well informed about the Turkish-Indonesian marriages around and very talented in terms of organizing meetings and being an intermediary between me and the Indonesian women. I often turned to her when I needed help in arranging interviews; in the same way, when her Turkish was insufficient to solve a problem with her husband, or she needed help understanding something about the local culture, she would ask me. More importantly, we could engage in lengthy, real conversations about life, our daily problems, and our worldviews. Except for her, I often asked the Indonesian women to see me as a friend rather than a researcher and tried to help them learn Turkish, make online shopping from Turkish stores, and research educational affairs in Turkey when they needed their Indonesian children or themselves, etc.

Acknowledging the fact that “ethnography cannot be understood independently of the experience which produces it”⁴⁰, I have so far tried to present how I experienced the overall process of this ethnographic fieldwork by discussing the social and personal dilemmas of studying masculinity as a female researcher, the dynamics of in-depth interviewing and participant observation, and importance of establishing collaborative and reciprocal relationships with the participants. In the proceeding parts of the chapter, I want to present how these research experiences are correspond in the contemporary anthropology literature and how the interest in the researchers’ self-experiences and positioning in the fieldwork became a matter of importance within the realm of ethnographic research.

⁴⁰ Robben and Sluka, 123.

2.4. Self as a Starting Point: Reflexivity, Positionality and Personality in Ethnography

Although the claim to have a more systematic, disciplined, and rational way of getting knowledge in scientific studies emerged much earlier than August Comte's lifetime, he was one of the pioneers in that as he brought the idea of positivism into the social sciences with a strong belief in the "scientific method" and its "unbiased inquiry, accuracy, and objectivity."⁴¹ *The positivist* mode of research prioritizes a practice of objectivity through a clear distinction between the researcher's own values, lenses, or worldviews and the research. Accordingly, the researcher should sustain secured control over his or her biases, ideas, and assumptions towards the research subject and should follow the famous linear path of a scientific study from defining the research question to determining the research hypothesis, from hypothesis to data collection and analysis and finally to revisions and testing.⁴²

The belief that a social scientist can get the objective truth if he or she uses accurate methodology and proper methods has long been criticized by many scholars of the critical sciences. Donna Haraway who is one of the forefront representatives of such criticisms in the course of feminist literature highlights the social constructionist perspective that views the objectivity of scientific research as no more than an "ideological doctrine" or "official ideology" implied on us with a belief that it will make us understand the world better.⁴³ However, rather than a complete opposition with the doctrine of objectivity as the constructionist view keeps, she proposes a "doctrine of embodied objectivity" which implies a reflection on the "limited location and situated knowledge."⁴⁴ She asserts that the scientific is a detailed and multidimensional knowledge that cannot be reduced in to an objective truth but there is objectivity in the scientific study and it can be obtained by the researcher's own "critical positioning" of "How to see? Where to see from? What limits to vision? What to see for? Whom to see with? Who gets to have more than one point of view? (...)"⁴⁵

⁴¹ Sharlene Nagy Hesse-Biber, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, Third Edition (California: SAGE Publications, 2017), 71.

⁴² Hesse-Biber, 76.

⁴³ Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 577.

⁴⁴ Haraway, 583.

⁴⁵ Haraway, 587.

Haraway's views on reflexivity are important because it finds a middle ground between the claim of objective science and the social constructionist view that sees this claim as a mere political pretense. She considers the researchers' own "critical positioning" - which can be seen as a matter of subjectivity - as necessary for fair, responsible, and accountable research and promotes objectivity in this direction and, therefore, suggests that they be critical and reflective on the certain positionings, assumptions, biases that comes from their political, socio-cultural, and also very personal backgrounds. According to Haraway, what is called objectivity in the course of social sciences can be possible only through a self-reflection that reveals the social, ethical, and political dynamics.⁴⁶

That said, Haraway is not the only name that promotes the self-reflexive approach and positionality in anthropology and ethnographic research. Reflexivity became an indispensable tool for anthropologists and ethnographers in their endeavor to come up with more transparent, reliable, and fair research on human behavior. In almost all contemporary anthropological studies, being aware of the socio-cultural, political, and even religious or anti-religious backgrounds and the gender, race, or nation-based assumptions and biases towards the researched was seen as necessary to be able to differentiate these assumptions and biases from the research process itself. Finally, including the positionality, the awareness on the certain backgrounds and assumptions, and the overall experience of being a field researcher into the ethnographic narrative was conceived as a meaningful effort to increase the productivity, reliability and accountability of the research.

Given this introduction on how the reflexivity approach challenges the understanding of the objectivity of science, I think it is also important to acknowledge how the "self" is understood within the discipline of anthropology because the self is the starting point of the reflexivity and it is important to understand how and why researcher should incorporate his or her self into the study.

The aforementioned methods, such as participant observation and in-depth interviewing, are the most prominent tools in which the researcher completely invests

⁴⁶ Haraway, "Situated Knowledges."

himself/herself in the research. Other than these, the process of taking field notes can be seen as a completely reflexive and self-oriented practice of the ethnographic methodology. Although the researchers could take short and relatively neutral notes about the numbers, names, local phrases, or specific elements of the local culture, in the end, field notes are highly subjective narratives that contain feelings, thoughts, and experiences of the whole field process. In the edited book titled *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, Robert Emerson, Fretz, and Shaw write that;

(...) while fieldnotes are about others, their concerns, and doings gleaned through empathetic immersion, they necessarily reflect and convey the ethnographer's understanding of these concerns and doings. Thus, fieldnotes are written accounts that filter members' experiences and concerns through the person and perspectives of the ethnographer; fieldnotes provide the ethnographer's, not the members', accounts of the latter's experiences, meanings, and concerns.⁴⁷

Thus, although they are kept to preserve observational and narrative data about the subject and the people being researched, field notes inevitably reflect the researchers' self-representation and they are related to the self as much as the participant observation and in-depth interviewing techniques are. To further elaborate on this issue, one should call Anthony Cohen's formulation on a better incorporation of the ethnographer's self into the research.⁴⁸ According to Anthony Cohen, the question of whether the self stands in the way of discovering the objective truth in social sciences has been debated for a long time and even decided: Anthropology is a field that has solved its issue with the self.⁴⁹ Therefore, he proposes to go further and put the ways in which the social scientist "might begin to exploit the intrusive self as an ethnographic resource rather than suffer it as a methodological hindrance."⁵⁰ He highlights three points for an "expedient use" of the self in anthropological studies. First, the anthropologist's awareness first of themselves and then of the individual prevents him from making over-generalizations and simplifications about society and the other. As they sustain justice and awareness for the individual, they would do the same for society.⁵¹ Secondly, Cohen asks about the experience of selfhood and states

⁴⁷ Robert M. Emerson, Rachel I. Fretz, and Linda L. Shaw, *Writing Ethnographic Fieldnotes*, 2nd ed, Chicago Guides to Writing, Editing, and Publishing (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 117.

⁴⁸ Anthony P. Cohen, "Self-Conscious Anthropology," in *Ethnographic Fieldwork: An Anthropological Reader*, ed. Antonius C. G. M. Robben and Jeffrey A. Sluka, 9 (Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub, 2007).

⁴⁹ Cohen, 111.

⁵⁰ Cohen, 111.

⁵¹ Cohen, 111–14.

that it is not contingent and relative as it is assumed to be and disagrees with the relativistic view's claim that the self cannot be separated from the society. Rather, he stands for a more absolute, autonomous, and "self-driven self" instead of a "society-driven self."⁵² On the other hand, Cohen stresses that this idea of a "self-driven self" does not contradict local and cultural differences in perspectives on the self, and as a final remark, he asserts that there can be societies in which there is an unconformity between the dominant view on the self and the personal experiences as well as there can be societies in which there is an over control on the definition and the experience of self or "societies in which these tensions are resolved."⁵³

His views on reflexivity sign a strong and dynamic interaction between the self and the ethnographic research, and more importantly, he goes further than Haraway's projection of a socio-culturally and politically positioned self by standing for a "self-driven self." For Cohen, beyond societal factors such as culture, gender, or nation that impact self-formation, there is an autonomous self that the researcher should be aware of and take into consideration in the course of ethnographic research. Although this "self-driven self" is a good contribution to the positionality and reflexivity studies within the anthropological discipline and ethnographic research, it is possible to go further and include the personality in the knowledge production.

In her article titled "Personality: A New Positionality?" Sarah Moser investigated her own personal traits within the context of her fieldwork in Indonesia. Being aware of her positions as a "female, 'white,' Canadian, graduate student, middle class and so on," she also "found that it was aspects of [her] personality, such as [her] social skills, [her] emotional responses to and interest in local events, how I conducted [herself] and the manner in which [she] navigated the personalities of others."⁵⁴ Moser argued that personalities are as important as positionalities are in field research, and what brought her to this idea was basically the observation she made of her research team in an Indonesian village. They were a group of researchers who had almost the same positionalities, but she noticed that the varying personal traits and "unique individual

⁵² Cohen, 115.

⁵³ Cohen, 117–18.

⁵⁴ Sarah Moser, "Personality: A New Positionality?," *Area* 40, no. 3 (September 2008): 384.

social and emotional qualities" were having different kinds of impacts on the research experience.⁵⁵

Given all these discussions on self-reflexivity in ethnographic research, I would like to present an analysis of my own experience of positionality and personality in the rest of the chapter. In fact, I have already mentioned certain positions that arise from my socio-cultural background, such as being a female, young, unmarried, and veiled researcher, and their reflections on my research experiences of studying men and masculinity. Avoiding repetition in this regard, I would like to present how these characteristics provided me with a positionality during the field process, how my personal traits are reflected in my fieldwork experience and relationships with the interlocutors, and overall, how this positionality and personality were dynamic with issues of being an insider and an outsider.

2.4.1. Dynamism Between the Insider and Outsider Positionalities

Being an insider in ethnographic fieldwork indicates a close connection and association to the field and the group being researched, while being an outsider literally means that the researcher has no belonging or affinity to the people and the culture he or she is studying. An ethnographer's access to the field, the quality of the relationship that they established with the interlocutors, their ability to maintain the fieldwork, their immersion into the field, and their ability to collect sufficient data, and so on are all affected by their insider and outsider positions in the field. Hence, it would be true to argue that the success of the fieldwork is dependent on the utilization of the advantages of these positions and the elimination of their disadvantages. One thing that shouldn't be missed about this insider-outsider relationship is definitely its dynamism. "One's status as insider or outsider is fluid and can change even in the course of a single interview."⁵⁶ During an interview, depending on the question that is asked or the topic, the researcher may find herself in an insider position. However, she doesn't have a specific affiliation to the interviewee or their culture, or it can be the vice versa.⁵⁷ Of course, this fluidity applies to almost all fieldwork contexts in the ethnographic

⁵⁵ Moser, 384.

⁵⁶ Hesse-Biber, *The Practice of Qualitative Research*, 188.

⁵⁷ Hesse-Biber, 188.

research. An ethnographer might keep an insider position due to his or her kinship relations to the social group being studied, and at the same time, he or she might be an outsider because of his or her position as a researcher.

Given all this background information on the insider-outsider positionalities in the ethnographic research and the views on positionality and personality, I want to express how I experienced all these during my fieldwork in Giresun. In this context, the first thing that I should mention would be the dynamic positions that give me insider and outsider positionalities.

First of all, I was affiliated with the field through my familial and neighborhood relations with the couples I was studying with. One of them was among my close relatives, and the other one was in the neighborhood of my family home. This affinity enabled me to get closer to the other couples in the region because they also had friendship and familial ties with each other.

Also, I was born and grew up in this locality and completed my elementary and middle school there. All these provided me with a strong familiarity and insight for a better understanding of their daily life experiences, family and neighborhood relations, socio-cultural norms, and social structures. My position as an insider in that sense was supported by my female identity in the interviews and the participant observation that I conducted with Indonesian women. On the other hand, my fellow townsmen⁵⁸ position as a person who was born and raised in this locality and whose family was living there supported my insider positionality in the context that I was interviewing the Turkish men and conducting participant observation among them.

Although this insider position gave me open access to the field and a better understanding of the local culture and the interpersonal relations within the group I am studying with, it was also a disadvantageous position for me as it brought me certain biases and assumptions that I should be aware of and critical of. To put it honestly, I had prejudices that the Turkish men were behaving badly toward these Indonesian women, and the Indonesian women were realizing these marriage migrations to escape

⁵⁸ Hemşehri

from their disadvantaged lives in Indonesia. Whether this was the case or not will be discussed in the following chapters, together with the related problematics in the literature, but what should be emphasized here is that the conversations and discussions that I had with my professors and peers during the breaks I had from the field made me aware of these biases and critically think about them.

On the other hand, returning back as a young researcher who had completed her high school and undergraduate education outside the city was pushing me into an outsider position among my interlocutors, most of whom are above forty. It was mostly the case that the people that I intended to interview didn't recognize me, although they know my family members very well, and even sometimes, my interview requests were rejected on the grounds that I was not known and, therefore, couldn't be trusted. Furthermore, my gender for the men and my nationality for the Indonesian women posed additional outsider elements that made it challenging to establish and sustain an easy relationship with them. However, it's worth noting that, within the strategizing space provided by the insider-outsider dynamic, I was able to cope with the disadvantages of my outsider position by leveraging the advantages of my insider status.

When male interviewees hesitated to accept interviews on the grounds that they didn't know me, I sought assistance from my family or distant relatives who knew them, building trusting relationships with many of them. This strategy was similarly applied to Indonesian participants in the very rare cases where they are reluctant to be interviewed; I attempted to connect with them through the other female participants with whom I had established stronger relationships through family and neighbor networks.

As the main focus of the research was Turkish men who are married to Indonesian women, I conducted most of my interviews with Turkish men, but I also spent time and maintained contact with numerous Indonesian women through home visits and participation in women's meetings in Espiye. In cases where language barriers arose, I enlisted the help of other multi-lingual women, creating a more interactive and engaged environment for participant observation. For women who spoke English or Turkish, I conducted more in-depth interviews. Employing various interviewing

strategies over the significant age difference with the participants, I took on the role of a sister or daughter with Turkish men and that of a friend with Indonesian women. They shared the same religion, had similar religious sensitivities, and had many common experiences as women. These friendships continue to this day.

Furthermore, although I could easily grasp many things in the field thanks to my insider position, the fact that I was a young single researcher at the age of twenty-five remained an obstacle for me to reach my interlocutors, spending time together with them and finding a topic of conversation in a research context in which the interlocutors are middle-aged couples, and therefore limited my access to the data in a sense. On the other hand, this outsider position provided me with a broader perspective for observing daily lives and relations and an important tool for balancing my insider biases and assumptions. Robben and Sluka, in their book on ethnographic methodology, indicate that a field researcher who keeps an outsider position in his field has a better ground to "observe, experience and make comparisons in ways that insiders can or would not."⁵⁹ Likewise, due to my outsider position in the research field, I could have a chance to better analyze the data and contextualize the findings in other contexts from a broader perspective.

Acknowledging the great impact of a researcher's socio-cultural and gendered identities and certain positionalities that stem from these identities on the research, I also tried to sustain reflexivity regarding my personality's influence on the research. First of all, I should note that I am known as a calm, introverted, and shy person among my family and friends. Having such personality traits in my private life inevitably reflected on the fieldwork I conducted in Giresun both positively and negatively. For example, in meetings with Indonesian women and their husbands, I sometimes found myself struggling to open daily conversations or small talks with my interlocutors. I preferred one-to-one interviews rather than group interviews. This was firstly because the content of the interview was related to the interviewee's private life, and it was hard to sustain privacy in the group interviews; secondly, I felt more comfortable in one-to-one interviews. Although I struggled with such issues, I continued to strive and eventually made strong friendships that facilitated the overall fieldwork process. I

⁵⁹ Robben and Sluka, "Fieldwork in Cultural Anthropology: An Introduction," p. 2

should also mention that my quiet and reserved characteristics allowed me to be a better observer. Sometimes, it can be difficult to perceive and understand what is going on around you when you are too involved in events and relationships. In my case, it was easier to avoid this, and on some occasions, I was able to step aside and observe more closely.

In conclusion, the methodology employed in this ethnographic research, which delves into the transnational marriages of men from Giresun to Indonesian women and the complex dynamics of masculinity within these marriages, is marked by a dynamic interplay of insider-outsider positions within the research context. The interconnectedness of my familial and neighborhood ties to the couples under study allowed for unparalleled access to the field and a profound understanding of their daily lives, interpersonal relations, and socio-cultural norms. This insider position not only facilitated close relationships with the participants but also laid the groundwork for a nuanced interpretation of their experiences. However, these opportunities came with certain challenges, including the need to acknowledge and confront certain biases and assumptions that could potentially affect the research. My return as a young researcher who had completed her high school and undergraduate education outside the city positioned me as an outsider among many of my interlocutors, most of whom were over the age of forty. This unfamiliarity and the related trust issues necessitated careful strategizing to establish and maintain rapport. Nonetheless, the insider-outsider dynamic offered a valuable space for navigating the complexities of the fieldwork. Leveraging my insider status, I managed to mitigate the disadvantages associated with my outsider position.

Moreover, reflexivity played a crucial role in recognizing the impact of my socio-cultural and gendered identities on the research. As a researcher known for being calm, introverted, and shy in my personal life, I found that these traits positively and negatively influenced the fieldwork. While it sometimes made initiating daily conversations a challenge, it allowed for more astute observation, as I could step back and scrutinize events and relationships closely.

2.5. Conclusion

To summarize, I tried to give a reflexive narrative of how I conducted this field research on men's marriages to the Indonesian women in Giresun and tried to express the very personal and scientific experiences that I had during this process. So far, I have mentioned how I got involved in this research project, and my relationship with the people in the field; the development of my research questions, the problems and discussions on studying masculinity as a woman and studying such a private aspect of life as marriage; specific methods I used to achieve my research goals together with my own experience of these methods, and the effects of my positionalities and personalities on the whole fieldwork process through a reflexive stance.

In essence, this methodology chapter underscores the intricate dance between the researcher's positionality, insider-outsider status, and personality traits. The combination of these elements is the bedrock upon which this ethnographic research is built, and it is enabling a deeper and more nuanced exploration of transnational marriages and constructions of masculinity in this unique cultural context. The challenges and advantages brought about by these aspects add depth and complexity to the research process, ultimately contributing to a richer understanding of the subject matter.

CHAPTER III

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THE RELEVANT LITERATURE

3.1. Introduction

In examining the intricate dynamics of transnational marriages between Indonesian women and Turkish men in Giresun, it is imperative to acknowledge the multidimensional nature and different layers of this study. Beyond the conventional focus on marital unions, a comprehensive literature review is warranted, encompassing themes such as transnational mobility, gender dynamics and mate selection, together with the local norms on gender and marriage. This literature review, therefore, endeavors to enhance our comprehension of Turkish-Indonesian marriages within the designated research questions that have been highlighted earlier in the previous chapter.

The following literature review, therefore, seeks to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the research objectives and a better comprehension of the research findings by analyzing the nuanced intersections among the themes as transnational marriages and masculinities, the individual and social processes for mate selection and decision-making; the global and local ideals on masculinity. In this context, the initial exploration involves an examination of the issue of masculinity within the realm of gender studies. This preliminary step aims to comprehend how masculinities have been scrutinized both in global literature and the local context in Turkey. By dissecting the perspectives and approaches employed in existing literature, this inquiry strives to reveal the experiences of masculinity among the men in Giresun who are involved in the subject of these transnational marriages.

Shifting the analytical lens to a distinct layer of the research, the subsequent focus centers on marriage and mate selection.

Proceeding to the next stage, the literature review zooms in on transnational marriage literature. However, instead of presenting an exhaustive review of the transnational marriages, the focus narrows down to the study of women and masculinity within transnational marriage research, as well as the unique landscape of transnational marriages in Turkey. This selective approach aims to provide targeted insights directly relevant to the specific context and objectives of this study.

3.2. Marriage and Mate Selection

Since the Indonesian-Turkish transnational marriages in this study will be viewed through the lens of Turkish men and marriage practices in Turkey, it is noteworthy to have a theoretical understanding of how marriage is approached both in the sociology and anthropology literature in general and how it is studied in the related literature specifically in Turkey. Through the synthesis and analysis of various studies, I have explored the theoretical and ethnographic perspectives on marriage and family, taking into account social norms, gender dynamics, and the increasing influence of individualism in the modern era. This examination also considers how these factors impact practices related to mate selection and marriage. In the first case, I presented the studies on marriage and mate selection in the world literature and then covered how the marriage practice is approached in the related literature in Turkey and which factors affected the marriage institution in Turkish society. In order to avoid deviating from the core of the topic, I have directed this analysis towards a crucial discussion present in the literature: the question of whether marriage is a societal agreement significantly influenced by socio-economic and cultural structures within a community, or if it is grounded in more individualistic patterns of mate selection.

Many scholars emphasize the socio-cultural, religious, economic, political, and historical factors that have a huge impact on the marriage and premarital processes. They define marriage and family as an institution that regulates socio-economic and cultural norms and also the reproduction in society.⁶⁰ By defining marriage as a truly

⁶⁰ Gary P. Ferraro and Susan Andreatta, "Marriage and the Family," in *Cultural Anthropology: An Applied Perspective*, 8th ed (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2010).; Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Disobedience or How Love Conquered Marriage* (United States: Viking Penguin, 2006).; Göran Therborn, *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World* (London: Routledge, 2004),

“socio-sexual institution” Göran Therborn highlights five societal functions for the marriage; it offers “regulation of sexuality,” “arrangement of procreation,” and becomes a “major vehicle of social integration/social division” as it paves the ways for establishment of in-group and outgroup networks webs in the society.⁶¹ For Therborn, marriage bears upon two other aspects of a society: social status and house-holding. Marriage is a major mechanism for settling the social status of adults. This holds for males above all, whereas many societies until quite recently never treated a woman as an adult, or not before she became a grandmother, or at least the mother of a son.⁶²

Another emphasis on the societal aspect of marriage is made through its role in the “sexual division of labor.”⁶³ According to Gary Ferraro and Susan Andreatta, marriage as an institution that regulates sexuality, it also sustains the existing norms that determine the division of household labor between males and females.⁶⁴ More than that, it becomes an institution that sustains a healthy reproduction in the society by meeting the “the material, educational, and emotional needs of children.”⁶⁵

There is a strong emphasis on societal factors and social norms in shaping mate selection and premarital processes of partner relations as well. Ferraro and Andreatta assert that it is the society itself that sets rules for the people in their decision to marry with whom and whom cannot be chosen as a sexual partner.⁶⁶ The prohibition of incest relationships in many societies, the legitimization or prohibition of the same-sex marriages, the promotion of endogamy or exogamy changeably in different cultures are the several examples that they bring to exemplify the societal factors that structures mate selection.⁶⁷

On the other side of the coin, marriage and family in the twenty-first century marked a huge change in both practice and the people’s approach to it. Still being an important sociological matter, there have been many changes in what people expect from

<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203643297>; Elizabeth S Scott, “A World Without Marriage,” *Family Law Quarterly* 41, no. 3 (2007).

⁶¹ Therborn, *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World*, 132–33.

⁶² Therborn, 133.

⁶³ Ferraro and Andreatta, “Marriage and the Family.”

⁶⁴ Ferraro and Andreatta, 210.

⁶⁵ Ferraro and Andreatta, 210.

⁶⁶ Ferraro and Andreatta, 212–13.

⁶⁷ Ferraro and Andreatta, 213.

marriage, how it is understood within the individuals' life courses, how it is framed under the structural changes of modern society, what kind of discourses has been produced regarding the marital and familial relations, etc. Stephanie Coontz's comprehensive study in which she examined the marriage with its entire historical process from the antiquities to the modern times can be an important source to refer in this regard.⁶⁸ In her book, she asserts that although the change in societies' practices and understandings of marriage took place in quite different ways in different parts of the world, however, there was a common experience of this change in almost all around the globe: marriage became something "more optional and more fragile." The traditional association between marriage and child-rearing started to disappear and simultaneously the relationships between men and women underwent a "traumatic transformation."⁶⁹ In this regard, she writes "In fact, I realized the relations between men and women have changed more in the past thirty years than they did in the previous three thousand, and I began to suspect a similar transformation was occurring in the role of marriage."⁷⁰

This "traumatic transformation" by Stephanie Coontz was also considered as an end to the future of the family and marriage in society. According to Elizabeth Scott, conservative and leftist people come to the same point on their thoughts about the future of marriage and family: the institution of marriage has come to an end, or it has already lost its importance in the course of modern society.⁷¹ Of course the two camps differentiated on their evaluation of this outcome: conservatives raise serious concerns about it while the leftist circles such as the feminists see it as essential for the sake of modern society.⁷² However, both approaches foresee a crisis in the traditionally proved form of marriage. According to Scott, "marriage has changed a great deal over the past half century; it is less sharply gendered and less infused with moral superiority than was the traditional institution."⁷³

⁶⁸ Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Disobedience or How Love Conquered Marriage*.

⁶⁹ Coontz, 4.

⁷⁰ Coontz, 4.

⁷¹ Elizabeth S Scott, "A World Without Marriage," 2022, 537.

⁷² Scott, 537.

⁷³ Scott, "A World Without Marriage," 2007, 555.

Another implication in this view is that with the transformation in the family structure from extended to nuclear, the role of the family members in matchmaking and mate selection processes decreased and marriages turned into an independent choice of the partners, based on their emotional and sexual relationships.⁷⁴ Shelley Budgeon stated that the “Major shifts in the structure of gender relations and processes of social transformation, such as individualization and detraditionalization, have significantly altered the nature of intimate relationships.”⁷⁵ In the last two centuries, marriage seen as a “personal and private” sphere in which the relations are established to meet the “emotional and sexual” needs of the couples.⁷⁶

However, calling Coontz’s historical perspective in the discussions on marriage, one should state that the immersion of love and companionship is not really a new invention, instead it dates back to the eighteenth century.⁷⁷ According to Coontz, the concepts such as love, companionship, the pursuit of happiness are included in the people’s expectations regarding marriage, not as an egalitarian practice but as a secured space for the marriage by “getting rid of the cynicism that accompanied mercenary marriage and encouraging couples to place each other first in their affection and loyalties.”⁷⁸ Interestingly, the very similar conservative reaction against the immersion of love and companionship into the marriage was seen in the eighteenth century with the implication that the mate selection would turn into an uncontrolled and inappropriate for the young people as it will depend on their free choice.⁷⁹ Therefore, while acknowledging the change and transformation in marriage and spouse selection practices, it is problematic to approach this as a traumatic transformation that has occurred in the last three to four decades. Yet it is possible to observe a rise in individualism and a decline in the influence of family and structural elements on individuals' choice of a spouse, it must be acknowledged that this is a long-lasting process.

⁷⁴ Bron Ingoldsby and Suzanna D. Smith, *Families in Global and Multicultural Perspective*, (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2006); Shelley Budgeon, “Couple Culture and the Production of Singleness,” *Sexualities* 11, no. 3 (June 2008): 301–25, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1363460708089422>.

⁷⁵ Budgeon, “Couple Culture and the Production of Singleness”, p. 306.

⁷⁶ Stephanie Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage* (New York: Penguin, 2005), pp. 306-307.

⁷⁷ Coontz, *Marriage, a History: From Obedience to Disobedience or How Love Conquered Marriage*, 149.

⁷⁸ Coontz, 149.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

It should also be noted that too much emphasis on individualism and free-choice marriage should not overlook the socio-cultural factors that inevitably continue to have an impact on the phenomenon of marriage.⁸⁰ Given that even the rise of individualism has a socio-cultural background, it seems impossible for the practice of marriage to take place without being influenced by the social, cultural, economic and even political factors in which it takes place. On the other hand, approaching marriage as an institution where structural elements are the main determinant or as a market that is shaped according to social norms and where there are men and women who can be matched with one another is highly problematic in terms of minimizing subjectivity and individual agency. As a result, marriage needs to be addressed without separating it from the time, culture and space in which it takes place, but at the same time without ignoring the subjective contexts.

It is also important to note that many scholars acknowledge that the marriage institution isn't something that can be generalized and universalized in definition, rather it is "defined by laws, culture, religion, historical and social context" and the meaning of marriage "changes over time and can reflect very different social contexts."⁸¹ Therefore, to reach a better understanding on the changing marriage practices in Turkey and to have a better contextualization for the transnational marriage case between the Turkish man and Indonesian women, we should detect the factors that have an effect on the marriage habits in the Turkish society. In that regard, it may be useful to look at whether the rise of free-choice marriages and growing individualism in mate selection observed around the world are reflected in Turkey, if did, to what extent they affected marriage practices in Turkish society, and what social factors come to the forefront in determining marriage practices in Turkey.

First and foremost, it should be noted that from the early republican times, the marriage institution has been affected by the state policies and gendered discourses on equality and family, placing the women as the "the bearers of Westernization, carriers of

⁸⁰ Aylin Sunam, "New Dating and Marriage Practices of Muslim Women: Marriage Websites in Turkey" (Doctorate Thesis, Galatasaray University, 2017), p. 44.

⁸¹ Carol Smart, "Family," in *The Cambridge Dictionary of Sociology*, ed. Bryan S Turner (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 354

secularization and actresses in public realm.”⁸² The Swiss Civil Code which was represented as a route from the old to the contemporary and civilized Turkish society became one of the determinants of change in the marriage practices and politics on it.⁸³ “Transposed to Turkey, it meant a ban on polygamy and on unlimited, unilateral male divorce, while allowing for divorce by mutual consent, and equal male–female inheritance rights.”⁸⁴ These policies were very effective in shaping the both male and female individuals’ marital choices and practices in their daily lives. Likewise, in the current situation, marriage institution is inescapably affected by the neoliberal policies and neo-conservative discourses of the AK Party era, sustaining the same patriarchal motives such as the “regulation of sexuality and the arrangement of procreation.”⁸⁵ With an objective to keep the “population young and the economy strong,”⁸⁶ the AK Party government played an very active role in shaping the marriage and family institutions. As Zeynep Korkman indicated in her study,

Starting in the late 2000s and continuing into the 2010s, Turkey witnessed the emergence of new governmental policies in the areas of reproduction that entailed offering financial incentives for early marriage and multiple children, discouraging caesarian sections and abortions, limiting the use of reproductive technologies to married heterosexual couples, registering and intrusively following-up pregnancies, channeling working mothers to part-time employment and even full-time caretaking, and encouraging the care of children and the elderly, sick, and disabled at home by their family members.⁸⁷

In her critical analysis on the AK Party government’s and specifically Erdoğan’s discursive policies regarding the gender, reproduction, family, and marriage issues in Turkey, she figures out that these intimate spaces of the daily life and the society are “undeniably political” and kind of an operation field of not only the neoconservative

⁸² Nilüfer Göle, *The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling*, (Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1997), quoted in Sunam, “New Dating and Marriage Practices of Muslim Women: Marriage Websites in Turkey”, pp. 89.

⁸³ Therborn, *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World*, 88.

⁸⁴ Therborn, 88.

⁸⁵ Göran Therborn, *Between Sex and Power: Family in the World, 1900-2000* (London: Routledge, 2004) quoted in Sunam, “New Dating and Marriage Practices of Muslim Women: Marriage Websites in Turkey”, pp. 92-96; also see, Zeynep Kurtuluş Korkman, “Politics of Intimacy in Turkey: A Distraction from ‘Real’ Politics?” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 2016): 112–21.

⁸⁶ Zeynep Kurtuluş Korkman, “Blessing Neoliberalism: Economy, Family, and the Occult in Millennial Turkey,” *Journal of the Ottoman and Turkish Studies Association* 2, no. 2 (2015): 347, <https://doi.org/10.2979/jotturstuass.2.2.06>.

⁸⁷ Korkman, 347.

politics but also the “transnational and local feminist struggles for the recognition of intimate issues as political.”⁸⁸

Although the political discourses and the social norms continues to be the very crucial determinants in the marriage practice throughout the contemporary history of Turkey, it is also important to recognize that the worldwide changes in the course of marriage and family reflected on people’s choices and perceptions. For example, in her case study in İzmir, Elif Baş figures out that the people’s orientation to marriage got away from the economic reasons and the objective of continuation of the family lineage, rather, it turned into free-choice and more voluntary and individual practices; families’ effect on the process of mate selection decreased to a great extent and became an approval authority after the decisions are made.⁸⁹

On the other side of the coin, it is also possible to talk about a remarkable decrease in the percentage of free-choice marriages in Turkey in the last two decades, and this decrease is evaluated as "the reflection of rising conservatism and patriarchal revivalism in the country."⁹⁰ Aylin Sunam figured out that the habitus is clearly effective in "shaping mate selection practices and the way of meeting with the spouse" whether it is an arranged or a choice marriage.⁹¹

It is also important to mention that the marriage programs in Turkish TV channels, online dating and marriage websites, and other social media platforms that can provide online dating opportunities to mates have played a major role in marriage processes in the last decades. According to Hülya Uğur Tanrıöver and Aylin Sunam, "today, opportunities for "mixed socialization," where men and women can meet in natural settings and decide to marry, are still very limited, and for some, not possible at all."⁹² Given this situation, these online platforms or TV programs play a crucial role in

⁸⁸ Zeynep Kurtuluş Korkman, “Politics of Intimacy in Turkey,” *Journal of Middle East Women’s Studies* 12, no. 1 (March 1, 2016): 117–18, <https://doi.org/10.1215/15525864-3422611>.

⁸⁹ Elif Baş, “Evlilik: Modernleşme Sürecinde Kuşaklararası Yaşanan Değişim,” *Gaziantep University Journal of Social Sciences* 20, no. 2 (April 27, 2021): 841–43, <https://doi.org/10.21547/jss.823131>.

⁹⁰ Sunam, “New Dating and Marriage Practices of Muslim Women: Marriage Websites in Turkey”, pp. 100-107

⁹¹ Ibid, p. 114.

⁹² Hülya Uğur Tanrıöver and Aylin Sunam, “Türkiye’deki Çevrimiçi Evlilik Siteleri: Medyanın Benlik Sunumuna Etkisinin Toplumsal Cinsiyet Odaklı Bir Analizi,” *Galatasaray Üniversitesi İletişim Dergisi*, no. 26 (June 30, 2017): 12, <https://doi.org/10.16878/gsuilet.324170>.

marriage and mate selection, especially for the groups who are not very involved in the environments where they can choose a spouse and find a match.⁹³ Both the marriage programs in the TV channels and the marriage websites on the digital platforms gained visibility in Turkey with the turn of the 2000s and they popularized through the last decades; diversified in terms of their target groups, and reach millions of users and audience across the country. Therefore, it is undeniable that both of these matchmaking services occupied a major role in the change of the perspectives towards and practices of mate selection and marriage in Turkish society.

Aytemür argues that these marriage programs have the effect of restoring the confidence of people, especially those who have had a failed marriage, in marriage and reinforcing trust in the institution of marriage in society.⁹⁴ In addition, it is possible to see that these programs reproduce the same patriarchal discourses regarding the gender roles in marriage⁹⁵ and reinforce these discourses by directing the couples to an "obeying, loyal and conformist institution".⁹⁶

Also, with the growing spread of the internet and social media channels in daily life, online dating and marriage websites have become a popular platform for mate selection within the last fifteen years in Turkey. Primarily, it is important to highlight that these websites in Turkey get into a division by defining themselves as "scientific" or "Islamic."⁹⁷ Fatma Tütüncü argues that the Islamic marriage websites plays an emancipatory role for women as serving them a vehicle to represent themselves as they wish and have the right to decide to whom they will get marry, at the same time they continue to reproduce gender inequalities on the digital space.⁹⁸ Agreeing with

⁹³ Uğur Tanrıöver and Sunam, 12.

⁹⁴ Gözde Aytemur Nüfusçu and Ayça Yılmaz, "Evlilik Pratiklerinin Dönüşüm/Yeniden Üretim Sürecinde Evlendirme Programları," *Galatasaray University Journal of Communication*, no. 16 (2012): 41.

⁹⁵ Tebrike Kaya, "Televizyonda Yayınlanan İzdivaç Programlarında Toplumsal Cinsiyetin Temsili," *Kadın Araştırmaları Dergisi*, no. 13 (2013): 81–110.

⁹⁶ Gözde Aytemur Nüfusçu and Ayça Yılmaz, "Evlilik Pratiklerinin Dönüşüm/Yeniden Üretim Sürecinde Evlendirme Programları Retrieved from: <http://iletisimdergisi.Gsu.Edu.Tr/Article/View/5000004764/5000005264>," *Galatasaray University Journal of Communication*, no. 16 (2012): 23-48.

⁹⁷ Sunam, "New Dating and Marriage Practices of Muslim Women: Marriage Websites in Turkey", pp. 135-136

⁹⁸ Fatma Tütüncü, "Güzel Ahlaklı Biriyle Hayırlı Bir İzdivaç İçin: İslami Evlilik Siteleri, Dönüşen Mahremiyetler ve Kadın Öznelliği" in *Yeni Medya Çalışmaları*, ed. Mutlu Binark (Ankara: Dipnot Yayınları, 2007), p. 304.

Tütüncü, Serhat Kaymas adds that these websites serves as “new places for Islamic elites and new Islamic discourse.”⁹⁹

The widespread use of marriage websites and other online dating platforms has a very important role in the transformation of marriage practices and the choice of spouse in Turkey. Social media, online messaging applications, and marriage websites have become important socializing venues where people not only find each other but also keep in touch after their first meeting. Considering the long distances over which transnational matches take place, these digital platforms are an important part of the process of meeting and getting to know each other. Therefore, before turning to the literature on transnational marriages, it was important to look at the impact of new media technologies in Turkey on marriage and mate selection in the Turkish context. After this background, it would be useful to look at how transnational marriages are approached in Turkey and in the world literature in general, what kind of studies are conducted, and what other dynamics affected the transnational marriage practices by the development in new media technologies.

3.3. Transnational Marriage and Masculinity

A very quick review of the literature on transnational marriage will reveal that most studies focus on women's subjectivity in these marriages. In transnational marriages, where the migrants are mostly women, questions such as how women are subordinated through their migration and marriage, how and in which contexts patriarchal victimizations over women persist, and what kind of strategy mechanisms women develop to form the basis of the studies. Although these studies are very important in terms of showing women's experiences and practices of transnational marriage, it can be easily observed that there is a great gap in the literature on transnational marriage in terms of studies on male subjectivities. In the following, after a brief review of transnational marriages in general, I present a range of studies exploring how mobile and non-migrant males experience their marriage and masculinity across trans-local spaces. Then, I explain how transnational marriages have evolved in Turkey and how this issue has been addressed in the relevant literature.

⁹⁹ Serhat Kaymas, “Collective Identity in the Virtual Islamic Public Sphere: Reading a Collective Identity into the Islamic Marriage Agencies,” *Journal of Yaşar University* 19, no. 5 (2010): p. 3238.

3.3.1. Marriage as a Market: Gendered Routes for Marriage Migration

Accepting the marriage migration as a form of marriage market that crosses national borders, some studies approach women who conduct transnational marriages as a means to meet the "shortage of women in the marriage market."¹⁰⁰ According to this kind of approach, in many East Asia countries such as China, India, and South Korea, there is a deficiency of women to marry due to some historical and contemporary factors.¹⁰¹ The argument says, historically, there was a "preference for boys" and little care for girls and this unbalanced care triggered a deficit in the female ratios.¹⁰² When it comes to the contemporary age, the unbalanced ratios were perpetuated due to the "new reluctance to have large families" which continues the women shortage as a more serious problem.¹⁰³ As a result of these factors, the men in those countries are more likely to look for wives from the transnational marriage markets and in the Asian context, there emerge global pathways of marriage migration, especially for the women from the countries like Philippines and Vietnam to the countries like China, India and South Korea.¹⁰⁴

It is argued that "in low-income countries such as India and Malaysia, a significant portion of migration from rural areas comprises female mobility due to marriage."¹⁰⁵ An emphasis on the "low-income countries" is striking here with the representation of the women's migration as way to "escape from the poverty"¹⁰⁶ or as an "economic option and tool for gaining [economic] independence"¹⁰⁷ because it contributes to the gender discourse and the gendered formations of the transnational marriage movements. Another research that focuses on this female mobility between the rural and urban territories with an orientation of marriage shows the motive of the women in the rural areas for marrying a man from the urban as a way to escape the patriarchal

¹⁰⁰ Delia Davin, "Marriage Migration in China and East Asia," *Journal of Contemporary China* 16, no. 50 (February 2007): 94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10670560601026827>.

¹⁰¹ Davin, 88.

¹⁰² Ibid p. 88

¹⁰³ Ibid p. 88

¹⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 94

¹⁰⁵ E. Murat Özgür and Olgu Aydın, "Spatial Patterns of Marriage Migration in Turkey," *Marriage & Family Review* 48, no. 5 (July 2012): 420, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2012.676468>.

¹⁰⁶ Özgür and Aydın, 420.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

hierarchies inside the house, in which the newly married women have the position at the very bottom and have almost no agency for decision and acting.¹⁰⁸ Therefore, it is possible to say that the marriage migration, whether it occurs within a country or across the international borders, is often feminized and viewed through a gendered lens that highlights their pursuit of a better socio-economic life.

Despite the fact that the women in most transnational marriage cases are more mobile than the men, one should be aware that the gendered formulations of the transnational pathways are highly problematic when it is associated with simple “material logics.”¹⁰⁹ Yet it is not possible to totally reject the existence of a migration route for women with a goal of family formation¹¹⁰ for some cases, it is problematic that in most of the studies, they were represented as “passive dependents”¹¹¹ as a result of their origins of a less developed country or their backgrounds of a low socio-economic status. However, various other studies approach these women as the very active agents of their marriages and migrations. There are studies that consider the women who have conducted a transnational marriage as both victims and agents of their migration and marriage.¹¹² While they face several constraints, at the same time, they benefit from some opportunities, so they both negotiate and strategize with the constraints and the opportunities.¹¹³

3.3.2. Global Hypergamy to Explain Transnational Female Marriage Migration

Being a truly gendered phenomenon, marriage and transnational marriages are also examined through the lenses of the hypergamy approach. A "conventional anthropological" discipline defines hypergamy as women are marrying up into a higher socio-economic group by referring to a social hierarchy or, for some cases, a hierarchical "chain of geographical location."¹¹⁴ It is argued that the hypergamy

¹⁰⁸Ibid, 423

¹⁰⁹ Nicole Constable, “Introduction,” in *Cross-Border Marriages: Gender and Mobility in Transnational Asia*, ed. Nicole Constable (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005), 11.

¹¹⁰ Oded Stark, “On Marriage and Migration,” *European Journal of Population* 4, no. 1 (September 1988): 32, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01797105>.

¹¹¹ Özgür and Aydin, “Spatial Patterns of Marriage Migration in Turkey,” 420.

¹¹² Wei-Jun Jean Yeung and Zheng Mu, “Migration and Marriage in Asian Contexts,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46, no. 14 (September 12, 2020): 2864, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1585005>.

¹¹³ Yeung and Mu, 2864.

¹¹⁴ Constable, “Introduction,” 10.

approach was developed to explain the patterns of marriage in societies that have a consolidated form of social stratification, such as Indian society.¹¹⁵ Although the men and the women achieve a marriage together, a mobility in the social stratification and in socio-economic status was associated with the women in a hypergamous marriage. Women were seen as being involved in an “upward mobility flow” when they marry a man of higher social status than [they] own, or better, than that of [their] family orientation.”¹¹⁶ Additionally, when they enter into a marriage pattern in the *global* marriage market, “in which women from less developed countries marry men from more developed countries in the hope of finding a more modern and comfortable life”, their marriage is conceptualized as “global hypergamy.”¹¹⁷

Although a “global hypergamy” approach has long been used to explain the general tendencies in transnational marriages, it doesn’t fit realities in most of the cases. It causes paradoxes and contradictions for most of the cases when the lived experiences of those women are taken into consideration with a closer engagement.¹¹⁸ For example, ethnographic research on the experiences of Chosonjok brides was carried out.¹¹⁹ The Chosonjok women were seen as achieving an upward mobility by conducting a marriage migration from China to South Korea. “In reality, however, they have moved from one disadvantaged geographic location to another”¹²⁰ and they experienced a “disappointment” due to the identification of being “other as a foreign bride” by the local people.¹²¹

Contemporary studies on transnational marriages with regard to gender performances approach the women subjects of the transnational marriages as the “individual agents” who have their own decision-making mechanisms and try to challenge the general assumptions and various public discourses that represent the women as victimized,

¹¹⁵ Pierre L. Van Den Berghe, “Hypergamy, Hypergenation, and Miscegenation,” *Human Relations* 13, no. 1 (1960): 84.

¹¹⁶ Berghe, 84.

¹¹⁷ Tuen Yi Chiu and Susanne Y. P. Choi, “The Decoupling of Legal and Spatial Migration of Female Marriage Migrants,” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 46, no. 14 (September 12, 2020): 2998, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369183X.2019.1585018>.

¹¹⁸ Constable, “Introduction,” 10–12.

¹¹⁹ Caren Freeman, “‘Marrying Up and Marrying Down: The Paradoxes of Marital Mobility for Chosonjok Brides in South Korea’ In,” in *Cross-Border Marriages: Gender and Mobility in Transnational Asia*, ed. Constable Nicole (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

¹²⁰ Freeman, 98.

¹²¹ Ibid

poor and vulnerable dependents.¹²² Many studies in this context focus on the decision-making processes, choices and certain strategy and tactics developed by these transnational migrant women who are often represented as the poor victims of the socio-economic, political, and gender structures in their countries of origin.

These are very significant contributions to the transnational marriage literature in the sense that they challenge the overgeneralizations, such as the global hypergamy approach, or the reductionist views, such as the marriage-market explanation. However, they remain insufficient for a comprehensive understanding of the transnational marriage dynamics as they pursue a mere focus on the female experience of transnational marriage and performance of gender but miss the male subjects' roles in and experiences of transnational marriage and their performances of gender within the context of such marriages. On the other hand, understanding the male experiences of transnational marriage in both cases that the men are migrant or non-migrant in their family formation, examining their agency and role in the construction of conjugal relations across the borders, flashing on their own perception and performance of gender within the context of their marriage stories might give remarkable insights not only for an understanding of the transnational marriages but also the local and global experiences of masculinity. Therefore, with an objection to understanding the male experiences and the masculine performances in the transnational marriage cases, in the following, I present how men rework on their masculine ideals when they are engaged in a transnational marriage through the relevant scholarly works on this manner.

3.3.3. Transnational Marriage and Mobile Masculinities

Although it is more common in transnational marriages that men host their transnational wives in their home places, the cases that the men achieve a mobilization with the orientation of marriage have received more attention from the researchers particularly, regarding the change and transformation in the masculine experiences. Mobility within the context of a transnational marriage necessitates a reconfiguration of the ideals, practices, and perceptions of masculinity in the face of the migrant men.

¹²² Lucy Williams, *Global Marriage: Cross-Border Marriage Migration in Global Context* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), 34, <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230283022>.

First of all, the same global hypergamy approach applies to men and masculinity within the context of transnational marriage. Especially the men achieving a migration towards their wives' home places are often perceived as experiencing upward or downward mobility in their socio-economic status depending on their countries of origin and the destinations they arrive in. Adapting a hegemonic-marginalized masculinity dynamic, Fresnoza-Flot points out:

Migrant men from economically developing countries who are in mixed couples most often see their masculine identities downgraded in their partners' countries. In contrast, men from economically wealthy societies generally experience a hegemonic form of masculinity when they migrate to their wives' natal countries.¹²³

Therefore, it is possible to say that the established pathways of marriage migration exist for the transnational husbands -just like they do for the transnational wives. The places of destination and arrival; the spatial hierarchy of the socio-politics on a global scale play an important role in shaping the gender and marriage performances of men.

From a broader perspective, many studies reveal that mobility puts men into a position of weakness, and therefore, traditional masculine identities and masculinities turn into a power that should be regained regardless of whether it is in a marriage context.¹²⁴ Some others figure out that the movement across the borders gives the men a ground that they need to question their traditional and hegemonic masculine ideals and it make them move towards more openness in that regard.¹²⁵ At the same time, transnational mobility creates tension and contradiction that stems from their search for authentic manhood in line with the career, privileges, and pressures of masculinity.¹²⁶ It is also seen that the mobile men develop certain "remasculination strategies as status-based

¹²³ Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot, "(Un)Configurable Masculinities and Gender Dynamics in Men's Eyes: 'Mixed' Couples of Filipino Migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 30, no. 1 (March 2021): 105, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0117196820974020>.

¹²⁴ Amrita Pande, "Mobile Masculinities: Migrant Bangladeshi Men in South Africa," *Gender & Society* 31, no. 3 (June 2017): 383–406, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243217702825>.

¹²⁵ Karla Elliott, "Navigating Mobile Masculinities: Young Men in Melbourne and Berlin" (Doctorate Thesis, Melbourne, Monash University, 2017).

¹²⁶ Elliott.

hypermasculinity, localised masculinity and flexible masculinity” to navigate the practice of emasculation caused by their movement across the national borders.¹²⁷

In the same manner, the men who engaged in a transnational marriage and achieved a migration toward their wives’ home places find themselves in a situation that they need to reconfigure their masculine ideals and practices. However, the direction of mobility creates a big impact on how these ideals and practices will be reconfigured. In Fresnoza-Flot’s study on the Filipino, Dutch, and Belgian men with regard to their transnational marriages, it is found that the Filipino men who got married to the Belgian and Dutch women and migrated there “reconfigure their sense of masculinity to adjust to the situation in their home where their European wives follow the gender equality principle.”¹²⁸ Although they desire to maintain a gendered division of labor with their wives handling house chores and themselves managing finances, Filipino men find themselves with a limited bargaining power in their marriages to European wives, leading to an acceptance of a more egalitarian division of household labor.¹²⁹ In this context, the male migration from the Global South to the Global North with an orientation of marriage challenges the masculine ideals of marriage and household relations and put the men into a situation that they need to leave some of their patriarchal privileges. On the other side, it is also evident that Filipino men strengthen their sense of “successful adult masculinity” within the context of their natal communities as being the men who upgraded their socio-economic status through a charming marriage with a European woman and also being able to financially support his natal family while continuing to be the breadwinner of conjugal family.¹³⁰

3.3.4. Non-Migrant Husbands of Transnational Marriage

Considering that transnational marriage is a whole comprised of many entities such as migration, marriage, gender, and feminine and masculine practices, it is noticeable that masculinity, which is also an important part of this whole, is overlooked in the

¹²⁷ Angela Gracia B. Cruz and Buchanan-Oliver M, “Cruz, A. G. B., & Buchanan-Oliver, M. Mobile Masculinities: Performances of Remasculatation,” *European Journal of Marketing* 51, no. 7–8 (2017): 1374, <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJM-04-2016-0199>.

¹²⁸ Fresnoza-Flot, “(Un)Configurable Masculinities and Gender Dynamics in Men’s Eyes,” 113.

¹²⁹ Fresnoza-Flot, 111.

¹³⁰ Fresnoza-Flot, 109.

literature on transnational marriage. Yet, the migrant husbands of transnational marriages and their experiences of masculinity in the host and natal societies have emerged as a subject of interest -as presented in the previous subtitle- it is quite possible to say that there is a lack of literature on the experiences of non-migrant husbands of such marriages. On the other hand, the vast majority of cases of transnational marriages around the world are marriages in which the woman is a migrant and the man is the host, and the experiences of men in these marriages are of great importance for understanding the changing structure of marriage and gender performances on both local and global stages. Based upon this importance and the gap, the literature regarding non-migrant husbands in transnational marriage cases should be expanded. In the following, I present the very few studies on the non-migrant husbands' experiences of masculinity and marriage around the different parts of the world.

The primary question that arises in this particular realm of inquiry is whether to examine the male experiences and masculine ideals in the transnational marriages in a local or global context. While a small portion part of the relevant literature keeps a primary focus on the localized subjectivities and experiences of the transnational husbands, most of the existing studies elaborate on the transnational facets of these masculinities.

In addition to Constable's endeavor to understand the intrinsic motivations and the social motives in American men's marriages to Asian women, Suzuki also allocates the Japanese men's experiences and practices in a "national" context and argues that;

Japanese men's desires arise from their localized constructions of manhood and nationhood, which are further disciplined by the Japanese state's and private sectors' collaborative capitalist competitions and within globalized sexual and affective cartographies as well as in personal negotiations with partners who themselves bear various attributes.¹³¹

Although she acknowledged that the globally shaped norms on sexuality and effect are also determinant in the practice of transnational marriage by Japanese men, her study primarily focuses on how masculinity ideals and family values are constructed in

¹³¹ Nobue Suzuki, "Marrying a Marilyn of the Tropics: Manhood and Nationhood in Filipina-Japanese Marriages," *Anthropological Quarterly* 80, no. 2 (2007): 448, <https://doi.org/10.1353/anq.2007.0035>.

Japanese society and what significant factors in this construction convinced some of the Japanese men to pursue a transnational marriage with the Filipino women. With that regard, one crucial factor that becomes prominent is the social mechanism that pushes Japanese men to be married by the turn of the age 30s the latest.¹³² She argues that “Being single beyond the ‘proper’ age and relying on marriage agents and others, these men are to blame for being ‘unable to marry’ (*kekkon dekinai*), ‘unqualified’ (*shikkakusha*) or ‘lacking any special skills to find a spouse.’”¹³³

By directing her focus on the local and national dynamics of transnational marriages, Suzuki reveals the socially shaped motivations for marriage and the masculine ideals embraced by the men participating in such marriages. Additionally, she explores how these men are marginalized and demasculinized in the Japanese national context, being accused of blurring the homogenized Japanese population.¹³⁴ With their research on the Singaporean husbands who are married to the Vietnamese women in Singapore, Yi'en Cheng and her colleagues support Suzuki on that the sense of a "masculine anxiety" may be the one factor that motivates the Singaporean men to marry internationally and "restore their sense of masculine self within the domains of marriage and family."¹³⁵

On the other hand, another topic explored in the literature on transnational marriages is the experience of non-migrant husbands across the trans-local spatialities, even if they don't pursue a migration in the context of their marriages. In that regard, Yi'en Cheng and colleagues found out that Singaporean husbands utilize money and their economic potency to restore their marginalized masculine representations by providing financial support and conjugal families in Vietnam as well as the natal family members in Singapore.¹³⁶ "They dislodge themselves from the label of 'losers' in the local marriage market and redefine themselves as capable 'providers' who not only have the financial capability to meet Vietnamese women's expectations but also to rescue them from the jaws of poverty."¹³⁷

¹³² Suzuki, 433–35.

¹³³ Suzuki, 437.

¹³⁴ Suzuki, 438.

¹³⁵ Cheng, Yeoh, and Zhang, “Still ‘Breadwinners’ and ‘Providers.’”

¹³⁶ Cheng, Yeoh, and Zhang, 875.

¹³⁷ Cheng, Yeoh, and Zhang, 875.

It is also interesting to note that the Singaporean non-migrant men's transnational marriages come to the surface as a strategy to reclaim the "respectable and honorable masculine status." .¹³⁸ In doing so, they also engage in a "transnational imagining" over the social standing of their wives, the society their wives come from and themselves. Portraying their Vietnamese wives as the subjugated and victimized women by the abuser Vietnamese men, they present themselves as "a masculine (...) 'saviour' who can offer a better life to women from 'less developed' countries."¹³⁹

In another study, Cheng draws attention to the settled binary between movement and unmovement and acknowledges that mobility is not necessarily limited to space and body.¹⁴⁰ Examining the transnational landscapes of masculine experiences among non-migrant husbands, he figured out that these men construct their masculine identities as "active transnational subjects" by emphasize their marriage as an international experience. They navigate negative local perceptions of gender and marriage towards them by engaging with transnational bodies, spaces, and times, drawing upon these connections to shape their identities.¹⁴¹ In other words, the construction of these "mobile" masculine identities enables them to navigate transnational spaces beyond the present moment, incorporating fragments from the past and glimpses of the future into their self-perception.¹⁴²

In the final analysis, in the transnational marriage literature on masculinity and male subjectivities, it is seen that whether the husband is a migrant or a local in the context of his marriage is considered an important factor determining the experience of marriage and masculinity. Although whether these masculinities are constructed in transnational spatialities or in local contexts is a prominent point of debate, recent studies seem to emphasize trans-local spatiality as a space that determines the experience of marriage and masculinity of transnational husbands. Whether these husbands are migrants in the context of their transnational marriages or whether they are habitants of their local spaces, hosting their transnational wives, in any case, their

¹³⁸ Cheng, Yeoh, and Zhang, 867.

¹³⁹ Cheng, Yeoh, and Zhang, 874–75.

¹⁴⁰ Yi'En Cheng, "Transnational Masculinities in Situ: Singaporean Husbands and Their International Marriage Experiences: Transnational Masculinities in Situ," *Area* 44, no. 1 (March 2012): 76–77, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2011.01045.x>.

¹⁴¹ Cheng, 81.

¹⁴² Cheng, 81.

constructions of masculinity seem to acquire a transnational dimension. Another important issue that needs to be mentioned in this analysis is the impact of transnational marriages on men's hegemonic masculine identities, which are also nourished by patriarchy, in terms of reinforcement or challenge. At this point, it is observed that the performance of hegemonic masculinity is complicated by factors such as the migrant or host status of the man, the position of the country where the husband migrates or where the wife comes from in global politics, and the socio-cultural background of the woman or the man.

3.3.5. Transnational Marriage in the Turkish Context

Although there is an extensive literature on the transnational marriages and marriage migration all over the world, the growing literature in Turkey consists of a few studies and several master's theses most of which are focused on the Russian and Syrian brides in Turkey. On the other side, although they are not exactly under the same category with the transnational marriages, studies on intercultural marriages can also be utilized in this line of inquiry because these two patterns of marriage share similar issues and challenges in practice.

Before moving into an analysis of such studies, it would be worthwhile to take a look at the statistical data showing the course of transnational marriages conducted in Turkey. With regard to this, the first thing that should be mentioned is the proportion of the foreign brides and grooms coming to Turkey within the context of a transnational marriage. According to TUIK reports dated from 2009 to 2022, the numbers of transnational marriage cases increase constantly over years and Turkey becomes a county that hosts excessive number of foreign brides compared to the foreign grooms.¹⁴³

According to statistics from 2009 to 2015, German women constituted the majority of foreign brides in Turkey. However, a noticeable shift occurred after 2015, with Syrian brides outnumbering German brides in terms of numbers. These German and Syrian brides are followed in number respectively by the women from Azerbaijan,

¹⁴³ Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu, "Evlenme İstatistikleri: Erkek ve Kadının Uğruğuna Göre Evlenmeler (2009-2022)," 2022, <https://data.tuik.gov.tr/Bulten/Index> (Accessed on May 21, 2023)

Uzbekistan, and Russia, also from other Turkic nations such as Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan; some other Middle East countries such as Iran and Iraq, some African countries such as Morocco and Algeria.¹⁴⁴ As for the transnational marriages with the Indonesian women in this statistical analysis. In the list showing the distribution of nationalities in the course of transnational marriages, it is observed that the number of Indonesian women is too low to be evaluated as a separate heading and probably included in the “others” category. Therefore, it is not possible to access data with regard to the numbers and the distribution of Indonesian brides in Turkey between 2009 and 2011. After 2011, Indonesian brides appears as a separate entry in the aforementioned list, although their number is not high, even lower than one hundred before 2013.¹⁴⁵

On the final remark, it should be stated that the changes in numbers and the country of origins of the foreign brides cannot be considered separately from the globally shaped socio-political conditions. In this regard, the high number of German brides in Turkey should be associated with the intense Turkish migration to Germany after the German-Turkey Recruitment Agreement.¹⁴⁶ It is also a fact that the increase in the Syrian-Turkish transnational marriages in the recent years is an outcome of the Syrian migration to Turkey following the civil war in Syria. Here, what should be highlighted is that neither of the two waves of migrations developed in the context of marriage-oriented migrations, but emerged as a result of existing migration interaction. In this regard, the Indonesian-Turkish marriages that I focused in this study are of a separate nature, they can be considered as the migrations that are conducted with a pursue of marriage. Still, they can also be seen as the products of the socio-political interactions between the two societies; and these can be the listed as the interactions through the

¹⁴⁴ Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu.

¹⁴⁵ Türkiye İstatistik Kurumu.

¹⁴⁶See, Işıl Bayraktar, “Transnational Marriages: Family-Forming Migration from Turkey to Germany” (Master’s Thesis, Ankara, Middle East Technical University, 2011).

relief activities of Turkish NGOs after the 2004 Aceh tsunami,¹⁴⁷ and the Asia Anew Initiative, which was officially announced in 2019.¹⁴⁸

Given with the statistical data on the transnational marriages in Turkey, let's examine how such marriages are studied in the relevant literature. In fact, a large part of the literature on this field consists of some qualitative studies based on specific transnational marriage cases. To start with an expression of how the Turkish-German transnational marriages developed, it should state that most of these marriages occurred within the context of Turkish labor migration to Germany and within this context, it is observed that the most Turkish immigrants choose to marry among themselves while some do marry the people of German ethnicity or the German citizens of other ethnic groups.¹⁴⁹ Differences in the Turkish and German family values, and the different understandings of social life and lifestyle; as well as the issues related to socio-economic background, education, religion and language becomes the main dynamics in these transnational marriages in which the Turks are in a migrant position while the Germans are the hosts.¹⁵⁰ It is also observed that the Turks are mostly represented as having a low socio-economic status and educational background and backward in terms of their understanding social life, and worldviews.

Another ground of inquiry in this line of research would be the Turkish men's transnational marriages with the women originated from the former Eastern Bloc and Soviet Union countries such as Russia and Ukraine and some other Turkic countries such as Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan and Turkmenistan. The dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the following crisis in the socio-economic structure in the region caused many people to migrate all over the world and Turkey was one of the destination

¹⁴⁷ Mehmet Özyay, "Relief Works and Challenges: Observations and Practical Approaches in the Aceh Case" (Ed.), in *Exchange of Experiences for the Future: Japanese and Turkish Humanitarian Aid and Support Activities in Conflict Zones*, ed. Merthan Dünder (Ankara: Ankara Basımevi, 2018), 65–67.; Alaeddin Tekin and Arshad Islam, "Turkish Waqf After the 2004 Aceh Tsunami," *Intellectual Discourse*, no. Special Issue (2018): 1052.

¹⁴⁸ "Turkey's Asia Anew Initiative: Assessment and Shortcomings," Middle East Institute, accessed May 13, 2023, <https://www.mei.edu/publications/turkeys-asia-anew-initiative-assessment-and-shortcomings>.

¹⁴⁹ Sidret Özmüş, "Türk-alman Evlilikleri Üzerine Toplumsal Algı ve Deneyim Biçimleri" (Masters Thesis, İzmir, Dokuz Eylül Üniversitesi, 2020), 4–5.

¹⁵⁰ Özmüş, "Türk-alman Evlilikleri Üzerine Toplumsal Algı ve Deneyim Biçimleri."; Bayraktar, "Transnational Marriages: Family-Forming Migration from Turkey to Germany."; İrem Gürel, "Family Migration from Turkey to Germany" (Masters Thesis, İstanbul, Kadir Has University, 2019).

countries as it offers a job opportunity in a newly emerging market: tourism.¹⁵¹ Many studies have revealed that it has become a trend over the years for many Russian women or women from former Soviet Union countries to establish relations with the local Turkish people especially in Mediterranean cities after their touristic visits in the region.¹⁵² It is observed that many of these women stayed in the tourist-intensive cities such as Antalya to work in tourism or domestic service and care sectors, and most of the transnational marriages with Turkish men were occurred within this context.¹⁵³ What lies under these relationships developed by migrants are the fact that Turkish men are known for their protective qualities, Russian women are known as beautiful/educated people who want to share the economic and social burden of daily life with someone.”¹⁵⁴

Most of the qualitative studies under this realm, including the master’s thesis by Deniz Özen tend to make an analysis on the socio-psychological circumstances of a number of foreign brides from Russia, Azerbaijan and a few other Soviet countries in İstanbul, and mainly focuses on the socio-cultural harmony among the couples, and these foreign women’s adaptation to the Turkish culture.¹⁵⁵

Lastly, it is important to address the Turkish-Syrian marriages which marks the most recent wave in the course of transnational marriages in Turkey. The intense migration from Syria to Turkey in the last decade inevitably reflected on the socio-cultural structure in Turkey, and this reflection included the marriage practices in the Turkish society. The marriages between the two communities increased in number and created a new pattern of marriage especially for the Turkish men and the Syrian women. Studies on these cross-cultural marriages between the Syrian and the Turkish people increased in this manner. Although marrying the people from the same origin by birth (endogamous marriage) was a traditionally preferred pattern for the Syrian men and women who migrated to Turkey and Europe, it brought financial and legal obstacles

¹⁵¹ Çisnel Ekiz Gökmen, “Türk Turizminin Yabancı Gelinleri: Marmaris Yöresinde Turizm Sektöründe Çalışan Göçmen Kadınlar,” *Çalışma ve Toplum*, no. 1 (2011).

¹⁵² Ayla Deniz and Özgür E. Murat, “Antalya’daki Rus Gelinler: Göçten Evliliğe, Evlilikten Göçe,” *Sosyoloji Dergisi* 3, no. 27 (2013): 151–75.; Gökmen, “Türk Turizminin Yabancı Gelinleri: Marmaris Yöresinde Turizm Sektöründe Çalışan Göçmen Kadınlar.”

¹⁵³ Deniz and Murat, “Antalya’daki Rus Gelinler: Göçten Evliliğe, Evlilikten Göçe,” 157.

¹⁵⁴ Deniz and Murat, 157.

¹⁵⁵ Deniz Özen, “Türkiye’deki Ulus-Ötesi Evlilikler ve Yabancı Gelinlerin Sosyo-Psikolojik Tahlili” (Yüksek Lisans Tezi, İstanbul, Üsküdar Üniversitesi, 2018); Gökmen, “Türk Turizminin Yabancı Gelinleri: Marmaris Yöresinde Turizm Sektöründe Çalışan Göçmen Kadınlar.”; Deniz and Murat, “Antalya’daki Rus Gelinler: Göçten Evliliğe, Evlilikten Göçe.”

and became challenging within the context of migration.¹⁵⁶ Therefore, exogamy or intermarriages in the host country became an alternative way of marriage especially for the Syrian women in Turkey and Europe.¹⁵⁷ Especially the transnational marriages with the Turkish men were seen as a preferred and desired option for some of the Syrian women as they brought financial and social stability, and citizenship in the long run.¹⁵⁸ However, they were also challenging for them in terms of bringing vulnerability to sexual and psychological violence, exploitation in their domestic labor, difficulties in accessing the legal rights etc.¹⁵⁹

The quantitative study by Emre Doğan focuses on the change in marriage habits and the practices of Syrian women who migrated to Turkey and investigates how their perception of marriage with Turkish men positively changed after their settling in Nevşehir.¹⁶⁰ On the other hand, the narratives in most qualitative studies on this subject show that the Syrian women are exposed to an inequality based on their gendered and ethnic identity as well as sexual and physical violence, marginalization, hostility by the Turkish men and women through their transnational marriages in Turkey.¹⁶¹

To conclude, it should be noted that both the transnational marriage cases and the studies on such marriages in the relevant literature in Turkey marks an increase and most probably this increase will continue in the upcoming years.¹⁶² However, as it is observed in the previous analysis, most of the studies in this research field have focused on the nationalities that constitute the majority in the transnational marriage cases. Nevertheless, this shouldn't be taken to mean that the transnational marriage cases, which are small in number compared to the majority of cases, are insignificant in showing the change in the marriage practices in Turkey. In fact, a small number of these cases, such as transnational marriages with Indonesian women, provide an

¹⁵⁶ Nubough Barkat, "Marriage in the Context of Migration: Finding Spouses for Syrian Women in Istanbul, Turkey" (Master's Thesis, Marmara University, Istanbul 2021), 96.

¹⁵⁷ Barkat, 96.; Emre Doğu, "Geçici Koruma Kapsamında Bulunan Suriye Uyruklu Yabancıların Evlilik Aışkanlıkları: Nevşehir İli Örneđi" (Nevşehir, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi, 2021)

¹⁵⁸ Barkat, 96–102.

¹⁵⁹ Barkat, 96–102.

¹⁶⁰ Emre Doğu, "Geçici Koruma Kapsamında Bulunan Suriye Uyruklu Yabancıların Evlilik Aışkanlıkları: Nevşehir İli Örneđi" (Nevşehir, Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli Üniversitesi, 2021).

¹⁶¹ Barkat, "Marriage in the Context of Migration: Finding Spouses for Syrian Women in Istanbul, Turkey."; Kamer Çamurluođlu, "Türkiye de Tutunma Stratejisi Olarak Evlilik: Mülteci Evliliđi," *İnsan Medeniyet Hareketi* 4, no. 1 (January 28, 2022): 56–69, <https://doi.org/10.51448/tde.2022.3>.

¹⁶² Nurullah Altun and Aybike Dinç, "Yabancı Gelinlerin Türk Ailesi İçindeki Yerine Sosyolojik Bir Bakış" (Halk Kültüründe Aile Uluslararası Sempozyumu, Edirne, 2016), 2.

opportunity to better understand the dynamics of the transnational marriage cases of large numbers as it opens ground for comparison. In this regard, this study that sheds light on the transnational marriage cases between Turkish men and the Indonesian women aims to be a good contribution to the relevant literature in Turkey by revealing the multiple the dynamics in the marriage and transnational marriage practices in the Black Sea region.

3.4. Conclusion

It is a recent phenomenon that men and women from different zones of the world meet each other and establish a cross-border family in which they cross over the territorial and the national frontiers.¹⁶³ To achieve the formation of such a cross-border family either the woman or the man migrate to the other's living place. While research on marriage migration cases often focuses on women as the subjects of migration, it's also possible for men to relocate to their wife's place of residence. Such a marriage migration in which the husband is mobile rather than the wife have recently got an attraction from the researchers with a focus on the men's performances of masculinity and their gendered and nation based identities within the context of their transnational marriage and migration.¹⁶⁴ In most of those studies, the male subjects are represented in a position that they are vulnerable to victimization and abuse because they achieved a migration towards a more developed country than theirs.

However, it is not very common that *non-migrant men's* positions, identities and representations in marriage migration cases are studied with a direct focus on their experiences. In most case studies, which primarily concern the migrant women's positions in marriage migration, the male participants of the marriages are represented

¹⁶³ See, Wen-Shan Yang and Melody Chia-Wen Lu, eds., *Asian Cross-Border Marriage Migration: Demographic Patterns and Social Issues*, IIAS Publications Series. Edited Volumes 2 (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010); Nicole Constable, ed., *Cross-Border Marriages: Gender and Mobility in Transnational Asia* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005); Lucy Williams, *Global Marriage: Cross-Border Marriage Migration in Global Context* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), <https://doi.org/10.1057/9780230283022>.

¹⁶⁴ Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot, "(Un)Configurable Masculinities and Gender Dynamics in Men's Eyes: 'Mixed' Couples of Filipino Migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands." *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 30, no. 1 (2021): pp. 102–16.; Katherine Charsley & A. Liversage "Silenced Husbands: Muslim Marriage Migration and Masculinity" *Men and Masculinities* 18, no.4 (2015): pp. 489-508; Patcharin Lapanun, "Masculinity, Marriage and Migration" *Asian Journal of Social Science* 46, no. 1–2 (2018): pp. 111–31.

as the victimizers¹⁶⁵ or patriarchal abusers¹⁶⁶ of the migrant wives. In such gender studies, while femininity and women with their agency and strategizing abilities are the main concern, the role of the masculine subjects in the formation of cross-border families becomes the secondary concern or totally ignored. Thus, it is possible to say that there is a lack of interest in the males, especially *the non-migrant male's* roles and experiences in their cross-border marriages.

Therefore, in the following of this thesis, I delve into an analysis of the research findings with a focus on the Turkish men's experiences of being a *non-migrant husband* in a transnational marriage with Indonesian women and their performance of masculinity rather than focusing on marriage migration experiences of the Indonesian wives in this transnational marriage case. Following questions such as "What are the multiple motives that lead the male respondents to these marriages;" "Which mediators play a role in this transnational engagement" and "how do the couples experience the engagement processes across the borders;" "Who choose to marry with whom and what are determining factors in the decision making;" "How and through which means Turkish men perform and construct their masculine ideals;" and "what does this specific case say about the change and the transformation of the marriage practices in the Black Sea Region in the Turkish society;" I went through a descriptive analysis of the research findings to comprehend both the pre-marriage and in-marriage dynamics of the encounters of Turkish men with Indonesian women in Giresun. In line with these objectives, the first part of the study presents an in-depth analysis of trust formation within Turkish-Indonesian couples, examining whether trust emerges as an inherent aspect of individual relationships or as a collective phenomenon influenced by their socio-cultural contexts. The research includes a descriptive and interpretive analysis of various factors, such as marriage networks, religious self-representations, and the significance of religiosity and nationality in shaping the level of trust between the two parties involved. By delving into these aspects, I presented the dynamics of trust within this transnational context and its various determinant in Turkish-Indonesian marriages.

¹⁶⁵ Constable, Nicole. "A tale of Two Marriages: International Matchmaking and Gender Mobility" in *Cross-Border Marriages: Gender and Mobility in Transnational Asia* (ed) Nicole Constable (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

¹⁶⁶ Nancy Abelmann- Hyunbee Kim, "A Failed Attempt at Transnational Marriage: Material Citizenship in a Globalizing South Korea" in *Cross-Border Marriages: Gender and Mobility in Transnational Asia* (ed) Nicole Constable (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2005).

In the second part, I provided an analysis of how Turkish men construct their masculine ideals regarding their perception of others, mainly Turkish and Indonesian women, and how they perceive their own experience of transnational marriage and masculinity. In the third part, I discussed the challenges and the reaffirmations of the traditionally accepted roles for household gender relations regarding Turkish men's transnational experiences with the Indonesian women in Giresun.



CHAPTER IV

MAKING TRUST ACROSS A CONTINENT

4.1. Introduction

Considering the continental distance between Turkey and Indonesia and the lack of physical transnational spaces that will bring the couples together to meet each other, this marriage case between Turkish men and Indonesian women looks completely surprising and even irrelevant. Also, considering the fact that Giresun is a relatively small and rural city, thus not very forefront in terms of transnational interactions compared to a metropolitan city, it is understandable to think that such an encounter with Turkish husbands and Indonesian wives is quite difficult. Then, it is worthwhile to ask the questions: How could this encounter become possible, and what were structural and contextual factors/dynamics that made it possible for these couples to form a transnational family?

The overwhelming and non-stopping globalization which transforms the whole world into a small town; the increasing developments in new media technologies and the spread of new communication platforms across the globe; also the increased ease in worldwide transportation make it easier for the rural localities to get connected to the global spaces of interaction, mobility, and cultural exchange. In his search for the possibility of a transnational anthropology, Arjun Appadurai defines a deterritorialized, transnational, and translocal landscape (ethnoscapes with his own terminology) in which the inhabitants are “no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous.”¹⁶⁷ Similarly, defining it as a “truly global phenomenon,” Lucy William contextualizes the cross-border marriages within the increasing notion of global mobility and points out that the cross-border pathways of marriage and family formation “exists within the global

¹⁶⁷ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, 8. print, Public Worlds 1 (Minneapolis, Minn.: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2008), 48.

imaginings of individuals and communities, but also built on concrete relationships, networks, aspirations and motivations.”¹⁶⁸ Therefore in a period of widespread intercultural interaction and worldwide mobilization, -what has been called elsewhere as the age of migration[3]- it is not something absurd or surprising that the Turkish men from a rural locality in the Black Sea region and Indonesian women across a continent meet each other and come together with an orientation of marriage and family formation.

Turkish informants' widespread experience of residing or working in various countries, along with the prevalence of transnational marriages among Indonesians in the study—often involving their family or friends—demonstrate a notable familiarity with trans-local spaces and movements, facilitating the seamless integration of transnational marriages into their lives. Also, the availability of various social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram or WhatsApp where they could follow and get to know each other in the process before making the decision to marry, the widespread use of translation means such as Google Translator that would facilitate their communication provided a ground and an opportunity for further interaction and evaluating the positive and negative aspects of these marriages. Moreover, when they intend to visit their prospective husbands' or wives' home places and the family members, the ease of transportation facilities that reduce a cross-continental distance into an eleven hours' air travel plays an important role in the decision-making processes for most of the marriages.

On the other hand, beyond the structural aspects of these transnational marriages, all the networks, motivations, aspirations, local and global dynamics, and also contexts that make these cross-continental marriages possible remain worthwhile to examine in detail. It is important to question how these transnational marriage relationships are established and maintained through which means and mediators. Additionally, what were the key determinants that contributed to the establishment of trust between Turkish-Indonesian couples?

¹⁶⁸ Williams, *Global Marriage*, 1–4.

Before delving into these inquiries through the lens of a theory of interpretation and suspension,¹⁶⁹ trust should be briefly reviewed as a sociological matter with its multifaceted nature both in interpersonal relationships and societal dynamics.

Trust, a fundamental aspect of human interaction, has indeed received significant scholarly attention over the years. The 1990s, in particular, witnessed a substantial surge in interest and research on subjects related to trust, social capital, and risk, particularly within disciplines such as sociology, economics, and political science.¹⁷⁰ The concept is multifaceted, with studies delving into its functions both in social and individual relationships, its intertwined relationship with the notion of risk, and its different bases over rational, emotional or social dimensions. The functionalist approach, which centers on the question of "what trust provides" or "what expectations it fulfills" in social and individual relations, views trust as a provider of order in society,¹⁷¹ a facilitator of cooperation in a "world of cooperative relations,"¹⁷² or a mitigator of social complexity.¹⁷³ On the other side, many scholarly works delve into the structural, affective and social bases on which the trust between the two individual or in society is formed. In this manner, Daniel J. McAllister discusses the cognitive and affective foundations of trust in the interpersonal relationships within organizations, and points out the "affect-based trust's role in facilitating effective coordinated action in organizations."¹⁷⁴ Furthermore, Russell Hardin, in his book, defines trust as an "encapsulated interest" and seeks to uncover its foundations in people's good reasons or rational calculations when deciding to trust or distrust somebody.¹⁷⁵ While these studies primarily focus on the cognitive and affective dimensions of trust, it is noteworthy that many other researchers investigate the

¹⁶⁹ Guido Möllering, "The Nature of Trust: From Georg Simmel to a Theory of Expectation, Interpretation and Suspension," *Sociology* 35, no. 2 (May 2001): 403–20, <https://doi.org/10.1177/S0038038501000190>.

¹⁷⁰ Möllering, 403.

¹⁷¹ Barbara A. Misztal, *Trust in Modern Societies: The Search for the Bases of Social Order*, Reprinted (Cambridge, U.K: Polity Press, 1998).

¹⁷² Diego Gambetta, ed., *Trust: Making and Breaking Cooperative Relations* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988).

¹⁷³ Niklas Luhmann, *Trust and Power* (Avon: Pitman Press, 1979).

¹⁷⁴ Daniel J. McAllister, "Affect- and Cognition-Based Trust as Foundations for Interpersonal Cooperation in Organizations," *Academy of Management Journal* 38, no. 1 (February 1, 1995): 55, <https://doi.org/10.2307/256727>. Also see, J David Lewis and Andrew Weigert, "Trust as a Social Reality," *Social Forces* 63, no. 4 (1985): 20.

¹⁷⁵ Russell Hardin, *Trust and Trustworthiness* (New York: Russell Sage Foundation Publications, 2002).

sources of trust in institutional¹⁷⁶ and societal frameworks. With reference to Charles Tilly, Sztompka points out the substantial role of social networks, movements, collective actions and shared values in the making of trust.¹⁷⁷ By way of further illustration, contemporary anthropologists questioned the individual and regional religiosity and moral communities,¹⁷⁸ and religious involvement and faith as the sources of social trust among the narrow and extended social groups.¹⁷⁹

The current body of work has made significant strides in unraveling the multifaceted nature of trust, encompassing both its societal implications and the rationale behind individual and social trust dynamics. However, there is a discernible need for a more nuanced exploration, particularly in the realm of trust's interplay with risk. As we navigate the complex landscape of trust literature, it becomes evident that trust is not only about the expectations of certain functionalities it might bring or the interpretations of the possible sources it comes from but a dynamic force intricately linked with risk.

The relationship between trust and risk has long confused researchers, as highlighted by Pennanen's observation that scholars remain uncertain about whether risk precedes trust, is intrinsic to trust, or emerges as a consequence of trust.¹⁸⁰ Coleman defines trust as the cornerstone of individual risk-taking behavior, emphasizing its dual nature involving both the act of trusting and the inherent risk of betrayal.¹⁸¹ Barbalet adds depth to the discussion by underscoring trust as a mechanism for navigating the absence of evidence, citing Simmel's assertion that without a general trust in society,

¹⁷⁶ Lynne G. Zucker, "Production of Trust: Institutional Sources of Economic Structure: 1840-1920," *Research in Organizational Behavior* 8 (1986): 53–111.

¹⁷⁷ Piotr Sztompka, "New Perspectives on Trust," *American Journal of Sociology* 112, no. 3 (2006): 914–15.

¹⁷⁸ Richard Traummüller, "Moral Communities? Religion as a Source of Social Trust in a Multilevel Analysis of 97 German Regions," *European Sociological Review* 27, no. 3 (2011): 346–63.

¹⁷⁹ Ellen Dingemans and Erik Van Ingen, "Does Religion Breed Trust? A Cross-National Study of the Effects of Religious Involvement, Religious Faith, and Religious Context on Social," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54, no. 4 (December 2015): 739–55, <https://doi.org/10.1111/jssr.12217>. Also see, Emin Baki Adaş, "Production of Trust and Distrust: Transnational Networks, Islamic Holding Companies and the State in Turkey," *Middle Eastern Studies* 45, no. 4 (July 2009): 625–36, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00263200903009700>.

¹⁸⁰ J. D. Lewis and A. J. Weigert, "The Social Dynamics of Trust: Theoretical and Empirical Research, 1985-2012," *Social Forces* 91, no. 1 (September 1, 2012): 28, <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sos116>.

¹⁸¹ James S. Coleman, *Foundations of Social Theory* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1990).

relationships would falter.¹⁸² Trust becomes indispensable in overcoming uncertainty, serving as a means to bridge the gap when rational proof or personal observation falls short, as noted by Simmel. Barbalet further articulates that trust, grounded in emotional commitment, is essential for substantive rationality in action, where formal rationality falls short in uncertain conditions..¹⁸³ Möllering introduces the concept of suspension, urging researchers to comprehend the ignorance and unknowable from the trustor's perspective.¹⁸⁴ This involves recognizing what may be overlooked or dismissed in interviews and understanding how trustors handle their own uncertainties.¹⁸⁵ In essence, these perspectives collectively underscore trust's role in navigating uncertainty, with emotional commitment and suspension serving as crucial components in understanding and managing the intricate interplay between trust and risk.

Going further with the exploration of trust literature, one should consider the perspectives of David Lewis and Andrew Wiegert. In their attempt to develop a more holistic approach to the study of trust, they define it as an inevitably social phenomenon inherent in everyday life, influencing various social interactions and encompassing cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and risky processes by its very nature. This emphasis on trust as an integral aspect of daily social life adds depth to our understanding of its multifaceted dynamics, providing a valuable complement to the orientation-focused definition offered by Weber and Carter, who described trust as an "orientation between self and other whose object is the relationship."¹⁸⁶ Focusing on the individual relationships occurring daily, they defined trust as belief that "the other will take one's perspective into account when making a decision and will not act in ways to violate the moral standards of the relationship."¹⁸⁷ In this theoretical framework, they focus on the experience of trust in friendship and love relationships and simply argue that trust is definitely emergent in the sense that it emerges out of the interaction between the two people in such relationships. On the contrary, in

¹⁸² Jack Barbalet, "A Characterization of Trust, and Its Consequences," *Theory and Society* 38, no. 4 (July 2009): 367, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11186-009-9087-3>.

¹⁸³ Barbalet, 380–81.

¹⁸⁴ Möllering, "The Nature of Trust."

¹⁸⁵ Möllering, 416.

¹⁸⁶ Linda R. Weber and Allison I. Carter, *The Social Construction of Trust* (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2003), <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4615-0779-6>.

¹⁸⁷ Weber and Carter, *The Social Construction of Trust*.

familial relationships such as between the parents and children, trust has an "established character," and it already exists. Therefore, in their theoretical synthesis regarding the research for trust, Weber and Carter propose "an interactional theory," interpreting trust as a "social construct for it emerges from the interactions of two or more people and influences those actions. While the argument Weber and Carter present is justified in underscoring trust's role in restructuring relationships during its enactment, it becomes somewhat problematic when applied to the context of transnational marriages. Considering the trust between Turkish-Indonesian couples, factors such as references and a network of marriage, perception and self-representation of religiosity, and nationality play pivotal roles in trust-building between Turkish men and Indonesian women. In such a context, trust appears to be influenced by pre-existing factors, challenging the notion that it solely emerges through the interaction.

Building on Möllering's conceptual framework, this discussion unfolds within the realms of expectation, interpretation, and suspension. Möllering delineates expectation as the period following the emergence of trust, focusing on the anticipated benefits and functions that trust is expected to provide to society, individuals, or interpersonal relationships. In essence, what are the anticipated outcomes associated with trust? Conversely, the dimension of interpretation explores the dynamics on which trust is constructed and the contextual sources contributing to its formation. Lastly, the concept of suspension delves into how individuals and society grapple with the inherent unknowable and unpredictable aspects of trust, highlighting what is held in abeyance in this regard.

Within the scope of this study, drawing inspiration from Möllering's framework, the examination initiates by investigating the foundational sources underpinning trust within Indonesian-Turkish couples and the participants' considerations encapsulated in the interpretation of trust. Subsequently, the focus shifts to exploring how participants navigate uncertainties and risks inherent in this trust dynamic, shedding light on the types of suspensions employed or exhibited in the process.

4.2. A Chain of Transnational Marriage

In the context of initial interactions between Turkish husbands and Indonesian wives, a significant factor that emerges is the formation of individual marriage networks across both regions. Notably, the reference provided by another Turkish-Indonesian couple plays a crucial role in influencing the decision-making process to pursue a transnational marriage, even if the engaged couple first meets through social media or marriage websites rather than in a traditional arranged setting. Even when the engaged couple initially connects on a digital platform without any intermediaries, the Turkish man who is familiar with the other Turkish-Indonesian couples in the same region often approaches and seeks their opinion about Indonesian women and Turkish-Indonesian marriages. Moreover, he may also encourage his own fiancées to interact with the Indonesian wife, seeking to gain insights into her perspective on Turkish men and her views on the prospect of such a marriage.

In most cases, it is observed that Turkish-Indonesian marriages are the outcome of a Turkish man's desire to get married but facing challenges in arranging a marriage within the local setting and an Indonesian woman's desire to conduct a transnational marriage. In such instances, the Turkish man seeks the assistance of an already-married Turkish-Indonesian couple to help him find a suitable match for marriage. The intermediary couple then facilitates the process by connecting the Turkish man with a woman from the Indonesian wife's circle of friends in Indonesia who shares a similar intention of marriage with a Turkish man. With the support of this intermediary couple, the entire engagement, including the online dating, messaging, and the agreements on certain criteria for marriage, and the whole wedding process, from the Indonesian bride's migration to Turkey to the management of necessary legal procedures, are carried out.

As a general tendency among the participants, people who have been divorced, or those who couldn't marry until a certain age, come to know about these marriages through acquaintances or friends of friends and request assistance in finding a suitable match for themselves. In such cases, either another acquaintance of the Indonesian woman who intends to get married is arranged, or the person making the request is guided to a platform where they can find a prospective spouse. During the subsequent

process, the potential spouse is contacted by other Indonesian women in the region to inquire about the groom, Turkish culture, or the local living conditions.

Delving into the literature on migration, we discern two primary types of spouse migration: *family reunification* and *family formation*. In family reunification, families geographically separated by migration are brought together, exemplified by the common practice of “chain migration,” where one family member pioneers the move, subsequently followed by others.¹⁸⁸ While marriage migrations or transnational marriages typically align with the family formation category, the existence of “chain marriage migration” becomes apparent in cases of transnational marriages. Bélanger and Flynn illustrate this phenomenon in the context of Taiwanese husbands and Vietnamese wives, noting that “Some immigrant spouses become matchmakers themselves and facilitate additional instances of marriage migration.”¹⁸⁹ Similarly, it is plausible to posit that the individual references and the intermediaries by the already-married Turkish-Indonesian couples in Giresun constitute a transnational marriage chain over the years, establishing a trustworthy marriage network for newcomers.

The existence of such a network plays a significant role in shaping the decision-making process for pursuing a transnational marriage, and it emerges as a good reason to trust the prospective spouse. Especially for the Turkish man who intend to marry an Indonesian woman, other examples in the region provide a source of trust. Even if they observe marriages that end in divorce or some inner-house problems due to differences in culture, language, and lifestyle, reference still remains significant as they think that these negative examples are few. For example, Sami was a 70 years old Turkish man who was in his second marriage to Winda for five years and expressed his thoughts on the Turkish-Indonesian marriages as follows:

¹⁸⁸ Danièle Bélanger and Andrea Flynn, “Gender and Migration: Evidence from Transnational Marriage Migration,” in *International Handbook on Gender and Demographic Processes*, ed. Nancy E. Riley and Jan Brunson, vol. 8, *International Handbooks of Population* (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands, 2018), 187, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-94-024-1290-1_13.

¹⁸⁹ Bélanger and Flynn, 193.

“Some of our friends couldn't agree [with their Indonesian wives.] Well, they had to divorce, but these were very few, here, I mean, if there are 20 or 25 Indonesian women in Giresun, 2 or 3 of them went back.”¹⁹⁰

When they are asked about the source of trust towards their prospective spouses, many respondents either addressed positive impact of the other marriages in the region or specifically pointed to the influence of the intermediary Turkish-Indonesian couple who is related or friends. In this context, one of my interlocutors Hikmet narrated:

“The reason I chose the Indonesian lady is that there are 15 or 20 Indonesian ladies around our house. I talked to their husbands; they all said they were satisfied. Not one of them complained about their wives; don't you have anything else to do; don't marry a woman from Indonesia etc. No one reacted like that, they all looked at them positively, they said trust them, you can marry them.”¹⁹¹

Similarly, another respondent -named Kemal- echoed these sentiments:

“I mean, I've seen some examples in other places and everyone is satisfied. There was no problem at all.”¹⁹²

Even the first Indonesian-Turkish marriage case in the region was based on a reference from another marriage between a Turkish man and a Malaysian woman. Remzi, who is known as the person who achieved the first Turkish-Indonesian marriage in the region ten years ago points out his friend who is married to a Malaysian woman and live in Malaysia. In his words:

“I had a friend who got married in Malaysia; he lives in Malaysia, though. He used to tell me about the nature of the people there, the culture, the marriage things. I was a little bit impressed by him, to be honest.”¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Interview with Sami, May 10, 2022. Aladere. “Bazı arkadaşlarımız işte anlaşımadılar, eee ayrılmak zorunda kaldılar ama çok az yani. Şimdi Giresun'da 20 25 tane Endonezya'dan bayan varsa bunun 2-3 kişi döndü geri.”

¹⁹¹ Interview with Hikmet, May 11, 2022. Taflancık He was above his 60s and married for 6 months when the interview was conducted. This was his second marriage after he lost his wife due to cancer. “Endonezyalı bayanı seçmemdeki amaç bizim evimizin orada 15 20 tane Endonezyalı bayan var. Eşleriyle hepsiyle konuştum. Hepsi memnun olduğunu söyledi. Hiçbir tanesi ben de eşimden şikâyetçiyim, senin daha işin yok mu, Endonezya'dan bayanla evlenme sakın ha sakın... Böyle bir tepki veren olmadı, hepsi olumlu baktı, onlara güven, evlen, evlenebilirsin dediler.”

¹⁹² Interview with Kemal, August 15, 2022. Espiye. He was above his 50s and married for three or more years when this interview was conducted. This was his third marriage after two divorces. “Yani biraz diğer yerlerde örneklerini görünce herkes de memnun, böyle bi sıkıntı olmamış.”

¹⁹³ Interview with Remzi, September 6, 2022. Espiye. “Malezyadan evlenen bir arkadaşım vardı. O kendisi gerçi malezyada oturuyor. O söylerdi oradaki insanların yapısını, kültür yapısını, işte evlilik şeylerini söylerdi. Ondan da biraz etkilendim daha doğrusu.”

Their story is very noteworthy in that sense they are the first couple and inspired the many others. Sometime after the loss of his wife, Remzi was in search for a second marriage. It was believed that the people in Malaysia and the surrounding areas are kind, and there are more marriage-able women than women in Turkiye because of their warm and obedient characteristics. He met Sarwendah who was an Indonesian woman, through social media. After a period of dating through the digital platforms, he traveled to Indonesia to get know his fiancée and her family members and they decided to get marry. When asked about their meeting and the role of any intermediaries, Remzi shared:

“I didn't have any intermediary; it was solely an inner impulse. For instance, even before my wife passed away and afterwards, a voice within me consistently insisted, "You will marry someone from abroad," and I say this with sincerity. Despite some people offering me advice (some Turkish women) here, I would instinctively dismiss it.”¹⁹⁴

He went on to elaborate on the reference from his friend married to a Malaysian lady and other reasons for his negative perceptions of Turkish women, such as indifference towards their husbands and a scheming character. With these considerations, he decided to marry Sarwendah, and over the years, their union became an inspiration for other Turkish-Indonesian marriages, especially in Espiye. Yunus, who had also lost his wife and was looking for a second marriage after many years of depression, depicts his first encounter with an Indonesian in Remzi's house. He was very surprised with the Indonesian women and a mixed child in the house and started to ask questions about this marriage and the Indonesian people. Also, having lived in the United States for a long period of time and being able to speak in English, he asks Sarwandeh whether she can find an Indonesian woman for him and responds as:

“I can't cause anyone, I can't play with anyone's life, it's against my faith, but I'll give you a website. If they don't want to talk to you, give them my number and they can call me on Whatsapp.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Interview with Remzi, September 6, 2022. Espiye. “Hiçbir aracı olmadı sadece içimden bir dürtü, mesela önceden beri, eşim öldükten sonra, böyle içimden bir ses bana “sen yurt dışından evleneceksin” diyordu, bunu samimiyetle söylüyorum. Mesela burada bazı insanlar bana (bazı Türk kadınları) tavsiye de etseler içim dışarı atıyordu böyle.”

¹⁹⁵ Interview with Yunus, June 21, 2020. Güce. “Karıya dedim ki bana yardımcı ol ben de senin gibi böyle Endonezyalı bir kadınla evlenmek istiyorum. Kadın dedi ki ben kimseye sebep olamam, kimsenin hayatıyla oynayamam, bu benim inancıma aykırı ama sana bir sayfa vereyim. Seninle konuşmak

After that, he contacted a few Indonesian women through this platform and started a more serious relationship with one of them, Fatima. They involved the Remzi-Sarwendah couple as trust-makers in their relationship and also arranged another marriage for their widowed friends, Sami and Winda. They organize double dates and double marriages in Indonesia. Even though finalizing these two additional Turkish-Indonesian relationships through marriage took some years, it is evident that these connections eventually formed further transnational marriage chains over time, especially in Güce and the connected villages.

As highlighted in selected quotations from interviewees mentioned earlier, the establishment of transnational couples in the region predominantly occurred through the references by pre-existing married couples. In the investigation of trust between spouses, numerous participants cited the influence of other Indonesian-Turkish couples. The ensuing diagram illustrates the intricate chains and networks among these couples, indicating the respective years in which they got married.

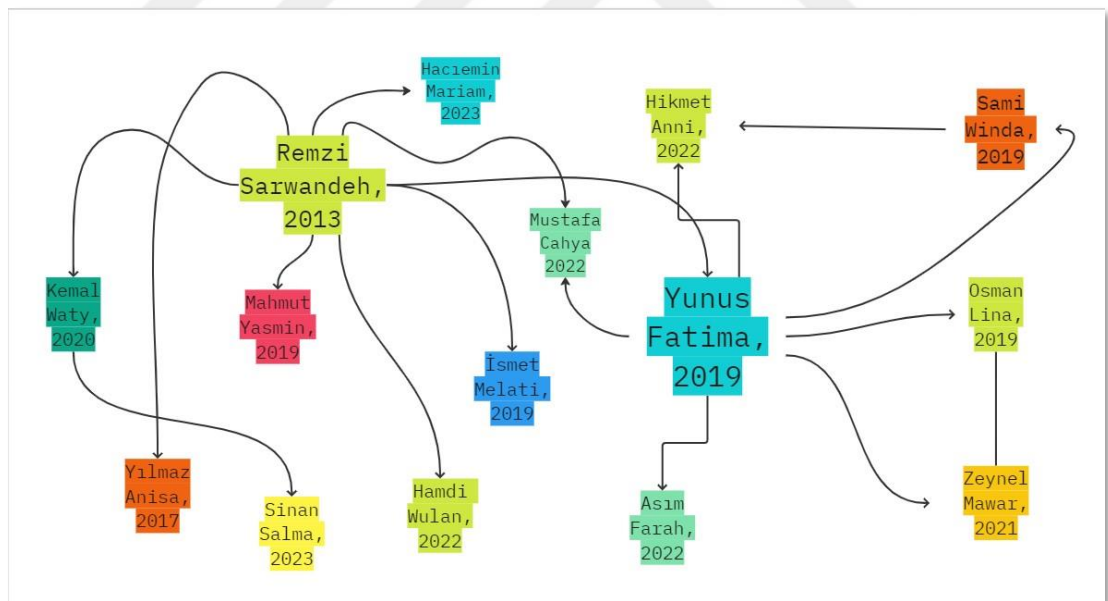


Figure 4.1. Chain of Transnational Marriage in Güce and Espiye

istemezlerse benim numaramı ver beni whatsaptan arasınlar.”

Examining the diagram, it becomes evident that all couples share some form of connection to each other. These connections manifest through friendships, kinships, or more distant acquaintanceships for both male and female participants.

For instance, Sinan and Salma were introduced following Kemal and Waty's marriage, pioneered by the Remzi-Sarwendah couple. Sinan, also a friend of Remzi, became acquainted with Salma, who is Waty's niece, through Waty's role as the matchmaker. Another illustration involves Yunus and Fatima, who, during marriage negotiations, discovered that Yunus's friend Sami desired to marry an Indonesian woman. In response, Fatima facilitated a meeting between Sami and her childhood friend Winda, leading to the simultaneous marriage processes of both couples. Yunus and Sami even traveled to Indonesia together in 2018 to meet their future spouses.

This network map emphasizes the prominent role of two couples, Remzi-Sarwendah and Yunus-Fatima, in facilitating connections. Remzi-Sarwendah held stronger ties with couples in Espiye, benefiting from their extensive experience and status as the oldest couple in the region. Furthermore, Sarwendah's official designation as the representative for all Indonesians in Giresun adds legitimacy to their role, fostering trust both locally and officially in facilitating Turkish-Indonesian marriages. Conversely, Yunus-Fatima's significance lies in their proficiency in English, enabling them to assist prospective couples with translation, contributing to their role in the marriage network.

Up to this point, our discussion has centered on the formation of marriage networks through existing connections and references from already married couples and how these networks influence prospective couples, fostering trust. In fact, this aligns with the subjective reality of the trusting individuals and their interpretation of the situation, a concept Möllering defines as "interpretation" and refers to as the starting point of trust/trusting. According to Möllering, " (...) whether our bases for trust are more calculative or more intuitive, more abstract or more idiosyncratic, what matters on the end is that they represent 'good reasons' for trust."¹⁹⁶ Speculating on Möllering's statement, participants' trust in the other party during the decision-making phase may

¹⁹⁶ Möllering, "The Nature of Trust," 413.

be intuitive, as seen in Remzi's case, or calculative, as observed in Sami's case. What emerges as more crucial is that, at both the decision-making and initiation stages of such marriages, these transnational marriage chains are interpreted by the participants as a substantial and valid reason to trust the other person.

On the other hand, the Indonesian-Turkish marriages examined in this study do not represent the only case where networks play a pivotal role in cultivating trust within the realm of transnational migration and marriage. The phenomenon, often conceptualized as a social network, aligns with Putnam's assertion that "affiliation with social networks helps establish trust, norms, and ties among the migrant community, thereby increasing their social capital." On a similar note, the study conducted by Özgür and Murat delves into the formation of social networks by Russian brides in Turkey, examining their dynamics at both local and transnational levels and shedding light on how these networks influence their daily experiences in the context of their transnational marriage migration.¹⁹⁷

Regarding the debate on the robust connection between trust and social networks, Charles Tilly goes a step further, asserting that trust itself is a category within a network.¹⁹⁸ According to Tilly, while not all networks or associations are inherently linked to trust, there exists a distinct category of networks where trust stands out as the prevailing quality. This is exemplified in networks such as those of cohabitation, trade diasporas, migration chains, or religious networks.¹⁹⁹

While Tilly's primary focus is on migration and the development of trust networks, his insights offer valuable perspectives for understanding trust dynamics within both migrant and non-migrant groups in the context of transnational marriages. He defines trust networks as "ramified interpersonal connections, consisting mainly of strong ties, within which people set valued, consequential, long-term resources and enterprises at

¹⁹⁷ Ayla Deniz and E. Murat Özgür, "Local, Institutional, or Transnational? Social Networks of Russian Marriage Migrants in Turkey," *European Journal of Women's Studies* 29, no. 2 (May 2022): 347–63, <https://doi.org/10.1177/13505068211063605>.; Also see, Marcelo J. Borges, "Network Migration, Marriage Patterns, and Adaptation in Rural Portugal and among Portuguese Immigrants in Argentina, 1870–1980," *The History of the Family* 8, no. 3 (January 2003): 445–79, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1081-602X\(03\)00046-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1081-602X(03)00046-0).

¹⁹⁸ Sztompka, "New Perspectives on Trust." p. 915

¹⁹⁹ Sztompka.

risk to the malfeasance, mistakes, or failures of others."²⁰⁰ In other words, various trust networks, such as kinship, religious networks, or migration chains, emerge as sources of trust through individuals' interpretations of their subjective realities and shared value judgments. Specifically, social networks that evolve within the framework of transnational marriage chains also serve as sources of trust—a compelling rationale to trust—alongside the inherent risks and uncertainties inherent in both migrant and non-migrant individuals' decision-making processes. Reflecting on the experiences of Turkish men and Indonesian women involved in this transnational marriage case, it becomes evident that both groups placed significant emphasis on the trustful guidance provided by the references and the mediation offered by previously married couples when assessing their decision-making processes.

As these marriage networks between Turkish and Indonesian couples function as pivotal facilitators of relationships and trust, it becomes imperative to delve deeper into the multifaceted factors that contributed to the trust-building process. In the context of these transnational marriage chains and networks, it is crucial to understand the shared values and ideals that underpin the establishment of these networks, as well as how participants navigate uncertainties inherent in their cross-cultural unions. This requires a nuanced exploration of the diverse elements influencing trust dynamics within these complex relationships. Consequently, in the next session, I will elucidate the additional factors that played a role in the trust-making process and discuss how participants addressed uncertainties concerning the future of their decisions or the risks—an indispensable facet of trust.

4.3. Religious Sensitivity, Trust, and Tawakkul: “I Trust Allah”

In the intricate web of trust that defines individual and social networks, particularly in transnational settings, shared values and common religious identity emerge as crucial sources of trust formation and continuity. Charles Tilly, in highlighting religious solidarities, underscores their significance within isolated groups where trust can be easily traced.²⁰¹ He notes that maintaining a clear boundary between "us" and "them"

²⁰⁰ Charles Tilly, “Trust Networks in Transnational Migration,” *Sociological Forum* 22, no. 1 (March 2007): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1573-7861.2006.00002.x>.

²⁰¹ Tilly, 8.

is pivotal for the sustained operation of trust networks in geographically dispersed religious or isolated communities.²⁰²

On the other hand, Richard Traunmüller emphasizes the impact of religion on social trust, stating that although there are many studies on the impact of religion and religious structures on organizational cooperation and associational membership, very few studies highlight the impact of religion on trust, namely social trust.²⁰³ In his study on the "formation of social trust" in Germany, Traunmüller highlights the profound influence of individual religiosity and regional religious contexts in shaping interpersonal relations and organizational affiliations.²⁰⁴ Carson Mencken et al., also highlight the importance of religion in sustaining the social trust and argue that the individual relationship with God is the most important; "the image of God as a loving God is related to loving people in general and thus trusting them more."²⁰⁵

Similarly, examining transnational trust networks, Baki Adaş reveals a study of how social capital, rooted in shared Islamic values and identities, established trust among owners of Turkish-based Islamic Holding Companies across the world.²⁰⁶ Social trust in this regard is significantly fueled by common identities, religious affiliations, and shared values, contributing to the cultivation of trust across various dimensions of socio-economic, cultural, and political relationships—whether formed individually or collectively.

While the aforementioned studies provide valuable insights into the broader dynamics of trust within societal and institutional frameworks, it is equally crucial to delve into the intimate fabric of trust that weaves through individual connections—particularly those formed through friendship and love and to understand how the notion of shared value or religious faith operates in making trust across the marital relationships and mate selection. Leveraging insights from Indonesian women and Turkish men, the

²⁰² Tilly, 8.

²⁰³ Richard Traunmüller, "Moral Communities? Religion as a Source of Social Trust in a Multilevel Analysis of 97 German Regions," *European Sociological Review* 27, no. 3 (2011).

²⁰⁴ Traunmüller, "Moral Communities? Religion as a Source of Social Trust in a Multilevel Analysis of 97 German Regions," p. 357.

²⁰⁵ Carson Mencken, Christopher Bader, and Elizabeth Embry. "In God We Trust: Images of God and Trust in the United States among the Highly Religious" *Sociological Perspectives* (2009): 52(1) Quoted in Dingemans and Van Ingen, "Does Religion Breed Trust?"

²⁰⁶ Baki Adaş, "Production of Trust and Distrust."

research unveils a distinctive viewpoint on trust intricately intertwined with their unwavering faith in destiny. Delving into the narratives of these individuals, this study discerns a nuanced comprehension of trust that goes beyond geographical boundaries and cultural distinctions. This highlights the profound influence of religious perspectives on establishing and maintaining trust within the realm of personal relationships, as well as rational calculations and individual relationships.

First and foremost, it is crucial to highlight that the respondents conscientiously portray their identities as modest Muslims dedicated to fulfilling their religious obligations. At the core of their self-perception lies the conviction that their marriages are intricately woven into the fabric of predestination, a concept they refer to as '*takdir-i ilahi*,' which can be translated to "God's will" in its literal sense. Besides, the intricate relationship they establish with Allah and their engagement with faith plays a fundamental role in both the construction of trust and the decision-making process of these marriages. This involves evaluating their subjective realities, understanding the source of trust, and embracing the uncertainties and potential risks linked to these marriages.

Both the men and women were willing to present themselves as religious individuals who do not disturb the daily prayers and duas and do not break the rules of Islam, like escaping gambling and adultery. Moreover, these individuals articulated a profound expectation for their prospective spouses to share an equal commitment to the tenets of the faith. They stressed the importance of a partner's devout belief in Allah and faithful observance of religious duties as pivotal criteria when considering the prospect of marriage. For them, a shared dedication to religious principles, such as the observance of daily prayers and abstention from activities forbidden by the religion, serves not only to fortify the sanctity of a marital bond but also to establish a fundamental trust in the spouse's commitment to their marriage, fostering confidence that their chosen life partner will not betray or deceive them. A pervasive narrative emerged throughout the interviews, underscoring the devout and sincere nature of all those involved in this marriage network. There was a strong emphasis, especially by the men, that presented the marriage as an act of worship in itself—as a key to heaven, especially for the women. Also, a consistent theme emphasized that Indonesian women

and the broader populace, "despite their sectarian and cultural differences"²⁰⁷ embody a sincerity in their adherence to Islam that transcends these distinctions.

In this regard, it was a priority for them to ask whether he or she had a strong belief in Allah and was careful about the daily prayers, etc. A compelling example from the marriage journey of Tiwi and Veli underscores the pivotal role religiosity plays in their decision-making process. After getting divorced from their past marriages, they look for a prospective spouse in their localities and marriage websites. However, they don't end up with a marriage out of these searches. Then, they get to know about the marriages between Indonesian women and Turkish men through a network of their friends who have already engaged in this marriage case. As Tiwi highlighted, when inquiring about her prospective groom, her primary concerns were centred around his previous marriage experience first and then commitment to namaz (prayer). She stated that:

*"How is he? I'm asking to Fatima, why he is divorced, how is namaz, something like that, and okay, I made dua and istikhara²⁰⁸ and said to Allah, if this men is okay for me, then make it easier, if not just forget it."*²⁰⁹

Further insights into their engagement process highlight the mundane yet crucial discussions that form the bedrock of trust-building. Questions about daily routines, plans, and religious practices become the fabric of their conversations. As Veli articulates, these daily exchanges function like "alarm clocks", emphasizing the significance of routine religiosity. He claimed that:

*"For example, "Are you married or single?" "Why did you divorced?" We were talking about daily life; "What did you do today?" "What will you do tomorrow?" "What are you planning to do?" "Did you pray?" "Did you go to work?" We were constantly talking about daily conversations like alarm clocks. Nothing else."*²¹⁰

²⁰⁷ This sentiment was underscored in several interviews, repeatedly emphasized by the participants.

²⁰⁸ The word "istikhara" is derived from the Arabic root "sthr" (استخارة), which means to seek goodness, blessings, or guidance from God. When a Muslim faces an important decision in their life, such as marriage, starting a new job, or making a major life change, they may perform the "Salat al-Istikhara," which is a specific prayer of guidance. During this prayer, the person asks Allah (God) to guide them and show them what is best for their situation.

²⁰⁹ Interview with Tiwi 12.05.2022.

²¹⁰ Interview with Veli, 12.05.2022; "Mesela, evli misin bekâr mısın, niye ayrıldın... Günlük hayattan konuşuyorduk, bugün ne yaptın yarın ne yapacaksın, ne yapmayı düşünüyorsun, planın ne? Namazını kıldın mı, işe gittin mi... Çalar saat gibi böyle... Sürekli günlük muhabbetleri konuşuyorduk. Başka bir şey yok."

These two excerpts from the interviews are important to understand the role of the religious faith and religiosity of the prospective husband/wife in their decision whether to marry him/her or not, alongside other factors. Of course, it should be noted that the parties' perception of religiosity is not the only factor in the construction of trust and decision-making mechanisms. As can be seen in the excerpts, many questions about daily life or the other party's financial situation, the reason behind the divorce from the previous marriage and family structure are sought to be answered, and the "convincing answers" given to these questions affect the trust and decision process. On the other hand, the relationship between religion and Allah stands out as a common and overarching narrative in almost all of the interviews in terms of network formation, the trust processes of individual relationships, and making sense of transnational marriage. Going further with this analysis, the spouses' continued commitment to religious duties in the post-marriage process becomes a validating factor, establishing a source of trust for potential candidates considering marriage with an Indonesian woman. In an interview with Salim, who was in the process of pre-marriage with an Indonesian woman, when I asked him whether he had heard about the other Turkish-Indonesian couples around, he expressed his amazement at the other married couples in the region regarding the Indonesian women's religious sensitivity:

"I met, I saw that delicacy. I asked our married people here, I talked to a few people: I marvel, they say, I have lived all this time for nothing. Why? Immediately the woman [Nuri's Indonesian wife] at four o'clock in the morning, Nuri, get up, morning prayers. Yahu stop! Nuri, get up, the prayer is going on."²¹¹

The portrayal of Indonesian women as resembling "alarm clocks" in the eyes of Turkish men highlights a perception that these women are devout and committed Muslims. This perception suggests that Indonesian women have the role of preserving their faith and actively encouraging and reminding their husbands to uphold religious practices. Such a commitment to religious duties serves as a substantial indicator of trustworthiness, contributing to the establishment of trust in the context of potential marriages with Indonesian women.

²¹¹ Interview with Sinan, September 19, 2022. "Tanıştım, o narinliği gördüm. Burada bizim evli olanlara sordum, birkaç kişiyle konuştum: Ben, diyorlar hayret ediyorum, ben boşuna yaşamışım bunca zamanı. Niye? Hemen kadın sabah saat dörtte Nuri, kalk, sabah namazı. Yahu dur! Nuri, kalk namaz geçiyor."

While avoiding delving too deeply into a discussion solely centred on religiosity, it becomes essential to move beyond the religious narrative. The emphasis on the religiosity of the prospective partners and the sacred nature of these marriages, recurrently highlighted in nearly every interview, prompts an exploration of whether the professed piety is genuinely sincere or more of a discursive and pragmatic narrative. This question lacks a straightforward answer, considering the absence of the participants in this study who belong to a specific religious group or share religious solidarity among themselves. Instead, they are observed as individuals engaging in religious practices independently - observing Ramadan, performing prayers, and occasionally missing them. For women, religion appears as a shared space and common value, seen in activities such as Friday meetings and Quran recitations. On the other hand, men manifest their religious commitment more through practices.

Returning to the initial question, determining the authenticity of the religious practices exhibited, and the emphasis on religion in these transnational marriages goes beyond the scope of this study or any academic research, as establishing a criterion for sincerity in religiosity proves challenging. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to briefly examine how these practices are interpreted and perceived. In my perspective, using religious discourse or engagement in religious practices doesn't necessarily reflect an individual's true beliefs. However, the continuous prominence of this aspect in discourse suggests that religious references form the overarching framework of these marriages and serve as a foundational element in establishing trust.

In these marriage cases, a pattern emerges as the couples go through online dating after their initial interaction. This dating process is marked by an inquiry about the prospective spouse's trustworthiness. Inquiries about daily life and religious practices play a key role in fostering trust and emotional connections. As emphasized by numerous participants, the accessibility of the other party during this online dating process, their willingness to share daily activities, and responsiveness to video or voice calls actively shape individuals' assessments of the relationship and their trust in the other party. Notably, the couples' frequent inquiries about daily prayers in this process underscore how their questions about the other's trustworthiness are intricately linked to the commitment to daily prayers and other religious duties in their daily life practices. This aspect stands out as crucial, evident in their recurring queries.

Indeed, these questions and inquiries reflect rational calculations, where individuals interpret their subjective realities and experiences to construct trust. Factors like the reason for previous divorce, financial stability of the men, and religious observance, both for men and women, contribute to the determination of trustworthiness.

Beyond these rational considerations, individuals frequently incorporate their relationship with Allah into decision-making and trust-building. The practice of *istikhara*, as illustrated by Tiwi, symbolizes a surrendering of personal agency, placing trust in divine guidance amid uncertainties. The emphasis on *tawakkul*, the belief in fate and the trust in Allah emerges as a significant mechanism in coping with the risks and unpredictable aspects of marrying a foreign spouse.

Both the Indonesian women and the Turkish men were representing themselves in a way that they wanted to establish a family based on divine consent; they questioned whether the prospective spouse was carrying such intentions and was able to manage a marriage based on Allah's consent. This appears to be the most crucial element in constructing a trust relationship between spouses. If the man or woman are careful about their religious duties, he or she is closer to being a reliable husband or wife. It is also important to highlight that they carry a sort of nonresistance to the will of Allah as the source of their trust in the success of this marriage. It is obvious in the answers of the respondents as they sincerely express that they trust Allah in taking a risk to conduct an unsuccessful marriage. For example, when Fatima was asked about her trust in her husband, she responded as

*“For me, it is really simple. I trust Allah and just make dua. This is the only way to find the good man in my life. I didn't have any commitment. I didn't ask too much, but just keep my heart dua, Ya Rab, if this is good, halas!”*²¹²

After meeting with Yunus, Fatima adhered to a common pattern observed in many couples. She inquired about her husband's daily life, possibly delving into his financial situation and family history. Subsequently, she entrusted the entire process to Allah's discretion, praying for His guidance, be it positive or negative. In essence, this aligns with the Islamic concept of *tawakkul*, a term commonly encountered in Islamic literature that encapsulates an act of relying on and entrusting the outcome to Allah's

²¹² Interview with Fatima, 10.05.2022.

discretion. Tawakkul, in the Arabic, denotes the Islamic concept of placing reliance on God or "trusting in God's plan." It is viewed as the embodiment of "perfect trust in God and dependence on Him exclusively." This principle is also commonly referred to as God-consciousness. A similar narrative can be found not only in the story of Fatima and Yunus but also in almost all stories of couples.

In another example, Veli responded to the question "How did you trust your spouse before you got married, did you think there was any risk in this marriage?" by stating that:

*"For example, you can't see the back if you pick up this phone. Can you see it? No. Whatever happens is your destiny. That's what we said. So whatever happens, [doesn't matter] it can be good or bad... Or you buy the watermelon, cut it and see that it is rotten. You either eat or you don't. But these are the gods of God's will. If Allah had not written in our minds, if there was no drinking water for her here, this would not have come."*²¹³

The examples of the telephone and the watermelon in Veli's statement are metaphorical but effectively illustrate how individuals interpret the uncertainty of the outcome of their actions. Not only the significant events such as a marriage but also the very ordinary activities in daily life bring uncertainty; and as the evidence from this research suggests, entrusting the outcome of actions to Allah, relying on God and placing trust in His divine plan emerges as one way of dealing with these uncertainties.

Returning to the issue of trust, this echoes Charles Tilly's definition of trust in the context of transnational networks: He defines trust networks as "ramified interpersonal connections, consisting mainly of strong ties, within which people set-valued, consequential, long-term resources and enterprises at risk to the malfeasance, mistakes, or failures of others."²¹⁴ According to this definition, trust can and does always involve inaccuracies, mistakes, and situations where the other party may fail. Barbalet also approaches trust as a tool that people develop to cope with uncertainty where personal observations and interpretations are insufficient.²¹⁵ Although accurate in identifying the trust-risk relationship, it is necessary to go a step beyond these

²¹³ Interview with Veli, 10.05.2022.

²¹⁴ Tilly, "Trust Networks in Transnational Migration," 7.

²¹⁵ Barbalet, "A Characterization of Trust, and Its Consequences," 380–81.

approaches to understand the nature of Turkish-Indonesian marriages. The findings from this research indicate that individuals manage the risks and uncertainties associated with trust by drawing upon their religious beliefs and values rather than establishing a relationship of trust to cope with the uncertainties of their behaviour and decisions. In his analysis of the nature of trust, Möllering calls this suspension and suggests that researchers should try to understand how the trustor copes with suspects and uncertainties regarding their actions and decisions.²¹⁶

Although they carry a certain amount of trust in their spouses stemming from the relationship itself, trustworthy networks of marriage, and their belief that the other is a sincere Muslim who will not violate the marriage, they are also open to interpreting any problem that emerges in their marriage as the destiny determined by Allah. Therefore, the emphasis on "takdir-i ilahi" leaves them open to risk while at the same time providing a source of trust, especially if they are convinced by their partner's religious sensitivity. During the entire process of engagement and online dating, they try to establish communication on daily religious duties, such as namaz, as Veli calls it, the "alarm clock," or, as Nuri narrates, his wife's sensitivity about the morning prayer.

4.4. Collective Trust of Turkish Men on Indonesian People

Although Turkish men's marriages with Indonesian women are very recent in the region and have a relatively small impact in Giresun, with no more than 50 cases, the phenomenon of transnational marriage and foreign women is not unfamiliar to the social structure and construction of masculinities in the Black Sea region. During my time in the field, I was informed about the existence of many other women from Georgia, Russia, Azerbaijan, Syria, and Uzbekistan. In most of the cases where I talked about my research topic to the residents, they shared stories of such marriages, many of which involved their neighbours or close and distant relatives. Some locals even expressed willingness to assist me in connecting with these women from various countries, offering to facilitate interviews in case I encountered difficulties in reaching a sufficient number of Indonesian participants for my research. I did not contact them,

²¹⁶ Möllering, "The Nature of Trust," 416.

as it would have exceeded the boundaries of the study and the focus of the fieldwork, but in the end, these cases were showing that the local people in this specific rurality were not unfamiliar with the phenomenon of transnational marriage or foreign women.

Once, on my way home after interviewing in a different village, I had an unexpected encounter with a taxi driver who shared stories about his marriages and relationships with women from various nationalities. When I explained why I was in Bahçecik village and the context of my visit, he began to talk about the challenges of marrying a foreign woman with a different language and a different culture.

Süleyman, a 40-year-old man, was currently married to a Turkish woman from his locality and earned his living through various freelance jobs.²¹⁷ On that particular day, I had tried to contact my regular taxi driver to take me home, but he was unavailable. Instead, he sent Süleyman to pick me up, and our meeting was entirely spontaneous in this context. During our conversation, he asked me several questions about the Indonesian women in the area and then, surprisingly, proceeded to share his own past experiences with foreign women. He mentioned his marriage with an Iranian university student he had met in Bursa, which ended in divorce due to incompatibility. Afterwards, he married a woman of Slavic origin who was living in Kastamonu. They eventually divorced because their families conflicted. A few years prior, he had a romantic involvement with an Indonesian woman he met on Instagram. When I inquired about the seriousness of their relationship and whether they had considered marriage, he explained that they had indeed contemplated it. She even travelled to Istanbul to visit him. However, they couldn't proceed with marriage because the woman didn't want to live in Turkey, and Süleyman faced financial difficulties preventing him from relocating to Indonesia. Then, he came back to his hometown and married a local woman.

He didn't accept a further interview; therefore, all my knowledge about his life story remained limited to a fifteen-minute conversation we had on the ride to my home. I couldn't gather the details regarding his experiences with these marriages and couldn't

²¹⁷ The term freelance job here is used for the Turkish expression "serbest meslek" and in the local context it refers to individuals who do not have a specific job and can adapt to various occupations depending on circumstances. These jobs can include construction work, farming, driving, and transportation, among others.

even be sure whether he was telling the truth. But in the end, this specific case, along with many others, showed me that the local people were familiar with transnational marriages, and it was not necessarily limited to Indonesians. On the other hand, this led me to question where exactly Indonesian women stand within the local community's understanding of transnational marriages, especially when considered alongside marriages involving women from other countries, and how Indonesian women were perceived in comparison to women from different countries of origin.

In light of this examination, the present study reveals that a prevailing sense of collective trust was formed within the local community, especially among the Turkish men married to Indonesian women, directed toward Indonesian people, particularly Indonesian women. Especially the men who went to Indonesia to meet their prospective wives and their families before marriage tended to have a trustworthy view of the Indonesian people based on their observation of Indonesian society as having "naïve" and "calm" characteristics and "sensitivity about the Islamic practices" in their terms. Furthermore, another source of this collective trust stemmed from the encounter with Indonesian people during the Hajj experience. There was a growing narrative of the Indonesian people as being very kind, helpful, and respectful. Interestingly, this narrative about the Indonesians extended beyond those who had personally experienced Hajj, indicating the widespread nature of this perception. Overall, in both local and transnational contexts, Indonesian people were widely perceived as trustworthy individuals, seemingly incapable of causing harm due to their admirable characteristics. Here, it is crucial to note that this collective trust in the Indonesian people seemed to be constructed in a very polarized manner, with other societies or nationalities often unfavourably compared to Indonesians or vice versa. To gain a deeper understanding of how this binary understanding of trust evolved among the participants in this study, it is essential to explore other cases of transnational marriages, both on local and national levels, that may have influenced the dynamics of trust in Turkish-Indonesian marriages. In line with this objective, I present a brief analysis of how Russian women were perceived in the context of marriage in the Black Sea region and how this corresponded to trust-making in the marital relationship with Indonesian women. I also analyze Syrian-Turkish marriages in terms of their reflection on the construction of trust toward Indonesian women.

When viewed from a broader historical lens, the Black Sea region holds a significant historical record concerning the presence of foreign women, particularly in shaping the concept of masculinity over time. Centred especially in Trabzon, the Black Sea Region was associated with the Natasha phenomenon that emerged with the turn of the 1990s. Referring to the female sex workers migrating from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries, it is noted that in many countries outside of Turkey, such as Israel, these female migrant sex workers were also referred to as "Natashas." However, Turkey, and specifically Trabzon, became one of the primary centres of this sex trade known as the Natasha phenomenon.²¹⁸ Describing it as a national discourse surrounding the Black Sea Region and Istanbul, Gülçür and İlkaracan pointed out that the migrant women from these countries were labelled as "prostitute" regardless of their actual profession and "Russian" regardless of their actual nation, and they were "portrayed as 'hot, passionate, blond bombshells' which were available and willing for any sexual acts required of them."²¹⁹ Here, it is essential to acknowledge that the phenomenon often referred to as "Natasha" or the perception of Russian women in the Black Sea region is not a homogeneous concept and does not accurately represent a unified ethnic identity. This categorization is overly broad and problematic as it tends to homogenize and stigmatize immigrant women from various countries within the former Soviet Union. Women from diverse backgrounds, including Georgia, Azerbaijan, Uzbekistan, and other former Soviet nations, are often grouped together under the label of "Russian women" and subsequently subjected to stereotypes associated with prostitution. Therefore, while this study discusses the phenomenon within the overarching category of "Russian women" to reflect the local perception, it is crucial to emphasize that this categorization does not accurately mirror the diverse realities and experiences of these women in practice.

The period following the opening of the Sarp Border Gate in 1989 is marked by a significant surge in the "Suitcase Trade" and an influx of female sex workers from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Bloc countries. This notable increase was extensively documented in newspaper articles, academic studies, and the local narratives from the

²¹⁸ Mehmet Bozok, "Constructing Local Masculinities: A Case Study From Trabzon, Turkey" (PhD Thesis, Ankara, Middle East Technical University, 2013).; Leyla Gülçür and Pınar İlkaracan, "The 'Natasha' Experience: Migrant Sex Workers from the Former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in Turkey," *Women's Studies International Forum* 25, no. 4 (2002).

²¹⁹ Gülçür and İlkaracan, "The 'Natasha' Experience," 414.

time, shedding light on its profound impact on prevailing perceptions of masculinity, femininity, and family dynamics within the Black Sea region.²²⁰ For example, Gülçür and İlkaracan noted that "The Natasha issue has also provoked much societal debate on the sanctity of the family, even causing stress between husbands and wives. Migrant workers have often been blamed for the increased incidence of AIDS/STDs as well as for the 'breakdown of the family.'²²¹ How the Natasha issue evolved into a discourse or became a source of provocation requires a separate analysis. On the other hand, it's clear that the ideals of femininity shaped by the presence of *Natashas* significantly influenced the local gender roles for both local women and men.

Mehmet Bozok, in his study on the construction of masculinities in Trabzon, highlighted that the male perspectives on *Natashas* as being "attractive", "beautiful", and "sexually appealing" placed pressure on not only the migrant sex workers but also the local women who were traditionally perceived as "industrious, contented, rugged and child carer."²²² In addition to these traditionally approved expectations, they also faced social pressure to be beautiful and well-groomed for their husbands in order not to let them engage with these "attractive" and "appealing" foreign women."²²³ Bozok's research revealed that this beauty pressure on local women led to an increase in visits to beauty centres, resulting in the establishment of many such centres in the region during this period.²²⁴ Local narratives framed this phenomenon as "Black Sea women" learning from "Russian women" about the standards of beauty and femininity; women who want to keep their husbands at home pay more attention to their grooming, go to beauty centres, and make efforts to look beautiful for their husbands. This sentiment was articulated by Yılmaz, one of Bozok's interviewees: "Trabzon women realized they must make their husbands happy from the *Natashas*. They did so to keep their husbands in their hands. I mean, *Natashas* have been very useful for Trabzon in this

²²⁰ Ayşula Kurt, "‘Bavula Sığmayan Hayatlar’: Göçmen Kadın Anlatılarında Trabzon’da Mekanlar, Patikalar ve Mücadeleler," *Karadeniz İncelemeleri Dergisi* 15, no. 31 (November 1, 2021): 257–96, <https://doi.org/10.18220/kid.1017431>.; Gülçür and İlkaracan, "The ‘Natasha’ Experience.>"; Bozok, "Constructing Local Masculinities: A Case Study From Trabzon, Turkey.>"; Ildiko Beller-Hann, "Prostitution and Its Effects in Northeast Turkey," *The European Journal of Women’s Studies* 2 (1995): 219–35.

²²¹ Gülçür and İlkaracan, "The ‘Natasha’ Experience," 414.

²²² Bozok, "Constructing Local Masculinities: A Case Study From Trabzon, Turkey," 60.

²²³ Bozok, "Constructing Local Masculinities: A Case Study From Trabzon, Turkey.>"; Beller-Hann, "Prostitution and Its Effects in Northeast Turkey."

²²⁴ Bozok, "Constructing Local Masculinities: A Case Study From Trabzon, Turkey," 133.

manner..²²⁵ The traditional roles of the women in the Black Sea region, which included being hardworking, skilled in managing both household and agricultural duties, productive, and family caregivers, faced challenges during the Natasha phenomenon. This period introduced new expectations related to femininity, particularly emphasizing beauty, grooming, and nice appeal.

On the other hand, the local men's experiences with Natashas became formative in the construction and also the performance of masculinity in the Black Sea region. As being attractive and available for any sexual relationship demanded from them, Natashas in the Black Sea region represented the performative aspect of masculinities that are constructed on sexuality, demand and performance.²²⁶ First of all, specifically Trabzon and the Black Sea region became a "proper mass of demanders" to this global sex trafficking, and it reflected on the stigmatization of the "Trabzon men" as being "sexually demanding people" of which they also both acknowledge and view as a source of pride and honour, shaping their self-identity.²²⁷ Bozok notes that

having a sexual relationship with Natashas became a lechery, being the sings of an "proper" masculinity" and it provided the ground for performing the patriarchal fantasies of Trabzon erkekleri (Trabzon men). In many cases, the sexual intercourses with Natashas served the place of the performances of manhood than the satisfaction of both sides.²²⁸

Despite the rise of conservatism and increased emphasis on "Islamic religiousness" in the region, men's paid sexual relationships with these foreign women were somehow tolerated and even celebrated in men's spaces as a demonstration of masculinity.²²⁹ Conversely, it was also viewed as a primary factor contributing to the breakdown of families and the erosion of traditional family values, often associated with the spread of immorality. Significantly, Trabzon, which is known for its radical nationalism and conservatism, has emerged as a focal point for the sex trade in the Black Sea region, attracting men from neighbouring provinces such as Rize, Gümüşhane, Giresun, and Ordu.²³⁰ In a patriarchal system where religious and moral norms play a significant role, prostitution and all forms of prohibited sexual activity cannot be openly practised

²²⁵ Bozok, 120.

²²⁶ Bozok, 133–36.

²²⁷ Bozok, 135.

²²⁸ Bozok, 118.

²²⁹ Beller-Hann, "Prostitution and Its Effects in Northeast Turkey," 226.; Bozok, "Constructing Local Masculinities: A Case Study From Trabzon, Turkey", 123.

²³⁰ Bozok, "Constructing Local Masculinities: A Case Study From Trabzon, Turkey," 122.

in public. Even if tolerated and sometimes even promoted as an element that reinforces masculinity in specific "male spaces," it remains an activity that must be conducted discreetly. Consequently, men from neighbouring provinces who wish to keep their involvement with prostitutes hidden clandestinely visit Trabzon. The act of a man journeying to Trabzon is viewed with a sense of suspicion and undesirability by his family members in this context.²³¹ The quotations Bozok makes from his interviewees show how this engagement with the sex trade and "Natasha" was a matter of deviance in the face of society's moral codes in the Black Sea region:

Because the women (the prostitutes) are here, Giresun Ordu Gümüşhane Bayburt Rize comes to here. But a man from places...let's say Ordu or Hopa who wants to make lechery does not do that at his hometown. He does not want to become a subject of gossip for anyone. For the lechery, he comes to here. If a man is somehow wealthy, he goes to there, especially Batumi, from here.²³²

Here in Çömlekçi, you cannot see a Trabzon erkeği!... Those who [nowadays] go to Natashas are cultureless, poorer Turks.²³³

Growing up in a small town in Giresun and completing my high school education in Beşikdüzü, a district of Trabzon, I can also witness the prevalence of this discourse throughout my life in the Black Sea region. I distinctly remember from my high school years how the neighbourhood of "Çömlekçi" in Trabzon was mockingly associated with hotels engaged in prostitution. Also, I have memories of women gossiping about couples who had marital disputes and the husbands travelling to Trabzon and being accused of having affairs with foreign women there. Together with Bozok's examples, this narrative actually illustrates the stigmatization and moral judgments placed upon those involved in such activities within the region. In this context, it can be interpreted as the complexities and inherent contradictions within patriarchy. However, at the same time, it shows how spatiality and embodiment interact within a specific location, Trabzon, and through the bodies of the individuals involved, specifically the "Natasha." Drawing upon Setha Low's terminology on space and place, it is possible to argue that Trabzon, as a spatiality, becomes associated with a practice that society frowns upon and considers a secret: prostitution. It finds embodiment in foreign women who are stigmatized as "Natasha". According to Setha Low,

²³¹ Bozok, 122.

²³² Ibid, 123.

²³³ Ibid, 123.

The body (and bodies), conceptualized as embodied space(s), incorporates metaphors, ideology, and language, as well as behaviors, habits, skills, and spatial orientations derived from global discourses and far away places — especially for the migrant — and yet is grounded at any one moment in a specific geographical location.²³⁴

From this perspective, it becomes evident that Trabzon, specifically the Çömlekçi neighbourhood, emerges as an embodied space within the Black Sea region. This embodiment is characterized by the presence of "beautiful", "attractive", and "sexually liberated" Russian women and the sexually-demanding Turkish men. However, it is also crucial to note that this embodiment and spatiality represents "immorality," "social decay," and the "undermining of family values", and when it is stretched over the Black Sea context, Trabzon and Çömlekçi neighbourhood creates a kind of an untrustworthy environment through the bodies of Russian women. Another qualitative research conducted in 2006 on the perceptions of foreign women from post-Soviet Union countries migrated to Trabzon supports this argument by putting forward that "In contemporary Trabzon, prostitution is believed to represent a social reality symbolizing moral decline. Therefore, when one mentions 'foreign women' in present-day Trabzon, it is often associated with the image of a sex worker."²³⁵

Given this detailed analysis of the Natasha phenomenon as a very significant dynamic in the construction of masculinities in the Black Sea region, it is also important to question what kind of relationship with foreign women from the former Soviet Union or Eastern Bloc countries was established in the context of marriage. Indeed, transnational marriages with Russian women are not an unfamiliar phenomenon across Turkey. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian women emerged as a significant cohort among foreign brides in Turkey. Statistically, in the year 2022, Russian women comprised a notable 5.5 per cent of the total foreign brides in the country. However, it is possible to say that the majority of Turkish-Russian marriages are concentrated in Istanbul and the Mediterranean region. In contrast, the Black Sea coastal region registers a notably lower incidence of such marriages. Notably, studies by Ayla Deniz and Murat Özgür shed light on the prevailing patterns and networks

²³⁴ Setha M. Low, "Towards an Anthropological Theory of Space and Place," *Semiotica* 2009, no. 175 (January 2009): 22, <https://doi.org/10.1515/semi.2009.041>.; Also see, Setha M. Low, "Embodied Space(s): Anthropological Theories of Body, Space, and Culture," *Space and Culture* 6, no. 1 (February 2003): 9–18, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1206331202238959>.

²³⁵ Sibel Aydın, "Post-Sosyalist Ülkelerde Açığa Çıkan İşgücü ve Trabzon'da Yabancı Uyruklu Kadın Olgusu" (Masters Thesis, Muğla, Muğla Üniversitesi, 2006), 65.

observed in the context of Turkish-Russian marriages in Antalya and several other Mediterranean cities.²³⁶ According to Deniz and Özgür, the increasing number of touristic visits to Antalya by Russian-speaking women created a system of migration and marriage, leading to longer stays in Turkey.²³⁷ They established partner relationships evolving into marriages, which provide them “economic, social and emotional security.”²³⁸ Deniz and Özgür illustrated that this transition from temporary migration to permanent residency and citizenship has made Russian women a dynamic core group in the growing Russian community in Antalya.²³⁹

However, the phenomenon of the Russian brides, often associated with tourism in the Mediterranean region, takes on a different identity within the Black Sea region. Here, it becomes intrinsically linked with the "suitcase trade" and the subsequent emergence of the "Natasha" phenomenon. While there is a dearth of comprehensive studies on marriages involving Russian women in the Black Sea region that extend beyond the context of prostitution and the "Natasha" stereotype, a discourse analysis reveals that these marriages are predominantly perceived as "unwanted" or "perfunctory" within the local context.

Aydın's research illustrates a good example in this regard, in which she interviewed three married Russian women, while the other sample consisted of Russian women only engaged in trade occupation in Trabzon. Her interviewees expressed the unease they had during their adaptation process because they faced uncomfortable glances from the locals and also disagreements with the natal family members of their husbands or prospective husbands, sometimes leading to divorce. Similarly, during my interview with a local resident of Giresun, I inquired about marriages involving Russian women. The response was that such marriages were virtually nonexistent in the neighbourhood, and if they did occur, they were likely contractual unions. Niyazi, a 60-year-old married man who works as a livestock breeder in Giresun, was one of

²³⁶ Deniz and Özgür, “Local, Institutional, or Transnational?”; Ayla Deniz, “Antalya’daki Rus Gelinler: Göçten Evliliğe, Evlilikten Göçe,” *Sosyoloji Dergisi* 3, no. 27 (2013): 151–75.; Ayla Deniz and E. Murat Özgür, “Mixed Marriage and Transnational Marriage Migration in the Grip of Political Economy: Russian-Turkish Case,” *Turkish Studies* 22, no. 3 (May 27, 2021): 437–61, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14683849.2020.1763797>.

²³⁷ Deniz, “Antalya’daki Rus Gelinler: Göçten Evliliğe, Evlilikten Göçe,” 157.

²³⁸ Ibid.

²³⁹ Ibid.

my key informants during the fieldwork because he had a perspective on both communities, thanks to his frequent visits to the surrounding villages as part of his profession and his trips to Trabzon to oversee his daughters' education at a religious school [Kur'an Kursu] in Of, a rural district of Trabzon. According to Niyazi, "If a Turk from this region married a Russian woman, it was probably in exchange for money, documented merely for the purpose of securing a residence permit."²⁴⁰

In fact, all these data remain insufficient to reach a generalization, and most probably, there are many different examples of Turkish-Russian marriages in the region that are not characterized as "unwanted" or "perfunctory." Nevertheless, it becomes evident that the presence of Russian women in the Black Sea region, often associated with prostitution and "Natasha" stereotypes, apparently has not formed a distinct marriage network as observed in the Mediterranean context. This divergence can be attributed to the pivotal element of "trust" in the context of marriage.

Russian women in the Black Sea region, as a collective group often associated with the practice of "prostitution" and perceived as "lacking in virtue," "violating family values," and "not adhering to moral standards," are viewed as untrustworthy as potential spouses. In the rural Black Sea context, where the patriarchal norms and traditionally gendered values of family forming are upheld to a great extent, Russian women create a portrait that does not inspire trust to be engaged in a transnational marriage context due to their embodiment in the "prostitution" whether they are sex workers or not.

This notion of trust is further underscored when we shift our focus to Indonesian-Turkish marriages, where this collective trust is constructed on the ideals of religious sensitivity, piety, purity, and humbleness of the Indonesian society, which was favourably compared to the other societies. In fact, during a participant observation in which I was having tea with Yunus and his Indonesian wife at their house, the story Yunus shared with me regarding his past relationship was very reflecting in terms of how this "purity" and "piety" was important in shaping their trust. At the moment that Fatima was not with us, he started to talk about his previous relationships with other

²⁴⁰ Interview with Niyazi, August 20, 2023. "Yani bu civardan bir Türk bir Rus'la evlenmişse muhtemelen para karşılığıdır, yani Rus kadının oturum izni alabilmesi için kağıt üzerinde yapılmıştır."

foreign women he met online upon a relevant question of mine. He mentioned an unmarried, Muslim, attractive woman whom he named as "ex-wife." He said that they were thinking about marriage until he learned that she was not a virgin. Although this Indonesian woman was representing herself as pious, having a degree in Quran recitation, being careful about the daily prayers, etc., from Yunus' perspective, she was having an "unlawful sexual intercourse" in the course of Islamic jurisprudence and contradicting her pious identity. He told me that he ended the relationship after he found out about this. "At that moment, her trustworthiness ended for me; I said, 'I don't want a whore'."²⁴¹

It is observed that the Turkish men are holding a confidence toward the Indonesian women on the basis on their religious sensitivity. As being the members of two Muslim societies, the participants believed that their prospective spouses quite likely the people who would be trusted because they are the "sincere Muslims" even more than the Turkish people are. In that manner, supporting the idea that religious identity plays a significant role in the construction of social trust, the present study reveals that there is a distinctive confidence toward the Indonesian people due to their Muslim images.

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For example, during an interview, when I asked Sami, "Did the fact that your wife was Indonesian help you to trust her, or could she have been Syrian or Russian, for example, not an Indonesian? Would this give you the same trust?"; he responded as the following:

"In every country, in every village, in every neighborhood, there are both good people and bad people. When you vilify someone there, you cannot vilify all

²⁴¹ Fieldnotes, April 29, 2021. Güce.

the people living in that region... But I've been to Indonesia twice, I saw wise people there. They were very humble, I mean, they were close to humans, respectful, and polite. I have never met such [a good] people. (...) They are different in sect, but they live piety better than us.”²⁴²

This emphasis on the different sects was also prevalent in other men in a way that the Indonesians are kind of wrong in some practices of religion because they practice it in a different manner, but because they are more sensitive in following the daily duties and Islamic rules, they were believed to be more religious than the Turkish people are, and inevitably more trustworthy. Most of the men who visited their prospective conjugal families in Indonesia were surprised by the Indonesian people going to the mosque for every time of prayer, long Quran recitations over the mosque loudspeaker, and again Quran recitations included in the wedding ceremonies. A very similar perception was prevalent in Salih's narrative. He was a 60-year-old man who went to Europe to work together with his father and came back to Turkey in his 30s. After he met his Indonesian wife online in 2019, he went to Indonesia to meet her and his conjugal family members. When I asked him about his trust in his wife, expressing the past and present experiences he had abroad, Salih narrated.

“I have been to France, Belgium. I have also traveled in Turkey, but I have never seen a nation that respects people as much as Indonesians. Of course, not all of them are like this, there might be bad ones [Indonesians] too. Even though we are different in terms of sect, they live Islam better than us, that's what I saw.”²⁴³

Here, what is more important than this over-emphasis on piety is the way how they construct this trust in the Indonesian people. When I asked about the very interpersonal trust of their spouses, they generally rooted it in Indonesian society's trustworthiness.

²⁴² Interview with Sami, May 10, 2022. Direkbükü. He was 70 years old man who was married for approximately four years.

“Eşinin Endonezyalı olması ona güven duymanda etkili oldu mu yoksa mesela Endonezyalı değil de Suriyeli ya da Rus da olabilir miydi senin için? Aynı güveni verir miydi?”

“Her memlekette her köyde her mahallede hem iyi insanlar vardır, hem kötü insanlar vardır. Şimdi burada birilerini kötülerken, bütün o bölgedeki yaşayan insanları kötüleyemezsin. Ama ben Endonezya'ya 2 defa gittim. Orada akıl insanları gördüm. Çok mütevazi böyle insana yakın efendime söyleyeyim, insana saygı gösteren, saygılı olan. Böyle millet tanımadım. (...) Mezhep olarak farklılar ama dindarlığı bizden iyi yaşıyorlar.”

²⁴³ Interview with Salih, 13.05.2022. *“Fransa'ya gittim, Belçika'ya gittim, Türkiye'yi de gezdim ama Endonezyalılar kadar insana saygı duyan bir millet görmedim. Tabi hepsi böyle değil, kötüsü de vardır. Mezhep olarak farklı olsak da İslam'ı bizden daha iyi yaşıyorlar, ben öyle gördüm.”*

In doing so, they also established a dichotomic relationship with the other societies they encountered at any time in their lives. In other words, this "collective trust" in the Indonesian people manifested as an idea that Indonesians are more trustworthy than others, excelling in this regard. One of the significant dynamics shaping the idea that "Indonesian people are trustworthy" is the encounter with the Indonesian people during the Hajj pilgrimage. Pilgrimage stories that highlight the "trustworthiness" of Indonesian people seem to reinforce this collective trust as a narrative from both the past and the present. Based on the experiences of many participants during their own pilgrimage or accounts they heard from fellow pilgrims, many participants mentioned the Indonesians as a distinctive group, being very humble, helpful, and respectful.

During an interview with Sinan, 57 years old men who were in the process of engagement with an Indonesian woman and waiting for her to come to Turkey in a month, we started to talk about Muslim societies, and he indicated that he was very happy about those Indonesian women around being sincere Muslims. I wanted to hear his thoughts about the other Muslim societies and Muslim women from different nationalities in the context of marriage and asked, "So, speaking of Muslims, does it matter to you that your wife is Indonesian? Syrians are Muslims too, or maybe Pakistan..." He brought his pilgrimage experiences into conversation and responded as the following:

*"Let me tell you, my daughter, when I went on pilgrimage with Indonesians in 2008, we met their caravans on pilgrimage. The pilgrimage guide who was with us said about Malaysians and Indonesians that they are very delicate people, they do not hurt anyone. When you accidentally touch them on the way out, they make a sign like "excuse me, I apologize". But Iranians and Africans go like bulldozers. Hurray! They drag you along. I have seen this difference. Now, if they asked me whether I would prefer Syrians or Indonesians among them, I would say Indonesians because they have been raised very delicately, both men and women."*²⁴⁴

²⁴⁴ Interview with Sinan, September 19, 2022. Espiye. "Bak kızım şöyle söyleyim sana, ben Endonezyalılarla birlikte 2008 yılında hacca gittiğimde hacda onların kabileleri ile karşılaştık. Başımızda bulunan hac rehberi Malezyalılar ve Endonezyalılar için dedi ki onlar çok narin insanlar, kimseyi incitmezler. Giderken yanlışlıkla dokunduğün zaman "affedersiniz özür dilerim" gibi işaretler bulunuyorlar. Ama gel gelelim İranlılar, Afrikalı buldozer gibi gidiyorlar. Hurra! Seni sürükleyip geçiyor. Bu farkı gördüm. Şimdi bana deselerdi bunların içerisinde Suriyeli mi Endonezyalı mı olsun, Endonezyalı derim çünkü çok narin yetiştirilmişler, erkeği olsun kadını olsun."

Very similar emphasis was made by Sami when I was asked about his trust to Waty:

“To make sure of the reliability of this work, [marriage with an Indonesian woman], I met our pilgrims from Turkey who went to Saudi Arabia and got information from them [about Indonesians]. I mean, they told me that Indonesian women, Indonesian people are very good, they are close to people [friendly], they are very humble. Later, when I met with her [his Indonesian wife], I got the pretty same impression...”²⁴⁵

These examples are very significant in showing the ongoing construction of a collective trust based on the narratives even when their relationship with the prospective Indonesian wife was started, and it shouldn't be overlooked that Turkish men's trust in the Indonesian people is very much related with the perceptions towards Indonesians as being pious Muslims and it was culminated in a dichotomic manner with the other societies they came across. Overall, these narratives played an important role when it comes to establishing marital relationships and making decisions to marry.

To go further in this manner, it should be highlighted that although it was not explicitly mentioned in some of the interviews, in my participant observation conversations with both local people and the married participants, the attribution of Indonesian people as a collective whole as trustworthy and the discourse of "no harm might come from them" were also reinforced by the spread of stereotypes created by local narratives and national media about Syrian, Pakistani, Afghan migrant women in the region. In other words, the discourses that other communities were not to be trusted supported the trustworthiness of Indonesians in a dichotomous way.

During participant observations, this dichotomy in trust perceptions was evident in my meetings with Turkish-Indonesian families. For instance, regarding a conversation with a Turkish man married to an Indonesian woman and his mother, I noted the mother saying, "Some Syrians are scammers, but Indonesians did not exhibit such

²⁴⁵ Interview with Sami, May 10, 2022. Direkbükü.

“Biraz da, bu işin [Endonezyalı bir kadınla evlenmek] güvenilirliğinden emin olmak için Türkiye'den Suudi Arabistan'a giden hacı adaylarımız var, onlarla görüştim ve bilgi aldım. Yani Endonezya kadınlarının, Endonezya insanının çok iyi olduğunu, efendime söyleyeyim, insanlara yakın olduklarını, çok mütevazı olduklarını söylediler. Daha sonra kendisiyle de görüştüğümüzde gayet aynı izlenimi aldım.”

signs of deceit."²⁴⁶ Although Syrian women did not have widespread visibility in Espiye and Güce, it can be said that they constituted the group that received the most antipathy and distrust in this sense, which was further exacerbated by the national media and local narratives about them. The propagation of anti-Arab discourses, fueled by the growing presence of Arab tourists and rich residents in Trabzon and neighbouring provinces; historical and contemporary anecdotes that stimulated the Arab hatred among the Turkish populace; the rise of nationalist and anti-refugee movements primarily directed at immigrants from Middle Eastern countries, all contributed to an environment of distrust and tension not only in the political or social scenes but also the very private spheres of the daily life. All these negativities over the Arabs affected people's reflections on the "Syrian women."

Although Syrian women did not have widespread visibility in Espiye and Güce, it can be said that they constituted the group that received the most antipathy and distrust in this sense, which was further exacerbated by the national media and local narratives about them. The propagation of anti-Arab discourses, fueled by the growing presence of Arab tourists and rich residents in Trabzon and neighbouring provinces; historical and contemporary anecdotes that stimulated the Arab hatred among the Turkish populace; the rise of nationalist and anti-refugee movements primarily directed at immigrants from Middle Eastern countries, all contributed to an environment of distrust and tension not only in the political or social scenes but also the very private spheres of the daily life. All these negativities over the Arabs affected people's reflections on the "Syrian women."²⁴⁷ To further illustrate, Kemal's statement during our discussion on the transnational marriages in Giresun encapsulates this sentiment, "yes, there are Syrians, but I heard they cheat." He was in his 50s and was divorced two times before marrying an Indonesian woman, but he was also aware of the other transnational marriage cases with other foreign women around.

From a broader perspective, it is possible to say that after 2011, in parallel with the increase in Turkish-Syrian transnational marriage cases that became highly visible across the country, perceptions such as 'Syrian marriage gangs' and 'fake brides' also

²⁴⁶ "Bazı Suriyeliler dolandırıcı, ama Endonezyalılarda öyle dolandırıcılık alameti yoktu." Fieldnotes, September 13, 2022.

²⁴⁷ Fieldnotes, September 13, 2022.

spread. In a discourse analysis on Syrian migrations to Turkey, Cemile Elmas notes that

Women who need more protection in their immigrant countries see marriage as a means of asylum and marry for economic, security and social reasons. However, this situation has led to the formation of marriage gangs, especially in some regions, and Syrian women have been turned into an opportunity by characterizing them as fake brides. When these situations are taken into consideration, young Syrian women have started to be addressed with stereotypes such as man hunters, money-loving, cunning, and kuma. [second wife].²⁴⁸

When it is examined through the lens of Turkish-Indonesian marriages, which constitute the main focus of the study, it is seen that these stereotypes created through Syrian women again support the collective trust in "Indonesian women" from a dichotomous perspective. It is also important to note that an element that fuels this dichotomy here is based on "physical appearance." According to interview data from another qualitative study, Syrian women tend to draw excessive attention due to their clothing and heavy makeup, which can result in a lack of trust. One interviewee mentioned:

...they attract the attention of our men with their clothes and excessive makeup. I met a few people, I didn't like them, they don't inspire confidence. Because they are too fancy. I don't like their make-up and clothes. For example, when you look from the outside, they are very clean, but when you look at their houses, they are very dirty but very well-groomed...and this issue of women is especially troublesome. If they don't wear so much makeup, our men won't look anyway.²⁴⁹

In contrast, Indonesian women are perceived differently by both married men and the local community. Trust is often associated with their modest and unassuming demeanour as well as their simple attire; the vast majority are makeup-free and veiled and try to cover themselves according to local norms. Hence, it's essential to highlight that the local community do not consider Indonesian women as a source of threat, partly due to their limited presence.

To illustrate their appearance in the local space of Espiye, I can mention a memory from the beginning of the fieldwork. After a weekly meeting of Indonesian women on

²⁴⁸ Safiye Cemre Elmas, "Söylemler Aracılığıyla Göçün Güvenlikleştirilmesi: Türkiye'deki Suriyeli Sığınmacı Kadınlar," *Hitit Ekonomi ve Politika Dergisi* 2, no. 1 (2022): 16. (Translation is my own.)

²⁴⁹ Serdar Ünal and Fatma Doğan, "Yerli Halkın Bakışından Suriyeli Kadın Sığınmacılar: Mardin'de Yabancıların Ötekileştirilmesi ve Ahlakı Dışlama," *OPUS Uluslararası Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi*, May 31, 2020, 3306, <https://doi.org/10.26466/opus.619452>.

Mondays, we decided to go to the street bazaar, and I was going to accompany them. I had this prejudice that I would witness people's judgmental and condescending looks against Indonesian women, but to my surprise, the locals were more curious and welcoming.

“What interested me the most was the attitude of the locals, I witnessed that they couldn't take their eyes off this relatively crowded and conspicuous group of foreign women for a while and sometimes even stopped and watched them. I heard two women stopping and talking among themselves wondering if they were Chinese. A male shopkeeper said something like "welcome" in reference to Indonesian women and drew us to his stand. During the shopping, I observed that the young assistants of this shopkeeper were kind of excited, trying to speak in English and trying to tell the price of the products that the women asked about. Before I went out, I thought I would be met with condescending looks, but I realized that this was not the case at all.”²⁵⁰

This short moment at a time from my fieldwork didn't fully reflect the construction of collective trust in the Indonesian people and Indonesian women. However, it was important for me to realize that I had a prejudice that Indonesian women were perceived as "threatening" because of their different and strange appeal in the local society. Yet, they were emphasized in terms of their differences in clothing, cleanliness, cooking food habits, etc. Overall, Indonesians were treated as a group that could be trusted because they were not engaging in "prostitution", which was reflected in the collective memory regarding the Russian women or because they were not scammers, which was discursive over the Syrian women. In that sense, this collective trust finds a dichotomic relationship with other societies, such as the Russians or Syrians, in the course of transnational marriage in Turkey. However, more importantly, this collective trust was constructed before the engagement of spouses with each other, and it was based on some narratives and discourses that the one might be trusted due to her/his society of origin. Therefore, this study reveals that trust is not merely an emotional orientation between two or more people based on several other emotions associated with it, such as love, respect, and care, but it has a sociological basis shared by the members of a wider community and the sociocultural structures.

²⁵⁰ Fieldnotes, February 2, 2022. Espiye.

4.5. Conclusion

In conclusion, I should recall the discussions about whether trust is something emergent within the context of any social interaction or whether it has an established character prior to the occurrence of any relationship. Based on ethnographical evidence, this study presents that trust cannot be understood as a mere emergence within the context of an interaction, but it also has an established character as it is based on some presumptions about the one who might be trusted. In the context of transnational marriages between Indonesian women and Turkish men, it can be said that trust had already emerged before the engagement of spouses because they acknowledged their prospective spouses' trustworthiness on the basis of the established networks and chains of marriage migration, the perception of religiosity and nationality. Therefore, admitting the importance of the individual relationships and the dialogue during the engagement process, it is essential to consider the pre-established values, sociocultural and religious norms, and favourable or unfavourable prejudices in understanding trust as a sociological matter.

CHAPTER V

TURKISH MEN AND THE OTHER: TURKISH WOMEN, INDONESIAN WOMEN AND INDONESIAN PEOPLE

5.1. Introduction

The extensive literature on gender and masculinity, including the works of scholars like Raewyn Connell, Judith Butler, and Erving Goffman, concurs that gender is a socially constructed concept arising from the collaboration of individual agency and structural factors. Gender is enacted as a performance by individuals to align themselves with specific gender identities within society. Raewyn Connell, for example, emphasizes that masculinity is a "dynamic" and "contradictory" social construction influenced by socio-cultural, economic, and political structures, as well as everyday interactions.²⁵¹ Also, being influenced by Judith Butler's theory of gender performativity, it is accepted that masculinity is a performance rather than a biological code that comes with birth. According to Butler, gender, including masculinity, is not an inherent quality but a set of behaviours, gestures, and actions individuals perform to express their gender identity and gain recognition within society."²⁵² Here, it is noteworthy to emphasize that the social construction perspective underscores the impact of social and cultural factors in shaping masculinity, while the performance perspective focuses on how gender roles, including masculinity, are actively performed and expressed in everyday life. Both viewpoints contribute to a nuanced understanding of the complexities of masculinity and gender in society.

Given this background to the literature on masculinity and considering the masculinity within transnational marriages, which is also the research topic of this thesis, in this context, an important question arises as to what kind of masculinity men in transnational marriages construct and what kind of masculinity they perform in the

²⁵¹ Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (California: University of California Press, 2005), 35–37.

²⁵² Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution," 527.

pre-marriage process and during their marriage. To delve into this field of transnational marriage masculinity with the question of construction and performance, one should elaborate on how the men who engage in transnational marriages interpret themselves within their society's performance of masculinity. To shed light on this aspect, it is valuable to review the aforementioned studies focused on both migrant and non-migrant husbands in transnational marriages, as they can provide insight for the analysis of my data. In doing so, one thing that should be taken into consideration is the dichotomy of failed and successful masculinity in the context of marriage and the local marriage scene. In his study on transnational husbands in Singapore, Cheng Yi'En reveals that the men who conduct such marriages are often seen as performing a failed masculinity.²⁵³ Furthermore, another important aspect to consider is how these men construct their ideals of masculinity in the context of these marriages and the relationship they establish with the "other." In this regard, it is essential to remember Fresnoza-Flot's study conducted among European-Vietnamese couples. According to this study, both migrant and non-migrant men tend to shape their masculine identity by observing and analyzing other groups, mainly women from their own nationality and women from their conjugal society.²⁵⁴ In the following, I present a discussion and the analysis of these subjects respectively, in line with the research findings.

5.2. Marrying an Indonesian Woman: A Failed or Successful Masculinity?

To start with the dichotomy of failed and successful masculinity, it is a kind of necessary to recall Raewyn Connell defining two types of relationships between the masculinities, one is hegemonic and the other is marginalized, to show us how the male practices are produced and constructed over time.²⁵⁵ According to her, masculinity is a term to understand the construction of the "male practices" that differs in cultures, times, spaces and individuals.²⁵⁶ By emphasizing the differentiations in the masculine practices over these factors, Connell offers a theory to recognize "multiple

²⁵³ Cheng Yi'En, "Transnational Masculinities in Situ: Singaporean Husbands and Their International Marriage Experiences: Transnational Masculinities in Situ," *Area* 44, no. 1 (March 2012): 76–82, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1475-4762.2011.01045.x>.

²⁵⁴ Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot, "(Un)Configurable Masculinities and Gender Dynamics in Men's Eyes: 'Mixed' Couples of Filipino Migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 30, no. 1 (March 2021): 102–16, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0117196820974020>.

²⁵⁵ Raewyn Connell, *Masculinities* (California: University of California Press, 2005), p. 81.

²⁵⁶ Connell, *Masculinities*.

masculinities."²⁵⁷ Her aim is basically to avoid an oversimplification and essentialist approach to the gender that adopts two basic concepts as feminine versus masculine and places one type of masculinity at the centre of the inquiry.²⁵⁸ She opposes to this essentialist approach on masculinity and finds out “multiple”²⁵⁹ and “divergent”²⁶⁰ masculinities in which the masculine ideals are constructed²⁶¹ varyingly, rather than being essential to certain characteristics of a certain group.

In her conceptualization, there are hegemonic masculinities, which are defined as the masculine practices of the dominant male groups in a society which change dynamically over time and culture²⁶² and there are marginalized masculinities, which don't fit the hegemonic masculine practices in a social locality, which are performed by the "non-conformers" from the marginalized social groups who don't conform the hegemonic masculine ideals.²⁶³ While the hegemonic masculine practices can vary over time and space and take different forms such as the “managerial masculinity”²⁶⁴ or the “successful adult masculinity”; the marginalized masculine practices can come out of ethnical, economic or social marginalization of certain groups or individuals in local, regional or global levels.²⁶⁵

Connell's approach to masculinities gives a very broad understanding of men's experiences of transnational marriage in different localities. Although it is quite problematic as it undermines the agency and the experience, it is possible to say that there are various approaches in academia, along with local and global discourses, that portray men in transnational marriages as performing a marginalized masculinity. The transnational husbands, either they are the migrants or the hosts in their marriage relationships, are mostly perceived as "failed" and "losers" in their local "marriage

²⁵⁷ Ibid, 76.

²⁵⁸ Cliff Cheng, “Marginalized Masculinities and Hegemonic Masculinity: An Introduction,” *The Journal of Men's Studies* 7, no. 3 (2008): 295–315, <https://doi.org/10.3149/jms.0703.295>.

²⁵⁹ Cheng, “Marginalized Masculinities and Hegemonic Masculinity: An Introduction.”

²⁶⁰ Connell, *Masculinities*.

²⁶¹ Cheng, “Marginalized Masculinities and Hegemonic Masculinity: An Introduction,” p. 297

²⁶² Cheng, “Marginalized Masculinities and Hegemonic Masculinity: An Introduction,” p. 297-

²⁶³ Cheng, “Marginalized Masculinities and Hegemonic Masculinity: An Introduction,” p. 300.

²⁶⁴ R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity Rethinking the Concept,” *Gender and Society* 19, no. 6 (2005): 829–59, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243205278639>.

²⁶⁵ R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” p. 847-850.

market," as they don't meet the expectations of an ideal husband in the local hegemonic masculinity such as the financial sufficiency.²⁶⁶

On the other hand, when it is looked at the experiences of the men who are involved in transnational marriages from their own perspectives, it can be observed that the failure is attributed to the local woman, not to masculinity or the performance of that male's masculinity,²⁶⁷ and that their transnational marriage is perceived as a success. For example, Yunus, who was married to his Indonesian wife in Indonesia and it took her nearly two years to migrate to Turkey, narrated that the people around him thought this Indonesian woman was deceiving him and would not come. He stated in the interview:

*"They knew but they didn't believe, who are they to bring wives from Indonesia, the foreigners deceive them. Even your father said, 'The [Indonesians] told them to go and said we'll call you later, who believes they will be able to bring women from Indonesia?' And your uncle told me, 'You got married, but if she comes, well done, mate.'"*²⁶⁸

He was not believed that he will be successful in this attempt to marry with an Indonesian woman. In fact, these negative comments of those around him and his overemphasis on these comments indicate that transnational marriage and the masculinity performed in the context of marriage are marginalized. In the eyes of many, these marriages are often perceived as having a lower likelihood of being a successful match, on the contrary a higher likelihood of ending in divorce. The same emphasis on being marginalized was prevalent in the interview with Mustafa, 40 years old Turkish man, who had two previous marriages with the Turkish women and now married for the third time with an Indonesian woman who had a child from her previous marriage. Mustafa's mother, Ayşe, was also with us during the interview and it was obvious throughout the conversation that she had a dominant role in his life.

²⁶⁶ Yi'En Cheng, "Transnational Masculinities in Situ," p. 76; Yi'En Cheng, Brenda S.A. Yeoh, and Juan Zhang, "Still 'Breadwinners' and 'Providers': Singaporean Husbands, Money and Masculinity in Transnational Marriages," *Gender, Place & Culture* 22, no. 6 (July 3, 2015): p. 868.

²⁶⁷ Yi'En, "Transnational Masculinities in Situ," 76.

²⁶⁸ Interview with Yunus, June 21, 2020. Güce. "Biliyorlardı da inanmıyorlardı, onlar kim Endonezya'dan karı getirmek kim, el onları kandırır. Baban bile "el onlara siz gidin biz sizi ararız dediler, onların peşinden karı mı gelir!" demiş... Amcan da bana "evlenmişsin ama gelirse helal olsun" demişti. Ya, dedim hoca ben bu memleketten karı bulmadım, para da vermedim, ama ben evlendim gelmezse de turist olarak gezmiş olurum."

Ayşe: *We wanted a family for our child. We wanted it to be here a lot, but our neighbors cut us off, they gave us bad publicity. (...) They play a tin can after us. They said they brought grandchildren but we didn't hear by ourselves.*

“So did they make fun of you or something?”

Ayşe: *Didn't they ever?*

Mustafa: *There must have been.*

Ayşe: *They played a tin can after us, but we did it, [marriage to the Indonesian woman] no matter what they say...*

Mustafa: *They said “imported bride, imported grandchild.”²⁶⁹*

Both his mother and him were well aware of that Mustafa, as a forty years old man who was divorced twice was not a desired candidate of husband for many of the Turkish women around. Their explanation for this situation was that the people around them were spreading a bad image of Mustafa for a reason they didn't explained to me during the interview.

On the other hand, participants interpret their experience of these transnational marriages as a success and a good fortune away from all the negative comments and the marginalization through mocking. As it was the case for Yunus' case, for most of the Turkish men who married to the Indonesian women; it turns into a success story or they prefer to portray it as a successful marriage and a successful masculinity performance if they could achieve to take their Indonesian fiancée to their home place with or without going to Indonesia. Yunus narrated:

“I was looked at with envy, let me put it this way, no one would dare to go to Indonesia to get married. Nobody can get along with an Indonesian anyway. It is not a privilege to marry an Indonesian, but mine is a privilege because I travelled 17 hours from here, which is not something that everyone can dare.

²⁶⁹ Interview with Mustafa, September 14, 2022. Ortaköy.

“Ayşe: Biz bi yuvası olsun, çocuğumuzun dedik. Buralardan çok istedik ama komşular bizi kesti, kötü tanıttılar. (...) İlk peşimizden teneke çaldılar. Demişler “torun getirmiş” diye emme duymaduk.

Yani dalğa geçen falan mı oldu?

Ayşe: Olmaz mı olmaz mı.

Mustafa: Olmuştur.

Ayşe: El peşimizden teneke çalmış ama biz alduk el ne derse desin...

Mustafa: İthal gelin, ithal torun demişler.”

There is also returning empty. I found it worthwhile, I didn't go without hope, but I said that at least I would be a tourist.”²⁷⁰

In the narratives of Turkish men, conducting a transnational marriage is perceived and experienced as a successful and enviable masculine practice, despite facing marginalization from the local community. These marriages are often associated with a perception of failure, as male participants may be ostracized within their social circles due to being considered unattractive or unsuccessful in the local marriage scene, making them less desirable to Turkish women for various reasons. This perception is evident both in the narratives provided by the participants and from observations. Interestingly, the Turkish men involved in transnational marriages do not necessarily perceive themselves as performing a specific form of masculinity. Instead, many of them view their ability to achieve a transnational marriage as a success and a display of successful masculinity. They take pride in their capability to "bring a wife across Indonesia"²⁷¹ and maintain a successful marriage despite language and cultural differences, viewing these accomplishments as signs of their masculinity. In attributing any failures to the other party, particularly Turkish women, and blaming the changing norms of marriage and family in Turkish society, these men construct their ideals of masculinity. This construction is often achieved through the marginalization of both Turkish and Indonesian women, placing them at two opposite poles and emphasizing their own perceived success in contrast.

5.3. Glorifying the Indonesian Women Against the “Degenerated” Turkish Women

Serpil Sancar, with reference to Simone de Beauvoir, indicated that masculinity is a "position of power" that is constructed and performed through the characteristics of several others, such as women, children, foreigners, migrants, national enemies or betrayers rather than their own gendered identities.²⁷² Resting on this, Sancar defines

²⁷⁰ Interview with Yunus, “Bana gıpta ile bakıldı, şöyle söyleyeyim kimse cesaret edip de Endonezya'ya evlenmeye gitmez. Kimsenin bir endonezyalıyla anlaşacak durumu yok zaten. Endonezyalı ile evlenmek ayrıcalık değil fakat benimki ayrıcalık çünkü ben buradan 17 saat gittim bu herkesin cesaret edebileceği bir şey değil. Buradan boş dönmek de var. Ben karşılığımı buldum, umutsuz gitmedim ama dedim ki hiç olmazsa turist olmuş olurum.”

²⁷¹ With their own words “Ta Endonezya'dan karı getirmek.”

²⁷² Serpil Sancar, *Erkeklik: İmkansız İktidar (Ailede, Piyasada ve Sokakta Erkekler)* (İstanbul: Metis Yayınları, 2020), 16.

masculinity as a "position of power" that keeps the right to talk about what other positions are about and makes his own position unquestioned..²⁷³ In other words, this power position gives the men a ground to establish a critical gaze on the other and to close the doors for their own criticism. When considering transnational marriages and the performance of masculinity in that regard, it is noteworthy that both migrant and non-migrant husbands in such unions tend to shape their masculine identity by observing and analyzing the other groups, mainly the women of their own nationality and women from the conjugal society. Fresnoza-Flot's study reveals that;

(...) These men criticized the women of their own countries by expressing their disagreement with their "liberal" behaviors, for instance, concerning finances (their holding separate bank accounts, their engagement in the labor market and so on). In this context, "liberated" European women are often demonized (Angeles and Sunanta, 2007), whereas Asian women are seen through an orientalist lens that reinforces essentialized stereotypes about them. The way some European informants compared the two groups of women appeared as a way for them to assert what Nader (1989: 234) calls a "position of superiority," which is linked to their ideals of masculinity (...)²⁷⁴

In his research on the Singaporean husbands' experience of transnational masculinity within the context of their marriages to Vietnamese women, Cheng Yi'en also finds out that Singaporean men perform an "attunement to the present as an enfolding of pasts and futures."²⁷⁵ He writes that Singaporean men tend to compare their Vietnamese wives to the local women in their femininity and household performances by blaming the local women as being "materialistic and demanding."²⁷⁶ In a quite similar manner, the Turkish men who got married to Indonesian women mention their past marriages and past relationships with the local women as failed attempts and go into a comparison between the Turkish and Indonesian women. In this regard, just like the Singaporean men in Yi'en's research, the Turkish men in Giresun portray their failed attempts as a failure of the Turkish women who are overly demanding and materialistic and also show inappropriate attitudes in society and household relations.

When asked about their own motives and experiences of these transnational marriages, almost all the male participants addressed their marriages to different characteristics

²⁷³ Sancar, 16.

²⁷⁴ Asuncion Fresnoza-Flot, "(Un)Configurable Masculinities and Gender Dynamics in Men's Eyes: 'Mixed' Couples of Filipino Migrants in Belgium and the Netherlands," *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* 30, no. 1 (March 2021): 107, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0117196820974020>.

²⁷⁵ Yi'En, "Transnational Masculinities in Situ," 77.

²⁷⁶ Yi'En, 78.

of Turkish and Indonesian women by engaging in comparisons and contrasts across various themes. The main themes of comparison revolved around the Turkish woman's scheming nature versus the Indonesian woman's innocence and purity; the Turkish woman's disobedient characteristic versus the Indonesian woman's submissive nature; quarrelsome and aggressive attitudes versus friendliness and refinement; materialistic and greedy habits versus contentment and satisfaction; and self-centeredness versus nurturing attitudes towards children and family members from the husband's previous marriage. These will be exemplified with the evidence from the narratives and the practices of the Black Sea Turkish men, but before moving into this analysis, it is also important to show how they make this comparison with respect to their perception of past and present norms in society.

Before moving into a deeper analysis of the research findings in line with this comparison between the co-national and the transnational women, it is important to recognize that most of the men involved in the research were divorced, and they have been looking for marrying again at least for two or three years. Eight of these men were divorced because they lost their spouses, and seven of them were divorced because of irreconcilable differences or similar reasons. Also, there were two men who didn't marry until their late 30s. It should be highlighted that all of the participants had been looking for a marriage for a long time, and their family members and friends supported them in this manner; also, they had had several marriage meetings with Turkish women before and had experienced in this manner. This is important to emphasize because both the researches on the non-migrant husbands of transnational marriages and the data from this ethnographic research suggests that the men who achieve such marriages and host their wives in their home spaces tend to establish their masculine identities with regard to their experiences from their past and present marriages and a generalizing comparison between the Turkish and Indonesian women.

When I asked Ibrahim about the details regarding engagement and the decision-making process, he automatically directed the conversation to the social motives that directed him to make such a marriage. I asked "You said that Selim introduced you, what did you talk about during this process and how did you decide to get married?" He responded that:

“Well, we met over the internet. Also, it's a bit difficult to get married in Turkey, it's hard to bear the brunt of women after marriage. Nowadays, men have become women and women have become men, but they still can't get along. In our village, for example, young people have always left.”

Upon his response, I asked what he meant by “men become women and women become men” and he narrated that:

“Women always have a say, whatever they say will be done. But it still doesn't work. Aha, half of our village, the young people have all gone out. Aha Mehmet, he has three or four tons of hazelnuts groves, he doesn't need money, he doesn't need anything, but he will leave [to Bursa]. That's what his wife wants. Did they get there and get comfortable? My brother Ali is crawling in Bursa now.”²⁷⁷

When made this interview in 2021, he had been divorced from his Turkish wife for a few years and was living with his Indonesian wife and two young children from his first marriage. The process of separation from his Turkish wife was quite complex, but in general terms, he narrated that she had suffered from a mental disorder and that they did not receive support from her conjugal family. In the end, he had a contentious separation from both his wife and her family. Very similarly, Sinan who had divorced his Turkish wife due to severe incompatibility and after a few years had met and got engaged an Indonesian woman

Let me tell you clearly what I saw here. Turkish women have degenerated. They have isolated the Turkish woman from her original duty. The old Anatolian woman's philosophy of making sacrifices, thinking about her home, the female bird builds the nest is over in my opinion.²⁷⁸

The glorification of the traditional gender roles, and the gendered expectations from the women, dissatisfaction with the modern concept of womanhood having a more autonomous character, and the emphasis on the traditional family values were all

²⁷⁷ Interview with Ibrahim, June 6, 2021, İlit.

²⁷⁸ Interview with Sinan, September 19, 2022. Espiye. “Burada ben şunu gördüm açık olarak söyleyim. Türk kadını, dejenere olmuş durumda. Türk kadını asıl görevinden soyutlamışlar. Eski Anadolu kadını, fedakarlık yapayım, yuvamı düşüneyim, yuvayı dişi kuş yapar felsefesi bana göre bitmiş durumda.”

prevalent in the many other generalizations of the Turkish men in the Black Sea region regarding their perceptions of the Turkish and the Indonesian women.

5.4. Scheme versus Innocence and Purity

One of the main points of this comparison was inevitably the Indonesian women's and the Indonesian people's innocent characteristics as opposed to the Turkish women's scheme nature. Although they accept and indicate specifically that the overgeneralizations would not reflect the reality, in most of the narratives, the Turkish women were depicted as being "agitators", "insincere negotiators", "cheaters", or "hypocrites" while the Indonesian women are defined as being "innocent" and "sincere." For example, Remzi mentioned his visit to Indonesia before he got married to Sarwendah and compared the two people.

"I went to a place called Semerad in Indonesia, I met a Turk there and he said that there are thirty different religions here. The place called Semerad is a place like Giresun or Ordu, a very crowded place, but the men have learned to live together. There is no mischief. I mean, there is no mischief like we have here."²⁷⁹

He described the calm and peacefulness of the Indonesian people as something generally accepted but emphasized that this was possible despite the different nationalities and religions living there. Very similarly, Yılmaz, who visited Indonesia before, was also generalizing about his experiences and narrating that both Indonesian women and the people have trustworthy characteristics while there is insincere negotiating and the dirty subconscious in Turkish women's minds.

"(...) Such fake smiles... there is no need for fake things, marriage will not take it away. Because look, there is a big difference when I compare them with those here."

"Like what, for example?"

²⁷⁹ Interview with Remzi, September 6, 2022. Espiye. "Semerad adında bir yere gittim, orada bir Türk'le tanıştım dedi ki burada otuz ayrı din var, Semerad denilen yer de hani bizim buranın işte Ordu'su gibi Giresun'u gibi bir yer çok kalabalık yer ama adamlar yani birlikte yaşamayı öğrenmişler. Fitne fesat yok. Yani bizim buradaki fitne fesat yok."

“Even if it seems natural here, there is something subconscious. They are constantly thinking and calculating and weighing things up and down. There's a scale there; it's constantly being weighed, and sometimes the scale doesn't always weigh correctly, and when it weighs incorrectly, there's a problem. It's not good, it's a bad thing that tears marriage apart divides it.”²⁸⁰

Sinan, who was a migrant in Germany for a long period of time and returned back to Turkey the last few years, was also criticizing his Turkish people as being hypocritical and dishonest:

“We use Islam only for our own benefit. We do theft, we do dishonesty, but when we pray, we immediately go to the front; supposedly, those at the front are forgiven. Allah knows, I think so; I see a whirligig, but I do not find it sincere. I got away from the people. I can't adapt, there is hypocrisy, dishonesty, everything. In 52 years, I saw here [Turkey] what I didn't see there [Germany].”²⁸¹

They were all complaining about the Turkish women and the Turkish people in general as being non-trustworthy, self-seekers and mischief makers and considering all the interviews done during this research; it also became clear that this was a narrative constructed collectively along with individual experiences because almost all the men interviewed expressed this comparison in similar terms and in similar contexts.

²⁸⁰ Interview with Yılmaz, August 15, 2022. Espiye.

“(…) Öyle sahte gülücükler... Sahte şeylere gerek olmaz, evlilik onu götürmez. Çünkü bak buradakilerle karşılaştırdığımda çok büyük fark var.

Ne gibi mesela?

“Buradakiler Doğal gibi gözükse bile bilinçaltında bir şeyler var. Devamlı bir şeyler düşünülüp hesaplanıp böyle tartılıp indiriliyor. Kantar var orada devamlı kantara çıkıyor, kantar bazen her zaman doğru tartmıyor yanlış tarttığı zaman da sıkıntı oluyor. İyi değil o vesvese evliliği parçalayan, bölen bir kötü bir şeydir.”

²⁸¹ Interview with Sinan, September 19, 2022. Espiye. “Biz islamiyeti sadece kendi çıkarımız doğrultusunda kullanıyoruz. Hırsızlığı yaparız, namuzsuzluğu yaparız, ama namaz kılacağımız zaman hemen en öne geçeriz güya en öndekiler af oluyor ya. Allah bilir, ben öyle düşünüyorum fırıldak görüyorum samimi bulmuyorum. Emin ol insanlardan hep uzaklaştım, uyum sağlayamıyorum riyakarlık sahtekarlık her şey var. 52 yılda orada görmediklerimi burda gördüm.”

5.5. Turkish Woman's Disobedient Characteristic versus the Indonesian Woman's Submissive Nature

Another point of comparison in most interviews was the Indonesian women's submissive characteristic as opposed to the Turkish women's disobedience. The Indonesian women were praised for their respectfulness, showing deference and respect to others, while the Turkish women were accused of being headstrong and rebellious to her husband, mother-in-law and father-in-law. Two quotations from two different interviews exemplify this.

*“First of all, when we make a comparison between our women and the women in our society, they are calmer, they are more domestic, they are more obedient to their husbands, they are not rebellious. That's what I'm telling you. I mean, how should I tell you? You don't get tired, our women do. Our women, our Turkish women tire you out.”*²⁸²

*“She has no fault in obedience, no fault in respect, God bless her. What we wanted...I didn't hear a bad word. As I said, we got along, we were fine.”*²⁸³

While Remzi was complaining about the Turkish women being disobedient and rebellious, together with their over-demands or insistence, Hamdi was expressing his satisfaction with his Indonesian wife in terms of her obedience and respect for him. The same emphasis was prominent in Kemal's words when he was asked to make a comparison between Turkish women and Indonesian women, he focused on this issue and said:

“Now most of the Turkish women... I see them all the time around here. With their friends... There are those who don't obey their husbands, there are those

²⁸² Interview with Remzi, September 6, 2022. Espiye. “Birincisi bizimkilerle bizim toplumdaki kadınlarla onların arasında kıyaslama yaptığımızda bunlar daha sakin, bunlar daha evcimen, bunlar daha eşe karşı itaatkar, başa buyruk değiller. Efendime söyleyeyim böyle. Şey olarak ne bileyim sana yani? Imm ya seni yormuyor? Yorulmuyorsun ya bizimkiler yoruyor. Bizim kadın bizim Türk kadınları yoruyor.”

²⁸³ Interview with Hamdi, September 14, 2022. Yağlıdere. “İtaatte kusuru yok, saygıda kusuru yok, Allah razı olsun. Bizim istediğimiz yani bi kötü kelime duymadım. Aha dediğim gibi anlaştık, iyi olduk.”

*who leave the house unannounced, there are those who cheat. I've always seen and heard about it here. We don't know what happens in Indonesia, but when they come here, there is no such problem.*²⁸⁴

Considering the gender dynamics between masculinity and femininity in marital relationships, the respect and obedience that women are expected to show to men also manifests itself in these marriages, and the construction of masculinity is done through the condemnation of the disobedient character of Turkish women and the glorification of the obedience of Indonesian women. In a sense, the hegemonic masculinity ideals, such as having authority and control over their household relationships, which had been challenged or undermined by Turkish women, seemed to be reconstructed or reaffirmed through Indonesian women's performances of "obedient," "docile," and "submissive" femininity. That the Indonesian women ask for permission for any of their acts and do not insist on things they couldn't get permission to do, unlike the Turkish women, contributes to the appreciation and construction of a dominant decision-maker masculinity among the Turkish men involved in this research. One of the very obvious examples of such a dynamic might be from the two different interviews with Osman, who was divorced from his Turkish wife many years ago because of incompatibility and was married to Lina for nearly five years. Osman was expressing his satisfaction and contentment together with his discomfort with the following situation:

*“Now, these [Indonesian women] are like, 'I will eat, you take your food and tea, eat this, that's it like this...,' but when she [the Indonesian woman] is going to eat, she asks me, 'Can I eat, too?' I tell her, 'You don't need to ask me at home,' but she keeps asking all the time. I feel sad about it, actually, but she's so attached... If I tell her not to eat, for example, she won't eat. Even if I tell her not to eat, she won't eat, but she still asks for permission, saying, 'If you allow, I will eat.' They have such subtle thoughts, maybe because she's educated. They're all educated, according to me. They are not like us; they don't have any of our thoughts.”*²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ Interview with Kemal, August 15, 2022. Espiye.

²⁸⁵ Interview with Osman, September 16, 2022. Bayrambey. “Şimdi bunlar “Ben yemek yiyeceğim, yemeğini çayını al bunu ye, bu kadar böyle...” Ama bu kendisi yemek yiyeceği zaman bana soruyor, ben de yemek yiyebiliyor miyim diye. Ya bu evde bunu sormayacaksın diyorum ben de ona ama bu yine her zaman soruyor. Ben de üzülüyorum aslında ama bu kadar bağlı... Yeme desem yemeyecek mesela bak. Yeme desem yemeyecek ama yine izin istiyor, izin verirsen yiyeceğim diyor. Böyle çok ince fikir var, bu da neden okumuş olduğundan. Okumuş hepsi bunların bana göre. Bizim gibi değiller, bizim düşüncelerin hiçbiri yok bunlarda.”

In another context, he was explaining and emphasizing his appreciation of her wife's obedience to him with reference to religious and cultural norms:

“A religious scholar also says that if your husband gives permission, you can visit your mother... There is a saying that if your husband allows, you can visit your mother, but she [Turkish women] doesn't listen to that. Nobody listens to such things. If her husband doesn't give permission, she cannot go downstairs to visit her mother, this is in Islam. Prophet Muhammad says that she doesn't go down to her mother's place because she's loyal to her husband, and because of this, she becomes a woman of paradise. Her husband didn't give permission, her husband wasn't at home, and she couldn't go down to her mother's place, yet she becomes deserving of paradise. Yes, you see, there are such things in religion.”²⁸⁶

It should be stressed that the construction and performance of masculinity are realized through women's obedience and disobedience, although not always explicitly expressed. In doing so, the Turkish men also contextualize religious and cultural norms on gender as a source of reference and justification for this performance of a dominant-decision maker masculinity. As clearly seen in Osman's statements, although most male participants express that they do not desire this, they emphasize their satisfaction with the docile and obedient attitude of their Indonesian wives, depicting it as an ideal male-female relationship. In this idealization, the importance of religious references and socio-cultural and political constructs cannot be ignored. With reference to Raewyn Connell, Şahinde Yavuz states that

Women either submit to the existing social structure or struggle against it. However, submission turns into a pattern that most women accept. This understanding of femininity is heavily supported by culture and ideology. Contrary to popular belief, obedience and the one who obeys contain a public pattern, and the whole society is organized to legitimize this pattern.²⁸⁷

In Osman's case, the idealization was sustained through a religious anecdote. The reliance on religious and cultural norms serves as a framework for justifying and

²⁸⁶ Interview with Osman, June 21, 2021. Espiye. “Bir hoca da diyor ya ananın yanına kocan izin verirse gidebilirsin... anasının yanına kocası izin verirse gidebilir diye bir kelime var ya, ama o dinlemiyor. Böyle şeyleri dinleyen yok. Kocasını izin vermezse alt kata inemiyor anasının yanına, müslümanlıkta bu var. Peygamber efendimiz şeyinde, anasının yanın inmez diyor kocasına sadık olduğu için de cennet dışısı olur. Kocasını izin vermemiş, kocası evde yok, anasının yanına inememiş, cennetlik olmuş orada. He bak, böyle şeyler var şeyde.”

²⁸⁷ Şahinde Yavuz, “Ataerkil Egemen Erkeklik Değerlerinin Üretiminde Kadınların Rolü: Trabzon Örneği,” *Fe Dergi* 7, no. 1 (2015): 121, https://doi.org/10.1501/Fe0001_0000000136. (Translation is my own.)

perpetuating these established patterns, influencing the dynamics of authority and control. In essence, the construction of masculinity becomes a nuanced reflection of societal values and beliefs, intricately woven into the fabric of everyday life.

5.6. Quarrelsome and Aggressive Attitudes versus Friendliness and Refinement

Another emphasis was made on the Indonesian women's friendly and refined characteristics through a comparison with the Turkish women showing quarrelsome and aggressive attitudes towards their husbands and the other family members. Remzi was generalizing the Indonesian people as having awesome attitudes in terms of this and refers to the Turkish people in that regard:

You can't see a person sulking outside, so they are very respectful to each other. And also a lot of things, I mean, their nerves are taken away, a friend of mine stood for two hours somewhere... if it were us, oh pof...²⁸⁸

In another interview with Sinan, he was complaining about his previous Turkish wife being a quarrelsome wife and exemplified the disagreement between them in that manner:

"I was like a second wife in my own home, the only thing I didn't give was childbirth, so think about it. [I did my best so that] we stay good and not bad. For God's sake."

"What kind of issues were problems between you, would you like to elaborate?"

"Let's put it this way, she finds special excuses to start a fight. For example, we are building a library on the terrace. We took the measurements, I went and cut it, I went and stood in front of it, I looked at it, the lady [his wife] came and looked at it, she said it was deep, we looked at the average of the books, how could it fit. She said are you stupid, can't you see, are you blind, don't you look at this?"²⁸⁹

²⁸⁸ Interview with Remzi, September 6, 2022. Espiye.

²⁸⁹ Interview with Sinan, September 19, 2022. Espiye.

He expressed great frustration with the incompatibility he experienced with his ex-wife, and throughout the entire interview, he continuously referred to this severe incompatibility. He complained about his Turkish wife's over-dominance and lack of respect towards him, but what bothered him the most was her contentious nature, turning even the smallest issues into major conflicts. At the time of the interview, Sinan had not yet married his prospective Indonesian wife, but they were engaged in an online dating process through social media and other digital platforms. He had high expectations for his prospective Indonesian wife to be respectful, full of love, respect and tolerance toward him.²⁹⁰ In support of Sinan's expectations in this direction, the narratives of Turkish men who are currently married to Indonesian women reveal that the calm and friendly nature of Indonesian women reinforces the constructions of hegemonic-dominant masculinity in their marital relationships with Turkish men. Instead of a female figure who disrupts this construction through fights and arguments, a calm, docile and appreciated performance of femininity reinforces the hegemonic-dominant masculinity of men.

5.7. Materialistic and Greed Habits versus Contentment and Satisfaction

The Turkish men in this research were also pointing out the materialistic and greedy attitude of Turkish women in the pre-marriage or marriage process, together with Indonesian women's humbleness on financial demands for marriage. The Turkish woman Asım had met once to marry and asked for material possessions, such as apartments and expensive jewellery, as a condition for a relationship or marriage. He was very annoyed by them as they prioritized material comfort and wealth, making specific demands for luxurious items and didn't accept to marry.

“Right here from Arpacık. She asked for an apartment; I said, I don't know you now; how can I buy you an apartment? Let's get married; if we like each other,

“Ben kendi evimde, ikinci bir hanım gibiydim ben, bir tek doğum yapmadığım kaldı onu da düşün yani ne derece. Yeter ki kötü olmayalım iyi olalım. Yahu insaf be insaf.

Ne gibi meseleler aranızda sorun oluyordu, biraz açmak ister misin?

Şöyle söyleyim, kadın kavga çıkartmak için hususi bahane buluyor.

Ne gibi?

Misal terasta bir kütüphane yapıyoruz. Ölçülerini şeylerini aldık gittim kestirdim gittim karşına geçtim baktım duruyorum bayan geldi baktı, bu dedi derin olmuş, kitapların ortalamasına baktık nasıl sığabilir. Sen salak mısın dedi, görmüyor musun, kör mü gözün, bakmıyor musun buna, dedi.”

²⁹⁰ “Kızım birbirimize saygılı olmak her şeyden önce, saygı duymak. Birbirimizi hoş görmek sevmek. Sevgi, saygı sevgi, ben başka bir şey beklemiyorum.”

we can take care of it in the future. He said no. If I buy you, you'll buy me an apartment in my name, blah blah blah. So I gave up at that moment. Then I found another one. He was with me through a friend, and he asked me for ten twisted bracelets; I said 10 billion liras, 50 100 billion each. I said come, and I'll buy you two bracelets, two bracelets every year. I said I'll get the ten twisted bracelets tomorrow. I said you'll leave and go away.”²⁹¹

Very similarly Yılmaz was generalizing these materialistic and demanding attitudes over the Turkish women in the local community and express his disappointment with the Turkish women to his Indonesian wife in a mixture of English and Turkish.

“Apartment, luxury apartment... Rent no... Buy will be. Under.... It will be a car, may be 400 hundred thousand 500 hundred thousand price car. She will be comfortable and it will be free, she will be free. You don't call it this, you don't use high voice, you don't call it that. You will always leave her free, she will go out with her friends, eat, drink, wear. The girls here will also have boyfriends outside. Only then they will have something to do with you here.”²⁹²

“And what does he ask you here when he asks for a house? Does it have a boiler? Does it have gas? She asks this is what is being asked right now.”²⁹³

He was not married until his 30s and, because of these demands of Turkish women, he did not think of getting married to a local woman. Mustafa agreed with the other participants and explained Turkish women's materialistic approach to marriage as follows:

“Because they don't know poverty, because they have grown up with plenty, because they don't know what poverty is, they want everything. Can I explain? I mean, they

²⁹¹ Interview with Asım, May 10, 2022. Aladere. “Arpacık’tan hemen buradan. Bir tane daire istedi, Ben de dedim ki ben dedim şimdi seni tanımıyorum sana nasıl daire alayım, bir evlenelim bakalım, eğer birbirimizi beğenirsek ileriye doğru bir çaresine bakarız. Yok dedi. Seni alırsam, işte bana üzerime bir daire alacaksın falan filan dedi. Bende o anda vazgeçtim bundan. Ondan sonra bir tane daha buldum, o da bir arkadaş vasıtasıyla, o da işte benden 10 dal burma bilezik istedi, 10 milyar lira tanesi. Bileziği gel dedim sana her sene 2 tane 2 tane bilezik alayım dedim. On dal bileziği alacağım yarın, bırakıp gideceksin dedim (...)”

²⁹² Interview with Yılmaz, 15 August, Espiye. “Apartment, lüks daire... Rent no... Buy olacak. Under.... Car olacak, may be 400 yüz bin 500 yüz bin bir araba olacak. Rahat bir şey olacak bir de o özgür olacak free olacak. Ona şöyle demeyeceksin, high voice kullanmayacaksın, ona öte var demeyeceksin. Daima free bırakacaksın onu, arkadaşlarıyla gezilecek yiyecek, içecek, giyecek. Buradaki kızların dışarıda erkek arkadaşı da olacak. Ancak onlar o zaman burada seninle şey yapmış olurlar.”

²⁹³ Interview with Yılmaz, August 15. Espiye. “Bir de ne ister burada senden, ev isterken evinde kombisi var mı, gazı var mı? Sorar, şu anda sorulan şey bu”

*want it with all their might. I mean, not where did the mill come from, this and that...'*²⁹⁴

By placing Indonesian women opposite Turkish women in this regard, it is seen that Indonesian women are glorified for not being demanding and being content with less. They were quite satisfied with their Indonesian wives as not being demanding houses, cars, and jewelry. Yılmaz, who was very complainer about the Turkish women's demands for marriage, expressed his gratitude for the Indonesian women as the following

*“My wife asked me for a ring, just a ring. Do you have a house, do you have a car, do you have this and that? He asked me this, do you pray, do you fast, do you live Islam, do you know the Qur'an, he asked me the requirements of Islam, he didn't dwell on my house, my car, my earnings, he didn't dwell on them so much, he only asked me what I do for a living, do I have a certain wage, but other than that, he didn't ask me anything, I mean, not much, I mean, can you take care of us, so that there is no problem.”*²⁹⁵

When I asked the participants about how they could manage the cost of these marriages with the Indonesian women, most of the answer that I got was “it is like a free of charge compared to the marriages in Turkey.” In fact, some of the most common expenses they make to marry an Indonesian woman were the ticket fee of the bride coming to Turkey, the cost of the official applications for marriage in Ankara and Giresun, and the cost of the ring given to the bride as mehir.²⁹⁶

“I mean, there is a financial gap between our marriage in Turkey and the marriage there. I mean, I think there are huge gaps in terms of wishes, I mean, it is not even comparable. I mean really, compared to us, marriage is like free of charge in their country. I mean, they can marry you with a ring and a mehir

²⁹⁴ Interview with Mustafa, September 14, 2022. Ortaköy. “Yokluğu bilmedikleri için, varlıkla yetiştikleri için yokluğun ne olduğunu bilmedikleri için her şeyi, var istiyorlar. Anlatabili miyim? Yani var gücüyle istiyorlar. Yani değirmen nereden geldi şu oldu buydu değil de...”

²⁹⁵ Interview with Yılmaz, August 15. Espiye. “Benden eşim sadece bir yüzük istedi, bir yüzük. Senin evin var mı, araban var mı? şunun var bunu var mı? Bana şunu sordu, namaz kılıyor musun, oruç tutuyor musun, islamiyet yaşıyor musun, kuran biliyor musun bana islamiyetin gerektirdiklerini sordu bana evimi barkımı arabamı kazancımı onların bu kadar üzerine düşmedi, sadece ne iş yaptığımı belli bir ücretim var mı onu sordu ama onun dışında öyle üstemedi yani çok şey değil yani bize bakabilir misin anlamında yani sıkıntı olmasın anlamında. bir şeyde bulundu.”

²⁹⁶ "Mehir" is a term used in Islamic traditions to refer to the dowry or bride price given by a groom to the bride or her family at the time of marriage.

in exchange for a ring. I'll buy this and that, I'll buy this and that, I'll buy that gold..."²⁹⁷

Actually, the Indonesian woman's demand for only a ring from his Turkish husband is important to specify in a context that the groom and his natal family is traditionally expected to offer the bride a dozen of golden bracelets in the Turkish marriages. Exemplifying from his own marriage with Rini, Yılmaz was also pointing the same thing with regard to the Indonesian women's satisfaction and the contentment;

*"My wife asked me for a ring, just a ring. Do you have a house, do you have a car, do you have this and that? She asked me this, do you pray, do you fast, do you live Islam, do you know the Qur'an, she asked me about the requirements of Islam; she didn't dwell on my house, my car, my earnings, she only asked me what I do for a living, do I have a certain salary, but other than that she didn't insist on it, I mean, could you take care of us, so that there would be no trouble."*²⁹⁸

Overall, the quotations shed light on a comparison in the view of the Turkish men who are married or in the process of marriage to an Indonesian woman between materialistic and greedy attitudes of the Turkish women versus contentment and satisfaction of the Indonesian women in marriage relationships. It raises questions about what kind of a masculinity ideal is presented through these portrays of the women and how the materiality played a role in this construction of the masculine ideals. Again, the hegemonic masculinity ideals as being the provider and the financially satisfying were challenged by the Turkish women especially for the men who cannot afford the demands for marrying a Turkish woman. With their very undemanding attitudes, Indonesian women in this sense reinforce Turkish men's construction of hegemonic masculinity, because in the context of these marriages, Turkish men can perform a strong breadwinner masculinity who can bring money and make the livelihood in the house even if they are not a strong provider financially

²⁹⁷ "Yani bizim Türkiye'deki evlilikle oradaki evlilik arasında maddi anlamda uçurum var. Yani istekler anlamında çok büyük uçurumlar var bence yani böyle yani kıyas dahi edilemez. Yani hakikaten bize göre onlarda evlilik bedava gibi bir şey yani. Yani senden bir yüzükle yüzük karşılığında mehirle evlenebiliyor. Ya bunun içerisinde yok bana şu eşyalar alacağım, bunu alacağım, şu altını alacağım..."

²⁹⁸ Interview with Yılmaz, August 15. Espiye. "Benden eşim sadece bir yüzük istedi, bir yüzük. Senin evin var mı, araban var mı? Şunun var bunu var mı? Bana şunu sordu, namaz kılıyor musun, oruç tutuyor musun, islamiyet yaşıyor musun, kuran biliyor musun bana islamiyetin gerektirdiklerini sordu; bana evimi barkımı, arabamı, kazancımı onların bu kadar üzerine düşmedi, sadece ne iş yaptığımı belli bir ücretim var mı onu sordu ama onun dışında öyle üstelemedi, yani bize bakabilir misin anlamında, yani sıkıntı olmasın anlamında gibi bir şey de bulundu."

Especially for Indonesian women who do not come from a very good socio-economic background, they can perform a hegemonic breadwinner masculinity.

5.8. Conclusion

To conclude, it is important to emphasize that all the points of comparison that the Turkish men made between the Indonesian and the Turkish women are not separate entities of a perception of the other; rather they are all together, they come to the forefront and reveal Turkish men's expectations of a wife in the context of marriage and household relations. These comparisons made by the Turkish men who are married to the Indonesian women mark the gendered expectations and the dynamics on which the hegemonic masculinity identities of these men are damaged in the local context; repaired and reinforced with respect to their transnational marriages to the Indonesian women.

CHAPTER VI

NEGOTIATING AND REAFFIRMING THE PATRIARCHY: CHANGE IN THE GENDERED DIVISION OF HOUSEHOLD LABOR

6.1. Introduction

Embarking on a nuanced exploration of masculinity within the intricate framework of transnational marriages, it becomes evident that these unions are dynamic spaces where gender ideals are both negotiated and reinforced. The intersection of cultural norms, global hegemonic masculinity values, local gender practices and individual negotiation strategies unfolds as a complex tapestry, with men in transnational marriages navigating a delicate balance between preserving their ideal masculine selves and adapting to the challenges posed by their partners' femininity ideals or cultural norms. This leads us to examine what aspects were subjected to negotiation and what elements were reaffirmed and to investigate into the daily life practices that create strategic opportunities for the women and men engaged in the Turkish-Indonesian marriages. Additionally, understanding this negotiation-reaffirmation dynamic within the context of patriarchy adds another layer of interpretation to comprehend the power dynamics at play. In line with these objectives, firstly, I lay the groundwork for an in-depth examination of the household relationship dynamics, emphasizing the interplay of negotiation and reinforcement within the gendered division of household labour in transnational marriage literature. Then, I examine how gender norms and ideals are comprehended in the local household context and try to understand how the local gender norms are negotiated and reaffirmed within Turkish-Indonesian households.

As the studies mentioned in the literature review indicate, the majority of masculinity studies in the context of transnational marriage are concerned with how men in transnational marriages engage in the hegemonic masculinity values of the society in

which they live and also in the global hegemonic masculinity values. In this relationship, two things come to the fore in general: either men reinforce their already existing hegemonic masculinity values in their own identity constructions through these marriages, or they have to negotiate their performance of hegemonic masculinity due to the challenges and cultural differences brought about by the new culture they encountered. Studies show that the most important factor determining the experience of masculinity in transnational marriages is whether the man is a migrant or a host in the context of his marriage.

If he is a migrant, and especially if he has migrated from a developing country to a developed country, he has to reconsider much of the hegemonic ideals of masculinity shaped by the local gender dynamics; perhaps he has to adopt more gender equality or adapt to the values of the new society he is in²⁹⁹ This adjustment becomes particularly prominent when examining a study conducted on migrant Pakistani and Turkish men in two European countries, Britain and Denmark.³⁰⁰ Katharine Charsley and Anika Liversage figures out that the Pakistani and Turkish men who are married to European women at the intersection of multiple identities—Muslim, male, and migrant—face a complex web of challenges in their gendered performances within both public and private spheres. Contrary to stereotypes that label Muslim men as the hardcore patriarchal figures or "bride forcers, importers or exploiters," the aforementioned study reveals a nuanced reality by shedding light on the subjective experiences of migrant husbands.³⁰¹ They experienced vulnerability and weakness in "their relational positions, and the multiple arenas (legal, political, institutional and within the 'community') in which their masculinity is variously problematized or denigrated."³⁰² In addition to a "surveillance in the public space" they also face "disempowerment in private space" mainly about the gendered division of household labor. An illuminating anecdote from one of the interviewees in the aforementioned study underscores this negotiation in the power dynamics. He shares his experience where his wife directed him to clean thoroughly after taking a shower:

²⁹⁹ See; Fresnoza-Flot, "(Un)Configurable Masculinities and Gender Dynamics in Men's Eyes."; Pande, "Mobile Masculinities."

³⁰⁰ Katharine Charsley and Anika Liversage, "Silenced Husbands: Muslim Marriage Migration and Masculinity," *Men and Masculinities* 18, no. 4 (October 2015): 489–508, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X15575112>.

³⁰¹ Charsley and Liversage, 2.

³⁰² Charsley and Liversage, 4.

When I had taken a shower, [my wife] said that I should clean everything up. And I certainly cleaned – walls, floor – polished it all. And then she came to control, pointing out: “You missed something there!” She loved my cleaning and my cooking. Sometimes when I wanted to shower, she said: “I’ll go first, so you can clean up afterwards”. And sometimes she showered herself without cleaning up.³⁰³

Authors of the study note that such narratives "suggest a perceived emasculation as he is forced into taking on the feminine (and low-status) household chores, and clearly communicates to us that he could not be 'the man' (at least in terms of general Turkish expectations) of the house."³⁰⁴ Here, it should also be taken into consideration that the direction of their migration within the broader global socio-political and geographical power dynamics emerges as a significant factor influencing their sense of empowerment concerning their masculinity as well as the status of being migrant. Notably, "men from economically wealthy societies generally experience a hegemonic form of masculinity when they migrate to their wives' natal countries."³⁰⁵ Still, it is important to note that in two different cases of this mobility, these men have to preserve a set of strategies to reinforce their sense of proper masculinity both in their conjugal and natal home societies such as being the breadwinner and provider for their families.

On the other side of the corner, if he is a non-migrant husband who hosts his wife in his home place; and especially if his wife has migrated from an underdeveloped country to a developed country, then it is observed that the local and global gender dynamics and its reflections in couple's household relationship are re-inforced in the men's own identity construction.³⁰⁶ In such a context, the non-migrant men tend to maintain the already existing norms of masculinity and femininity especially in the gendered division of household labor. To illustrate from Flot's study, she states that:

In the households of many European informants, the Filipino spouses [wives] performed most of the work considered as “feminine” (cooking, cleaning the house, washing clothes, etc.) while the husband generally accomplished “masculine” tasks such as filling up administrative papers, paying bills and repairing broken or damaged parts of the house.³⁰⁷

³⁰³ Charsley and Liversage, 13.

³⁰⁴ Charsley and Liversage, 13.

³⁰⁵ Fresnoza-Flot, “(Un)Configurable Masculinities and Gender Dynamics in Men’s Eyes,” March 2021, 105.

³⁰⁶ See; Fresnoza-Flot, “(Un)Configurable Masculinities and Gender Dynamics in Men’s Eyes.”; Cheng, “Transnational Masculinities in Situ.”; Cheng, Yeoh, and Zhang, “Still ‘Breadwinners’ and ‘Providers.’”

³⁰⁷ Fresnoza-Flot, “(Un)Configurable Masculinities and Gender Dynamics in Men’s Eyes,” March 2021, 110.

With such a construction of the gender dynamics within the household, these men actively uphold and strengthen their sense of masculinity by employing specific strategies, which generally include fostering closer relationships with their children and persisting in their breadwinning roles etc.³⁰⁸ Such taken for granted roles for the local and global forms of gender values and the strategies serve the non-migrant men a ground that they can re-establish local gender ideals in their household relationship. In this context, Flot's study is important in showing how European non-migrant husbands re-inforce ideals of masculinity in their domestic relationships with their Filipino wives, and what kind of strategies are developed for this. Additionally, it prompts an exploration into whether this dynamic between migrant wives and non-migrant husbands, while reinforcing certain gender norms, might also foster negotiation. Specifically, the study raises questions about whether women's performances and strategies of femininity are subject to evaluation in this context, and if so, on which levels these negotiations will unfold. In fact, Flot mentions this dynamic relationship for all the couples she examines in her study and emphasizes that there is not a one-way relationship in which negotiation is only valid for migrant husbands.

Within the realm of the home, the clash between the masculine ideals of the men interviewed and the ideal femininities of their foreign spouses resulted in mixed feelings and dynamic negotiations. These produced strategies to maintain or reinforce one's image of one's gendered self.³⁰⁹

The quotation highlights that all the men who involved in a transnational marriage engage both in a “dynamic negotiation” regarding the ideals of masculinity and adopt certain strategies to protect their ideal masculine selves within the household realm. The challenge actually comes from their partners' femininity ideals and performances or the cultural norms regarding the gender and household relations from which their partners' come and may result in either a break or reaffirmation in their hegemonic masculine performances. Certainly, while this challenge is inherent in every relationship, various factors, including local and global gender norms, everyday life strategies, and the subjective reality of each relationship, contribute to whether this challenge leads to a negotiation or a reaffirmation on the gendered household

³⁰⁸ Ibid.

³⁰⁹ Fresnoza-Flot, “(Un)Configurable Masculinities and Gender Dynamics in Men's Eyes,” March 2021, 111.

expectations and practices. The significance of these elements underscores the need for a nuanced analysis that considers both the broader societal influences and the intimate, personal dimensions of transnational relationships. So, expanding on this analysis, it is worth examining how the dynamic relationship between *non-migrant* Turkish husbands and their Indonesian wives is built on reinforcement and negotiation and the strategies of femininity and masculinity that are exercised in this context, with a specific focus on the *non-migrant husbands'* experiences regarding the gendered division of household labor within their transnational marriages.

Moving into the specific data that comes out of this research on the Black Sea Turkish Men-Indonesian women, it is observed that the Black Sea Turkish men's expectations from their Indonesian wives regarding the division of the household and agricultural labor, speaking in the local language, adapting the local culture play a major role in the reconstruction of their masculine identity within the framework of these transnational marriages. The expectations and ideals of men from the Black Sea region regarding a successful marriage undergo a transformation when they enter into transnational marriages with Indonesian women. This transformation also leads to a reconstruction of their own ideals and performances of masculinity, aligning with the outcomes of a transnational marriage and the expectations of femininity demonstrated by their Indonesian wives. In the process of this reconstruction, it is essential to recognize that their sense of proper masculinity is both challenged and reaffirmed, and the ground in which these challenges and reaffirmations took place is complicated and dynamic. To elucidate the intricacies of this dynamism, an analysis of data obtained through the fieldwork is undertaken. This examination encompasses the perspectives of male interviewees considering their non-migrant positions, juxtaposed against the backdrop of local norms pertaining to gender ideals and nuanced understandings of the gendered division of household labor. So, before delving into the analysis of how the domestic division of labor is constructed and experienced within these marriages, it is essential to first examine the broader perceptions and understanding regarding femininity and masculinity within the context of domestic duties, both locally and globally.

6.2. Local Insights into the Gendered Division of Household Labor in the Rural Black Sea Region

In many cultures, household tasks, including cooking, cleaning, ironing, and any other domestic duties, have traditionally been associated with femininity and are often taken for granted as they fall under women's responsibility in the division of household labour. On this matter, Oriel Sullivan states that "the traditionally feminine-associated, mundane, tasks of routine housework (...) are things that people do not enjoy, and are unwilling to do" and she further explains that it becomes a matter of power dynamic within marriages, where those with less power in the household end up doing a larger share of housework.³¹⁰ Sullivan's viewpoint not only facilitates an analysis of the patriarchal system's association of gender-based power disparities but also prompts a critical assessment of the traditional division of domestic labor, deeply influenced by societal perceptions of femininity and masculinity.

In this power dynamic, of course, factors such as educational background, socio-economic status, employment and income level come to the fore as important denominators. For example, a woman in a higher position in terms of her education and socio-economic status owns the ground to challenge the expectations of her femininity and advocate for a more equitable distribution of household responsibilities.³¹¹ Such instances can be further elaborated through specific cases and different formulations, however, returning to the discussion of transnational marriages, this scrutiny gains further significance.

In a transnational marriage context where the husband hosts his wife in his natal country, it would be assumed that the migrant status places women in a disadvantaged household position, making them vulnerable to certain impositions based on the local gender norms and leading them to undertake a greater share of household chores, including cooking, cleaning, ironing, and childcare. In this manner, while it becomes mostly evident that power dynamics and various positionalities, such as the migrant status, notions of femininity, foreign identity, and the gender ideals associated with

³¹⁰ Oriel Sullivan, "The Gendered Division of Household Labor," in *Handbook of the Sociology of Gender*, ed. Barbara J. Risman, Carissa M. Froyum, and William J. Scarborough (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2018), 378.

³¹¹ Sullivan, 384.

them, exert a profound impact on the expectations regarding the division of household labor and the construction of masculinity and femininity ideals, it is worthwhile to explore whether there exists a distinction between the construction and the performance in the everyday practices in different patriarchal cultures and localities. In fact, the literature on gender norms in the Black Sea locality indicates that the relationship between the power dynamic and the gendered division of household labor becomes complicated in the local context of the Black Sea region, where male migration is common and leaves women with more responsibility for domestic tasks. Furthermore, it is also evident that it becomes more complicated when examining the gendered expectations and practices of households within the context of transnational marriages in rural areas. To understand these complexities better, I present in the following how the local norms and ideals on gender shaped the household relationships in Turkish-Indonesian marriages, shedding light on the nuanced interplay between construction and performance in this domain.

In rural regions of the Black Sea coast, the gendered division of labour is clearly constructed both within the confines of the household and extends to tasks beyond it. Many responsibilities such as cooking, housekeeping, and child and elder care are unquestionably linked to femininity and designated as women's responsibility. A married woman is expected to undertake most of the household chores, and this expectation often extends to include tending to the family's livestock and engaging in small-scale farming activities. Therefore, it is possible to indicate that, especially in the rural locality of the Black Sea region, household labor transcends the limits of the house; it encompasses the farm-related tasks that significantly contribute to the livelihood of a house. This reality was quite prevalent during my lifetime observation in a rural district where and it was further reinforced during the fieldwork conducted for this research. As I witnessed firsthand, tasks such as managing our small-scale tea and nut harvest and tending to husbandry animals were predominantly the responsibilities of my grandmother and mother. They were organizing most of the farming operations in addition to handling other household chores like cooking and cleaning. In addition, studies conducted on the local culture and society in the Black Sea region confirm this both on nationwide discourses and local-level practices. For example, Şahinde Yavuz, in her study on femininity and the kitchen, explored the dynamics of femininity in villages and neighbourhoods within the Trabzon city centre.

Her findings shed light on how the gendered division of household labor among the lower and middle-income families operates in Trabzon: "Housewives belonging to the lower income group, like other middle-income group housewives interviewed, are responsible for housework and childcare alongside the gardening and tending to cattle."³¹² Yavuz also emphasizes that women "occupy a central place in the family economy" with the income they earn from such gardening and small-scale farming by selling the products in the bazaars of the city centre. In this context, it is seen that the "hardworking", "strong", and "omnipotent" figure of the women in the Black Sea region encompasses the labor both requiring and representing power in the gender-based division of labor with the dynamics of the Black Sea region.³¹³

This invites us to recall Oriel Sullivan's argument regarding power dynamics within the gendered division of household labor. While Sullivan's approach explains how power dynamics are rooted in domestic relations and the gender-based division of labor in patriarchal societies, it's important to acknowledge that varying socio-economic dynamics within different local expressions of patriarchy also come into play. In the rural context of the Black Sea region, women are often depicted as strong, hardworking, and all-capable in every aspect of daily life, and assuming a greater share of roles in the gendered division of household labor.

In the division of household labor based on gender, this "share" is not associated with less power, as emphasized by Sullivan. On the contrary, it involves a representation of femininity merged with tasks requiring strength, contributing to the household income, and taking care of animals and the garden. This representation can be observed in the everyday narratives of the local community, in epic narratives about the past, and in the discourse of local and national media and humour tools. For example, Ayşula Kurt, in her analysis of a local humour magazine published in Trabzon in the 1990s, discusses the local joke characters Fadime and Temel and says that Black Sea women are usually depicted carrying firewood, grass, harvest or children on their backs, and

³¹² Şahinde Yavuz, "Mutfak ve Kadınlar: Mutfak Kadınlara Ne İfade Eder?," in *Karaelmas 2009: Medya ve Kültür*, ed. Nurçay Türkoğlu and Sevilen Toprak Alayoğlu (İstanbul: Urban Kitap, 2009), 439. (Translation is on my own.)

³¹³ Ayşula Kurt, "Çizgiden Göstergeye 1990lı Yıllarda Trabzon'da Cinsiyet Halleri: Hamsi Dergisi Örneği," *Uluslararası Kıbrıs Üniversitesi Fen-Edebiyat Fakültesi* 23, no. 91 (July 1, 2017): 46–73, <https://doi.org/10.22559/folklorededyat.2017.36.>; Yavuz, "Mutfak ve Kadınlar: Mutfak Kadınlara Ne İfade Eder?"

in this way, perception of Black Sea women as women with "a hunched back, a heavy burden, difficult living conditions and a lot of work to do (...)"³¹⁴ is created. With a reference to Çiğdem Sezer, Ayşula Kurt delves more into the character Fadime and indicates that

Fadime is often found on the mountain road, in the grass field, in the garden, or in the forest path in the late afternoon. In other words, she is not just the "woman of the house"*** but also the woman engaged in activities outside the home. The character of the Black Sea woman, epitomized through Fadime, is frequently constructed with a focus on the Trabzon woman. In these characterizations, "*the "woman from Trabzon" is portrayed as diligent, resilient, standing behind her man like a fortress wall, outspoken, possessing a well-developed sense of humor, and capable of handling every task; in short, she is depicted as everything.*" (Sezer, 2007: 49).³¹⁵

When it is taken into account that both women and men reinforce this situation through local practices and gender performances, it is possible to say that women in the Black Sea region go far beyond the generally accepted typology of womanhood, which is limited to the 'house' and even the 'kitchen', where they are usually portrayed as powerless and their responsibilities are minimized. On the contrary, a woman from the Black Sea region is expected to take on many responsibilities that require power in the domestic division of labor. In a sense, this creates more strategizing and authority space for the Black Sea woman, but on the other hand, it would be insufficient to interpret this as a combative and strong woman figure that breaks the patriarchy. Once again, as highlighted in Kurt's study, the representation of womanhood in the Black Sea region, exemplified through the figure of Fadime, portrays a combative form of womanhood. However, it also reinforces a portrayal of womanhood that "must consent to a male-dominated decision at a critical juncture that will impact all their lives," supporting, in a sense, a submissive aspect of womanhood. More significantly, the discourse surrounding the strong Black Sea woman renders women more susceptible to exploitation within the patriarchal system, not only by male figures such as husbands, fathers-in-law, and fathers but also the other female figures in society such as mothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, and neighbors.

³¹⁴ Ayşula Kurt, "Çizgiden Göstergeye 1990lı Yıllarda Trabzon'da Cinsiyet Halleri: Hamsi Dergisi Örneği", 55. (Translation is my own; emphases belong to the author.)

³¹⁵ Kurt, "Çizgiden Göstergeye 1990lı Yıllarda Trabzon'da Cinsiyet Halleri: Hamsi Dergisi Örneği", 55. (Translation is my own; emphases belong to the author.)

On the other side of the coin, it is also essential to highlight that the men who are involved in such tasks are mostly perceived as emasculated and subjected to humiliation. One illustrative example of this stigmatization can be found in Hasan's story, a distant relative I knew prior to my fieldwork. He was a 40 years old local man who was a young teacher in a high school and, was married to a local woman who was also a educator. They lived in Bursa and during summer and winter breaks they frequently visited their parents in Güce. Although Hasan's situation doesn't directly relate to Turkish-Indonesian marriages, his experience demonstrates a compelling illustration of how men's involvement in the house chores are perceived in the local context.

Hasan -having a more docile and calm personality than the other men in his family- was seen as lacking the dominance expected in his relationship with his wife and was even labeled as 'submissive' by some of the people in his family. He was mockingly called as "Tenekecigilin Hasan" meaning that he is from his conjugal family which is known as Tenekecigil among the local community. When I was there for fieldwork, Hasan's mother and older brother had gone on a pilgrimage, and while preparations were being made in his mother's house for their return, Hasan helped by washing the stairs and balconies. In a family meeting where I was present, this event was brought up and Hasan was mocked as not being a proper man and mocked as "Zeynep's wife". This very small anecdote might not represent the whole community's perception regarding a men undertaking the house chores such as cleaning or cooking, however, it is very identical in showing the possible stigmatization in such a context. Men who somehow contradicted the traditionally gendered division of household labor and got engaged in feminine-associated chores were mockingly stigmatized as not performing a proper masculinity.

Such a stigmatization over the men who got involved in house chores that are associated with femininity was also presented in scholarly works on gender in the Black Sea region. For example, Şahinde Yavuz in her aforementioned study on the women's relationship with kitchen in the Black Sea region states that;

In the Black Sea region, particularly in rural areas, numerous women undertake tasks traditionally designated for men. However, it is uncommon for men to assume tasks traditionally associated with women's roles. According to the majority of women interviewed

in Trabzon, women are reluctant to have men engage in household chores, especially those that are visibly noticeable, such as cleaning windows and hanging laundry. The perception is that men participating in housework could be perceived as a compromise to their masculine reputation.³¹⁶

She well pointed out the unequal division of household labor in the local context of the Black Sea region by shedding light on women's involvement in tasks traditionally associated with femininity and even sometimes masculinity, such as sustaining the livelihood, taking care of animals and organizing agricultural activities belonged to that house etc. On the other hand, the belief that men doing household chores would undermine their masculinity is a significant aspect of this gendered division of labour. This perspective, as highlighted by Şahinde Yavuz's study, reflects a deep-seated societal norm that reinforces traditional gender roles, emphasizing the need to challenge and rethink Indonesian-Turkish transnational marriages. The Black Sea region's complex dynamics in this manner serve as a case study for the broader conversation on the intersection of gender, household labour, and sociocultural norms within the society.

Furthermore, it is crucial to highlight the gendered division of household labor in the Black Sea region is not only prevalent in the male practices and narratives but also perpetuated by the female members of the society. While individual households may vary, it is mostly the case that women play a substantial role in maintaining this gendered division of household labour and perpetuating the discourse that men's masculinity is compromised when they engage in tasks traditionally associated with femininity. Women themselves adhere to local gender norms, perpetuating them in their practices and narratives. This stems from inhabiting and internalizing these norms, continuing them in their own lives. Additionally, maintaining the gendered division provides women with strategic advantages and authority within familial relationships and daily routines. This dynamic is exemplified by one of Yavuz's female interviewees, who stated that:

I don't think it suits a man. A man can't hold a diaper. I couldn't teach him. I call this territorial conservatism. I think it's fine if he hangs out the laundry. They say, "Oh, you made your husband wash the balcony, clean the windows, hang the laundry", I don't want my husband to hear that. I don't want her to be offended. I don't want people to say "he was washing the balcony" behind his back as he passes by.³¹⁷

³¹⁶ Yavuz, "Mutfak ve Kadınlar: Mutfak Kadınlara Ne İfade Eder?," 127. (Translation is my own.)

³¹⁷ Ibid.

As it is prevalent in this quotation and was detailed by Yavuz, women have a very determinative role in this gendered construction of household labor. "They keep the men away from such house chores by disliking the way men do the work, by declaring themselves as the sole responsible for household chores, by accepting that it is natural for this to be so, and (...) by 'sparing' their sons."³¹⁸ Consequently, local women contribute significantly, both in practice and discourse, to the gendered construction of various tasks such as cooking, house cleaning, washing balconies and windows (perceived as a bigger challenge to masculine representation as they are publicly visible spaces of the house), caring for the elderly and children, managing vineyards and gardens, carrying wood and grass kind of materials on their shoulders, and tending to household animals, all of which can be multiplied in different contexts. Local women's active involvement in those chores has a profound impact on shaping gender expectations within Black Sea society in this regard.

Another important point to emphasize here is that these expectations contribute to the construction of a fragile masculinity—a masculinity perceived as dependent and incapable of self-care. This fragile masculinity profile is marked in the local context by the inability to cook for himself, do his laundry, iron his clothes, and maintain self-sufficiency. It is observed that this fragile masculinity perception often leads to a search for a life partner who can manage these aspects and care for both the husband and the household.

In cases where men did not receive such services in their previous marriages, it often becomes a compelling reason or primary motivation for entering into a second marriage. This desire is not limited to the men themselves but is also actively endorsed by the local community, presenting it as a necessity. Women from the man's family, such as sisters or sisters-in-law, often view the presence of a woman who will cook, do the cleaning and laundry, and manage the household as essential for the well-being of the man in question. In fact, during the fieldwork I encountered three different examples for such a case one of which ended up with a second marriage to an Indonesian woman.

³¹⁸ Ibid.

During my participant observation with a family, I witnessed how Sami's marriage with his Indonesian wife was built upon fulfilling the care that had been notably lacking in his prior marriage. His Turkish wife, known for her hard work outside and lack of care expected from her in their household and their marital relationship, fell ill before Sami and passed away. Throughout their marriages, she devoted most of her time primarily to tending to her natal family's orchards and fields rather than her own household and in the last years prior to death, her health deteriorated significantly, leaving her unable to fulfil her traditional wifely duties, and she became dependent on others.

This situation was described by Sami's sister in one of our conversations as the following,

“She would wake up with the morning prayers, carry a pouch on her waist containing dry cottage cheese and bread, and spend the day mowing grass in her father's expansive garden. His father had ample land. Although she was much older than my brother, she was the only girl in the house, and my father arranged their marriage due to her vast land. My brother was only fifteen at the time; he was practically a child.”³¹⁹

Despite the large age difference between Sami and his wife Fatma, they were married because of the property owned by Fatma's father, and after their marriage, she continued to work in her father's fields with narratives suggesting she didn't fulfill the traditional expectations of a wife within her own household. While the specifics of Fatma's experience remain unknown to me, given that I did not have the opportunity to meet her and can only glean insights from the accounts of others, her life story and challenging living conditions mirrored the experiences of many other women I had the observed during my fieldwork, who often faced a heavy burden of both domestic and non-domestic chores in the rural context of the Black Sea region.

In this respect, I would like to insist that the gender-based division of household labor within the Black Sea region often compels women to assume numerous tasks that can be typically characterized as men's work in addition to the ones that are traditionally associated with their femininity. Ironically, the adequacy of women to handle all of their responsibilities is portrayed as a right of the men to seek divorce and a second

³¹⁹ Informal interview with Ayşe, May 7, 2023. Direkbükü.

marriage with another woman who can provide such services for them. This dynamic highlights the complex interplay between gender performances, societal expectations, and the institution of marriage in the Black Sea region. While men often project a strong, authoritative, and provider role in society within the household, they are paradoxically depicted as vulnerable and unable to fulfil basic responsibilities, such as cooking, cleaning, and self-care. Although this portrayal suggests a contradiction between their masculinity performances in public and private spaces, it is also very complementary in the sense that the "strong and authoritative" masculinity ideal requires to be respected and served in a homespace where the lines between the public and private became blurred in a marriage context.

Again, it was prevalent in Sami's example that her sisters began insisting that Sami should consider a second marriage long before Fatma passed away as "it is his right to find a table ready or a shirt ironed when he is home."³²⁰ Thus, especially following Fatma's death, they actively sought a suitable second marriage for their brother, who was by then over 60 years old. However, finding an appropriate match proved to be a challenge in the local context. Instead, Sami met with Winda through a friendship network, who are already involved in Turkish-Indonesian marriages, and his sisters welcomed her into the family. They expressed a keen interest in participating in transmitting the Turkish household culture, particularly the local culinary tradition. In this marital relationship, Sami's Indonesian wife was expected to take care for their elderly brother and handle the housechores like cooking, cleaning and maintaining the order. Notably, this case was not unique, as many Indonesian women in such marriages assumed these responsibilities for their Turkish husbands; moreover, it was observed that the Indonesian wife was expected to take care of the children from man's natal family or from his previous marriage and elderly.

Yet, within the context of transnational marriages with Indonesian women, these expectations of local men and the corresponding responses from their Indonesian wives appear to acquire a more intricate dimension. I observed that men are also involved in the housework and cooking and that they reshaped their expectations in the context of their transnational marriages. Considering this as a domain of

³²⁰ Informal talk with Sami's sister Hatice, 25.09.23, Direkbükü. "Eve geldiğinde hazır bir sofraya ütüleri bir gömlek bulmak onun da hakkı değil mi?"

negotiation regarding the gendered division of household labor, I would like to highlight that this shift in men's involvement in the kitchen was attributed to the fact that their Indonesian wives are not familiar with Turkish food and the local domestic culture and have different food habits, which in turn creates a strategizing space for the Indonesian women regarding the femininity performance expected from them.

6.3. Kitchen and House as a Negotiated Space in the Indonesian-Turkish Households

In the context of negotiations and reaffirmations within Indonesian-Turkish marriages, the initial focal point is the characterization of roles in domestic tasks, particularly in areas such as cooking and maintaining a clean and orderly household. Therefore, it is important to examine how local gender norms surrounding household chores are manifested in the household dynamics within these transnational marriages. In numerous interviews conducted with both Indonesian women and Turkish men, the issue of cooking emerged as a significant point of contention. It is observed that Turkish husbands often have expectations that their Indonesian wives should handle cooking alongside other household responsibilities. However, challenges arise due to their Indonesian wives' unfamiliarity with Turkish cuisine and their general reluctance to engage in cooking. Consequently, the kitchen becomes a space where couples engage in both an affirmation and negotiation regarding their respective notions of femininity and masculinity.

Starting with the male expectations regarding cooking and the other house chores such as cleaning, laundry, and ironing, almost all of the male interviewees expected such work from their previous wives or, if they had not been married before, from the female family members such as their mothers or sisters. A few took on some of these tasks themselves or supported their wives due to the dominance or physical incapacity of their previous wives, but ultimately considered this as a problem and attributed it to the failure of their marriages. Therefore, based on the observations, it is possible to generalize that house chores such as cooking and maintaining order and cleanliness of the house are generally expected from women and the kitchen, in particular, is constructed as a female space. However, it is also seen that the transnational marriages in Giresun create a domain of negotiation between the Turkish men and the Indonesian

women regarding the gendered division of household labour and reconstruct the kitchen and house as a negotiated space while also reaffirming certain gender roles within the household.

First of all, cooking emerged as a primary concern in the course of their marriages to the Indonesian women as they portrayed it as a very important domain in terms of the couple's adaptation to each other and each other's culture. In my interviews with the men, discussions often revolved around the cooking and eating habits of their Indonesian wives, which they considered vital for the success and harmony of their marriages. They assessed whether their Indonesian spouses adjusted to local foods and cooking styles, how often their wives prepared Indonesian dishes, and if they enjoyed Indonesian food. These factors were seen as indicators of their marital well-being.

Such as perception mirrored in Remzi's thoughts on Indonesian women's adaptation to the local culture in Giresun. Remzi was married to Sarwendah for nearly ten years, and their union was the first of Turkish-Indonesian marriages known in the local community. Therefore, as an authoritative figure, due to his long-standing marriage with his Indonesian wife and his familiarity with other transnational marriages in the area, I sought to understand how he assessed the adaptation of Indonesian women to the local culture. He expressed his thoughts on this as the following:

*The very problematic issue is the climate. It is very hot there [in Indonesia], I mean it is always summer. So when they come here, even in this hot weather they feel cold, but in time their bodies get used to it. Second is the food. They don't have such a cooking culture like us. They always eat out, and their food is too saucy, too spicy... But my wife is making black cabbage soup [a common local meal] now. So there is no problem, she gets used to it.*³²¹

From Remzi's perspective, adjusting to the local food culture wasn't a big deal, albeit a process that required time. However, in a society where cooking is taken for granted as a traditional role for women, this adjustment period could potentially strain

³²¹ Interview with Remzi, May 29, 2023. Espiye.

marriages, particularly if it is prolonged, extended beyond expectations or if the adaptation doesn't meet the husbands' requirements.

In fact, when viewed from the perspective of Indonesian women and by focusing on their individual experiences, it became evident that they faced other significant adaptation challenges that were often more prominent than those discussed by the men. Many of the Indonesian women I interviewed expressed that their main difficulties in adapting weren't related to local culinary culture or climate but rather stemmed from aggressive nature of the local people and their financial dependence on their husbands. Conversely, Turkish men more concentrated on their Indonesian wives' capability to cook Turkish dishes and manage various other household tasks that is associated with femininity. To further illustrate how the issue of cooking was problematized by men in a way that it is the most critical aspect of these marriages, I would like to quote from Kemal, who was married to Waty for almost two years and complaining about his wife as being not very interested in cooking. When I asked him a general question about his marriage and his trust in Waty, he answered that:

“When they said [she is] Muslim, I trusted her, so I thought I would try it from there [From Indonesia]. Now, there is no problem at the moment. We only have a problem with the food, she doesn't cook, she makes her own food. So I can't eat.”³²²

In many other interviews like this one, I have witnessed that the conversation topic was often directed from different points to the Indonesian woman not cooking, not being able to cook Turkish food, or the learning process; reflecting the male expectations within the course of these transnational marriages. Much like in the case of Sarwendah (Remzi's wife) and Waty, Indonesian women were expected to gradually learn how to prepare Turkish meals and take on traditional female household responsibilities. For some Indonesian women, this learning process was easier due to their personal capabilities, interests, or preferences. In some of my home visits, I observed instances where Turkish and Indonesian culinary traditions merged. Dishes were prepared using a blend of spices and sauces from both backgrounds, resulting in a diverse array of creations on the dining table. Some of the Indonesian women have

³²² Interview with Kemal, August 15, 2022. Espiye. “Müslüman dedikleri zaman ben de öyle gene güvendim yani bir de oradan deneyeyim bakalım dedim. Şimdi yani şu anda bir sıkıntı yok. Sadece bir sıkıntı şeyde var, yemekte var, yemek yapmıyor, kendi yemeğini yapıyor. Yani ben yiyemiyorum.”

actively adapted their kitchens within the local culture. As an illustration, I would consider Devi, a woman recognized by the local men and women as "being handy at everything."³²³ During a visit to her home, together with other Indonesian women and my family members, we were amazed by her culinary talents by preparing Turkish dishes enriched with Indonesian spices. Some of the men I interviewed were showing appreciation for their Indonesian wives for being able to handle the household duties expected from them. When I asked male participants about their expectations from their Indonesian wives, some of them expressed their appreciation, stating that their Indonesian wives can cook Turkish meals and handle the household duties without a need for guidance. Asım, for example, who was married to Farah in January 2022, nearly five months ago at the time of this interview, mentioned:

*"So, at the moment, there's nothing I can say that I'm waiting for this or that. Time will reveal everything. She has already grown up on her own. I mean, I don't need to say anything... For instance, she made all the food today, everything herself; I didn't touch anything."*³²⁴

We were at their home during the interview, and there was a table with Turkish dishes like red lentil soup and rice alongside several Indonesian appetizers, the specific names of which I forgot. I was surprised that Farah, who was in her 40s and had worked as a secretary in Indonesia, was able to learn to cook Turkish meals in a very short time, approximately five months. Similarly, I had a conversation with Mustafa and his mother, where his wife Cahya was not present at the moment. They were married for six months, and I asked Mustafa about his expectations from Cahya. His mother interjected and talked about her appreciation of their Indonesian bride, specifically about the cooking issue: "Cahya can prepare her own meals and eat them separately. Sometimes, she eats our food, and she also cooks our meals. I am satisfied with this." Mustafa agreed, saying, "She also tries to make our local dishes."³²⁵ Here, it is really intriguing in terms of showing how female figures like mothers-in-law, in this case, play a significant role in constructing gender-based expectations and performances within the division of household labor. However, what stands out in this context is that both couples were highly appreciated by their Indonesian brides, showcasing a rapid

³²³ A local expression for the talented people, implying they are capable in every kind of work. In Turkish it means "elinden her iş gelmek."

³²⁴ Interview with Asım, May 5, 2022.

³²⁵ An informal conversation with Mustafa and Ayşe, September 14, 2022. Ortaköy.

adaptation process in the locally shaped division of household labour: women undertaking the cooking, cleaning, child and elderly care etc., while the men hold the providing role.

On the other hand, it is also important to note that not all Indonesian women adapted to these expectations seamlessly and experienced an easy and willing process of learning within a "two-year" timeframe, especially when it came to cooking Turkish meals for their husbands. Instead, they strategized to increase their life options and opportunities in household relationships by making their husbands more involved in the kitchen.

Most of the men I interviewed in this study got involved in the kitchen to teach their wives to cook Turkish food or to help them in cooking and the other housechores. Their main narrative on this was that the Indonesian women do not know, are not used to or do not like cooking because, in their culture, meals are not cooked inside the house; rather, it is delivered from a company, or most of the Indonesian people eat outside. For example, Yunus who was pointing to cooking as the primary issue in their five years of marriage, emphasized that Indonesian women are not very familiar with cooking and the kitchen culturally, suggesting that Turkish men are understanding in the long process of adapting and helping their Indonesian wives in this cooking and other house chores. For example, Yunus who was pointing the cooking as the primary issue in their five years of marriage emphasized that the Indonesian women are not very familiar with the cooking and kitchen culturally, suggesting the Turkish men to be understanding in the long process of adapting and helping their Indonesian wives in this cooking and other house chores.

“For instance, she didn't know how to cook, and I knew how to cook, so I did the cooking for two years and showed her. I never forced her to do anything; she did what she could, gradually. The primary issue [in our marriage] was cooking: I mean, our society eats at home and they eat at restaurants. Since I knew how to cook, I taught her by saying “this is how you do it; this thing is used for that ” etc. However, it took two years for her to learn; I mean she couldn't learn in a short time. In two years, you know... She had never really been in the kitchen before. Many times, she made things raw. She didn't know the cooking process, but over time, people can learn.”³²⁶

³²⁶ Interview with Yunus, June 9, 2022. Güce.

Here, the emphasis on Indonesian people's dining habits - preferring restaurants over home-cooked meals - and the notion that Indonesian women are inexperienced in cooking is intriguing and warrants further examination. Very similarly, when I asked Kemal what are his expectations from his wife and her expectations from him, he responded as the following:

“Well, I'm not saying anything again. She's going to give it a try a bit more and learn little by little. She tells me she hates cooking; she never had to cook in Indonesia, probably because they had a maid at home, so she never really cooked. That's why she says she can't do it.”³²⁷

To get deeper into this conversation I asked whether she doesn't like cooking or she doesn't know how to cook. Mustafa's response was that

“She knows how to cook but just doesn't do it, I mean, she hardly even makes menemen.³²⁸ Before coming here, she told me, “Give me a few months to get used to cooking like this... and just eat out.” I said okay. Now, two years have passed, and she does cook, but it's Indonesian food, which I can't eat. She doesn't cook what I can eat because she thinks I won't like it. It's quite spicy, a very different kind of dish.”³²⁹

In both of these cases, it was emphasized that Indonesian women needed to learn how to cook when they were in Indonesia or that they needed more practice in cooking due to their individual circumstances, such as working or having a maid in their homes. Going into further analysis Of Fatima, while I lack specific information about her cooking practices in Indonesia, I learned that she held a position as a bank employee with a substantial income. This could explain Yunus' portrayal of Fatima, who had a relatively high socio-economic status, as it may be attributed to her lack of time, financial comfort, or personal preferences. However, both Yunus' testimonies and the other interviews I conducted with men throughout my research process led me to a conclusion. It became evident that the perception of "Indonesian women not cooking or disliking cooking due to their individual circumstances" and the narrative that "Indonesian people prefer dining out" were unfounded generalizations about Indonesian women in Giresun and Indonesians in general. In Waty's case, the situation was similar, as she was reportedly part of a wealthy family. It's possible to verify this through her social media posts about her family in Indonesia, which suggests that

³²⁷ Interview with Kemal, September 14, 2022. Ortaköy.

³²⁸ An aperitive meals made usually for breakfast and perceived as easy to cook.

³²⁹ Interview with Mustafa, September 14, 2022. Ortaköy.

household employees took care of cooking and other housechores, as Kemal mentioned. What's crucial here is that both the narrative about Indonesian women's cooking emerges as a ground for strategizing among Indonesian women, while for Turkish men, they offer an explanation and justification for the unmet expectations regarding having meals prepared for them.

In the course of Indonesian women's strategizing opportunities, in addition to the fact that they have limited familiarity with Turkish cuisine, they can also leverage the narrative that Indonesian women may not have extensive cooking experience due to their socio-economic status, working conditions, or the Indonesian culture, which often encourages dining out. In this sense, Waty's case can be an insightful example, where she asked her husband for time to learn how to cook before their marriage and then extended this time on the basis that she didn't have much experience with cooking while in Indonesia. This illustrates the tactics employed by Indonesian women to create space for themselves in daily life practices.

Moreover, I also observed that when they enter the kitchen with their husbands, they subtly reinforce the narrative that Indonesian women are not good at cooking through their own actions. This may involve intentionally omitting or incorrectly performing tasks that are instructed by their husbands or not strictly following recipes given to them, and it appears that these tactics are employed as a means to foster an equal division of domestic labor and involve their husbands more in the kitchen. One intriguing example of such a strategy can be in Winda's case. Sami and Winda, a couple who had been married for about four years but had started living together in 2022, sought my assistance as a translator in resolving a dispute between them. After a phone call with both of them, I continued the conversation with Winda through messaging. She shared her frustration, saying:

“Every time he is complaining to me about my cooking style. He doesn’t accept me that before I was working at an office for twenty-five years, I was cooking only on Saturday and Sunday. I’m not an expert one, an expert wife at home but I try.”³³⁰

³³⁰ This was in a whatsapp correspondence with Winda and these quotes are from the audio recording she sent me, used with her permission. July 16, 2022.

Winda, who was over 60 years old and had worked as an officer in Indonesia for a considerable period, faced harsh criticism from her husband regarding her perceived lack of cooking skills and her inability to assist him in the kitchen as expected. This criticism made her uncomfortable:

*“When I need to cut the potatoes, I should follow him: no big... please make it small or I need to hold the knife in one way... many many complains about cooking.”*³³¹

In response to the pressure to conform to these expectations, Winda employed various tactics, such as continuing to cut the potatoes or holding the knife in her preferred way. She was telling that she even intentionally "forgot" pots on the stove, leaving more work for her husband in the kitchen. While these subtle gestures sometimes deepened conflict between them, Winda was insisting in her efforts to involve her husband more in kitchen and household chores, thereby fostering a more balanced distribution of domestic responsibilities.

Through their tactical ruses in everyday life practices, such as pretending to be unfamiliar with cooking techniques, acting as though they lack kitchen expertise, and extending the time needed for learning with various excuses, Indonesian women strategically navigate the narrative that Indonesian women are not skilled in the kitchen. This enables them to create space for themselves within the prevailing socio-cultural and gendered framework of household relationships.

To conclude this analysis, I would like to emphasize that I did not find any evidence that Indonesian women do not cook or Indonesian people do not eat at home. Even if women work outside and have limited time for housework, they are somehow involved in cooking and other housechores. In fact, the point here, or the reason I wanted to address this specifically, was not to find out whether Indonesian women were cooking in their house in Indonesia or not, but to understand how this issue of cooking takes a complexity in the context of their marriages with Turkish men or what kind of a negotiation and strategy it reveals in the course of Turkish men's expectations from their Indonesian wives.

³³¹ Ibid.

In his insightful work on the rhetoric of everyday life practices, Michel De Certeau explores how these actions and practices convey meanings, communicate ideas, and exhibit a form of resistance.³³² He interprets seemingly ordinary and mundane practices within individuals' daily routines, particularly those perceived as "weak," as a form of resistance to dominant sociocultural and economic forces, pointing their very tactical and subtle practices as a means of resistance.

Dwelling, moving about, speaking, reading, shopping, and cooking are activities that seem to correspond to the characteristics of tactical ruses and surprises: clever tricks of the "weak" within the order established by the "strong," an art of putting one over on the adversary on his own turf, hunter's tricks, maneuverable, poly-morph mobilities, jubilant, poetic, and warlike discoveries.³³³

De Certeau makes a clear distinction between strategy and tactics in the realm of everyday practices, underlining their fundamental differences. The strategies are the calculations and manipulations within the power relationships and are associated with the dominant, structured systems of power, such as institutions, organizations, or the ruling class. It represents the plans, designs, and rules established by those in authority.³³⁴ On the other hand, tactics resemble the "calculated actions" of ordinary individuals, the everyday person, and those who may not hold significant influence or power. These tactics are often characterized by their subtlety, resourcefulness, and adaptability.³³⁵

In the complex dance of everyday life, Indonesian women engaging with Turkish culture often exhibit a fine balance of strategy and tactics. Drawing inspiration from De Certeau's conceptual framework, we can discern a parallel between the dominant strategies wielded by Turkish husbands in their expectation of Indonesian wives mastering Turkish cuisine and the tactics used by these women to navigate this terrain. The strategies, which include predefined expectations and established power dynamics, come from the husbands and reflect a structured system of authority in the realm of cooking and domestic chores. In contrast, Indonesian women employ tactics marked by subtlety, resourcefulness, and adaptability. They strategically utilize their

³³² Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, trans. Steven Rendall (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984).

³³³ Certeau, 40.

³³⁴ Ibid, 36–37.

³³⁵ Ibid, 38–39.

limited familiarity with Turkish cuisine, often leveraging the narrative that they lack extensive cooking experience due to their socio-economic status, working conditions, or cultural differences in dining preferences in Indonesia. These tactics allow them to create space for themselves within the confines of the dominant sociocultural and gendered framework of household relationships, presenting a powerful example of "the weak" challenging "the strong" within the rhetoric of everyday practices.

As a result of the tactics employed by Indonesian women, male participants, particularly during the adaptation phase, appear to assume more significant roles in the division of domestic labor and become more actively involved in kitchen duties, including cooking. While it is important to acknowledge that not all Indonesian women strategize for resisting the dominant sociocultural structuring of household labor and some adapt quickly, my observations, as a participant observer in numerous family settings, indicate that in the majority of cases, including the women whose adaptation process easier and willing, men take on a more active role in their marriages with Indonesian women, when it is compared to their previous relationships with the Turkish women. This increased involvement is especially noticeable in the kitchen, where they assist their wives in the food preparation process and setting the table, even if they are not the ones primarily responsible for cooking, a shift from their roles in previous marriages or their relationships within their natal families.

This heightened involvement, which is particularly active during the initial years of their marriage, generally maintained with the expectation that it will persist until the Indonesian woman becomes proficient in cooking and preparing "local dishes" adequately. Over time, these efforts tend to diminish as Indonesian women get more familiar with the local culture, learn more about the Turkish cuisine, and are less likely to strategize about making their husbands involved in the kitchen, etc. Therefore, it is very crucial to notice that men are taking on more responsibility for household chores, and being involved in the kitchen and cooking are, in fact, part of a teaching process, and Indonesian women are the most decisive agents in determining how long this process takes. Of course, it should also be noted that in this process of adaptation and learning, the female members of the family, such as the man's mother or sister, also play an active role, in a sense reinforcing the gendered division of domestic labour in favour of their sons or brothers. To illustrate, in a participant observation in Winda and

Sami's house, I witnessed that Sami's younger sister was trying to show Winda some tips about cooking Turkish food. Also, Kemal, who was complaining about his Indonesian wife as not being very interested in cooking Turkish food, expressed that:

“I show her sometimes, I do it and I tell her to chop tomatoes, chop onions, she does it right away. (...) She might learn more in the future. [I heard] most of the [Indonesian] women who come here cooks. There is not too much difficulty in learning, I showed many times. My mother also shows.”³³⁶

It's worth noting that while female family members were indeed supportive in this adaptation process, it was primarily the men who actively assumed responsibility. In many cases, it was observed that the couples resided separately from the men's natal families, which limited the direct involvement of female family members in their daily lives. In the course of these instances of men actively participating in the kitchen and household chores, one notable example can be found in my conversation with Hikmet. When I asked him "what kind of division of the house chores they had at home" he emphasized that they did not have a division at the moment and that his wife helped him in cooking and other things. He was presenting himself as in charge of such house duties and expecting her to learn and get accustomed in the coming years.

“Ours is different right now. I do the work and she helps me. She watches how it is done, carefully. I mean she wants to do it, too. But such things will happen in time, now I'm doing the cooking, I'm a cooker; I worked as a cooker in an imam hatip high school”³³⁷

They were married for nearly one year when this interview was done and Hikmet was confident that his wife will learn cooking Turkish meals in the future more and will undertake the housechore responsibility at all. Time would reveal whether this will come true or not, but it is for sure that Hikmet will be more involved in the kitchen and other household chores that are traditionally associated with femininity during this period than it was in his previous marriage. In fact, during one visit to their home with

³³⁶ Interview with Kemal, August 8. Espiye. “Ona gösteriyorum bazen, ben yapıyorum. Domates doğra diyorum, soğan doğra diyorum yapıyor hemen. (...) Ama bilmiyorum ileride daha fazla öğrenebilir biraz. Buraya gelenlerin çoğu kadın hep yemek yapıyor. (...) Yani öğrenmede bir şey yok ki. Burada çok defa göstereyim. Benim annem de gösteriyor. (...)”

³³⁷ Interview with Hikmet, November 5, 2022. Taflancık. 60 years old men who lost his previous Turkish wife and married for two years.

my parents, I was surprised that Hikmet was the person brought the refreshments for the tea table from the kitchen and served the tea himself; while his wife was staying with us, which was not very accustomed within the traditional gender norms and local gender performances regarding the household. Just like the many others Hikmet and Anny'nin case was illustrating the evolving dynamics within these transnational marriages, where both partners adapt to new roles and responsibilities over time.

In another interview with Sami, there was an emphasis on a more egalitarian division of labor and cooperation in the household chores.

“Since then, we cook together at home. I cook. She follows me. If I want to go to a friend's house, we go together. (...) I mean, whatever we did together, for example, I cooked, she washed the dishes. She cleaned the house while I cooked.”³³⁸

Over 70 years old, Sami was married to 60-year-old Winda. I have already mentioned Winda's complaints about Sami regarding their marriage relationship and the division of housechores. In this sense, even if a very harmonious division of labor or sharing, as portrayed by Sami, did not exist in their actual practice, Sami, like Hikmet, was involved in the kitchen and housework more than in his previous marriages and familial relationships, with a more emphasis on "life is a joint venture." Very similarly, in my 2020 interview with a couple who got married in 2019, when I asked what kind of division of labor they do at home, I got the following answer from Yunus: He watches me cook, I cook, she cleans the house.”³³⁹ These examples show a more egalitarian division of labor and cooperation within the household, reflecting a shift in traditional gender roles, where the couples cook together and sharing the other responsibilities.

Especially in the initial years of the marriage, the male subjects get more involved in the kitchen and are challenged to pursue a more egalitarian division of house chores. It is discussible whether such an involvement in the traditionally accepted feminine activities can be interpreted as a major shift in the gendered roles and expectations in

³³⁸ Interview with Sami, September 5, 2023. Direkbükü. They were married six years ago in Indonesia, however started to live together in Turkey since 2021.

³³⁹ Interview with Yunus, June 2020, Güce.

their practices, however, one should give attention to their self-representations and the projection as being more understanding, helpful and responsible. It is worthwhile to consider their emphasis on “being together” and “helping each other” as a domain of negotiation on their masculine performances in the context of their transnational marriages and it is important to notice that this change stems from the femininity performances and presentations showed by their Indonesian wives and their encounter to a different culture of household which is represented by their Indonesian women in Giresun. The very similar emphasis on the awareness of such a cooperation in the household was prevalent in Hacı Emin’s remarks:

“Now, my niece, we didn't really understand household chores. Until we came to Germany, we always said, “let the wife do it, the wife should do it.” When we arrived in Germany in '70, for instance, I observed men in the garden, German men hanging and collecting laundry. Do you understand? They are helping their wives. (...) I couldn't realize it until then; life is a partnership, you know? So, we began hanging and collecting laundry after that. We started helping women at home, assisting with cooking, and various other things.”³⁴⁰

Although he mentions his migration to Germany with his conjugal Turkish family in 1970s, the question was about how they make the division of household chores with her Indonesian wife and in fact, his answer was pointing his self-projection as being understanding and cooperative in his marriage to his Indonesian wife. Together with the all other quotations and the examples, this short piece show that the encounter with a different culture especially with regard to the gendered roles in the household and the family values necessitate a change and negotiation in the patriarchal values of the household division of labor. The various quotations and examples from other participants also contribute to the overarching theme of change and negotiation in patriarchal values concerning the division of household labor. The transnational marriages serve as a catalyst for reevaluating established gender norms and family values, prompting couples to adapt and negotiate their roles and responsibilities. The willingness to navigate and negotiate new roles and responsibilities showcases a

³⁴⁰ Interview with Hacı Emin, September 15, 2023. Gurağaç. “Şimdi hanım yeğenim, biz ev işlerini pek anlamıyorduk. Almanya’ya gelene kadar hep karı yapısın, karı etsin diyorduk biz. Almanya’ya vardık 70’te, ben mesela bakıyorum bahçede erkek, Alman erkekleri çamaşır asıyorlar, çamaşır topluyorlar. Anladın mı? Karıya yardım ediyor adamlar. (...) O zamana kadar farkına varamadım, hayat müşterekmiş yani anladın mı? Biz de başladık çamaşır asmaya, toplamaya yani ondan sonra. Evde kadınlara yardım etmeye, yemeğine, şuna, buna yardım ediyoruz yani.”

complex process of mutual adaptation and understanding between partners from different cultural backgrounds. On the other side of the corner, it shouldn't be understood as that the gendered expectations and the unfair division of labor in the household is totally changed, rather it is challenged by the new circumstances of a transnational marriage with the Indonesian women and made the Turkish men more involved in the housechores which are traditionally accepted as feminine.

Here, it is worth considering how this challenged and renegotiated masculine performances of the men married to Indonesian women in Giresun is understood and perceived within the framework of "remasculating" transnational marriages and the concept of a "successful adult masculinity" in the broader socio-cultural context. As previously examined in detail, these men perceive themselves as achieving a successful marriage and masculinity performance through their ability to establish transnational marriages across continents. They often attribute any failures in their previous attempts to marry local Turkish women to the perceived shortcomings of those women and a corrupted society in response to a perception that they were seen as losing out in the local "marriage market" due to their inability to marry local women and offer financial sufficiency. These transnational marriages with the Indonesian women, however, was demonstrating a success story of marriage and a successful masculine performance from their own perspective. They are viewed as overcoming the challenges related to cultural and linguistic differences, as well as the long distance between the two countries. Moreover, these marriages strengthen their masculine identities, which were perceived as somehow inadequate in meeting the local community's expectations of an ideal husband, especially in terms of financial sufficiency and other aspects of local hegemonic masculinity.

In this context, these transnational marriages of Turkish men to Indonesian women, on the one hand, reinforced the construction of masculinity as "able to marry," "served," and having a "household where he would have authority," while on the other hand, they were unusually more involved in domestic chores, which are identified with "femininity" and "serving" and in a sense "powerlessness" in the context of local socio-cultural values, and they performed a more negotiated masculinity within the household. While this contradiction mirroring the intricacies existing within the

patriarchal systems by its nature, it also open to an interpretation as men's and masculinities' bargaining with the patriarchy.

The complex dynamics within these transnational marriages of Turkish men to Indonesian women highlight the concept of "patriarchal bargain," as theorized by Deniz Kandiyoti. Aiming to offer a more comprehensive and grounded understanding of the patriarchy and the patriarchal systems, Deniz Kandiyoti comes up with the term *partiarachal bargaining* to refer to the women's coping mechanisms and strategizing capacities to "maximize the security and optimize life options."³⁴¹ Accordingly, in such societies, where power and privilege are often unequally distributed along the gendered norms, individuals may engage in patriarchal bargains to attain some degree of agency or better their circumstances. With a specific focus on the women and their strategizing spaces, Kandiyoti points out the ways individuals might bargain with the patriarchy. For example, a woman might accept or even conform to traditional gender roles in the public sphere to gain more autonomy within the private sphere. In doing so, she negotiates her role within the confines of a patriarchal system, making choices that align with her personal circumstances and desires while recognizing the limitations imposed by societal norms. To illustrate, Kandiyoti takes the women's practice of veil under the Khomeini's reign as an example and quotes from Azari: "the restriction imposed on them by an Islamic order was therefore a small price that had to be paid in exchange for the security, stability, and presumed respect this order promised them."³⁴²

Although this example was specific to the women and their bargaining practices, it is also important to highlight that this bargaining is not unique to the women but encompassing more mutual and complicated relations and performances, taking different forms depending on specific cultural, social and economic contexts in which it occurs. It acknowledges that individuals, while constrained by prevailing gender hierarchies, can still exercise agency in their own lives by making strategic choices and negotiations within the existing patriarchal framework. On this manner, Yavuz states that "in patriarchal bargaining, there is an assumption that certain mutual

³⁴¹ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy," *Gender & Society* 2, no. 3 (1988): 274.

³⁴² Kandiyoti, 283.

expectations between men and women will be fulfilled.”³⁴³ In other words, this emphasis on the bargain is encompassing both the gendered expectations between men and women and also their negotiation with the patriarchal system itself. “The women demand that men work to support the household and protect themselves against the outside world in return for obeying men, taking care of children and the elderly at home, seeing the home as a sanctuary and sanctifying it, and not being able to define themselves as individuals outside the family.”³⁴⁴

Given with this background on the patriarchal bargain, it is also worth to understand how men engage in a negotiation with the patriarchy. In their study on “The Case of Primaries within Hamulas in Palestinian Arab Communities”, Hanna Herzog and Taghreed Yahia-Younis explore how men within Palestinian Arab communities in Israel negotiate their roles and positions within a patriarchal framework.³⁴⁵ They investigate how the young Palestinian men exercise certain strategies and behaviors to gain or secure their power and try how they respond to changing gender dynamics and societal shifts. With a reference to Connell’s argument that “that when dominant masculinity is threatened, structural arrangements are reshaped to reaffirm threatened masculinity,” Herzog and Younis, claim that the young Hamula member’s strong demand and advocacy for the primary elections within the hamula groups serve as a negotiating ground for the men over the possession of power.³⁴⁶ In return, “launching of primary elections within the hamula” emerges as an “attempt to preserve the hamula as a kin-based political-social framework and at the same time an attempt to retain men’s exclusivity in politics.”³⁴⁷ While it becomes as a patriarchal bargain among the different hierarchical groups of men over the power, it is also noteworthy to consider that Hamula member’s bargain with patriarchy includes a gender hierarchy between men and women. The authors state that “excluding women from the primary elections was one of the major mechanisms used by men in their bargaining with patriarchy.” and it “reproduces the gendered hierarchy between men and women.”³⁴⁸ In short,

³⁴³ Yavuz, “Ataerkil egemen erkeklik değerlerinin üretiminde kadınların rolü,” 122. Translation is my own.

³⁴⁴ Yavuz, 122.

³⁴⁵ Hanna Herzog and Taghreed Yahia-Younis, “Men’s Bargaining with Patriarchy: The Case of Primaries within Hamulas in Palestinian Arab Communities in Israel,” *Gender & Society* 21, no. 4 (August 2007): 579–602, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243207302571>.

³⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 587

³⁴⁷ *Ibid*, 587

³⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 592

Herzog and Younis' study helps us to better understand the concept of patriarchal bargain by stretching the analysis over the men's experience with the socio-political formulations of the patriarchy and the lower strata's bargain in this manner. Although the focus of this analysis is on a socio-political organization and the political strategizing capabilities of its individuals, it has many insights for understanding the patriarchal bargaining of the men married to Indonesian women in Giresun in that it shows both how men experience patriarchal bargaining and how it produces a new hierarchy of men and women within patriarchal bargaining.

In the context of these transnational marriages, Turkish men appear to engage in a form of patriarchal bargaining. Their willingness to take on some domestic responsibilities traditionally associated with femininity can be seen as a strategy to "maximize security" and "optimize their life options."³⁴⁹ By participating in household chores and helping with cooking, they negotiate their roles within the confines of the patriarchal system. This involvement in traditionally "feminine" tasks can be considered a small price to pay for the perceived benefits, which include an enhanced sense of respect both within the household/family and the broader community and a bolstered masculine identity.

This patriarchal bargain is multifaceted. On one hand, these men maintain their dominant positions in their households and communities, fulfilling their gendered expectations as providers and protectors; and as also achieving a transnational marriage which has certain challenges. On the other hand, they adapt to changing dynamics by participating in domestic chores, which may be viewed as non-traditional in their cultural context. This adaptation not only reflects their ability to adjust to the evolving demands of contemporary relationships but also serves as a way to secure their masculinity and preserve their perceived respect within the household. Therefore, within these transnational marriages, Turkish men's involvement in domestic chores can be interpreted as a form of patriarchal bargain. They negotiate their roles within the patriarchal system, strategically adjusting to changing gender norms, in exchange for the perceived respect and a reinforced masculine identity they receive in return.

³⁴⁹ Kandiyoti, "Bargaining with Patriarchy."

This dynamic reflects the complexity of patriarchal systems and the strategies individuals employ to navigate them.

6.2. Conclusion

In conclusion to this analysis, upon revisiting the discussions in the literature on transnational marriage, the predominant focus of studies revolves around gender negotiation and challenges within unions where the man assumes the role of the host, and the woman is positioned as the migrant, often to the detriment of women. Both the literature's focal point and general gender assumptions imply that migrant women face a double challenge and are subjected to subjugation due to their dual identities as both women and migrants. While there is undeniable truth in this narrative, assuming its absolute accuracy would overlook the agency exercised by women.

Challenges such as being unfamiliar with the culture and language, grappling with adaptation issues, and occupying a minority status pose significant hurdles for Indonesian women. However, it is plausible to assert that these women carve out a space for themselves through daily life practices and tactics, challenging the established gender norms within their marital relationships.

From the women's perspective, this not only challenges assumptions about the transnational marriage of migrant women but also disrupts local gender norms. Particularly in the Black Sea region, the archetype of a robust woman assuming tasks even traditionally designated for men, adept at handling any responsibility at home, does not resonate with the experiences of Indonesian women. Additionally, it has been observed that the migrant position or being a stranger in the local scene enables Indonesian women ground to navigate daily life strategies and tactics to negotiate the gendered division of household labour.

On the other hand, viewed from a male standpoint, this situation can be interpreted as a form of male patriarchal bargaining. Within the local patriarchal system, men engage in negotiations, strategically adjusting their roles to align with evolving gender norms. In return, they seek perceived respect and a strengthened masculine identity. This

dynamic underscores the complex nature of patriarchal systems and illuminates the strategies individuals employ to navigate within them.



CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, although the transnational marriage case between Turkish men from the Black Sea region and Indonesian women is small in number and territorially limited when it is placed in a context within the other transnational marriages across Turkey, it gains great importance in understanding the change and transformation of marriage practices in Turkish society. In this context, the majority of transnational marriages today are with women from Syria and Central Asia, and how marriages with Indonesian women differ from these is helpful in understanding how Turkish men construct masculinity through these marriages.

This thesis reveals that the references of the people who had previously performed these marriages are of great importance in the decision-making process of Turkish men who marry Indonesian women and that these references have even turned into a network of marriage over the years. On the other hand, religious identity and religious self-representation, the belief in the will of Allah and the general trust in Indonesian people stand out as the main elements that support this network. Therefore, I argued that trust is not merely an emotional orientation between two or more people based on several other emotions associated with it, such as love, respect, and care, but it has a sociological basis shared by the members of a wider community. In that context, I should recall the discussions about whether trust is something emergent within the context of any social interaction or whether it has an established character prior to the occurrence of any relationship. Based on ethnographical evidence on the trust experienced within a transnational marriage context, this study presents that trust cannot be understood as a mere emergence within the context of any interaction, but it also has an established character as it is based on some presumptions about the one who might be trusted. In the context of transnational marriages between Indonesian women and Turkish men, it can be said that trust had already emerged before the

engagement of spouses because they acknowledged their prospective spouses' trustworthiness on the basis of their religiosity and nationality.

In another analysis, the thesis revealed the construction of a masculine identity within the marriage and household context through power positioning on the other: The Turkish and the Indonesian women. They portrayed a compare and contrast between the obedient nature of Turkish women and the submissive nature of Indonesian women. Through the quotations obtained from the interviews and the participant observation, it is observed that Turkish women are depicted with certain traits, such as being disobedient, headstrong, and hypocritical. Conversely, Indonesian women are portrayed as innocent, sincere, trustworthy, and submissive. In fact, these depictions apparently express men's expectations of a "proper wife", but more importantly, they play an important role in their construction of hegemonic masculinity or in reaffirming and supporting this construction. Besides, they also open up a space for men to repair their damaged representations of hegemonic masculinity within the local community, such as not being able to marry or not being a suitable candidate in the local marriage scene.

Furthermore, the negotiation and reaffirmation of patriarchy within transnational marriages between Black Sea Turkish men and Indonesian women was analyzed. It was observed that men either reinforce existing hegemonic masculinity values or negotiate their performances due to challenges and cultural differences arising from the new culture encountered through marriage. The ethnographic data from the Black Sea Turkish men's and Indonesian women's transnational marriages revealed intricate negotiations concerning masculine expectations within the household dynamics. The division of labour in housework, particularly cooking, emerged as a prominent sphere of negotiation. Traditionally, house chores like cooking, cleaning, and maintaining order were expected from women and associated with femininity. However, with the introduction of Indonesian wives into the households, these expectations underwent a transformation. Black Sea Turkish men actively engaged in housework, primarily cooking, either because their Indonesian wives were unfamiliar with Turkish food or did not enjoy cooking. This involvement in traditionally feminine chores marked a shift in gendered roles and expectations within their marriages. Men emphasized the importance of cooperation, showing understanding, and being helpful in the

household. These shifts were projected as an integral part of their masculinity within the context of transnational marriages. The encounters with a different culture, particularly regarding household gender roles and family values represented by their Indonesian wives, necessitated changes and negotiations in the patriarchal values of the household division of labour. This negotiation process can be seen as a domain where masculine ideals are challenged and reaffirmed. Indonesian women's performances and presentations of femininity influenced the reconstruction of masculine identities, leading to a more egalitarian division of labour and cooperation within the household.



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APPENDIX

Evrak Tarih ve Sayısı: 22.12.2022-21001



T.C.
İBN HALDUN ÜNİVERSİTESİ
Sosyal ve Beşeri Bilimler Bilimsel Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği
Kurulu Başkanlığı

Sayı : E-71395021-020-21001
Konu : Şeyda KARABATAK-Etik Kurul
Kararı

22.12.2022

İLGİLİ MAKAMA

Kurulumuza başvuran Şeyda KARABATAK'ın "Changing Experiences of Marriage in Turkey: Black Sea Turkish Men's Transnational Marriages to Indonesian Women" isimli projesi; amaç, araştırma türü, veri toplama araçları, süreç ve işlemler, veri analizleri dikkate alınmak suretiyle 28.10.2022 tarihinde değerlendirilerek 2022/07-4 karar numarası ile etik açıdan uygun bulunmuştur.

Bilgilerinizi arz/rica ederim.

Prof. Dr. Alev ERKİLET
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