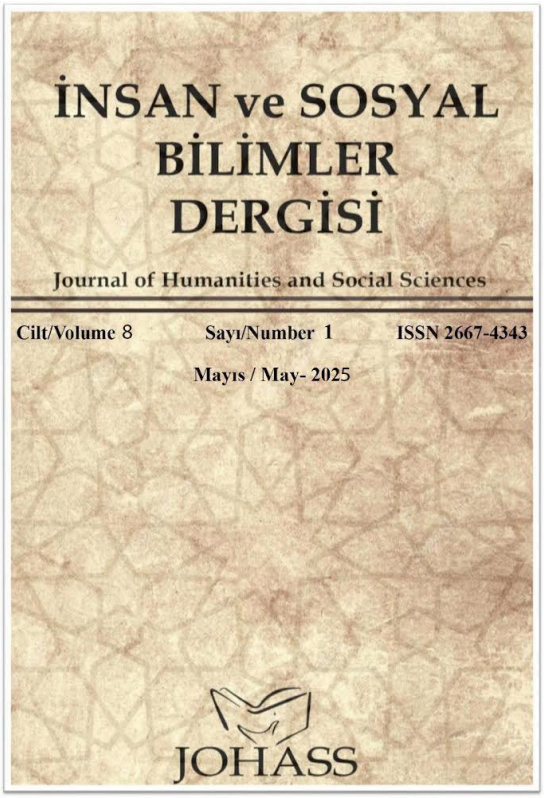
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Constructing Masculinity Through Marriage: Middle-Upper Class Men's Decisions on Marriage and Experiences of the Husband Role

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Constructing Masculinity Through Marriage: Middle-Upper Class Men's Decisions on Marriage and Experiences of the Husband Role

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Abstract

The identity of husband with marriage brings about changes in men's lives and this identity transforms in itself with the changes in the social structure. Based on this perspective, the main focus of this study, which aims to contribute to the understanding and solution of marriage and family problems, is the male identity in the marital relationship. In this study, the effects of education level and socioeconomic status on the reproduction and performance of masculinity in the marital relationship were questioned. Within the scope of the study, the construction processes of gender role stereotypes of the participants, the effects of these roles on marital attitudes, spouse selection, perception of the husband role in marriage and the maintenance of this role were investigated. In the study, which was designed according to the phenomenology design, one of the qualitative research methods, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 married men living in various provinces of Türkiye using purposive sampling method, and the data obtained were analyzed. Based on the findings, it was seen that traditional masculinity patterns are effective on men with higher education. It was observed that they often experience a contradiction between acting patriarchal and sensitive to gender equality and that traditional masculinity representation is reproduced in the marital relationship through the position of being a husband.

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Introduction

People living in communities constantly attribute meanings to themselves and their surroundings during the socialization and acculturation process and establish relationships in this field of meaning. The perception of the genders of women and men in society and the roles attributed to genders also find a counterpart in this cultural and meaning field. Being a woman and a man is characterized by being sociocultural beyond biological determinations. While sex finds a counterpart in biological formation, gender finds meaning in a cultural and social structure (Kimmel & Aronson, 2004). Gender roles and expectations vary according to society, culture and time, and are not universal and transhistorically uniform structures. Emotions, behaviors, identity and personality traits deemed "appropriate" for women and men are formed by culture and individuals are expected to behave according to these traits. Gender should not be considered as a stereotyped "structure" but as a continuous "performance" (Maral, 2004).

Studies on gender have gained visibility with the feminist movement (Erbalaban Gürbüz, 2016). For many years, studies focusing on women have expressed women's subordinate position, their disadvantage in social life, their restriction in the patriarchal system and their inequality before the law (Horzum, 2018). With the understanding of the relationship between the problems addressed as "women's problems" and social relations, patriarchy, power, modes of production and hierarchy between the sexes, it has been understood that the issue should be addressed not only in the center of "women" but also multidimensionally (Akbalık, 2014). Since the 1970s, gender discussions have also started to address the issues of men and masculinity (Erbalaban Gürbüz, 2016). Studies on men and masculinities have examined what masculinity is, how it is formed, how it is acquired, its performance in society and its transmission to the next generations. It has been revealed that masculinity is not fixed, single-formed and universal, and that there are different representations of masculinity (Connell, 2019a). Masculinity is a product of "gendered" social relations, and this construction continues constantly within the social and historical context (Kimmel & Messner, 2001).

Although it is not possible to make a universal definition of masculinity, it is possible to say that masculine identity is constructed through various performances (Aksakal, 2021). Masculinity has been defined as a gender role based on social and cultural dynamics (Kimmel & Messner, 2001; Vandello et al., 2008; Türkoğlu, 2013; Connell, 2019a), a form of power (Özbay, 2013; Sancar 2020), an ideology (Reeser, 2010), a symbol with cultural meaning (Nayak & Kehily, 2013), a construction transmitted through patriarchal culture (Connell, 2019b), the rejection of femininity (Demren, 2003), and a status that is hard to gain but quickly

lost (Sakallı & Türkoğlu, 2019). Being a man is based on the social and cultural acceptance of individuals born biologically male as "men". Men try to live by internalizing masculine norms in order to be accepted as "men" in the society they live in (Bozok, 2011). Masculinity constantly reproduces itself in various institutions, spaces and cultural processes. One of these institutions is the family (Bozok, 2011). Marriage, which constitutes the institution of family, is both a condition for gaining masculinity and one of its performance areas. Masculinity is reproduced not only in the public sphere but also at home (Özbay and Baliç, 2004) and in marriage with roles such as father, husband, head of the family, breadwinner (Cengiz et al., 2004). The identity of husband that is acquired with marriage brings about changes in men's lives and this identity transforms in itself with the changes in the social structure. Based on this perspective, the main focus of this study, which aims to contribute to the understanding and solution of marriage and family problems, is the male identity in the marriage relationship.

In Türkiye especially since the 2000s, academic studies on masculinity and social movements have started to gain visibility (Elitok, 2019). In the field of masculinity; in which the social, cultural and physical processes in the construction of masculinity are discussed (Demren, 2001; Zeybekoğlu, 2009; Barutçu, 2013; Bolak Boratav et al., 2018; Sancar, 2020), how the crisis of masculinity is experienced (Akkoç, 2020), representations of masculinity in literature (Utanır, 2012), art (Çetin, 2013), sports (Ak, 2019; Boran, 2019) and the media (Umut, 2007; Sığın, 2018; Görücü; 2022), the relationship between masculinity and violence (Öztürk, 2014; Kordalı, 2022), fatherhood (Zeybekoğlu, 2013; Varlıklar Demirkazık, 2021), unemployment (Ok, 2011; Türkoğlu, 2013), migration (Yalçın, 2020) and the effect of divorce on men (Elitok, 2019) have been studied. It was observed that masculinity studies in the field of marriage were conducted on the axis of marital adjustment (Ünlü, 2022), the effect of masculinity roles on family functions (Kayıran, 2022), married men's relationship with home as a place (Özbay & Baliç, 2004; Barutçu, 2015; Peker Dural, 2019), divorce (Yüzer, 2021), men's perception of marriage and expectations from marriage (Sancar, 2020), the meaning of marriage and spousal relationship (Bolak Boratav et al., 2018). In this study, it was aimed to understand the effect of education level on the maintenance of masculinity and the role of being a husband. It is thought that the results of the study will contribute to the field of family and couple therapies, which is becoming increasingly widespread Türkiye. It is hoped that the results of the study will contribute to the creation of content for the training of consultants working in the field of family counseling and experts providing family education. This research aims to contribute to the literature on masculinity studies which is seen as a late field in Türkiye

(Atay, 2004), and aims to see how married men position themselves as subjects and to inspire future studies.

The problem of the research is to try to understand how men experience their husband position in marriage in the context of masculinity representation and how this representation is affected by educational level and socioeconomic status. The research seeks answers to the following questions:

1. What are the meanings that married men with higher education attribute to masculinity, how are their representations of masculinity formed in childhood and adulthood, what are the social mechanisms affecting their representations of masculinity?

2. What are the factors affecting the marital attitudes and spouse selection of married men with higher education, what are the meanings they attribute to the role of husband?

3. Has getting married and becoming a husband caused a change in the representations of masculinity of men who graduated from higher education?

4. How do married men behave in case of a possible threat that they perceive in their representations of masculinity and in the role of husband?

Method

Model

This research was designed to understand the formation, maintenance and reproduction of masculinity constructs of higher education graduates and middle-upper class men, to reveal the factors affecting their marriage decisions and spouse choices, and to obtain in-depth information about how they experience the role of being a husband that emerges with marriage. In this context, in accordance with the purpose of the research, the qualitative research method was used, which encourages participants to tell their own stories, opens up space for us to look at the subject from the perspective of the subjects' life experiences, and allows us to interpret and analyze what is told (Baltacı, 2019). Qualitative research is a type of research conducted to examine people and cultures in depth and to reveal the meanings, processes, perceptions and understandings that people attribute to reality (Kümbetoğlu, 2008).

The phenomenological design, which is one of the qualitative research approaches, was used in the study. Phenomenological study presents a holistic description of a phenomenon or concept based on the experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2013). For this purpose, the phenomenon to be investigated is defined and data is collected from people who have

experience with the phenomenon. Accordingly, for this study, data were collected using the in-depth interview technique with a male graduate of higher education, upper-middle socioeconomic level, who experienced the marriage process and the status of being a husband.

Sample and Population

The purposeful sampling method was used to determine the participants of the study. Purposeful sampling is used to select people who can best represent the phenomenon under study and who have knowledge and experience about the phenomenon (Yağar & Dökme, 2018). In this study, criterion sampling was preferred since the phenomenon to be investigated was determined.The study group consists of men who have been married for 1 year or more and who are graduates of higher education. The main reason for choosing men who have been married for 1 year or more is based on the assumption that having experienced a certain period of marriage will internalize the status of husband in daily life. Attention was paid to the fact that the study group lived in the same house with their spouses. The reason why this was set as a criterion was both the general acceptance of cohabitation in the phenomenon of marriage, which is one of the main pillars of the study, and the desire to capture the daily performances of masculinity and husband practices within marriage. Since those who apply for psychological help are mostly higher education graduates (Özakkaş & Ercan, 2023) and middle-upper socioeconomic level individuals (Arslantaş et al., 2010), it was thought that examining the group frequently encountered in the session room would contribute more to the field. Another reason for focusing on men is that men are less likely to seek help in the field of mental health than women (Addis & Mahalik, 2003; Ang et al., 2004; Lane & Addis, 2005; Uçan, 2016). Therefore, it was thought that the findings obtained from this study focusing on men would be useful in counseling practices. In this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 15 married men living in İstanbul, Diyarbakır, Gümüşhane, Trabzon, Ordu and Batman provinces. Participants' marriage durations ranged between 2 and 24 years, with an average marriage duration of 8.4 years. Interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview form. Participant codes are indicated as Participant 1 = P1, Participant 2 = P2. Demographic information of the participants is shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Information of Participants

	Age	Education Status	Profession	Duration of Marriage	Marital Type	Place of Living	Number of Children	Average Income
P1	48	Doctorate	Academician	24	Love Marrıage	İstanbul	2	High
P2	39	Doctorate	Academician	6	Love Marrıage	İstanbul	2	High
P3	33	Bachelor's	Teacher	6	Love Marrıage	Gümüşhane	-	Middle Income
P4	33	Bachelor's	Teacher	2	Love Marrıage	İstanbul	-	Middle Income
P5	37	Master's	Sociologist	11	Love Marrıage	Ordu	1	Middle Income
P6	50	Doctorate	Academician	16	Love Marrıage	İstanbul	1	High
P7	33	Doctorate	Academician	8	Love Marrıage	İstanbul	1	High
P8	42	Doctorate	Officier	7	Love Marrıage	İstanbul	1	Middle Income
P9	31	Master's	Academician	2	Love Marrıage	İstanbul	1	Middle Income
P10	34	Bachelor's	Social Worker	4	Love Marrıage	Diyarbakır	1	Middle Income
P11	34	Master's	Academician	4	Love Marrıage	İstanbul	1	Above Middle Income
P12	34	Bachelor's	Social Worker	5	Love Marrıage	Batman	2	Middle Income
P13	35	Bachelor's	Psychologist	10	Love Marrıage	Diyarbakır	2	Middle Income
P14	34	Bachelor's	Accountant	9	Love Marrıage	İstanbul	2	High
P15	38	Bachelor's	Teacher	12	Love Marrıage	Trabzon	1	Middle Income

Data Collection Tools

A semi-structured interview form was prepared by the researcher in accordance with the purpose of this study. While preparing the questions in the interview form, a question pool was created in line with the purpose of the study by examining national and international sources in the literature. Then, the questions suitable for the scope and purpose of the study were transformed into a semi-structured question form that could be used in the study. A pilot study was conducted with 3 participants to test the clarity, suitability, order of questions and usability of the prepared semi-structured interview form. As a result of the pilot study, some corrections were made and the interview form was re-arranged, expert opinion was also obtained and the questions were finalized and made ready for implementation.

The first part of the semi-structured interview form included questions on socio-demographic information. In the second part, questions were asked about masculinity,

marriage, partner selection and experiences of being a husband. The prepared open-ended questions were directed to the participants by the researcher, and when deemed necessary, the questions were explained and the participants were asked to be more descriptive. All interviews were conducted individually in a single session between December 2022 and February 2023. Interviews with the 15 married men who participated in the study were conducted face-to-face or online at a predetermined time and lasted between forty minutes and seventy minutes. Sampling in qualitative research is explained by the concept of "saturation". The saturation stage, which refers to the point at which the data starts to repeat and no new information or themes emerge, indicates that sufficient sample size has been reached (Akçay & Koca, 2024). After 15 participants were interviewed, the data collection process was completed as sufficient data saturation was reached.

Collection of Data and Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis is the most important part of the research (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2021). In the analysis process, the researcher organizes, classifies, synthesizes, derives patterns, reaches concepts and finally reports the findings (Gürbüz & Şahin, 2018). The data obtained in this study were analyzed by inductive content analysis method. Qualitative research data were analyzed in four stages: coding the data, finding themes, organizing codes and themes, describing and interpreting the findings (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021).

In the analysis of the data, first of all, the participant opinions, which were audio-recorded, were transcribed via computer. The participants' statements were analyzed by the researcher and the data were arranged in the form of themes, sub-themes and codes in line with the theoretical information obtained from the literature and made suitable for interpretation. The frequencies of the participants who expressed their opinions about the codes are also included in the tables.

Validity and Reliability

The validity and reliability of a study are the most important criteria in terms of science (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). Maxwell (2009) recommends conducting intensive long-term interviews, providing rich data, and making comparisons with other studies to increase validity in qualitative research. In this study, these criteria suggested by Maxwell (2009) were taken into account to increase validity, in-depth interviews were conducted to provide original and rich data, the frequencies of participant opinions were included when presenting the data, and

the findings were compared with the results of other studies. The study group of 15 participants from which the findings were obtained is considered to be sufficient to ensure credibility.

In order to ensure the reliability of the research, the data was collected in a way that was appropriate for the purpose, the participants were introduced, a detailed explanation was made regarding the data collection and analysis methods, and sample statements reflecting the themes were presented without any comments using direct quotes (LeCompte & Goetz, 1982; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2021). By presenting the data as the participants expressed them, readers were enabled to evaluate the findings. Audio recordings were taken during the interviews to prevent data loss. Audio recordings, interview transcripts, and coding contents are stored digitally to ensure external reliability.

Findings

The findings obtained within the scope of the research are presented under two headings as the view of masculinity and masculinity in marriage, in accordance with the purpose of the study. First, the findings on what masculinity means to the participants, how they learn it and how this identity is maintained will be presented. Then, the participants' thoughts on the decision to marry, the choice of a spouse and the role of being a husband will be discussed and finally, their evaluations on the impact of marriage on masculinity will be presented. The codes and frequencies of each theme are given in tables below.

A View of Masculinity: The Meaning, Learning and Maintenance of Masculinity

The Meaning of Manhood

The codes and frequency values for the views on the meaning of masculinity are presented in Table 2. The theme of the meaning of masculinity was presented as the sub-themes of perception of masculinity and perception of ideal men.

Table 2

Perception of Masculinity

Perception of Masculinity		**f**
Being responsible	P1, P2, P3, P4, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P14	10
Being protective	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P8, P11, P12, P13	9
Being possessive	P1, P2, P3, P4, P8, P11, P14	7
Being non-traditional	P2, P4, P5, P10, P12, P13, P14	7
Family	P3, P4, P7, P8, P11, P14	6
Honesty	P1, P3, P8, P11, P12	5

Fatherhood	P6, P7, P10, P14	4
Different masculinities	P5, P7, P11, P15	4
Courage	P1, P6, P9,	3
Bravery	P1, P9, P11	3
Biological sex	P1, P4, P6	3
A burdensome role	P5	1

According to Table 2, the codes of the theme of "perception of masculinity" are "being responsible", "being protective", "being possessive", "being non-traditional", "family", "honesty", "fatherhood", "different masculinities", "courage", "bravey", "biological sex" and "a burdensome role". Some of the participant opinions regarding these codes are as follows:

"When it comes to the definition of masculinity, I want to say that I feel more protective, more embracing, more possessive, more responsible, for some reason I always get this feeling compared to women."(P2)

"I am saying this based on the family role, at this point I think that men have more responsibility, in terms of protecting their home, taking care of it, ensuring the continuation of the home, and carrying out the relationship, and they have a greater role than women." (P4)

"I think there should be a perception of masculinity that is equal to men and based on women's rights." (P12)

The codes and frequency values for the participants' views on the ideal man are given in Table 3.

Table 3

Ideal Man Perception

Ideal Man Perception		**f**
Cares about his family	P2, P3, P4, P8, P9, P14, P15	7
Responsible	P2, P6, P8, P9, P12, P14	6
Loyal and honest	P6, P8, P9, P11, P15	5
Giving importance to gender equality	P7, P9, P10, P12	4
Strong	P1, P7	2
Understanding	P1, P4	2
Respectful	P5, P8	2
Compassionate	P1, P10	2
Calm	P9	1
Open to criticism	P9	1
Tolerant	P13	1
Compromising	P15	1
Patient	P15	1

According to Table 3, the codes of the "ideal man" sub-theme are "cares about his family", "responsible", "loyal and honest", "cares about gender equality", "strong", "understanding", "respectful", "compassionate", "calm", "open to criticism", "tolerant",

"compromising" and "patient". Some of the participant opinions regarding these codes are as follows:

"It is very important for men to fulfill their gender responsibilities that exist within their natural structure." (P6)

"In my opinion, he needs to approach with equality, he needs to defend the rights of the female gender as much as he defends his own rights." (P12)

"The ideal man for marriage is most importantly reliable, like every human being, trust is a must." (P15)

Learning About Manhood

Learning about manhood is discussed under the titles of feeling being a man, structures that teach being a man, and processes that teach being a man. Codes and frequency values regarding the time when one first felt being a man are given in Table 4.

Table 4

Time of First Feeling of Being Male

Time of First Feeling of Being Male		**f**
Childhood	P2, P4, P5, P8, P12	5
Romantic relationships	P6, P9, P10, P15	4
Circumcision	P1, P11	2
Marriage	P7, P13	2
Starting to work	P3	1
Moving out of the family home	P14	1

According to Table 4, the codes of the subtheme "when manhood is first felt" are "childhood", "romantic relationships", "circumcision", "marriage", "starting to work" and "moving out of the family home". Some of the participant opinions regarding these codes are as follows:

"Society made you feel this at a very early age. When you are born, you have cousins, you have friends, you have many people around you. You play as a child and so on, you understand and feel from the perspective and attitudes of those closest to you from preschool age, I would say preschool age, 4-5 years old." (P4)

"Maybe in a relationship, maybe when I was my first lover with my wife or in my relationships before my wife, I felt this in the relationship between a man and a woman." (P12)

The codes and frequency values for the views on the structures that play a role in the formation of male identity are given in Table 5.

Table 5

Structures That Play A Role in the Formation of Male Identity

Structures That Play A Role in the Formation of Male Identity		f
Family	P1, P2, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P13, P14, P15	12
Social Environment	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P11, P13, P14, P15	11
Religion	P1, P2, P9, P10, P11, P15	6
Culture	P1, P2, P6, P9, P10, P15	5
Biological structure	P2, P7, P8	3
Women's expectations	P2	1
Technology	P6	1

According to Table 5, the codes of the sub-theme "structures that play a role in the formation of male identity" are "family" "social environment" "religion" "culture" "biological structure" "women's expectations" and "technology". Some of the participant views on these codes are as follows:

"My own family, my environment. My family was a bit of an extended family. For a while, it was always my uncles, my cousins, my father's uncle, his children, we lived with them all the time and there were many men in the family, there were many types that I could take as role models." (P1)

"I think religion is the basis of all behaviors that are called masculinity in our country right now." (P9)

"During adolescence, there is something that will affect the social environment of a person, both in terms of their own peers and their elders in the environment, that will affect the masculinity role model." (P13)

The codes and frequency values for the opinions on experiences found important in gaining male identity are given in Table 6.

Table 6

Experiences Found Important in Gaining Male Identity

Experiences Found Important in Gaining Male Identity		f
Being a man is biological	P6, P7, P8, P11	4
Education life	P4, P7, P9, P12	4
Working life	P2, P7, P13	3
Separation from family	P2, P4, P14	3
Sexuality	P1, P13	2
Taking responsibility	P3, P10	2
Father role model	P13	1
No need for any experience	P15	1

According to Table 6, the codes of the sub-theme "Experiences found important in gaining male identity" are "being a man is biological", "education life", "working life", "separation from family", "sexuality", "taking responsibility", "father role model" and "no need for any experience". Some of the participant opinions regarding these codes are as follows:

"If there is education, many problems are already prevented in advance. If there is no education, many problems can arise. At this point, this is very important, education brings many things with it. Education also brings experience. It also provides an environment to meet many different people at the same time, it allows people to gain a lot of experience in the field." (P4)

"Now, let me say this once, when we look at the nature of a person in terms of genetics, it is clear that women are women and men are men. Physiologically and emotionally, all these do not change over time. In other words, we are men by birth, we are women by birth." (P6)

"A man must work in order to sustain his life. Working life makes a man a man." (P7)

Maintaining Masculinity

Codes and frequency values for views on maintaining masculinity are given in Table 7.

Table 7

Situations That Make You Feel Like Being a Man

Situations That Make You Feel Like Being a Man		**f**
Emotional/sexual relationship with the opposite sex	P1, P2, P6, P9, P12	5
Being socially free and privileged	P2, P4, P9, P10, P12	5
I didn't feel anything like that in particular	P4, P5, P7, P8, P15	5
Avoiding femininity	P1, P2, P10, P11, P13	5
Supporting the family	P14	1
Not having sexual intercourse before marriage	P3	1

According to Table 7, the codes related to the sub-theme of "maintaining masculinity" are; "emotional/sexual relationship with the opposite sex", "being socially free and privileged", "I did not feel anything like that in particular", "avoiding femininity", "supporting the family" and "not having sexual intercourse before marriage". Some of the participant opinions regarding these codes are as follows:

"Since I am not an individual with that character, I am not an individual who thinks that the role of the man is this and the role of the woman is that, the parties cannot take on each other's roles, so I do not remember having such a thing." (P4)

"Loving a woman since I was 13, being in love with a woman, feeling a woman, so I think that is one of the most important things about your gender." (P6)

"For example, when I go home, when I go to my own family's house or my spouse's family, when they say don't touch anything, you are a man, I feel like a man. When they say, "Don't touch anything, don't do it, you're a man, you can't touch it", I say, "Okay, I'm a man, so that means a man is like this" (P12)

Masculinity in Marriage

In this theme, first, the factors affecting the participants' decision to marry and their choice of spouse were tried to be determined. Then, their views on the characteristics that a married man should have, how they feel about being a husband/wife, and their thoughts on the problems specific to men in marriage were evaluated. Only one of the participants had a second marriage. All participants stated that they got married "for love" and "of their own will". The participants' marriage durations ranged between 2 and 24 years, and the average marriage duration was 8.4 years.

Factors Affecting The Decision To Marry

The codes and frequency values related to the factors affecting the decision to marry are given in Table 8.

Table 8

Factors Affecting The Decision to Marry

Factors Affecting The Decision To Marry		
Economic sufficiency	P2, P3, P7, P8, P9, P10, P13, P14, P15	9
Feelings towards the partner	P2, P3, P5, P6, P7, P11, P12, P15	8
Religious thoughts	P1, P3, P4, P10, P11, P14	6
Seeing marriage as necessary	P4, P7, P9, P10	4
Wanting to have children	P2, P9, P10, P12	4
Age	P2, P3, P4, P11	4
Graduating from university	P1, P7, P13, P15	4
Feeling psychologically ready	P4, P7, P9	3
Wanting to establish a life of one's own	P5, P10	2
Attitude of the family of origin	P3, P5	2
Not wanting to be alone	P9	1

According to Table 8, the factors affecting the participants' decision to marry are; "economic sufficiency", "feelings towards the partner", "religious thoughts", "seeing marriage as necessary", "wanting to have children", "age", "graduating from university", "feeling psychologically ready", "desire to establish a life of one's own", "attitude of the family of

origin" and "not wanting to be alone". Some of the participant opinions regarding these codes are as follows:

"After I got the job, I started to focus on it. Or it has become possible for me." (P2)

"Of course, first of all, it is God's command." (P3)

"I am a person who attributes a very high meaning to marriage, I have always considered marriage necessary for myself, I have always waited for the right time in my life." (P4)

"Because I love my wife and because I think I am now mature. (P11)

Factors Affecting Partner Selection

Codes and frequency values for opinions on factors affecting mate selection are given in Table 9.

Table 9

Factors Affecting Partner Selection

Factors Affecting Partner Selection		**f**
Positive attitudes and behaviors	P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15	13
Compatibility	P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P11, P12, P14, P15	9
Emotional intimacy	P2, P3, P5, P7, P9, P13, P15	7
Religion	P1, P3, P4, P9, P10, P14	6
Appearance	P9, P11, P15	3

According to Table 9, the codes of the sub-theme "factors affecting spouse selection" are; "positive attitudes and behaviors", "compatibility", "emotional intimacy", "religion" and "appearance". Some of the participant opinions regarding these codes are as follows:

"Statuses such as honesty, being a good housewife, being resourceful, raising good children. (P2)

"I didn't have any other criteria other than the temperament and so on that I could get along with. She should prioritize consultation, not be dominant, not be self-centered, mutual decisions should be made, she should be respectful. (P4)"

"For example, mutual love, mutual respect, compassion, being understanding, empathy, emotionality, love, these are important things." (P7)

"I also wanted her to be close to me culturally. Because my cousin had gotten married and divorced, and from what I could tell, they had put forward many other reasons, but the reason for this was that they were culturally very distant from each other." (P11)

What It Feels Like To Be A Husband

Codes and frequency values for the opinions about what it feels like to be a wife/husband are given in Table 10.

Table 10

What It Feels Like To Be A Husband

What It Feels Like To Be A Husband		**f**
Responsibility	P1, P2, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14,	13
Happiness	P2, P3, P4, P5, P9, P14	6
Restriction on Freedom	P1, P2, P9, P10, P12	5
Reputation	P2, P3, P9, P15	4
Loyalty obligation	P1, P2	2

According to Table 10, the codes of the sub-theme "what it feels like to be a husband" are "responsibility", "happiness", "restriction on freedom", "reputation" and "loyalty obligation". Some of the participant views on these codes are as follows:

"I felt that I was under a serious responsibility."(P11)

"Actually, it feels good most of the time because you realize that there is someone who is determined to live with you, someone who will shoulder this life with you even if you have your wrongs and rights."(P9)

"When they are single, men are given social freedom by their own families, but in marriage they are taken back. You can't go out in the evening as you want, everything is taken under control."(P2)

Characteristics That A Married Man Should Have

Codes and frequency values of opinions on the characteristics that a married man should have are given in Table 11.

Table 11

Characteristics That A Married Man Should Have

Characteristics That A Married Man Should Have		**f**
Responsibility	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P9, P10, P12, P13, P14, P15	13
Loyalty to family	P2, P3, P6, P7, P8, P9, P11, P13, P15	9
Making your spouse happy	P1, P2, P7, P10, P15	5
Loyalty to partner	P1, P2, P5, P9, P12	5
Taking joint decisions	P4, P8, P9, P15	4
Sacrifice	P2, P6, P8	3
Maturity	P4, P11	2

Religiosity	P3	1
Patience	P9	1
Being able to balance work and home	P10	1

According to Table 11, the codes for the sub-theme "characteristics that a married man should have" are "responsibility", "loyalty to family", "making his wife happy", "loyalty to partner", "taking joint decisions", "sacrifice", "maturity", "religiosity", "patience" and "being able to balance home and work". Some of the participant views on these codes are as follows:

"He needs to be aware of his responsibilities in every sense with his wife. Today, we have economic responsibilities, we can share them when she works, but still, in general, the responsibility should mostly be on us." (P9)

"I think a married man should spare time for his wife and family, he should definitely have a serious sharing." (P11)

Male-Specific Problems in Marriage

Table 12 presents the codes and frequency values of the opinions on male-specific problems in marriage.

Table 12

Male-Specific Problems in Marriage

Male-Specific Problems in Marriage		**f**
Women's attitudes	P2, P4, P10, P11, P12, P13	6
More responsibility	P1, P3, P11, P13, P15	5
Problems of family of origin	P3, P9, P10, P11	4
I do not have gender-specific problems	P5, P7, P8, P14	4
Restriction of freedom	P1, P6, P15	3
Sexuality	P2, P15	2
Not being able to express their feelings	P9, P11	2

According to Table 12, the codes of the sub-theme "problems specific to men in marriage" are; "attitudes of women", "more responsibility", "problems of family of origin", "I do not have gender-specific problems", "restriction of freedom", "sexuality" and "not being able to express feelings". Some of the participant opinions regarding these codes are as follows:

"You are the one who has to protect, you are the one who has to look after, you are the one who has to do all the housework outside. You also have to help inside… Women actually take less responsibility in sharing responsibilities." (P1)

"Men may have a problem at this point, but let me say this in advance, it is natural that women are more emotional by nature. They can be more childish at times. In some periods of

situations, they may not be able to think logically as much as men due to emotionality, but do not misunderstand this. This is a periodic thing, it may be something that happens because emotionality is dominant, this situation can tire and overwhelm the man a little." (P4)

"Men have a handicap in this regard because there is the issue of daughter-in-law and mother-in-law. The other is that there is no issue of male mother-in-law and father-in-law in our society, there is no such thing. In that respect, we generally have such a problem." (P9)

"I do not have a problem due to being a man, and if I do, I do not perceive it as a problem." (P5)

Participants were asked whether their thoughts about marriage had changed after they got married. 6 participants answered yes and 9 participants answered no.

Table 13

Change in Thoughts About Marriage After Marriage

Change in Thoughts About Marriage After Marriage		**f**
Yes	P1, P2, , P6, P10, P13, P15	6
No	P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P9, P11, P12, P14	9

Some of the participants who answered yes expressed their thoughts as follows:

"Now, your expectations from marriage and the person you marry are very seriously related. What do you mean, you will meet that expectation with the person you marry. You are putting this on her. But maybe she promises you about this and that is how you get married. You have mutual expectations from each other. But when you get married, different things come into play. Her family, your family, her wishes, your wishes, her fears, your fears. All of these conflict with each other. When you conflict, you cannot communicate properly, and unless you communicate properly, you cannot understand each other. There is a constant atmosphere of unrest. You cannot adapt." (P1)

A participant stated that his thoughts changed positively.

"Yes, it definitely changed. I saw that marriage is a beautiful thing from my perspective." (P15)

Some of the participants who answered no expressed their thoughts as follows:

"Actually, it doesn't seem to exist because we are like friends and at the same time, I didn't have any extra expectations when we got married. Actually, there has been no change in my life, we just started living in the same house. Other than that, there has been no extreme difference between us." (P14)

"No, no, it hasn't changed much, to be honest, because I think I have a family that is parallel to the family figure you think of." (P9)

When asked, "have you changed your mind about masculinity after marriage?", 1 participant responded yes, 13 participants responded no, and 1 participant responded no idea.

Table 14

Changes in Thoughts About Masculinity After Marriage

Changes in Thoughts About Masculinity After Marriage		f
Yes	P9	1
No	P1, P2, P3, P4, P5, P7, P8, P10, P11, P12, P13, P14, P15	13
No idea	P6	1

The participant who said that his ideas about masculinity changed after getting married expressed his thoughts as follows:

"For example, although I used to think that women should not be a burden or that women should not be associated only with housework, I could not put this into practice. But after getting married, I was able to put it into practice and changed my behavior in that respect and I see that there has been a change. I think that I acquired the ability to share all the chores at home after getting married. I used to do those chores when I was single, but when we got married, it was as if I thought that women should do them before, as if we have something like that in our subconscious, but now I think I share more in general." (P9)

Among the participants who stated that marriage did not cause any change in their thoughts about masculinity, 4 of them answered no to the question and added that their thoughts on some issues had changed. Some of the participant opinions are as follows:

"I think that what has changed in me now is positive. More precisely, I think that I have improved myself. I used to be very strict about many things. Now I say that you are a man, you shouldn't make mistakes like you are a man, you shouldn't be afraid, for example, you are human, you can be afraid. You are a man, you shouldn't look at a woman, of course, I think like that, but there is also the fact that you can look at a woman."(P1)

"I'm the best at everything, I do everything, I bring everything or I have the last word, those things start to stretch in some cases. It becomes a little more obvious that you are not the only one with the only power... "Inevitably, there is a stretching in those characteristics you mentioned. For example, while I was more interfering with my wife during the engagement, I

was a bit more jealous, but I stretched it a bit more over time. Of course, it became a bit more comfortable after marriage."(P3)

To the question “Have there been situations in which you had to show/defend/protect your masculinity in your relationship with your spouse?” 3 participants answered yes, 11 participants answered no, and 1 participant answered I do not remember.

Table 15

Perceived Threat to Masculinity

Perceived Threat To Masculinity		**f**
Yes	P2, P3, P11	3
No	P1, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P12, P14, P15	11
I don't remember	P13	1

Some of the views of the participants who answered yes are as follows:

“Yes, I have experienced a lot, but there again, I did not act according to my ego, I acted according to my compassion and faith...Is the woman more oriented towards her family or is she more involved with her husband's side? To what extent does the woman interfere with the economy that her husband spends on his family, I had problems with these, there were points that touched my pride, there were even different discourses on a small scale."(P3)

“I stayed calm, I felt that she was attacking there and I said that I don't have to prove my manhood to you, I know how much of a man I am. I expressed it by talking, I said I didn't have to prove it. Then, after the heat of the argument had passed, I told her that it bothered me."(P11)

Some of the views of the participants who answered no are as follows:

“*There was no problem between us regarding this.” (P10)*

“I have never experienced such a thing, but even if I did, I would not do something like that, you know, he insulted my manhood, I would not engage in such things, I would not care much if it was someone from outside, not my wife, to be honest, I wouldn't protect myself like that. (P14)

When asked whether marriage has a negative effect on manhood, 3 participants answered yes, and 12 participants answered no.

Table 16

Views On The Negative Effect Of Marriage On Manhood

Views On The Negative Effect Of Marriage On Manhood		f
Yes	P2, P5, P13	3
No	P1, P3, P4, P6, P7, P8, P9, P10, P11, P12, P14, P15	12

Some of the participant views that marriage has a negative effect on masculinity are as follows:

"I can say that it rasps both masculinity and femininity, I think it has a negative effect on people's self-realization."(P5)

"A negative effect on masculinity can be thought of as follows, many people jokingly say this, there is a situation of something, a situation of being tied to the house. You know that men are in a gender structure that can wander around until 12 o'clock at night, but women are not in such a situation. When a man gets married, if he has a structure that can stay up until the morning and have fun, he can be affected negatively in this situation, he may have that problem in terms of his manhood, he may have that problem in terms of male gender. I also have problems at this point.(P13)

Some of the views of the participants who do not think that marriage has a negative effect on masculinity are as follows:

"It didn't happen for me because I tried to live my life according to my life before marriage, my perspective on issues, my perspective on the concept of family, the meaning I attributed to masculinity and femininity, and it didn't happen after marriage."(P4)

"I love my wife, I love my family, if my wife has a request, I would be happy to fulfill it, I would find any comment that it harms masculinity absurd and illogical."(P6)

Contrary to the negative impact, the 3 participants who answered no also think that marriage is a proof of manhood.

"No, I mean we can say that a man who gets married is a man."(P1)

"Actually, I think it is a bigger factor in the construction of masculinity, I think it affects it positively."(P9)

Result and Discussion

Based on the findings of the study, the following conclusions were reached regarding the experiences of being a husband of higher education graduates and upper-middle class

married men and the impact of this role on the reproduction of the representation of masculinity in marriage.

Participants interpreted masculinity in various ways in light of the common experience of being a man and being married. When asked what it meant to be a man in the interviews, the most common response was to take responsibility. This result is consistent with the findings of various studies on masculinity in Türkiye (Cengiz et al., 2004; Üstünel, 2010; Türkoğlu, 2013; Öztürk, 2014; Varlıklar Demirkazık, 2021). The responsibility of masculinity has been generalized as providing a living as well as protecting and taking care; "taking responsibility" has been idealized in masculinity as a competence, capacity and indicator. In traditional values, men are seen as the head of the family, the pillar of the house, the breadwinner, the one who has the final say in the house and the indisputable authority (Bolak-Boratav et al., 2018). Providing for the family, protecting it, taking initiative and managing outside work are considered by the participants to be the responsibility of men. The male identity is constructed with the label of 'family man'; it is defined as a person who is married, attached to his home and responsible for taking care of his family and children. Sancar's comprehensive study also supports these findings and reveals that the male identity is often constructed with the position of the head of the household who provides for the family (Sancar, 2020).

For men, the first place they learn codes of masculinity is the family, and the first man they meet is the father. Fatherhood can be considered one of the definitions of masculinity, as it is closely related to the patriarchal characteristics mentioned above, such as taking responsibility, being protective, and taking care of the family, and on the other hand, the first role model for men is the father. As seen in the studies, fatherhood is also considered to be an area where the status of masculinity is proven in the context of heterosexuality, a social expectation, and a step that completes masculinity (Barutçu, 2013; Bozok, 2018a; Selek, 2021), and therefore, it can be considered to be mentioned together with masculinity for the participants. In their study on gender stereotypes in Türkiye, Sakallı-Uğurlu and colleagues (2018) also found that fatherhood, as a gender role, is one of the codes of masculinity.

Another striking aspect of the participants' perceptions of masculinity is their attitudes towards gender roles. While defining masculinity in a traditional way, they also stated that they believed in gender equality, did not adopt traditional gender roles in society, and that masculinity could change according to society and time. This contradiction is also seen in their thoughts on gender roles and women's identity. While emphasizing gender equality, division of labor at home and sharing the care of children, on the one hand, they used sexist expressions

such as men being more rational than women, women being emotional, men being more effective in decision-making mechanisms, and men tolerating women's "natural" weaknesses. Erbuğ (2021) and Peker Dural (2019), who reached similar findings, also drew attention to this dilemma and stated that the phenomenon of masculinity is constructed between traditionalism and modernity. Bolak-Boratav et al. (2018) also found in their studies that men experience ups and downs on the axis of patriarchy and democracy. Considering that the participants are middle and upper income level, have a bachelor's degree or higher education, it is thought that gender roles change in relation to education level and socioeconomic status, and that traditional norms and values continue to have an effect despite being stretched and changed. This egalitarian discourse also brings to mind the "denial of responsibility" concept conceptualized by Hewitt and Stokes (1975). They save their statements from being sexist by stating that they do not adopt gender roles, that they believe in the equality of men and women, and that the only difference between these two genders is biological. In other words, the preliminary statements about believing in the equality of the sexes can be seen as serving to prevent what follows from being interpreted as sexist (Edley & Wetherell, 1999). Another possibility is that the participants were not aware that their definitions of masculinity contained sexist references. Because these two completely contradictory statements, such as adopting patriarchal roles and not being sexist, were expressed as independent attitudes rather than opposites. Men, compared to women, are less aware of sexism and often do not interpret attitudes and behaviors that could be considered sexist in this way (Sakallı et al., 2022).

When we look at the participants' constructions of masculinity, they emphasize that they are "made to feel" that they are men from childhood onwards, from the attitudes towards them within the family, the toys they receive, the games they play and the names they are given. In addition, romantic and sexual relationships with women also emerge as an important factor in feeling masculinity and constructing this identity. Romantic relationships bring the roles of femininity and masculinity to the agenda and become an area that reproduces gender codes. In terms of gender roles, marriage is considered a necessity for a heterosexual man. A man's ability to marry and have children is an important indicator in terms of his social position (Demren, 2008). The fact that experiences attributed to masculinity, such as being able to take care of the family and becoming a father, can be realized through marriage makes it meaningful for participants to mention marriage in terms of feeling masculinity. These findings are parallel to studies in the literature. Bolak-Boratav et al. (2018) also asked male participants in their study when they first felt that they were a man. Similarly, the most common answer to this question

was “I have always felt it” (38.45%). Then, the answers were “when I was circumcised” (20.60%), “during military service” (14.95%), “during my first sexual experience” (12.85%), “when I first fell in love” (2.70%), “when I had a child” (2.55%), “when I received my first salary” (2.30%) and “during adolescence” (2.25%).

The socialization process is a cornerstone in the construction of masculinity (Onur and Koyuncu, 2004). In Türkiye, the social structure is shaped by patriarchal values transmitted through family, kinship and cultural community relationships (Cengiz et al., 2004). The majority of participants stated that their ideas about male identity begin in childhood and are first formed in the family, and that the social environment then affects them. The family provides an area where gender roles are formed, transmitted, and individuals internalize and classify these roles through various experiences (Avşar, 2017; Bozok, 2018b). The structure of the society in which one lives, the social environment and groups of friends have also been frequently mentioned as important factors that affect and learn the representation of masculinity. It has been determined that the roles learned, judgments and experiences acquired during the socialization process are among the important factors in the formation and internalization of the male role. By incorporating the discourses and opinions of others into oneself, a man first becomes their object and then becomes a subject for himself (Demren, 2008). Sancar also states that dominant masculine values are produced and constructed in spaces and contexts outside the family; the role of homosocial male spaces, patriarchal institutions, masculine entertainment venues, sexual experiences, sports and leisure habits in the construction of masculinity is more evident (Sancar, 2020). Religion and belief systems have a great impact on the organization of social relations, the determination of gender regimes of institutions and the shaping of individuals' own gender (Özbay, 2013). In the interviews, it is seen that the participants' representation of masculinity is sometimes directly affected by religious references and sometimes by indirect elements embedded in the culture. Religious teachings constitute an important reference to men's reasons for attitudes and behaviors (nature), character traits (honesty, loyalty, morality, etc.), marriage decisions (God's command) and relationships with women (sacred trust from Allah to man). The dominant cultural codes in society have also been expressed as an element through which the representation of masculinity is learned. The cultural structure produces norms for men and women and teaches them as standards through the family, social environment, institutions and media (Kimmel, 2011).

Masculinity is a status that is gained by going through certain stages (Türkoğlu, 2019). It was also tried to understand what kind of experiences and processes the participants included

in the research found important in gaining this status. In Türkiye, masculinity is constructed and continues to be performed through the processes of being circumcised, going to the military, having a first sexual experience, working, getting married and becoming a father (Bozok, 2011; Barutçu, 2013; Yavuz, 2014; Selek, 2021). In this research, the statements that are parallel to these results were only working in a paid job and having sexual experience. Circumcision, military service, marriage and fatherhood were not counted as experiences that must be experienced for the male role identity. In fact, some interviewees stated that they did not associate circumcision and military service with masculinity and found them cliché. Deniz (2022) also found in his study investigating the changing perception of masculinity that factors such as circumcision, military service, having a job and becoming a father were not perceived as gaining masculinity. Hıdır (2015) also found in his study with men who did not adopt the dominant male identity that circumcision, sexual experience, military service, being a business owner, marriage and fatherhood were not considered as stages of being a man. For the participants, working in a full-time job is one of the important areas of experience in life with its social, psychological and economic aspects. Being employed is seen as becoming an adult, fulfilling the given tasks, taking on a responsibility, maturing and learning about life. As the findings in other studies in the literature show, working in a paid job is one of the basic dynamics of masculinity for men (Ok, 2011; Barutçu, 2013; Türkoğlu, 2013; Edley, 2017; Sancar, 2020). The responses of the participants belonging to the middle and upper classes are also parallel to the bureaucratic masculinity position that Segal (1992) stated, which reveals itself with the duty and will associated with the middle-class business culture. It is striking that the education life reached within the scope of the research is expressed as an important area of experience for men, as a finding not encountered in the literature. According to Coles (2008), men construct their masculinity not only through hegemonic values, but also through the capital they possess. At this point, the fact that the participants expressed education as a necessary step for masculinity suggests that these individuals, who have undergraduate and above education, construct masculinity outside of hegemonic values through an area in which they are strong. Considering that the level of education has a positive effect on social, cultural and economic capital, it can be thought that the dominant strong male profile in society is achieved in this way. Education; It enables men to be strong and dominant as it provides opportunities such as job, career, money and status. As Bozok also stated, middle-upper class masculinity shaped by patriarchy in today's capitalist society is characterized by being well-educated, well-groomed, healthy, competitive and sporty (Bozok, 2011). For the participants, leaving the family is also

an important experience in gaining masculinity. Leaving home is associated with going to university, work and military service, and it is thought that the person goes through important experiences for masculinity by becoming individual, standing on his own feet, taking responsibility and being alone. Leaving home is an important process for the construction of masculinity because the man leaving home is directly associated with going to work and is also a reference to the relationship between working and being a man (Whitehead, 2002, cited in Peker Dural, 2019). Some participants stated that being a man is, first of all, innate. It is very common to interpret gender relations as natural phenomena (Connell, 2019a). As Cengiz and his colleagues stated, masculine behaviors are shaped within the social context and have become naturalized to the point of not being discussed with daily life practices (Cengiz et al., 2004). Participants stated that no experience is needed to become a man, and being born a man is considered sufficient to become a man. Keeping it independent of social processes and expressing it as biological sex indicates that participants perceive masculinity as a set of innate and given characteristics. This situation is parallel to the content emphasized in the literature that masculinity is perceived as a natural phenomenon rather than a cultural structure (Atay, 2004). According to Sancar, who found in his study that men think that behaviors attributed to genders come from creation, explaining social phenomena with gender and therefore naturalizing them is one of the most important features of the dominant gender regime (Sancar, 2020). Research findings show that masculinity is being constructed through modern institutions (paid labor market, educational institutions) rather than bodily and traditional processes.

It is seen that relationships established with women are decisive in both the perception of masculinity and its maintenance. Emotional and sexual relationships established with women, the fact that women are seen as physically and emotionally weak, are seen in statements where both physical differences are shown and women are positioned as rational men against women who are emotional subjects. With this positioning, participants define both themselves and women in accordance with traditional gender roles. The discourse of men coming to the fore in processes related to reasoning, being rational, taking initiative and decision-making shows the traditional view. The opposite sex determines masculinity not only by getting close and having relationships but also by avoiding them. Masculinity is built on avoiding being feminine and therefore on the opposition to women (Cengiz et al., 2004; Avşar, 2017). They exhibit a masculine stance by not dressing in feminine colors and not showing "feminine weaknesses." When faced with a "feminine" threat, they both protect their masculinity and

demonstrate a masculine performance by fending off this threat. Another theme that stands out in the areas where the participants feel their masculinity is their freedom and privileges in social life. It is seen that this freedom and privilege given by the family and society play an important role in maintaining and experiencing their masculinity. Some participants stated that they did not feel anything about being a man or feeling masculinity in their actions in their daily lives. The process that Bourdieu (2019) describes as "transforming history into nature, cultural arbitrariness into natural" emerges. Gender-specific performances are processed into the body and normed through experiences established through discourses.

The study attempted to determine the factors that influenced the participants' decisions to marry. The participants decided to get married after they started a full-time job and felt financially secure. Since men feel primarily responsible for providing for the family, working is seen as a prerequisite and obligation for marriage. Working a full-time job and having a regular income is also one of the proofs of masculinity (Ok, 2011; Türkoğlu, 2013; Sancar, 2020; Açer, 2022). In this study, responsibility, which is the most frequently mentioned definition of masculinity by the participants, was often mentioned together with providing for the household, and "entering the workforce" was expressed as an important experience for men. Considering that having a job is the most influential factor in the decision to get married, it is seen that discourses such as "a man should be able to make money", "have a job", "take care of his children" are accepted, and the role of "family father" attributed to male identity is closely related to economic competence. Ok (2011) also found in his study on the relationship between unemployment and masculinity crisis that men do not marry when they do not have a job, they break up with their partners and they think that a healthy marriage cannot be achieved without a regular income. For the participants, graduation from university is perceived as both a completed task and the first step towards becoming a job holder. When graduation from university is considered together with the educational life factor that is considered important in gaining masculinity, the man who completes his education perceives himself as having proven himself here and also proven himself in the next stage, which is marriage. In the study, the characteristics such as economic sufficiency and completing education (Ondaş, 2007; Baş & Cengiz, 2018; Akbaş et al., 2019; Erkol et al., 2021), reaching the marriage age (Akbaş et al., 2019), love, respect, closeness, sharing in their relationships with their partners, and having a similar lifestyle (Baş & Cengiz, 2018) are consistent with the findings of similar studies in the literature. The effects of religious belief on the decision to marry are seen in the statements of the participants. Marriage also constitutes a religious basis for the participants because it is the

order of Allah, complementary to religion, maintenance of the Islamic lifestyle, and the only legitimate form of sexuality in religion. It is understood from the statements of the participants that the reference to religion is Islam. Bacanlı (2001) and Gazioğlu (2006) also found that men see marriage as a religious obligation. Traditionally, marriage is considered a given for adulthood (Bolak Boratav et al., 2018). According to the participants, marriage is an institution that should be included in the natural flow of life. The importance attributed to marriage and family is reflected in the participant's statements. Marriage is accepted as a phenomenon that is always thought of, desired, and has religious, cultural and legal justifications. In the studies conducted by Bacanlı (2001) and Erkol et al. (2021) with university students, the necessity of marriage was expressed by both genders. One of the reasons for the participants to get married was the desire to have children. Since they did not think of having children outside of marriage and family, this was a driving factor in their decision to marry. Reaching a sufficient age for marriage is another factor that paves the way for marriage. Participants who wanted to have children thought of getting married before they were old enough to do so. Keldal (2021) and Baş and Cengiz (2018) also revealed that having children is among the expectations of university students from marriage.

When the factors that the participants consider in choosing a spouse are examined, it is seen that the spouse candidate's having positive attitudes and behaviors is prioritized. Characteristics such as honesty, trustworthiness, respect, loyalty, resourcefulness, helpfulness, empathy, understanding, rationality, being reasonable, being austere, being altruistic, being fair, and having good relationships with people, which are generalized as good traits, were sought in the spouse candidate. This finding is similar to the results of studies indicating that positive personality traits, the importance of which is emphasized in spouse selection, are decisive (Mutlu, 2004; Ondaş, 2007; Sancak Aydın & Demir, 2017). It was stated that being compatible with the spouse, having similar characteristics, leisure time activities, family background, life views, future plans, and feeling good and peaceful in the relationship were the factors they paid attention to in choosing a spouse. Sancak Aydın and Demir also reached similar findings from the data of male students in their study on the factors affecting graduate students' choice of spouse (Sancak Aydın & Demir, 2017). Another important factor for the participants was emotional closeness. Mutual attraction, love, and feeling emotional closeness were taken into consideration in choosing a spouse. In a study conducted by Aytaç and Bayram (2001) on university students, it was found that the first criterion for male students in choosing a spouse was the love factor. It is seen that belief is an effective factor in the participants' choice of

spouse. The fact that the belief of the person to be married is compatible with their own beliefs and that they are sensitive to religious requirements are the factors taken into consideration in choosing a spouse. This finding is consistent with the result of Bener (2011) who investigated the relationship between university students' religiosity levels and spouse selection and found that there is a significant relationship between religiosity and spouse selection.

Being a husband is a position of conflicted subjectivity for men (Demren, 2008). In this study, men expressed their feelings about being a husband through different emotions and situations such as increased responsibilities, happiness, restriction of freedom, dignity and obligation of loyalty. Men frequently construct their husband identities through the concept of responsibility. This finding is consistent with the findings of Pınar's (2008) study on university students' views on marriage. For university students of both sexes, marriage primarily means taking responsibility (94.2%). Based on the findings obtained from the interviews, men's model of a spouse who takes responsibility in marriage stands out. The sense of responsibility felt for providing for the household coincides with the traditional identity of the family father and breadwinner husband (Gorman-Murray, 2008). However, this responsibility is thought to be an economic responsibility, as it is revealed that they do not feel primarily responsible for housework and perceive housework as “helping their wives”. The fact that men participate in housework with the idea of “helping” suggests that the gender-based division of labor is taken for granted. Being a husband brings happiness to the participants in addition to responsibilities. Having someone who accepts, loves, supports and trusts them as they are constitutes the source of their happiness. This finding coincides with Pınar's (2008) study in which university students of both sexes expressed sharing (98.5%) and happiness (47%) in married life. Participants also experience the feeling that the social freedom given since childhood is restricted with marriage. Bolak Boratav and colleagues also found that married men feel restricted (Bolak-Boratav et al., 2018). Being married makes the participants feel more respected, mature and reliable in the eyes of the society. Considering the phrases attached to married men in social perception such as “family man, married man, man with children”, it is a common attitude in society that married men are respected both within the family and in social relations, and are considered more reliable than single men. Being a man and being married correspond to two basic social capitals. While being a man refers to a capital based on gender in the patriarchal system, being married refers to the capital they acquire through their position as family father. These two positions can be considered as enabling the husband to be respected by the society.

Almost all of the participants stated that a married man should be responsible. As with the male identity, the identity of a married man is also associated with responsibility. Another prominent characteristic that a married man should have is the prioritization of domestic relations. While being a husband is constructed with traditional economic responsibilities, it is also constructed as a position that makes his wife and children happy, spends time with them and meets the psychological and social needs of the family. These findings are also consistent with the literature. In the study conducted by Sakallı-Uğurlu and colleagues, married men were portrayed with gender roles such as family father, responsible, hardworking, sacrificing, protective, and head of the family (Sakallı-Uğurlu et al., 2018).

Based on the idea that the problems experienced in the marital relationship are informative for individuals to perceive their own identities and to make sense of the marital relationship, it was aimed to learn the gender-specific areas where the problems experienced by the participants in marriage were made sense of. Problems arising from women's attitudes were listed at the top of the gender-based problem areas in marriage. These problems were listed as women trying to change men after marriage, being touchy, changing after the birth of a child and being emotional. This situation is explained by the participants with the nature of women. As Sancar stated, not only are the behaviors, feelings, thoughts and attitudes between the sexes seen as innate biological differences, but this view is supported by religious and psychological explanations as well as biologically based explanations (Sancar, 2020). It is seen that these discourses of the participants reproduce discriminatory and sexist attitudes towards women. Among the difficulties specific to men in marriage, taking more responsibility than women was also mentioned in the interviews. Since the responsibility of providing for the family is a duty attributed to men, it is perceived as a gender-specific challenge in marriage. In this respect, men, who play a fundamental role in the family's livelihood, feel more responsibility in the marital relationship than women. In the findings of Kundakçı's study, tasks attributed to men such as representing the family, being responsible for the family's livelihood, and protecting family members were expressed as difficulties experienced by men (Kundakçı, 2007). Peker Dural (2019) also found in her study that men think that men take greater responsibility in marriage than women by taking care of their wives and children. One of the areas that participants perceived as a gender-based problem was problems related to origin. Mother-in-law-daughter-in-law conflict, which is frequently encountered in Turkish society, is one of the gender-specific problem areas mentioned by the participants. While men do not have problems with their wives' parents, their wives have problems with their own parents. This situation puts

men in a difficult situation, and men who are caught between two women feel the pressure to be the mediator. Men who are caught between the roles of husband and son lead to contradiction and role conflict (Arslan & Arslan, 2015; Bayer, 2018).

Another issue that the research seeks to answer is the question of whether a married heterosexual upper-middle class heterosexual man with a higher education degree changes his perspective on masculinity and marriage after marriage, and in which situations in marriage he perceives a threat to his masculinity. A male crisis emerges when men's dominant masculinity roles and their dominance associated with these roles are shaken (Bozok, 2019). Men experience threats to masculinity when they feel inferior to women, when their authority and decisions are questioned, when they feel physically and sexually inadequate, when they are ridiculed, when they are not listened to in the family, when women in the family behave in a way that damages their reputation as men, and when they experience economic losses (Göç-Bilgin & Sancar, 2021). According to the data obtained from the participants' responses, marriage is not seen as an experience that changes their perspective on marriage and masculinity and threatens their masculinity.

The social structure of Türkiye has both individualistic and traditional characteristics parallel to technological, economic and cultural changes. In this context, it was tried to determine the direction of men's thoughts on masculinity and the position of husband in a society where both modern and traditional cultures coexist. In this study, the processes affecting the construction and maintenance of masculine identity were examined, and the effects of education level and social class on marital attitudes and the position of being a husband were examined. Although it is a qualitative study, it is not possible to generalize the findings, it provides important ideas on this subject. In this study, a small section was taken from higher education graduates who constitute a significant portion of men in Türkiye and it was shown that masculinity is reproduced and performed through certain perceptions, judgments, behaviors, cultural and religious norms regarding the meaning of being a man and a husband in a marital relationship. It can be argued that the traditional view on masculinity, family and marriage is continued by the participants. Masculinity reproduces itself in its traditional form with the roles of being responsible, breadwinner, and father of the family, and gender roles are often based on the grounds of nature for both genders, thus approving the normativity of masculinity and legitimizing sexism. Thus, men reproduce the patriarchal masculinity ideology produced in the public sphere by constructing their husband identities in the domestic sphere.

Based on the statements of the participants, it is possible to say that the practices of masculinity continue to exist and are reproduced in the ordinary routines of daily life in marriage.

Another striking aspect of the participants' perceptions of masculinity is their contradictory attitudes towards gender roles. While defining masculinity hegemonicly on the one hand, they also state that they do not view gender roles traditionally and believe in gender equality, and at the same time they can talk about women's "natural" emotionality and their weakness not only physically but also emotionally. These two completely contradictory statements are expressed as if they are not opposites but independent attitudes, and while sexist attitudes towards women are legitimized through this "natural" phenomenon, men are also freed from being sexist.

Most of the participants stated that they had never thought about the meaning of being a man before. The fact that masculinity was frequently referred to as biological, innate, natural, given and inherent during the interview process once again showed the importance of questioning masculinity. The belief that gender roles constructed in social and cultural contexts are immutable and divine creation prevents hegemonic masculinity attitudes from being perceived as “an unchangeable form of existence” and therefore from being criticized and questioned. As long as men continue to be the reference point that meets the “norm” (Uçan, 2012), inequalities between genders will continue to produce themselves.

The findings of the study show that as the level of education increases, the influence of hegemonic and patriarchal values on men relatively decreases, but does not completely disappear. Participants construct masculinity and the position of husband together with both traditional and egalitarian values. From this point of view, it is possible to interpret that patriarchal thinking, which is effective on male identity, cannot be overcome only by increasing the level of education.

Recommendations

It is expected that couple and family counselors and professionals such as psychological counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists and social workers who provide counseling and therapy to families and couples will benefit from this study, which reveals findings in terms of understanding the construction of men's husband identities and their performance in marital relationships. The data of the study is limited to married men with higher education. Therefore, in order to generalize the findings obtained to the society, it would be

useful to conduct new studies with people from different educational levels, larger study groups, in different regions, as well as studies that include other demographic characteristics. This study is also limited in that it was designed with a qualitative research method. In order to increase the generalizability of the findings obtained, it is thought to be useful to conduct mixed-method studies. Masculinity studies have revealed that there is no universal and standardized masculinity, and that masculinity is a construct that changes according to the time, society and culture (Yavuz, 2014). As this study is limited to a specific group, the nature of the findings obtained is temporal rather than universal and generalizable. In the current era, gender roles continue to be redefined for both men and women (Uçan, 2012). In this context, gender, which is characterized by its dynamic nature, reproduces and develops new norms, requires masculinity studies to follow a path that can be constantly updated and reinterpreted. This study aimed to understand the reproduction of the position of being a husband by tracing the perception of masculinity, but there is still a need to understand the extent to which problems between spouses are affected by gender. In future studies, it is important to develop training and group programs that aim to change these patriarchal assumptions and replace them with an egalitarian and inclusive perception of gender and husbands.

Ethics Committee Approval

In this research, ethical approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Istanbul Ticaret University on 10.01.2023 and numbered E-65836846-044-274963. In this research, in which qualitative method was used, care was taken to protect the confidentiality of personal information as the statements of the participants were included in direct quotations. The participants included in the research were provided with explanations regarding the subject, duration and content of the research through the "Informed Consent Form" and their consent was obtained for the interviews to be recorded. The identities of the participants were kept confidential and each participant was given a code using letters and numbers. Participant codes are indicated as Participant 1 = P1, Participant 2 = P2.

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