ANTHROPOLOGY AND SOCIOLOGY OF EMOTIONS

Theoretical and Ethnographic Perspectives from Turkey and Beyond

Editor

Ramazan Aras

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Making Trust Across a Continent: Transnational Marriages Between Indonesian Women and Turkish Men in the Black Sea Region

Şeyda Karabatak*

Introduction**

The rapid advancements in communication and transportation facilities have facilitated unexpected encounters between people and cultures from diverse origins. People of different countries and nationalities encounter each other in global metropolitan cities or in the transit zones of global migration. With globalization, it is common for multiple trans-localities, cross-border spaces, and intercultural encounters to emerge in the frontier towns or metropolitan cities of a country. However, such encounters are uncommon in rural localities that are far from transit zones and lack the facilities of metropolitan cities. This study focuses on transnational marriage cases in a rural locality where the intensity of transnational migrations or cross-border mobilization is not intense. Intriguingly, the transnational marriages between Indonesian women and Turkish men from Giresun, a small city in the Black Sea

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** This study is based on my MA thesis titled "*Changing Experiences of Marriage and Masculinity in Turkey: Turkish Men's Transnational Marriages to Indonesian Women in the Black Sea Region*" conducted under the supervision of Prof. Dr. Ramazan Aras at the Department of Sociology, Ibn Haldun University, and completed in 2023. This work was supported by Research Fund Office of Ibn Haldun University and the project code was 2116.

region, mark important insights into this global interconnectedness and its reflections on local practices.

Güce and Espiye, two small towns in the rural Black Sea region, 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. On the other hand, all these questions and inferences are somewhat misleading and problematic to understand the lived experiences of Turkish-Indonesian couples who are practicing these marriages and currently live in various districts and villages of Giresun. The preconceived notions about marriages between Turkish men and Indonesian women often deemed them challenging and implausible due to cultural and spatial disparities. These notions 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.

To avoid both marginalization and romanticization of the transnational marriages between Turkish-Indonesian people in Giresun, I aimed to understand the lived experiences, self-representations, and perceptions of Turkish men regarding their marriages to Indonesian women. Through an ethnographic lens, I aimed to reveal how these transnational marriage relationships are established and maintained, identifying the means and mediators involved. Most importantly, I

sought to identify the key determinants that contributed to the establishment of trust between Turkish-Indonesian couples.

To achieve these objectives, I conducted ethnographic research in Giresun over more than two years, including intermittent periods of fieldwork. I conducted in-depth interviews with Turkish husbands and the Indonesian wives, as well as informal interviews with some local community members, to understand their perceptions of these marriages. Additionally, I engaged in participant observation by attending planned or spontaneous meetings of the Indonesian women and the family gatherings of the couples. It is important to highlight that these marriages are not arranged through international matchmaking agencies or a mail-order bride organizations, but through intermediary networks. The relationship between the Turkish men and the Indonesian women is initially established through intermediaries, many of whom are already involved in such marriages. The most common scenario involves a Turkish man seeking a wife, who, after hearing about marriages with Indonesian women in the neighborhood, contacts one of these couples to arrange a match. A similar process occurs for Indonesian women. An Indonesian woman learning of her friend's marriage to a Turkish man may ask for a similar arrangement. In such cases, the two candidates are matched. If no match is found, the person is directed to various marriage websites and promised mediation after finding a suitable match themselves. Following this match, which can take a few months to a few years, they communicate through social media and messaging applications before deciding to marry. There are about twenty transnational marriage cases within the borders of these two districts. In most cases, the Turkish husbands were over forty and divorced from their early marriages with Turkish women due to death or dissension. Almost all of them were looking to marry again, but to a Turkish one who would accept their marital status, become a friend in their home, and take responsibility for household chores like cleaning and cooking. Not only the men but also their family members and friends seek to mediate these marriages.

They mostly use Google Translate to communicate during the engagement process and after marriage because they do not share a common language. Except for one couple who spoke English, the others did not share a common language, causing occasional difficulties in their relationships. A pivotal aspect of this research is that all Turkish men included in the study are from Giresun, primarily living in Espiye and Güce districts, while Indonesian women come from various regions and cities in Indonesia. In addition, the sociocultural background and socio-economic status of both Turkish and Indonesian participants differ. A notable observation is that nearly all the male participants engage in agricultural activities, primarily hazelnut farming, on 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 have completed primary education. Their occupations include construction masonry, craftsmanship, machine operation, and some of them are retirees. Only two of the interviewed men were in their first marriage with an Indonesian woman, while the others were in their second or third unions.

Regarding Indonesian women, although only nine were interviewed and some interviews were not systematic, it was noted that almost all had salaried jobs before migrating to Turkey. Only three stated that they had worked in textiles for a while, while the others had jobs such as office employees, secretaries, bankers, and teachers. It is significant to note that not all marriage migrations imply upward socio-economic mobility and well-being for Indonesian women. It is important to address how globalization has facilitated such marriages by building trust between both sides.

The relentless process of globalization has transformed the world into a small town. Developments in new media technologies, the spread of new communication platforms, and the ease of worldwide transportation have connected rural localities to global spaces of interaction, mobility, and cultural exchange. In this context, Arjun Appadurai defines a deterritorialized, transnational, and translocal landscape – eth-

noscapes, in his own terminology – in which the inhabitants are "no longer tightly territorialized, spatially bounded, historically unselfconscious, or culturally homogeneous."[1] 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 imaginings of individuals and communities, but also built on concrete relationships, networks, aspirations and motivations."[2] 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 tools such as Google Translate facilitated communication, providing opportunities for further interaction and evaluation of the positive and negative aspects of these marriages. Moreover, when visiting prospective spouses and their families, the ease of transportation, reducing cross-continental travel to an eleven-hour flight, plays a crucial role in the decision-making processes for most of couples.

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

2 Lucy Williams, *Global Marriage: Cross-Border Marriage Migration in Global Context* (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2010), 1–4.

3 Stephen Castles and Mark J. Miller, *The Age of Migration* (London: Macmillan Education UK, 1998).

On the other hand, beyond the structural aspects of these transnational marriages, all the networks, motivations, aspirations, local and global dynamics, and contexts that make these cross-continental marriages possible remain worthwhile to examine in detail. It is important to investigate how these transnational marriage relationships are established and maintained, and through which means and mediators. More importantly, what were the key determinants that contributed to the process of building trust between Turkish-Indonesian couples? Before exploring these inquiries within the framework of sources and the reasonable grounds for trust between individuals, as well as their self-perception of their experiences with the risks and uncertainties of their actions, it is pertinent to briefly examine emotion of trust as a sociological concept. The emotion of trust exhibits a multifaceted nature within interpersonal relationships and societal dynamics.

The Question of Trust

The emotion of trust, a fundamental aspect of human interaction, has received significant scholarly attention over the years. The 1990s saw a substantial surge in research on trust, social capital, and risk, especially within sociology, anthropology, economics, and political science.[4] The concept is multifaceted, with studies exploring its functions in social and individual relationships, its relationship with risk, and its rational, emotional, and social bases. The functionalist approach, focusing on "what trust provides" or "what expectations it fulfills" in social and individual relations, views trust as a provider of societal order,[5] a facilitator of cooperation in a "world of cooperative relations",[6] or a mitigator of social complexity.[7] Conversely, many scholarly works

4 Guido Möllering, "The Nature of Trust: From Georg Simmel to a Theory of Expectation, Interpretation and Suspension", *Sociology* 35, no. 2 (May 2001): 403.

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

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

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

examine the structural, affective and social bases on which the trust between individuals or within society is formed. Daniel J. McAllister discusses the cognitive and affective foundations of trust in the interpersonal relationships within organizations, highlighting "affect-based trust" in facilitating effective coordinated action.[8] Russell Hardin, defines trust as an "encapsulated interest" and explores its foundations in people's rational calculations when deciding to trust or distrust somebody.[9] While these studies focus on the cognitive and affective dimensions of trust, many researchers investigate its sources in institutional[10] and societal frameworks. Referencing Charles Tilly, Sztompka points out the substantial role of social networks, movements, collective actions, and shared values in the formation of trust.[11] Contemporary anthropologists have explored individual and regional religiosity, moral communities,[12] and religious involvement as sources of social trust among narrow and extended social groups.[13]

The current body of work has made significant strides in unraveling the multifaceted nature of trust, encompassing its societal implications and the rationale behind individual and social trust dynamics. However,

8 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. Also see, J David Lewis and Andrew Weigert, "Trust as a Social Reality", *Social Forces* 63, no. 4 (1985).

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

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

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

12 Richard Traunmuller, "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.

13 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. 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.

there is a need for a more nuanced exploration, particularly of trust's interplay with risk. The literature reveals that trust is not only about the expected or sources but is also a dynamic force intricately linked with risk.

The relationship between trust and risk has long puzzled researchers. Pennanen observes that scholars are uncertain whether risk precedes trust, is intrinsic to it, or emerges as a consequence.[14] James S. Coleman defines trust as the cornerstone of individual risk-taking behavior, emphasizing its dual nature: the act of trusting and the inherent risk of betrayal.[15] Sociologist Jack Barbalet adds depth to the discussion by underscoring trust as a mechanism for navigating the absence of evidence, citing George Simmel's assertion that without a general trust in society, relationships would falter.[16] Trust becomes indispensable in overcoming uncertainty, serving as a means to bridging the gap when rational proof or personal observation falls short, as noted by Simmel. Barbalet further explains that trust, grounded in emotional commitment, is essential for substantive rationality in action, especially where formal rationality falls short in uncertain conditions.[17] Guido Möllering introduces the concept of *suspension*, urging researchers to understand the ignorance and unknowable from the trustor's perspective.[18] This involves recognizing what may be overlooked in interviews and understanding how trustors handle their uncertainties.[19] These perspectives underscore trust's role in navigating uncertainty, with emotional commitment and suspension as crucial components in understanding and managing the interplay between trust and risk.

In their attempt to develop a more holistic approach to the study of trust, David Lewis and Andrew Wiegert define it as an inevitably social

14 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.

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

16 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.

17 Barbalet, 380–81.

18 Möllering, "The Nature of Trust."

19 Möllering, 416.

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. It complements the orientation-focused definition by Linda R. Weber and Allison I. Carter, who described trust as an "*orientation* between self and other whose object is the relationship."[20] Focusing on daily individual relationships, 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."[21] In this theoretical framework, they focus on trust in friendship and love relationships, arguing that trust emerges from the interaction between the two people. In familial relationships, such as between the parents and children, trust has an "established character" and already exists. Therefore, Weber and Carter propose "an interactional theory", interpreting trust as a social construct that emerges from interactions and influences actions.[22] While the argument Weber and Carter's argument underscores trust's role in restructuring relationships, it becomes problematic when applied to transnational marriages. For Turkish-Indonesian couples, factors such as references, marriage networks, perceptions of religiosity, and nationality play pivotal roles in trust-building. In this context, trust is influenced by pre-existing conditions, challenging the notion that it solely emerges through interaction.

Building on Möllering's conceptual framework, this discussion examines trust through the lenses of *expectation, interpretation,* and *suspension.*[23] Möllering defines *expectation* as the period following the emergence of trust, focusing on the anticipated benefits and functions trust provides to society, individuals, or relationships. Essentially, it explores the anticipated outcomes associated with trust. The dimension of *inter-*

20 Linda R. Weber and Allison I. Carter, *The Social Construction of Trust* (Boston, MA: Springer US, 2003), 3. Emphasis is belong to author.

21 Weber and Carter, *The Social Construction of Trust,* 3.

22 Weber and Carter, *The Social Construction of Trust* , 1-5.

23 Möllering, "The Nature of Trust."

pretation explores the dynamics of trust construction and the contextual sources contributing to its formation. Lastly, *suspension* examines how individuals and society handle the unknowable and unpredictable aspects of trust, highlighting what is held in abeyance.[24]

Drawing from Möllering's framework, this study begins by investigating the foundational sources of trust between Indonesian-Turkish couples and their considerations in interpreting trust. It then explores how participants navigate uncertainties and risks in forming trust, highlighting the types of suspensions employed in the process.

A Chain of Transnational Marriage

In the initial interactions between Turkish husbands and Indonesian wives, the formation of individual marriage networks across both regions emerges as a significant factor. A reference provided by another Turkish-Indonesian couple plays a crucial role in 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 traditionally arranged setting. Even when the engaged couple initially connects on a digital platform without intermediaries, the Turkish man often seeks the opinion of other Turkish-Indonesian couples in the same region about Indonesian women and Turkish-Indonesian marriages. He may also encourage his own fiancées to interact with the Indonesian wife, seeking insights into her perspective on Turkish men and the prospect of such a marriage.

In most cases, Turkish-Indonesian marriages result from a Turkish man's desire to marry despite local challenges 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. The intermediary couple facilitates the process by connecting the Turkish man with a woman from the Indonesian wife's circle of friends who shares a similar inten-

24 Möllering, 415-417.

tion of marriage. With the support of this intermediary couple, the entire engagement, including the online dating, messaging, and the agreements on marriage criteria, as well as the wedding process, from the Indonesian bride's migration to Turkey to the management of necessary legal procedures, are carried out. Over time, the assistance, initiatives, and references provided by already-married couples have contributed to the rise of Turkish-Indonesian marriages in the neighborhood, establishing a discernible marriage network and chains of Turkish-Indonesian unions in Espiye and Güce. These networks foster social ties and interactions among couples in the region and cultivate trust for individuals considering a transnational marriage.

It is important to acknowledge the prevalence of marriage chains in cases of marriage migration and transnational unions. The literature on migration identifies two primary types of spouse migration: *family reunification* and *family formation*. In family reunification, geographically separated families are brought together through "chain migration", where one family member pioneers the move, followed by others.[25] While marriage migrations typically align with the family formation, "chain marriage migration" becomes apparent in many transnational marriages. Daniele Belanger and Andrea Flynn illustrate this phenomenon with Taiwanese husbands and Vietnamese wives, noting that "some immigrant spouses become matchmakers themselves and facilitate additional instances of marriage migration."[26] Similarly, the individual references and the intermediaries by the already-married Turkish-Indonesian couples in Giresun constitute a transnational marriage chain, establishing a trustworthy network for newcomers.

The existence of such a network significantly influences the decision-making process for pursuing a transnational marriage and provides a good reason to trust the prospective spouse. For Turkish men intend-

25 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.

26 Bélanger and Flynn, 193.

ing to marry Indonesian women, other examples in the region provide a source of trust. Even if they observe marriages that end in divorce or face problems due to cultural, language, and lifestyle differences, references remain significant as they consider these negative examples to be few. For example, Sami, a 70-year-old Turkish man in his second marriage to Indonesian Winda for five years, expressed his thoughts on the Turkish-Indonesian marriages as follows:

> Some of our friends couldn't get along [with their Indonesian wives.] Well, they had to divorce, but these were very few, here, I mean, if there are twenty or twenty-five Indonesian women in Giresun, two or three of them went back.[27]

When they are asked about the source of trust towards their prospective spouses, many respondents mentioned the positive impact of other marriages in the region or specifically the influence of the intermediary Turkish-Indonesian couple who were friends or relatives. One of my interlocutors, Hikmet, narrated:

> The reason I chose the Indonesian lady is that there are fifteen or twnety Indonesian ladies around our house. I talked to their husbands; they all said they were satisfied. Not one of them complained about their wives or advised against marrying an Indonesian woman. They all looked at them positively and said to trust them; you can marry them.[28]

Another respondent, Kemal, echoed these sentiments and claimed, "I mean, I've seen some examples in other places, and everyone is satisfied. There was no problem at all."[29] Even the first Indonesian-Turkish marriage in the region was based on a reference from another marriage between a Turkish man and a Malaysian woman. Remzi, known for

27 Interview with Sami, May 10, 2022, Aladere.

28 Interview with Hikmet, May 11, 2022, Taflancık. Hikmet 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.

29 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.

achieving the first Turkish-Indonesian marriage in the region ten years ago, points to his friend who is married to a Malaysian woman and lives in Malaysia. He stated:

> I had a friend who got married in Malaysia. He still lives in Malaysia. He used to tell me about the people, the culture, and marriage customs there. I was quite impressed by him, to be honest.[30]

Their story is noteworthy because they are the first couple and have inspired many others. Sometime after the loss of his wife, Remzi was searching for a second marriage. He believed that people in Malaysia and surrounding areas are kind, and there are more marriageable women with warm and obedient characteristics than in Turkey. He met Sarwendah, an Indonesian woman, through social media. After a period of dating on digital platforms, he traveled to Indonesia to get know his fiancée and her family, and then they decided to marry. When asked about their meeting and the role of 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 (on considering some Turkish women) here, I instinctively dismissed it.[31]

Remzi considers his marriage to Sarwendah as a spiritual union, based on deep spiritual and religious beliefs rather than mere worldly rationality. He believes their meeting was due to a higher spiritual calling, a conviction that resonates deeply within him. Interestingly, during a conversation with Sarwendah, it became apparent that she shares a similar interpretation of their marriage. Although Sarwendah's family was Christian, she converted to Islam after turning eighteen and chose to live with her Christian aunt. She recounted that during this transitional phase, she dreamt of her future husband, Remzi, before ever meeting him. Upon their encounter, the memory of this dream flooded back to her.

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

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

Additionally, positive remarks from Remzi's friend, who had previously married a Malaysian woman and spoke fondly of his marriage and Southeast Asian culture, significantly influenced Remzi's decision to marry Sarwendah. He elaborated on the reference from his friend married to a Malaysian woman and other reasons for his negative perceptions of Turkish women, such as indifference toward their husbands and a scheming character. With these considerations, he decided to marry Sarwendah. Over the years, their union inspired 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, describes 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. Having lived in the United States for a long time and being able to speak English, he asked Sarwendah if she could find an Indonesian woman for him. She responded, "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."[32] 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 arranged another marriage for their widowed friends, Sami and Winda. The two new couples organize double dates and double marriages in Indonesia. Although finalizing these two additional Turkish-Indonesian relationships through marriage took some years, these connections eventually formed further transnational marriage chains over time, especially in Güce and the surrounding villages.

As highlighted in selected quotations from interviewees, the establishment of transnational couples in the region predominantly occurred through references by pre-existing married couples. In investigating trust between spouses, numerous participants cited the influence of other Indonesian-Turkish couples. The following diagram

32 Interview with Yunus, June 21, 2020, Güce.

illustrates the intricate chains and networks among these couples, indicating the years they got married.

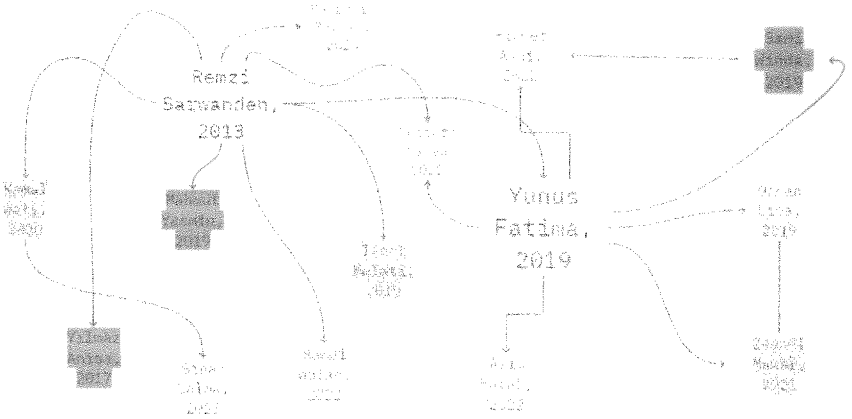

Figure 1: Chain of Transnational Marriage in Güce and Espiye.

The diagram shows that all couples share some form of connection, whether through friendships, kinships, or more distant acquaintances for both male and female participants. For instance, Sinan and Salma were introduced following Kemal and Waty's marriage, facilitated by the Remzi-Sarwendah couple. Sinan, a friend of Remzi, met Salma, Waty's niece, through Waty's matchmaking. Another example involves Yunus and Fatima, who, during marriage negotiations, discovered that Yunus's friend Sami wanted to marry an Indonesian woman. Fatima facilitated a meeting between Sami and her childhood friend Winda, leading to simultaneous marriage processes for both couples. Yunus and Sami even traveled to Indonesia together in 2018 to meet their future spouses.

This network map highlights the prominent role of two couples, Remzi-Sarwendah and Yunus-Fatima, in facilitating connections. Remzi-Sarwendah had stronger ties with couples in Espiye due to their extensive experience and status as the oldest couple in the region. Additionally, Sarwendah's official designation as the representative for all

Indonesians in Giresun adds legitimacy to their role, fostering trust locally and officially. Conversely, Yunus-Fatima's significance lies in their proficiency in English, enabling them to assist prospective couples with translation and contributing to their role in the marriage network.

Our discussion has focused on the formation of marriage networks through existing connections and references from already married couples and how these networks influence prospective couples, fostering trust. 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."[33] Speculating on Möllering's statement, participants' trust in the other party during the decision-making phase may 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.

Indonesian-Turkish marriages examined in this are not the only case where networks play a pivotal role in cultivating trust in transnational migration and marriage. This 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."[34] Similarly, the study conducted by Özgür and Murat examines the formation of social networks by Russian brides in Turkey, their dynamics at both local

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

34 Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993) as quoted in 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): 348.

and transnational levels, and how these networks influence their daily experiences in transnational marriage migration.[35]

In the debate on the connection between trust and social networks, Charles Tilly asserts that trust itself is a category within a network.[36] According to Tilly, while not all networks are inherently linked to trust, there is a distinct category of networks where trust is the prevailing quality. This is exemplified in networks such as cohabitation, trade diasporas, migration chains, or religious networks.[37]

While Tilly's primary focus is on migration and trust networks, his insights offer valuable perspectives for understanding trust dynamics within migrant and non-migrant groups in 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 risk to the malfeasance, mistakes, or failures of others."[38] 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 values. Social networks within transnational marriage chains serve as sources of trust—a compelling rationale to trust—despite the inherent risks and uncertainties in decision-making processes of both migrant and non-migrant individuals. Reflecting on the experiences of Turkish men and Indonesian women in transnational marriage case, it is evident that both groups emphasised the trustful guidance provided by references and the mediation offered by previously married couples in their decision-making processes.

35 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.; 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.

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

37 Sztompka, "New Perspectives on Trust", 915.

38 Charles Tilly, "Trust Networks in Transnational Migration", *Sociological Forum* 22, no. 1 (March 2007): 7.

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

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 are crucial sources of trust formation and continuity. Charles Tilly highlights the significance of religious solidarities within isolated groups where trust can be easily traced.[39] He notes that maintaining a clear boundary between "us" and "them" is crucial for sustaining trust networks in geographically dispersed religious or isolated communities.[40]

Richard Traunmüller emphasizes the impact of religion on social trust, noting that while many studies examine religion's impact on organizational cooperation and associational membership, few highlight its impact on social trust.[41] In his study on the "formation of social trust" in Germany, Traunmuller highlights the profound influence of individual religiosity and regional religious contexts in shaping interper-

39 Tilly, "Trust Networks", 8.

40 Tilly, "Trust Networks", 8.

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

sonal relations and organizational affiliations.[42] Carson Mencken et al. also highlight the importance of religion in sustaining the social trust, arguing that an individual's relationship with God is paramount; "the image of God as a loving God is related to loving people in general and thus trusting them more."[43]

Similarly, Baki Adaş examines how social capital, rooted in shared Islamic values and identities, establishes trust among owners of Turkish-based Islamic Holding Companies worldwide.[44] Social trust in this context is significantly fueled by common identities, religious affiliations, and shared values, contributing to trust in socio-economic, cultural, and political relationships, whether formed individually or collectively.

While these 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 in individual connections—particularly those formed through friendship and love—and to understand how shared values or religious faith operate in trust formation in the marital relationships and mate selection. Leveraging insights from Indonesian women and Turkish men, this 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 understanding of trust that transcends geographical boundaries and cultural distinctions. It highlights the profound influence of religious perspectives on establishing and maintaining trust within personal relationships, alongside rational calculations and individual relationships.

First and foremost, the respondents conscientiously portray themselves as modest Muslims dedicated to fulfilling their religious obliga-

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

43 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?"

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

tions. At the core of their self-perception is the conviction that their marriages are intricately woven into the fabric of predestination, a concept they refer to as *"takdir-i ilahi"*, which translates to "God's will". The relationship they establish with Allah and their engagement with faith play a fundamental role in constructing trust and making decision in these marriages. This involves evaluating their subjective realities, understanding the source of trust, and embracing the uncertainties and potential risks of these marriages.

Both the men and women presented themselves as religious individuals who maintain daily prayers and duas and avoid breaking Islamic rules, such as gambling, alcohol and adultery. They 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 marriage. For them, a shared dedication to religious principles, such as daily prayers and abstaining from forbidden activities, fortifies the sanctity of marriage and establishes fundamental trust in the spouse's commitment, fostering confidence that their partner will not betray or deceive them. A pervasive narrative emerged throughout the interviews, underscoring the devout and sincere nature of those involved in this marriage network. There was a strong emphasis, especially by the men, that marriage is an act of worship and a key to heaven, particularly for the women. A consistent theme emphasized that Indonesian women and the Indonesian populace, "despite their sectarian and cultural differences"[45] embody a sincerity in their adherence to Islam that transcends these distinctions.

It was a priority for them to ask whether their prospective spouse had a strong belief in Allah and was diligent about daily prayers. A compelling example from the marriage journey of Tiwi and Veli underscores the pivotal role of religiosity in their decision-making process. After divorcing from their past marriages, they looked for a prospective spouse

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

in their localities and on marriage websites. However, they did not find a marriage through these searches. Then, they learned about marriages between Indonesian women and Turkish men through a network of friends already engaged in such marriages. Tiwi highlighted that when inquiring about her prospective groom, her primary concerns were his previous marriage experience and his commitment to namaz (prayer). After meeting him, she said, "I made dua and *istikhara*[46] and said to Allah, if this man is okay for me, then make it easier, if not just forget it."[47]

Further insights into their engagement process highlight the 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 performances of religiosity in everyday life.[48]

The religious faith and religiosity of the prospective spouse were critical in their decision to marry. It should be noted that religiosity is not the only factor in constructing trust and decision-making. Questions about daily life, financial situation, the reason for previous, and family structure are addressed, and the "convincing answers" to these questions affect the trust and decision process. The relationship between religion and Allah is a common narrative in almost all of the interviews, influencing network formation, trust processes, and understanding transnational marriage.

Further analysis shows that spouses' continued commitment to religious duties after marriage becomes a validating factor, establishing trust for potential candidates considering marriage with an Indonesian

46 The word "*istikhara*" is derived from the Arabic root "sthr" (استخارة), which means to seek goodness, blessings, or guidance from God. When Muslims face important decisions 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.

47 Interview with Tiwi, May 12, 2022.

48 Interview with Veli, May 12, 2022.

woman. During the interview with Salim, who was in the process of pre-marriage with an Indonesian woman, I asked if he had heard about the other Turkish-Indonesian couples. He expressed his amazement at the other married couples in the region regarding the Indonesian women's religious sensitivity and stated, "I met, I saw that delicacy. I asked our married people here, I talked to a few people: I marvel what they say, I have lived all this time for nothing. Why? She always tries to wake me up in the morning for prayers."[49]

The portrayal of Indonesian women as "alarm clocks" who remind Turkish men of prayer times highlights the perception that these women are devout and committed Muslims. This perception suggests that Indonesian women preserve their faith and actively encourage their husbands to uphold religious practices. Such commitment to religious duties serves as a substantial indicator of trustworthiness, contributing to the establishment of trust in potential marriages with Indonesian women.

The emphasis on the religiosity of prospective partners and the sacred nature of these marriages, 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, especially considering the absence of participants in this study belonging to a specific religious group or sharing religious solidarity. 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 regular Friday meetings and Qur'ān recitations. Men manifest their religious commitment more through practices such as fasting and praying. Determining the authenticity of the religious practices and the emphasis on religion in these transnational marriages goes beyond the scope of this study. Nevertheless, it is worthwhile to briefly examine how these practices are interpreted and perceived.

49 Interview with Salim, September 19, 2022.

From my perspective, using religious discourse or engaging in religious practices does not necessarily reflect an individual's true beliefs. The continuous prominence of religious discourse in these interviews suggests that religious references form the overarching framework of these marriages. Yet, this does not necessarily reflect an individual's true beliefs. Instead, it might indicate a pragmatic approach to fulfilling societal and relational expectations.

Moreover, it is essential to recognize that religiosity can be both a personal and a public performance. While some participants may view their practices as sincere expressions of faith, others might engage in them primarily to align with social norms and expectations. This duality underscores the complex role of religion in these marriages, serving both as a personal conviction and a social strategy. 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 inquiries about the prospective spouse's trustworthiness. As emphasized by numerous participants, other party's accessibility, willingness to share daily activities, and responsiveness to video or voice calls during online dating shape individuals' assessments of the relationship and trust in the other party. 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 unpredictability of marrying a foreign spouse.

Both the Indonesian women and the Turkish men were represented themselves as wanting to establish a family based on divine consent. They questioned whether the prospective spouse had similar intentions and could manage a marriage based on Allah's consent. This appears to be the most crucial element in constructing a trust relationship between spouses. It is also important to highlight their nonresistance to the will of Allah as the source of their trust in the success of this 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*!"[50]

After meeting with Yunus, Fatima adhered to a common pattern observed in many couples. She inquired information about her husband's daily life, financial situation, and family history. Subsequently, she entrusted the entire process to Allah's discretion, praying for His guidance, be it positive or negative. This aligns with the Islamic concept of *tawakkul*, which encapsulates an act of relying on and entrusting the outcome to Allah's discretion. In Arabic, *tawakkul* 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."[51] 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 stated:

> 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.

50 Interview with Fatima, May 10, 2022.

51 John Bousfield, "Islamic Philosophy in South and South-East Asia", in *Companion Encyclopedia of Asian Philosophy*, ed. Indira Mahalingam and Brian Carr, Companion Encyclopedia Ser (New York: Routledge, 2002), 857.

> If Allah had not written in our minds, if there was no drinking water for her here, this would not have come.[52]

Veli's examples of the telephone and the watermelon are metaphorical but effectively illustrate how individuals interpret the uncertainty of their actions' outcomes. Both significant events, such as marriage, and ordinary daily activities bring uncertainty. This research suggests that entrusting the outcome of actions to Allah, relying on God, and placing trust in His divine plan is one way of dealing with these uncertainties.

This echoes Charles Tilly's definition of trust in 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."[53] According to this definition, trust always involve inaccuracies, mistakes, and situations where the other party may fail. Barbalet also sees trust as a tool that people develop to cope with uncertainty when personal observations and interpretations are insufficient.[54] While accurate in identifying the trust-risk relationship, it is necessary to go beyond these approaches to understand 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 trust to cope with the uncertainties of their behaviour and decisions. Möllering calls this situation as "suspension" and suggests that researchers should try to understand how the trustor copes with doubts and uncertainties regarding their actions and decisions.[55]

Although they trust in their spouses based on the relationship, trustworthy marriage networks, and their belief that the other is a sincere Muslim who will not violate the marriage, they also interpret any problem in their marriage as destiny determined by Allah. Therefore,

52 Interview with Veli, May 12, 2022.

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

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

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

the emphasis on *"takdir-i ilahi"* (divine providence) leaves them open to risks while providing a source of trust, especially if they are convinced by their partner's religious sensitivity. Throughout the engagement and online dating process, they try to communicate about daily religious duties, such as namaz, which Veli calls the "alarm clock", or, as Nuri narrates, his wife's sensitivity about the morning prayer.

Collective Trust of Turkish Men on Indonesian People

Although Turkish men's marriages with Indonesian women are recent 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. In other words, local people were not unfamiliar with the phenomenon of transnational marriage or foreign women in the region. However, this led me to question where Indonesian women stand in the local community's understanding of transnational marriages, especially when compared to marriages involving women from other countries.

This 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. Men who went to Indonesia to meet their prospective wives and families before marriage tended to view Indonesian people as trustworthy, describing them as "naïve", "calm", and sensitive about Islamic practices. 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 very kind, helpful, and respectful. This narrative 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 and incapable of causing harm due to their admirable characteristics. This collective trust in Indonesian people was constructed in a polarized manner, with other societies or nationalities often unfavourably compared to Indonesians. To understand how this binary trust evolved among participants, it is essential to explore other cases of transnational marriages, both locally and nationally, that may have influenced the dynamics of trust in Turkish-Indonesian marriages. 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 marital relationships with Indonesian women. I also analyze Syrian-Turkish marriages and their impact on the construction of trust toward Indonesian women.

Viewed from broader historical perspectives, the Black Sea region holds a significant record of 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 in 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 migrant sex workers were also referred to as "Natashas." However, Turkey, specifically Trabzon, became one of the primary centres of this sex trade known as the Natasha phenomenon.[56] Describing it as a national discourse surrounding the Black Sea Region and Istanbul, Gülçür and İlkkaracan pointed out that 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

56 Mehmet Bozok, "Constructing Local Masculinities: A Case Study From Trabzon, Turkey" (PhD Thesis, Ankara, Middle East Technical University, 2013).; Leyla Gülçür and Pınar İlkkaracan, "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).

were available and willing for any sexual acts required of them."[57] 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 homogenizes and stigmatizes 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 under the label of "Russian women" and subjected to stereotypes associated with prostitution. While this study discusses the phenomenon within the 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 increase was extensively documented in newspaper articles, academic studies, and the local narratives, shedding light on its profound impact on perceptions of masculinity, femininity, and family dynamics within the Black Sea region.[58] For example, Gülçür and İlkkaracan 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'."[59] How the Natasha issue evolved into a discourse or became a source of provocation requires a separate analysis. It is clear that the

57 Gülçür and İlkkaracan, "The 'Natasha' Experience", 414.

58 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.; Gülçür and İlkkaracan, "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.

59 Gülçür and İlkkaracan, "The 'Natasha' Experience", 414.

ideals of femininity shaped by the presence of *Natashas* significantly influenced the local gender roles for both local women and men. The traditional roles of the women in the Black Sea region, including managing household and agricultural duties, being productive, and caregiving, faced challenges during the Natasha phenomenon. This period introduced new expectations related to femininity, particularly emphasizing beauty, grooming, and appeal.

Despite the rise of conservatism and increased emphasis on "Islamic religiousness" in the region, men's paid sexual relationships with these foreign women were tolerated and even celebrated in men's spaces as a demonstration of masculinity.[60] Conversely, it was 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. Trabzon, 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.[61] In a patriarchal system where religious and moral norms play a significant role, prostitution and all forms of prohibited sexual activity cannot be openly practiced. 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 neighboring provinces who wish to keep their involvement with prostitutes hidden visit Trabzon clandestinely. The act of a man journeying to Trabzon is viewed with a sense of suspicion and undesirability by his family members in this context.[62] 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:

60 Beller-Hann, "Prostitution and Its Effects in Northeast Turkey", 226.; ", 123.

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

62 Bozok, 122.

> 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.[63]
>
> Here in Çömlekçi, you cannot see a *Trabzon erkeği*!... Those who go to Natashas [nowadays] are cultureless, poorer Turks.[64]

Bozok's examples illustrate the stigmatization and moral judgments placed upon those involved in such activities in the region. This context illustrates the complexities and inherent contradictions within patriarchy. It also 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, 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,

> 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.[65]

From this perspective, it becomes evident that Trabzon, specifically the Çömlekçi neighborhood, 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. However, it is also crucial to note that this embodiment and spatiality repre-

63 Bozok, 123.

64 Bozok, 123.

65 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.

sents "immorality", "social decay", and the "undermining of family values", and when it is stretched over the Black Sea context, Trabzon and Çömlekçi neighborhood create an untrustworthy environment through the bodies of Russian women.[66]

Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Russian women emerged as a significant cohort among foreign brides in Turkey. Statistically, in 2022, Russian women comprised a notable 5.5 per cent of the total foreign brides in the country. 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. Studies by Ayla Deniz and Murat Özgür shed light on the prevailing patterns and networks observed in the context of Turkish-Russian marriages in Antalya and several other Mediterranean cities.[67] 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.[68] They established partner relationships evolving into marriages, which provide them "economic, social and emotional security."[69] Deniz and Özgür illustrated that this transition from temporary migration to permanent residency and citizenship has made Russian women a core group in the growing Russian community in Antalya.[70]

While there is a dearth of comprehensive studies on marriages involving Russian women in the Black Sea region beyond the context of prostitution and the "Natasha" stereotype, discourse reveals that these marriages are predominantly perceived as "unwanted" or "perfuncto-

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

67 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.

68 Deniz, "Antalya'daki Rus Gelinler: Göçten Evliliğe, Evlilikten Göçe", 157.

69 Deniz, 157.

70 Deniz, 157.

ry" within the local context. Aydın's research illustrates a good example, as she interviewed three married Russian women, while the other sample consisted of Russian women engaged in trade in Trabzon. Her interviewees expressed the unease they had during their adaptation process because they faced uncomfortable glances from locals and disagreements with their husband's natal families, 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 my key informants during the fieldwork. 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."[71] In fact, these data are insufficient to reach a generalization, and there are likely 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, 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 were perceived as "lacking in virtue", "violating family values", "not adhering to moral standards", and as "untrustworthy" as potential spouses.

This notion of trust is further underscored in Indonesian-Turkish marriages, where collective trust is constructed on the ideals of religious sensitivity, piety, purity, and humbleness of Indonesian society, which was favorably compared to other societies. During a participant observation, while having tea with Yunus and his Indonesian wife, Yunus shared a story about his past relationship that reflected how this "purity" and "piety" were important in shaping their trust. When Fatima was not with

71 Interview with Niyazi, August 20, 2023, Güce.

us, he started talking about his previous relationships with other foreign women he met online in response to a relevant question of mine. He mentioned an unmarried, Muslim, attractive woman whom he called as "ex-wife." He said that they were thinking about marriage until he learned that she was not a virgin. Although this Indonesian woman represented herself as pious, with a degree in Qur'ān recitation, and diligent in daily prayers, Yunus saw her as engaging in "unlawful sexual intercourse" according to Islamic jurisprudence, contradicting her pious identity. He ended the relationship after discovering this, "At that moment, her trustworthiness ended for me; I said, 'I don't want a whore.'"[72]

It is observed that the Turkish men hold confidence toward Indonesian women based on their religious sensitivity. As members of two Muslim societies, participants believed that their prospective spouses were trustworthy because they were the "sincere Muslims", even more so than Turkish people. Supporting the idea that religious identity plays a significant role in constructing social trust, this study reveals a distinctive confidence toward Indonesian people due to their Muslim image.

Religious identity plays a significant role in constructing of social trust. For example, during an interview, I asked Sami, "Did the fact that your wife was Indonesian help you trust her, or could she have been Syrian or Russian? Would this give you the same trust?"; he responded:

> 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 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.[73]

This emphasis on the different sects was also prevalent in other men. They believed Indonesians were wrong in some religious practices

72 Fieldnotes, April 29, 2021, Güce.

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

but more sensitive in following daily duties and Islamic rules, making them more religious and inevitably more trustworthy than Turkish people. Most men who visited their prospective conjugal families in Indonesia were surprised by the Indonesian people going to the mosque for every prayer, long Qur'ān recitations over the mosque loudspeaker, and Qur'ān recitations at wedding ceremonies. A similar perception was prevalent in Salih's narrative. He was a 60-year-old man who went to Europe to work with his father and returned to Turkey in his 30s. After he met his Indonesian wife online in 2019, he went to Indonesia to meet her and her family. When I asked him about his trust in his wife, Salih narrated his past and present experiences abroad:

I have been to France and 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 too. Even though we are different in terms of sect, they live Islam better than us. That's what I saw.[74]

When I asked about the interpersonal trust of their spouses, they generally attributed it to the overall trustworthiness of Indonesian society. In doing so, they also established a dichotomous relationship with other societies they encountered in their lives. This "collective trust" in Indonesian people manifests as the idea that Indonesians are more trustworthy than others. During an interview with Sinan, a 57-year-old man engaged to an Indonesian woman and waiting for her to come to Turkey, we talked about Muslim societies. He indicated that he was very happy that Indonesian women around were sincere Muslims. I wanted to hear his thoughts about 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 Pakistani...*" He brought his pilgrimage experiences into the conversation and responded:

74 Interview with Salih, May 13, 2022.

> Let me tell you, my daughter, when I went on pilgrimage in 2008, we met their caravans... 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.[75]

Very similar emphasis was made by Sami when I asked about his trust in 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 same impression...[76]

These examples are significant in showing the ongoing construction of a collective trust based on the narratives, even when their relationship with the prospective Indonesian wife started. It should not be overlooked that Turkish men's trust in Indonesians is related to their perceptions of Indonesians as pious Muslims, culminating in a dichotomous manner with other societies they encountered. Overall, these narratives played an important role when it comes to establishing marital relationships and making decisions to marry.

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 signs of*

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

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

deceit."[77] Although Syrian women did not have widespread visibility in Espiye and Güce, they received the most antipathy and distrust, further exacerbated by national media and local narratives. The propagation of anti-Arab discourses, fueled by the growing presence of Arab tourists and wealthy residents in Trabzon and neighboring provinces; historical and contemporary anecdotes that stimulated the Arab hatred among the Turkish populace; and 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 political or social scenes but also in private spheres of daily life. All these negative perceptions of Arabs affected people's view of "Syrian women."[78] To further illustrate, Kemal's statement during our discussion on transnational marriages in Giresun encapsulates this sentiment: "Yes, there are Syrians, but I heard they cheat." In his 50s and divorced twice before marrying an Indonesian woman, Kemal was also aware of other transnational marriage cases with other foreign women in the area.

From a broader perspective, after 2011, alongside 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 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 characterized as fake brides. When these situations are taken into consideration, young Syrian women have started to be stereotyped as man hunters, money-loving, cunning, and *kuma* [second wife].[79]

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

78 Fieldnotes, September 13, 2022.

79 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.)

When it is examined through the lens of Turkish-Indonesian marriages, the main focus of this study, it is seen that these stereotypes of Syrian women 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.[80] 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, veiled, and try to cover themselves according to local norms. Hence, it's essential to highlight that the local community does 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 Mondays, we decided to go to the street bazaar, and I accompanied them. I expected to witness people's judgmental and condescending looks toward Indonesian women, but to my surprise, the locals were more curious and welcoming. What interested me the most was the attitude of the locals. They could not take their eyes off this relatively crowded and conspicuous group of foreign even stopped to watch them. I heard two women stopping and talking among themselves, wondering if they were Chinese. A male shopkeeper said something like "welcome" to the Indonesian women and drew us to his stand. During the shopping, I observed that the young assistants of the shopkeeper were excited, trying to speak in English as they were telling the price of the products 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."[81]

80 Serdar Ünal and Fatıma Doğan, "Yerli Halkın Bakışından Suriyeli Kadın Sığınmacılar: Mardin'de Yabancının Ötekileştirilmesi ve Ahlaki Dışlama", *OPUS Uluslararası Toplum Araştırmaları Dergisi*, May 31, 2020, 3306.

81 Fieldnotes, February 2, 2022, Espiye.

This brief moment from my fieldwork did not fully capture the construction of collective trust in Indonesian people and Indonesian women, but it revealed my own prejudice that they would be perceived as "threatening" due to their different appearance in the local society. Instead, their presence seemed to evoke curiosity, fascination, and a sense of novelty. While differences in clothing, hygiene practices, and culinary habits were noted, they didn't incite discrimination or hostility. Overall, Indonesians were treated as a group that could be trusted. They were not engaging in "prostitution", which was reflected in the collective memory regarding Russian women, nor were they considered "scammers", which was a stereotype of Syrian women. In that sense, this collective trust creates a dichotomous relationship with other societies, such as Russians or Syrians, in the course of transnational marriage in Turkey. More importantly, this collective trust was constructed before the engagement of spouses and was based on some narratives and discourses about the trustworthiness of a person due to their society of origin. Therefore, this study reveals that trust is not merely an emotional orientation between two or more people based on emotions like love, respect, and care, but it has a sociological basis shared by the members of a wider community and sociocultural structures.

Conclusion

Exploring emotion of trust from a sociological and anthropological perspective necessitates grasping its multifaceted and intricate nature. Trust is not merely a passive element but rather an active force woven into the very fabric of individuals' daily interactions with both others and institutions. It assumes a pivotal role in both initiating and perpetuating individual and societal bonds. Acting as the cornerstone of mutual understanding, cooperation, and reliability, trust shapes the dynamics of interpersonal connections and broader societal frameworks. Moreover, within the realm of these everyday interactions, trust manifests through diverse dynamics, ranging from socio-cultural influences to rational calculations of the individuals. However, its relationship with

risk adds a layer of complexity; while trust often entails a sense of security, it also involves vulnerability, juxtaposed against the notion of risk. Thus, trust emerges as a complex interplay of factors, pivotal in shaping human interactions and societal structures alike.

Guido Möllering's theory, revolving around *expectation, interpretation, and suspension,* offers insights into the intricacies of trust within social contexts, emphasizing its roles, outcomes, basis, and unknowability in society and social relationships. In his conceptualization, *expectation* delineates trust's functions and impacts within social structures and interactions. *Interpretation* delves into individuals' reasoning and personal interpretations regarding trust, exploring the rationales behind their decisions to trust. *Suspension* encapsulates the aspect of unknowable factors from the trustor's perspective, acknowledging the limitations and uncertainties inherent in trust dynamics. Together, these components form a comprehensive framework for understanding the multifaceted nature of trust within social realities. Within the theoretical framework proposed by Möllering, this study aimed to explore specific interpretations and suspensions evident in couples' experiences of trust within the context of transnational marriage, where physical encounters and interactions are limited. I investigated the key determinants that contributed to the establishment and maintenance of trust between Turkish-Indonesian couples.

A cursory observation of marriages between Turkish men, predominantly over fifty years old, residing in rural areas of the Black Sea region, and Indonesian women from various socio-cultural backgrounds in different regions of Indonesia, might lead some to attribute the trust between the couples to "reckless audacity."[82] Indeed, during my fieldwork, I encountered many community members who interpreted these marriages as acts of "ignorant courage." However, a closer examination based on individual experiences revealed that the trust between the

82 "Cahil cesareti" in Turkish. A frequently used statement refering to a daring or bold action undertaken without considering or fully understanding the risks involved.

couples is firmly rooted in their own social and cultural affiliations, values, and individual considerations. In this context, the existing reference and intermediation networks established by Turkish-Indonesian marriages, along with the expanding marriage network over time, have served as sources of assurance for newly arriving couples. These networks have reinforced the perception among individuals involved in the decision-making process, especially Turkish men, that the other party is trustworthy as a collective entity. Furthermore, the knowledge that the other party is devout and holds religious sensitivities has instilled a sense of trust for both sides. Additionally, the relationship established through religious beliefs has emerged as a coping mechanism for individuals in dealing with the uncertainties and risks associated with their decisions and trust in the other party. In this sense, trust and reliance on Allah have provided individuals with a framework to navigate their decisions and uncertainties.

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

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