EVOLVING MASCULINITIES IN THE CASE OF EVOLVING MILITARY SERVICE: PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF MIDDLE-CLASS MEN IN TÜRKİYE

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ABSTRACT

EVOLVING MASCULINITIES IN THE CASE OF EVOLVING MILITARY SERVICE: PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF MIDDLE-CLASS MEN IN TÜRKİYE

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While many countries have moved to professional armies, in Türkiye, military conscription is still compulsory and civic duty for healthy men above 18. The practice of short-term military service, *bedelli askerlik* in Turkish, which provides an alternative where people can expedite their military duty in exchange for a fee, has been standardized with the new military service law in 2019. This thesis focuses on the perceptions of masculinity and nationalism of two primary groups within the middle class in Türkiye: long-term service participants (6 and 12 months) and short-term service participants, by using qualitative research techniques including semi-structured in-depth interviews of 14 men and thematic analysis of the data. Although the motivations behind short-term military service have started to be explored, the decision to choose long-term service despite having the financial means has not been studied. By providing a comparative analysis, this thesis argues that four main typologies explain the factors influencing the decision-making process. For short-term military service groups, the thesis has found that it is a pragmatic choice, combining the main aspects of time and efficiency calculation and lesser exposure to the discipline. Long-term military service, on the other hand, is more diverse and can be explained through the dimensions of adventure, stabilizer, and ethical decision.

The study also finds that there is a transformation in the idea of being useful to the nation. While military service is at the center of the traditional understanding of nationalism, alternative ways of serving society are emphasized in the contemporary version.

Keywords: compulsory military service, long-term and short-term/paid military service, masculinity, hegemonic masculinity, military

ÖZ

EVRİLEN ERKEKLİKLER: TÜRKİYE'DE ORTA SINIF ERKEKLERİN EVRİLEN ASKERLİK DENEYİMLERİ VE ALGILARI

EVREN, Buğu Sıla
Yüksek Lisans, Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Bölümü
Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut Beşpınar

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Birçok ülke profesyonel orduya geçerken, Türkiye'de askerlik hala 18 yaşından büyük sağlıklı erkekler için zorunlu ve bir vatandaşlık görevi. Bedelli askerlik olarak adlandırılan ve kişilerin askerlik görevlerini maddi bir bedel karşılığında hızlandırabilecekleri bir alternatif sunan askerlik uygulaması, 2019 yılında yeni askerlik yasası ile standart hale getirilmiştir. Bu tez, Türkiye'de orta sınıf içerisinde yer alan iki temel grubun, "uzun dönem askerlik yapanlar" (6 ve 12 ay) ve "kısa dönem askerlik yapanlar" (bedelli), erkeklik ve milliyetçilik algılarına odaklanmaktadır. Araştırma kapsamında 14 erkekle yarı yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmeler ve verilerin tematik analizi gibi nitel araştırma teknikleri kullanılmıştır. Kısa dönem askerlik hizmetinin ardındaki motivasyonlar araştırılmaya başlanmış olsa da maddi imkanlara sahip olunmasına rağmen uzun dönem hizmeti seçme kararı üzerinde çalışılmamıştır. Bu tez, karşılaştırmalı bir analiz sunarak, askerlik hizmetinin süresine ilişkin kararları etkileyen faktörleri açıklamada dört ana tipoloji olduğunu savunmaktadır. Kısa dönem askerlik grubu için tez, bunun pragmatik bir seçim olduğunu, zaman ve verimlilik hesaplaması ile disipline daha az maruz kalma gibi ana unsurları içerdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Uzun dönem askerlik ise daha çeşitlidir ve bu karar macera olarak görme, hayatı stabilize etme ve etik karar

boyutlarıyla açıklanabilir. Çalışma aynı zamanda ulusa faydalı olma fikrinde de bir dönüşüm olduğunu ortaya çıkarmaktadır. Geleneksel milliyetçilik anlayışının merkezinde askerlik hizmeti yer alırken, çağdaş versiyonda topluma hizmet etmenin alternatif yolları vurgulanmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: zorunlu askerlik hizmeti, uzun dönem ve kısa dönem/bedelli askerlik hizmeti, erkeklik, hegemonik erkeklik, askerlik

To all queers and women in Türkiye, your unwavering courage and strength fuel my own journey… Highly appreciative of the unwavering spirit of your resistance, my source of inspiration and hope…

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My sincere gratitude goes out to each and every participant of this thesis, who so kindly offered their thoughts, experiences, and narratives about gender identity, military service, and masculinity. This research has been made possible by your bravery, honesty, and openness to meaningful discourse. It is an honor for me to use this thesis to elevate your voices and experiences.

Additionally, I would want to sincerely thank all of my connections for utilizing their networks and resources to help me reach out to and establish contact with the participants of my thesis. Their dedication, diligent effort, and cooperation were crucial in fostering deep conversations and obtaining insightful information that enhanced this study.

In addition, I am appreciative of all the people I got to know over my study adventure. All of the interactions, long or short, deepened my knowledge, opened my eyes, and created enduring bonds with both the academic and broader community.

I also have to admit that writing a master's thesis presents significant emotional difficulties. My resilience and drive were put to the test on numerous occasions during the journey when I experienced struggles within, feelings of inadequacy, and self-doubt. It took a lot of emotional labor to navigate the academic environment, deal with intricate theories and approaches, and pursue intellectual rigor. An ongoing undercurrent of worry and self-criticism was brought about by the need to do original research, adhere to academic standards, and meaningfully contribute to the intellectual conversation.

Being a non-male researcher exploring the difficult areas of masculinities and military service, the journey was full of obstacles that required both mental toughness and emotional fortitude. It was a difficult task to navigate through complex narratives, ingrained prejudices, and societal expectations; this left me frequently struggling with the tensions and weight of my overlapping identities. Engaging with delicate themes, confronting structural injustices, and dismantling ingrained prejudices required a great deal of emotional labor that constantly negotiated personal experiences with academic detachment. The complex tapestry of hurdles included managing the responsibilities of a professional career, instances of mobbing, ending relationships, and overcoming health issues... These difficulties were frightening, but they also acted as stimulants for development, fortitude, and reflection. Every obstacle surmounted, every disappointment overcame, and every insight gained deepened and refined the study process, enhancing this thesis.

The emotional toll of juggling obligations to one's studies, one's own well-being, and outside influences cannot be emphasized. Although it is frequently the most difficult and significant component of academic work, it is also the least visible and acknowledged. Writing a master's thesis is an emotional and transforming process that calls for courage, determination, and reflection. It is not merely an intellectual undertaking.

Thus, I would like to express my gratitude to the challenges themselves as well as to people who helped and accompanied me, as they have been essential in molding me into the researcher and person that I am today.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

While many nations have transitioned to professional militaries, conscription remains mandatory and a civic obligation for healthy men over the age of 18 in Türkiye. The regulations on military service are set out in the Law No. 1111 on Military Service. According to the first article of this law, "Every male subject of the Republic of Türkiye is obliged to perform military service in accordance with this law." This article makes military service compulsory for male citizens of Türkiye. The 2019 military service law standardized the practice of short-term military service, or *bedelli askerlik* in Turkish, which offers an alternative where individuals can expedite their military duty in exchange for a fee. This thesis focuses on the perceptions of masculinity and nationalism of two primary groups, within middle-class in Türkiye: "long-term service participants" who follow the traditional 6- or 12-month service, and "short-term service participants" who choose to expedite military service, by using qualitative research techniques including semi-structured in-depth interviews of 14 men and thematic analysis of the collected data. It aims to illuminate the intricate relationship between masculinity ideals, societal expectations, and personal choices in the context of middle-class men in Türkiye by contrasting the narratives of individuals who select different military service paths. It seeks to further our understanding of the complex dynamics underlying masculinity and military service in modern-day Türkiye through this examination.

Short-term military service is an academic research field that received attention very little and only recently despite its popularity and importance. The decision to select long-term military duty despite having the financial means has not been researched, despite the motivations for short-term military service have been examined. Seeing this gap, this thesis aims to understand the factors influencing decisions on the duration of military service. While for the short-term the findings support the already

existing literature, it brings out new aspects in understanding the decisions behind choosing long-term service. This presents the argument through a comparative analysis that there are four primary typologies that can be utilized for clarifying the factors influencing decisions about the duration of military service: under the headings short-term military service as a pragmatic choice, long-term military service as an adventure, as a stabilizing experience and as a fair and ethical decision. The study also finds that there is a transformation in the perception of nationalism from the traditional sense, where the military service is located at the core. Instead, the contemporary understanding of nationalism is defined with respect to being beneficial to the society by performing his profession skillfully and contribute to the homeland depending on one's own education and capabilities. Thus, in this context, the idea is that there are multiple ways of being useful to the homeland, not just serving in the military for long time.

1.1. Background

My curiosity about gender dynamics started in my family's intimate context, where my older brother's differing experiences as a child raised a lot of concerns. One of the earliest moments that prompted my contemplation was the realization of the differing treatment between my older brother and me. Why were my toys so different from his? Why were specific colors and activities prescribed by society standards based on our gender? These questions, which sprang from a youthful revolt against conventional gender roles, lingered into my teenage years and ultimately brought me into contact with the feminist movement. I frequently felt pushed in the direction of activities and toys that are more "feminine" or "appropriate" for girls, while my brother seemed to be drawn to those that are typically associated with boys. These early findings made me wonder about the rationale for these inflexible divisions and their consequences for our comprehension of gender and identity.

These differences between me and my brother become more noticeable as we moved through childhood and adolescence, affecting every facet of our life, including social interactions and educational prospects. I frequently felt under pressure to fit into more passive and caring positions, while my brother was pushed to be bold and

adventurous. Our experiences were drastically different from what society expected, which shaped our self-perceptions and reinforced gender stereotypes in our household. Such insights piqued my interest in learning more about the larger social variables influencing how we perceive gender and its consequences.

I became increasingly interested in gender studies as I made my way through adolescence, especially as it related to masculinity. I was attracted to studying the ways in which ideas of power, identity, and socialization interacted with the expectations and cultural conceptions surrounding masculinity. These questions prompted me to explore the topic of masculinity studies, where I tried to understand the complex processes by which masculinity is constituted and acted out in many social settings.

Simone de Beauvoir's statement, "one is not born but rather becomes a woman," had a profound effect on how I perceived gender. As a social being, I came to understand that ideas of what it means to be a woman, or a man are socially manufactured rather than innate. My interest in the study of masculinity so stems from a personal background in which my brother and I were treated very differently from one another. The curiosity about "other side" was stoked by my upbringing in a household that upheld traditional gender norms and having an older brother. It emphasized the idea that gender experiences span an expansive spectrum of diversity rather than being limited to distinct boundaries.

When I think back on my path into masculinity studies, especially in the context of military duty, I find myself thinking back to key experiences in my childhood that influenced my outlook and sense of inquiry. Observing the military parades and celebrations honoring national festivals and victories was one of the most memorable experiences. These incidents reinforced the public expectation that military service was not just a necessity but also a sign of one's masculinity and loyalty to the country. They also functioned as potent symbols of bravery and patriotism. The military seemed to profoundly exemplify traditional ideas of masculinity with its emphasis on strength, discipline, and bonding. This made me wonder how ideas of masculinity were perpetuated before, during and after the military service and how

that affected service members' lives. Glorification of traditional masculine attributes like strength and courage, along with the emphasis on military duty as a rite of passage for young men, provided little room for other gender identity expressions. During the years when I began to question myself, I also delved into the nuances of masculinity in Turkish society.

Central to my fascination with masculinity studies were the "rites of passage" associated with manhood. “Rites of passage” are ceremonial rites that mark key milestones in a person's life, representing their advancement from one social or cultural rank to another (Forth, 2018). These rituals frequently entail symbolic actions, community participation, and compliance to established cultural norms and traditions. They play a number of crucial roles in societies, such as establishing community cohesion, socialization and identity development, and transition marking. Similar to other ceremonial rituals, military rites of passage are extremely important to some societies since they indicate significant life transitions. These customs are ingrained in cultural traditions and have purposes beyond just marking significant life events. They are symbolic behaviors that uphold cultural standards, spread values, and strengthen a feeling of group belonging. It is traditional to consider military service, especially compulsory service, as a rite of passage that transforms boys into men and teenagers into adults. Throughout history, this process of change has connected "masculinity" to characteristics of a "warrior," someone who embodies virtues like fortitude, bravery, and fortitude. Furthermore, military service has been considered as a ritual that enforces societal disparities between male and female responsibilities. This ceremonial element reinforces the binary opposition between masculine and femininity and adds to the underlying tensions within military culture (Macdonald et al. 1988).

What distinguishes military rites of passage is their distinct blend of personal development, societal expectations, and state authority. Thus, military rites of passage represent power, hierarchy, and citizenship difficulties in a microcosm of larger society dynamics. They serve as systems of social control and loyalty, reinforcing dominant standards of masculinity and influencing ideas of citizenship and duty.

Military rites of passage provide a rich field of inquiry into the formation and performance of gender identity within the framework of masculinity studies. These rituals offer a prism through which to see the maintenance and application of ideas of masculinity inside the military establishment. Traditional ideas of masculinity are upheld by military rites of passage, which also value bravery and sacrifice in addition to emphasizing physical stamina and endurance, marginalizing alternative expressions of gender.

In discussions on military service as a rite of passage, I believe it is critical to use a Foucauldian lens because of the enormous implications of state engagement in shaping individuals and identities. Military service can be seen as a manifestation of biopower, as it involves the state exerting control over individuals' bodies and behaviors for the purposes of national defense and security. Although culturally significant rites of passage like circumcision are important, military service is unique since the state directly intervenes in people's lives to regulate and rule them. This intervention represents the practice of biopower, according to Foucault, in which political organizations regulate the physical appearance and conduct of their constituents. People compelled to serve in the military are subjected to training, disciplinary procedures, and monitoring techniques that are standard in military settings. This regulating authority encompasses not just physical instruction but also the psychological and intellectual aspects of citizenship, influencing people's perceptions of duty, obedience, and loyalty to the state. By enabling people to buy exemption from longer service terms, short-term military duty amounts to a commoditization of military duties. From a Foucauldian point of view, this practice illustrates how disciplinary processes can be tailored to fit various state governance circumstances. The state nonetheless maintains control over people's bodies and actions through institutional practices and regulatory frameworks, even though people can choose to pay a price to complete their military service requirements more quickly. Thus, short-term military service might be interpreted as an expression of governmentality and biopower, but with specific consequences for the exercise of citizenship rights and state power.

Military service is the right and duty of every Turk in accordance with Article 72 of the Turkish Constitution. Every male citizen of the Republic of Türkiye is obliged to

perform military service. The state's engagement in mandatory military duty gives the ceremony a unique meaning and character. It transforms serving in the military into a civic obligation and a demonstration of allegiance for the nation, which suggests that people are not only changing on a personal level but also carrying out their legal duty as state residents. The entire process of compulsory military service, from enlistment to training and deployment, is shaped by this direct governmental engagement. It creates a codified framework with precise rules, regulations, and penalties for breaking them, allowing people to go through their rite of passage.

Historically, ideas of masculinity have been greatly influenced by the rite of passage commonly connected to military duty, which serves as an essential indicator of manhood and social integration. But there's been a noticeable change in the way some men view the societal value of military service in modern settings. The conventional story of military service as the ultimate rite of passage into masculinity has changed for these people. Rather than imbuing this experience with the same symbolic significance as earlier generations, their perspective on military duty is shaped by evolving social norms and values. Gaining an understanding of this change provides important context for analyzing more general changes in how masculinity is constructed in society. It sheds light on how cultural norms pertaining to gender roles and manifestations have changed over time, influencing how people manage and negotiate their identities within social contexts. We can learn more about the complexities of modern masculinity and its intricate relationship to societal changes by looking at how men's perceptions of military service have evolved and deviated from conventional ideas of masculinity.

This study anticipates that the difference in the meanings attributed to military service by two groups of men, who are in similar financial positions, some of whom prefer short-term, *bedelli*, while others prefer long-term military service, is rooted in the varying perceptions of masculinity. Furthermore, the main aim of this study, which anticipates that the relationships between military service and masculinity may vary depending on the different meanings and perceptions attributed to the military experience between these two groups, is to examine the factors that contribute to the transformation in perceptions and values of masculinity. This study aims to compare

the decision-making factors of individuals who opt for long-term military service (6 or 12 months) despite having the financial means to pursue short-term military service, with those who choose short-term military service (currently 28 days while it has changed from time to time since the beginning). In particular, this study seeks to understand how choices regarding military service are influenced by the intersection of men's perceptions of societal expectations, their ideals of masculinity, and their attitudes towards military service in Türkiye.

The story of military duty is not only that of one person; but it is a reflection of the experiences of many who struggle to understand what it means to be a man (and also a woman, though more indirectly) in Türkiye. İt is an investigation into an area where I am not wanted as a non-male, but this institution's influence is felt throughout society. By means of these accounts, I hope to illuminate the complex relationship between military service and masculinity construction. The complex interplay between being subjected to traditional gender roles and acknowledging the flux of gender is acknowledged in this exploration. It seeks to navigate the complex web of cultural expectations, recognizing the curiosity that arises from challenging conventions and appreciating the variety of ways people perceive and express gender. This study aims to shed light on the motivations behind the choice of military service type and the significance of military service in the construction of masculinity among young upperclass men in Türkiye.

1.2. Research Question

“How do men's opinions about military duty, views on masculinity, and perceptions of society expectations affect their decision-making when choosing between short-term (which is currently 28-days) short-term military service and long-term (conventional) military service (6 or 12 months) in Türkiye?” is the core research question of this thesis. In order to offer important insights into the confluence of masculinity, class, and military service in Türkiye, this research will look at the reasons influencing these decisions and how they affected the participants' conceptions of masculinity in relation to their class positions.

Consequently, this thesis explores the complex relationship between masculinity and class status, providing insight into the complex ways that middle-class men in Türkiye develop attitudes and experiences about serving in the military. Why does one group not choose short-term military service, even though they have the means? What does serving in the military mean to middle-class men in Türkiye? What role does serving in the military have in their conceptions of masculinity? What are the social factors behind the different preferences of the two groups? What are the commonalities in the perceptions of masculinity and nationalism of people who do short-term military service and long-term military service? What are the visible differences, if there is any?

The relationship between military duty, patriotism, and nationalism is examined indirectly in this study. It examines how decisions are made, ideas of duty and honor, and the changing nature of patriotism in the context of shifting military service requirements. By doing this, it seeks to provide a comprehensive knowledge of the interrelated forces influencing male identity, notably in the particular context of military service, and to offer insightful analyses of gender studies discourse, specifically within the Turkish middle class.

1.3. Operationalization of the Key Concepts

1.3.1. Masculinity

The idea of masculinity will be painstakingly analyzed in this research as a social construct that includes a variety of gendered behaviors, attitudes, and expectations related to being a man. Based on feminist theories and the social constructionist methodology, masculinity is addressed as fluid, context-specific, and evolving across time and space. Through in-depth interviews, important aspects of masculinity—like dominance, emotional expressiveness, and conformity to social norms—will be examined. This method enables a deeper comprehension of participants' conceptions and embodiments of masculinity in the unique setting of military duty.

One key theoretical debate when it comes to gender studies is essentialism and social construction. Essentialism means that there are certain set of essential traits that

identifies a thing or concept. Social construction, on the other hand, means that how we perceive the things (concepts, people, objects…) around us does not necessarily reflect the nature but they are products that are loaded with social meanings that human beings put into. Therefore, there is no single truth to be discovered through objective stance despite the essentialist claims. Instead, meaning is constructed; all concepts and 'truths' as we believe it are socially constructed, meaning they are historically and culturally specific, making our knowledge of the world relative rather than absolute (Burr & Dick, 2017). This also means that creation and reproduction of knowledge is tied to power relations on the grounds that those who possess the power are the key determinants of generally accepted knowledge (Burr & Dick, 2017). When applied to gender studies, it is a topic of discuss whether the feminine/masculine traits are inherent or learned. From an essentialist point of view, there exist a group of traits that are inherent and coming from birth that is specific to being masculine, which can be being rational, aggressive, strong, etc. However, in the contemporary world, it is not that easy to define masculinity despite essentialist claims and stereotypes.

The production and reproduction of militarism is highly connected to ideas and ideals about masculinity and femininity. One key point about military is that it positions itself against women and femininity. Military is an institution where there is no place for women or feminine characteristics and where 'manly' attitudes are glorified. The masculinity of the man is strengthened by the distance he puts between himself and womanhood, which is further devalued in military service. In this process, men learn not only how to be like men but also how not to be like women (Barutçu, 2013). It is traditionally argued that biology constrains, and culture liberates however Goldstein (2003) argues that "culture constrains (channels, harnesses, limits) the diverse potentials of biology" and cultural ideas of masculinity and femininity can be more rigorous than biology. The duality and oppositionality is highly culture oriented. In similar lines with Enloe on artificiality of men being inherently warriors, Goldstein (2003) further argues it is not about biology, it does not come inherently or naturally as the intense socialization and training to fight in militaries show. In its core, "cultures develop concepts of masculinity that motivate men to fight" (Goldstein, 2003, p.264). Although masculinity is time and context

dependent, being a warrior is the key part of manhood (Goldstein, 2003). And through military, men learn to “deny all that is ‘feminine’ and soft in himself” (Goldstein, 2003, p.266).

It is difficult to give an exact description of masculinity since it is better understood as a component of a larger social structure rather than as a separate entity. Masculinity functions as a defining factor that shapes behavior, setting apart those who display characteristics commonly associated with masculinity from those who do not. It is in a constant state of change, though it may be slow and ambiguous. Instead approaching masculinity as a relational concept is more meaningful because masculinity is defined in relation to femininity; meaning what is not feminine. Still, they are both evolving concepts, changing depending on time, space, culture. Because masculinity is socially constructed and affects personal agency, it highlights a distinction that goes beyond gender. Furthermore, masculinity is expressed differently in different cultures and social groupings according to different norms, values, and expectations. This variation calls into question any strict or universal definitions by highlighting the fluid and contextual character of masculinities. Different scholars provide varying definitions on masculinity. Combining the perspectives of Connell and Butler offers a nuanced understanding of masculinity. For Connell (2005), it refers to the behaviors and actions that men exhibit due to their male identity within a specific social environment. For Butler (1990), “masculinity is an identity that is constructed, reiterated, and performed through a stylized repetition of actions. It is neither a singular nor a stable identity but is continuously in flux”. Through the integration of Connell's emphasis on social context and practices with Butler's focus on performative repetition, a more thorough understanding of masculinity as a fluid and contextually constructed identity that is constantly produced and reshaped through social encounters and performances is achieved.

Hence, in this thesis it is argued that the idea of masculinity is a cultural construct rather than a fundamental psychological or biological characteristic. Regarding men's conduct in personal interactions, the idea is that men do not always act in particular ways because they identify as men or because they possess characteristics associated

with men. Rather, the idea of masculinity that individuals internalize from society shapes their behavior (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993). The social constructionist viewpoint takes masculinity as an ideology—a collection of expectations and beliefs about the traits and behaviors that are considered appropriate in men—instead of a traditional personality characteristics. This study adopts an emic approach, seeking to reflect men's own insights and perceptions regarding masculinity and military service. Evaluating masculinity ideology entails determining attitudes toward the male gender role, particularly the importance of men conforming to culturally prescribed norms of masculine conduct (Pleck, Sonenstein, & Ku, 1993). This methodology acknowledges that masculinity is a social construct, stressing the impact of cultural standards and anticipations on people's conceptions of what it means to be a man.

1.3.2. Middle Class

In order to operationalize the term "middle class" in this research, economic data and educational achievement have to be carefully taken into account. The complex economic criterion requires participants to earn more than a benchmark that is defined and based on national income figures. Income criteria involve surpassing a predetermined threshold, referencing national income statistics. The middle class was defined in this study by an income criteria that was based on a minimum threshold of double the minimum wage before individuals undergo military service. This criterion's justification is to identify individuals or households that make comparatively more money than the average individual in the population. To comprehend the motives behind opting for or abstaining from long-term military service despite financial capability, I chose the middle-class group. I intend to include people who have a much larger purchasing power and socioeconomic position, suggestive of belonging to the middle class, by placing the income barrier at double the minimum wage.

Having a high level of education is also essential for class identification among the middle class. In addition to meeting the income requirement, research participants had to have completed at least their high school education. This criterion was

established with the knowledge that education has a major impact on how people live their lives, how much money they make, and what their cultural values are. I sought to include persons who had completed at least high school in order to include those who have acquired a fundamental level of education, which may have an impact on their cultural viewpoints and socioeconomic standing. This method makes it possible to investigate the intersections of education, wealth, lifestyle, and culture in greater detail in order to comprehend middle class decision-making processes regarding military service. This operationalization recognizes the interaction between economic status and educational background in defining the middle class, capturing the multifaceted nature of this socioeconomic category by including both income and educational requirements.

1.3.3. Short-term Military Service

In this study, operationalizing "short-term military service" entails establishing particular standards for those who choose this line of activity. Individuals who voluntarily participate in a financial transaction to fulfill their mandatory military service responsibilities are considered to have chosen short-term military duty. Instead of the customary six to twelve months of service, the financial transaction in this sense refers to the monetary payment made by individuals to complete their military service commitment.

In the Conscription Law, short-term military service is defined as follows: military service fulfilled by those who are selected for military service for a fee, provided that they meet the conditions for benefiting from military service specified in the law, on the condition that they pay the determined price and undergo basic military training. According to Article 9 (1) of the Conscription Law[1], those who are willing and eligible for military service shall be deemed to have fulfilled their military service if they pay in advance the amount to be determined by the Ministry, taking into account the needs of the Turkish Armed Forces, the amount to be found as a result of multiplying the 240,000 indicator figure by the civil servant's monthly coefficient

[1]https://www.mevzuat.gov.tr/anasayfa/MevzuatFihristDetayIframe?MevzuatTur=1&MevzuatNo=7179&MevzuatTertip=5

valid on the day the payment is made, within the period to be determined by the Ministry before being recruited and complete one month of basic military training.

The cost of short-term military service legally increases with the civil servant salary increase. Civil servants receive 2 raises every year, in January and July. In 2023, the short-term military service fee was 122 thousand 351 TL. In the calculation made according to the 49.25 percent civil servant salary increase, the fee for military service was determined around 182 thousand TL for the June-July period of 2024. According to the announcement of the Ministry of National Defense; with the Circular of the Ministry of Treasury and Finance dated January 05, 2024, and titled "Financial and Social Rights", the Civil Servant Monthly Coefficient for the period January 01-June 30, 2024 was announced as 0.760871. In this context;

Short-term Military Service Fee Amount: 240.000 x 0,760871 (civil servant monthly coefficient) =182.609,04 TL

Additional Fee Amount (Monthly): 3.500 x 0,760871 x 1 = 2.663,05 TL (for Absconders / Fugitives)[2].

The table below shows the change in the price of short-term military service in dollar terms.

Table 1. Change in the price of short-term military service in dollar terms

Time Period	Turkish Lira	USD Dollars
2019 June	31343	5397
2019 July-December	33230	5851
2020 January – June	35054	5894
2020 July – December	37070	5417
2021 January – June	39788	5406
2021 July - December	43150	4973
2022 January – June	56507	4210

[2] https://www.msb.gov.tr/Askeralma/icerik/bedelli-askerlik

Table 1. (continued)

2022 July – December	80063	4790
2023 January – June	104084	5565
2023 July - December	122351	4700
2024 January - June	182609	6155

Source 1 HaberTürk

Note: The dollar amount is calculated based on the Central Bank of the Republic of Turkey's foreign exchange buying rate on the first business day of the relevant period[3].

The table below shows the minimum wage in Türkiye between 2019-2024.

Table 2. Minimum wage in Türkiye between 2019-2024

Time Period	Net Minimum Wage (in TL)
2019	2020,90
2020	2324,71
2021	2825,90
2022 January – June	4253,40
2022 July – December	5500,35
2023 January – June	8506,80
2023 July – December	11402,32
2024 January	17002,12

Source 2Ministry of Labor and Social Security[4]

The tables illustrate the economic instability and high inflation in Türkiye, which significant impact the cost and affordability of short-term military service. In a climate characterized by high rates of inflation and economic instability, money loses purchasing power. The price of products and services—including military service—

[3] https://www.haberturk.com/bedelli-askerlikte-dolar-rekoru-3650759-ekonomi#:~:text=DOLAR%20BAZINDA%20EN%20YÜKSEK%20BEDELLİ%20ASKERLİK%20ÜCRETİ&text=2022%20temmuz%20ayında%204.790%20dolar,ücreti%20dolar%20bazında%20ne%20oldu%3F

[4] https://www.csgb.gov.tr/media/93378/netbrutasgari.pdf

tends to increase as a result. This effect is especially noticeable in the case of military spending expressed in a stable currency such as the US dollar. A weaker local currency relative to the US dollar may result in higher costs.

In order to provide further details about this operationalization, individuals who qualify for short-term military service should have chosen this course of action within the parameters set forth by the legislation following Türkiye's 2019 legalization of the military service program. This time restriction guarantees that the study's focus is on those who, in the context of the altered circumstances brought about by the new legislation, had the option to choose for financially and legally compensated military duty. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, " short-term military service" refers to the voluntarily given payments by individuals in order to satisfy their obligations under the law under the post-2019 legal framework in Türkiye regarding mandatory military service.

1.4. Assumptions

The research design and interpretation of the study's results are informed by specific assumptions. It is imperative to acknowledge these assumptions in order to provide clarity on the scope of the study and to contextualize the research within its limitations.

Despite their financial means, individuals in the long-term group often opt against short-term military service, raising questions about the significance of military service within their constructs of masculinity and societal roles. For these men, military service might symbolize not just a duty to their country but also a rite of passage, a demonstration of honor, and a validation of their masculinity. Understanding the interplay between financial resources, societal expectations, and personal beliefs is crucial in deciphering why this group may choose long-term military service over the short-term alternative. Such decisions likely reflect complex negotiations of identity, duty, and social status within the context of Turkish society. Comparisons with other socioeconomic groups shed light on the multifaceted nature of masculinity and the diverse factors influencing perceptions of military service.

Hence, it is assumed that individuals' decisions regarding military service are influenced by financial factors, including income and economic stability. It is also assumed that the personal values and beliefs of the participants—such as their views on duty, honor, and patriotism—have a significant influence on how they make decisions. People frequently use a feeling of duty as a compass in their daily lives. In this sense, duty refers to a moral or ethical commitment one has to one's family, community, and country. It is expected that how participants prioritize and understand this sense of obligation will impact their decisions about serving in the military. It is assumed that individuals' perspectives on military duty are intricately linked to their personal interpretation of honor. Participants may associate honor with courageously fulfilling one's obligations and contributing positively to society. It is expected that their decision to enlist in the military will align with their notion of an honorable path, emphasizing the significance placed on virtues such as duty, integrity, and sacrifice. It is anticipated that the participants' perspectives on patriotism will influence how they make decisions. In this meaning, patriotism is a feeling of love and allegiance to the country. It is assumed that people may see serving in the military as an expression of their patriotism and a way to support their nation's security and well-being. As duty, honor, and patriotism are dynamic elements impacting the participants' perceptions and decisions regarding military service, this assumption acknowledges the complex interaction of personal values. It is critical to comprehend how these values are created and assimilated into the cultural and societal framework, influencing people's stories and choices. Therefore, individuals' motivations for military service may not only stem from a sense of duty to their country but also from a desire to fulfill societal expectations of masculinity. This connection between patriotism and masculinity highlights the complex interplay between personal values, societal norms, and gender roles, influencing participants' narratives and choices regarding military service.

This study makes the assumption that masculinity is a dynamic notion that is shaped by broader society changes, such as legal, economic, and cultural developments. Its underlying theory is that changes to legal frameworks—like the 2019 revisions to the regulations pertaining to military service—have an impact on how middle-class men understand and embody masculinity. The underlying premise acknowledges the

relationship between personal conceptions of gender identity and cultural structures. Hence, this study makes the assumption that the importance of military service in the formation of masculinity is dynamic and subject to change over time. It is based on the idea that sentiments toward military duty are not set in stone and can alter in response to larger sociocultural movements, especially among middle-class individuals. The thesis makes the assumption that cultural views of military service as a rite of passage, representing honor, duty, and dedication to one's country, may change. It acknowledges that societal norms and cultural narratives influence the symbolic significance of military service in establishing masculine identity.

The goal of the study is to investigate how, in the context of the middle class, these cultural attitudes could change. This presumption also includes societal beliefs about how military service defines masculinity. It acknowledges that there's a chance that changing national interests, globalization, and gender dynamics will have an impact on the conventional link between military duty and male identity. This also gives room for individual agency with respect to importance given to military service in masculinity constructions and generational shifts, reflecting that younger generations' values may be different from those before. This presumption directs the research's investigation into the potential shifts in the middle class demographic's symbolic value of military duty, which sheds insight on the changing nature of male identity in the particular context of military service in Türkiye.

1.5. Research Method

This study uses a qualitative research design to look into the complex dynamics of masculinity among Turkish middle-class men in the context of military service. It is believed that the selected methodology is best suited for exploring the subtle nuances of personal experiences, perceptions, and decision-making processes and experiences. This study chooses a qualitative approach in recognition of the complexity of masculinity and the necessity for a more thorough comprehension. Through a thorough examination of participants' subjective experiences, opinions, and values, qualitative research provides valuable insights into the complexity of their masculine identities.

With a focus on two different groups of men in comparable economic circumstances, the research design is structured as a comparative study. The study compares those who choose to serve in the military for pay with those who serve the required amount of time in order to identify any possible differences in how the middle-class constructs and perceives masculinity.

Men who have served in the military between the ages of 24 and 34 are the target population for this study. Two distinct categories emerge from this cohort: those who opted for short-term military service and those who adhered to the long-term service period. A targeted investigation of the influence of economic decisions on the formation of masculinity is made possible by this purposeful selection.

The main technique for gathering data is semi-structured, in-depth interviews. By speaking with participants face-to-face, the researcher can extract rich narratives that reveal the nuances of their experiences serving in the military and the corresponding ideas about masculinity. The interviews' qualitative format makes it easier to comprehend participants' attitudes, values, and decision-making procedures in detail.

Confidentiality, informed permission, and participant anonymity are guaranteed by following ethical norms throughout the research procedure. The qualitative design places emphasis on the agency and voices of the participants, enabling them to make genuine contributions to the investigation of masculinity in the Turkish military setting.

The goal of the one- to three-hour interviews was to fully convey the breadth and depth of the participants' experiences. There were open-ended questions in which participants could decide how quickly and how much they disclosed.

Prior to every interview, participants were fully informed about the study's objectives, potential outcomes, and the voluntary nature of their participation. The informed consent process made it obvious that participation in the activity was entirely voluntary and that participants might stop at any time without suffering any consequences. Pseudonyms were used throughout the interview process to protect

participants' identities and identity. The participants were allowed to choose a name that best matched them, which allowed them to be open and honest in their narratives.

In conclusion, this study uses a qualitative methodology based on a comparative study to explore the intricacies of masculinity in Turkish military duty. The study intends to provide important insights into how economic decisions interact with the production of masculinity within the middle-class population by using in-depth interviews with two economically similar but distinct groups.

1.6. Significance and Contribution of the Study

The field of gender and military research is of great significance, beyond the walls of military organizations. Gender conceptions, practices, and effects in military settings are not exclusive to military culture; they also influence broader society conceptions of gender. Social conceptions of gendered identities, masculinities, and femininities are greatly influenced by these military cultures, ideals, practices, and histories. There is a long history of the melding of masculinities and militaries, especially in the context of nation-state and imperial histories (Woodward & Duncanson, 2017). Consequently, military institutions have additionally influenced our conception of what it means to be a man. Important works like "Masculinities" by Raewyn Connell and "Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives" by Cynthia Enloe have made it possible to comprehend the ways in which military organizations influence the formation of gender roles. These seminal works explore the ways in which masculinity and femininity are constructed in relation to military organizations, providing important insights into the larger socio-political ramifications of militarization. By concentrating on Türkiye's middle class, this study goes one step further and provides a distinctive perspective for analyzing the relationship between masculinity and socioeconomic status in the particular setting of military duty. While previous research offers insightful analyses of the gendered aspects of military service, this study offers a novel viewpoint by focusing on a particular socioeconomic group within the Turkish setting. In doing so, it aims to shed light on the subtleties and complexity of the relationship between economic

privilege and the construction of masculine identities in the particular context of the Turkish military.

In the Turkish context, military service is considered a fundamental component in the development of a masculine identity, as traditional gender norms are deeply embedded in society structures. The stories that come out of this research aim to give voice to people who are frequently left out of conversations about gender and militarization. By emphasizing the experiences of men from the middle class, the study challenges preconceived notions about socioeconomic status and its bearing on male identity, while simultaneously highlighting the diversity within the larger story of military service. In addition, the investigation of short-term military service adds a fresh perspective to the discussion of social and cultural significance. Short-term (*bedelli*) military service is a relatively new occurrence in the Turkish military, raising concerns about changing masculinity dynamics, economic factors influencing military decisions, and cultural expectations. By exploring these unexplored areas, this study provides a new viewpoint on the social and cultural ramifications of this new trend.

By exploring the intricate relationship between military service experiences and the development of masculinity among middle-class men in Türkiye, this research significantly contributes to the field of academics. This study's importance is relevant to the larger fields of masculinity studies, gender studies, and military sociology.

Standardized in 2019, short-term military service is a relatively new and developing concept inside the Turkish military system and society. Although short-term military service is relatively new, there is a distinct lack of scholarly focus aimed at comprehending its dynamics and the two-way relationship between it and masculinity. The scant body of research on short-term military service that currently exists calls for a deeper investigation in order to fully understand the distinct obstacles, decisions, and effects that it places on people. Through the exploration of these unexplored domains, the study broadens the focus of gender studies and provides significant perspectives to the developing conversation about modern military's activities.

This study addresses this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the perceptions, decisions, and experiences of middle-class men regarding military service, as well as their understanding of the connections between masculinity and military service in Türkiye. The purposeful focus of this research on members of the middle class who have the means to enroll in the short-term military yet, interestingly, decide not to does much to underscore its scholarly value. This multifaceted approach adds a degree of complexity that deepens our knowledge of how individual decisions, the development of masculinity in the context of military service, and socioeconomic factors interact. The study enhances the narrative landscape of masculinity by focusing on individuals who choose to serve in the military in accordance with conventional values even in the context of financial opportunities. The study adds to the diversity of masculine narratives by elevating the perspectives of those who make unorthodox decisions within their socioeconomic setting. This diversity is essential to eradicating stereotypes of masculinity and recognizing the complex interactions between various factors that influence people's decisions within larger social contexts. The deliberately designed inclusion of middle class rejectors of short-term military service has wider consequences for comprehending class relations in society. This study explores the intricate relationships between social class, economic factors, and masculine identity in the Turkish military context by examining the intersections between financial advantage and ideas of duty, honor, and patriotism.

This study also contributes by challenging the hypothesized direct relationship between patriotism and long-term military service and illustrating the diversities. In addition, it also makes an important contribution by showing that the groups of men who do short-term military service or long-term military service are not homogeneous groups within themselves. Just as there are those who do short-term military service and emphasize their perceptions of traditional masculinity or have high perceptions of nationalism, there are also those who do long-term military service and touch upon alternative non-traditional and inclusive masculinities and say that they do not feel a sense of nationalism. Therefore, this thesis challenges the oversimplistic assumption, emphasizes diversity and makes an important contribution to both the masculinity and militarism literature in showing differences.

By going beyond traditional bounds and recognizing that masculinity occurs along a dynamic continuum rather than within set constraints, the study stands as an inspirational endeavor in gender research. Through a clear investigation of how people view their masculinity in the context of military duty, the study gives a voice to people who are frequently marginalized in popular discourse. In order to contribute to a more thorough understanding of the complex relationship between gender identity and military service choices, it aims to elevate the experiences of people whose narratives may be eclipsed by prevailing discourses. Through illuminating the distinct stories of Turkish middle-class males, the study promotes a sophisticated comprehension that surpasses conventional gender roles. It seeks to serve as a catalyst for inclusive and knowledgeable dialogues, opening the door to a broader understanding of gender identity in the dynamic context of Turkish military duty.

This study holds significance not only for its academic contribution but also for its societal impact. It sheds light on the evolving dynamics of duty, honor, and patriotism among Türkiye's middle-class men, untangling the complexities of these concepts within the framework of military service. By providing policymakers, sociologists, and the public with a comprehensive understanding of the societal implications of these changes, it offers valuable insights for shaping legislation related to military service. Additionally, it adds to the growing body of knowledge on masculinity in the Turkish context, contributing to international conversations on gender studies and challenging existing presumptions about the interaction between socioeconomic factors and gender identity. Through its nuanced exploration of masculinity within the context of military duty, the study amplifies the voices of marginalized individuals and seeks to elevate their experiences in understanding the complex relationship between gender identity and military service choices. Ultimately, it aims to foster inclusive and informed dialogues that deepen our understanding of gender identity in the dynamic landscape of Turkish society.

1.7. Outline of the Thesis

To provide an outline of the thesis, this section will be followed by the methodology section. The rationale for the chosen methodology, emphasizing the comparative

study design and participant selection criteria, will be elucidated in the research design and methodology section. Justifications for employing semi-structured interviews, thematic analysis technique, and data collection methods will be outlined, accompanied by a candid discussion of the study's underlying assumptions and limitations.

Prominent theories of masculinity, such as the widely accepted notion of hegemonic masculinity and the developing paradigm of hybrid masculinities, will be examined in the literature review. In order to comprehend the gender dynamics at work, the investigation will also look at feminist criticisms and historical viewpoints on military service. The discussion will be followed by providing brief picture on key works of masculinity studies in Türkiye and short-term military service literature.

In the findings section, a comprehensive comparison with regards to gender perceptions of the two groups is presented. Following that, the discussion will revolve around the perceptions of homeland, nation, nationalism, and patriotism. Here, the transformation with regards to how nationalism is constructed for them and the relationship between nationalism and military service is analyzed. Additionally, what men in both groups think about other type of military service and those who choose the other type is presented. It is suggested that while military service can have some benefits for personal growth and maturation, the participants do not see it as a necessary experience for becoming men. Finally, decision-making factors of middle-class men is elaborated under four main typologies. In the conclusion chapter, the main arguments of the thesis is discussed alongside with theories and suggestions.

CHAPTER 2

METHODOLOGY

Being a part of in the military has long been seen as a rite of passage that marks the shift from boyhood to manhood. Military service has historically been viewed as a turning point in the development of a masculine identity, as well as the cultural, psychological, and symbolic aspects associated with it. This master's thesis seeks to explore the complex relationship between ideas of masculinity and military duty, with a particular focus on whether Turkish men's perceptions of military service as a rite of passage into manhood. The thesis argues that given the prevalence of short-term military service and responses of interviewees', military's role in masculinity construction is losing its importance for a group of men from middle-class. The study's theoretical frameworks and contextual underpinnings will be thoroughly examined in this chapter. Being a part of in the military has long been seen as an essential rite of passage that marks the shift from boyhood to manhood. Military service has historically been viewed as a turning point in the development of a masculine identity, as well as the cultural, psychological, and symbolic aspects associated with it.

A meticulous approach to analysis is essential for fully grasping the intricate interplay between military service and the shifting paradigms of masculinity. With a focus on qualitative research methodologies, self-reflection, and a feminist perspective, this chapter explores the nuances of the selected study design. The approach illuminates the complex character of the men's testimonies by acting as a compass for the investigation of their experiences in the military. The decision to employ qualitative research techniques is motivated by a desire to fully convey the richness and depth of unique experiences. By going beyond statistical representations, qualitative research gives us a deeper knowledge of the actual lives

of our participants. Taking a feminist stance guarantees an acute awareness of gender dynamics and is consistent with the principles of inclusivity and equality.

The research design used to examine the evolving value of military service experiences for middle-class men in Türkiye is described in this chapter. The goal of the study design is to understand the subtleties of men's decision-making processes regarding short-term and long-term military service, as well as the ways in which these decisions interact with societal norms and ideas of masculinity. The research question and sub questions are designed as:

RQ1: How do the constructs and perceptions of masculinity vary between middle-class men in Türkiye who choose long-term military service despite having financial resources and those who do not? What factors influence their decisions regarding military service, and how do these decisions shape their experiences and understanding of masculinity within the context of their class positions?

Sub-question(s):
SQ1: How do men's opinions about military duty, views on masculinity, and perceptions of society expectations affect their decision-making when choosing between short-term (which is currently 28-days) military service and long-term (conventional) military service (6 or 12 months) in Türkiye?

SQ2: What are the differing factors which affect the middle-class men’s decision-making process regarding the duration of the military service?

SQ3: How do individual perceptions of masculinity and military service contribute to the decision-making process regarding the type of military service undertaken?

SQ4: How do individuals who choose short-term military service and those who prefer traditional 6- or 12-month service perceive and position their own masculinity and each other's masculinity?

SQ5: What are the commonalities in the perceptions of masculinity and nationalism of people who do short-term military service and long-term military service? What are the visible differences, if there is any?

2.1. Researcher's Positioning

2.1.1. Research Philosophy: Feminist Standpoint

It was critical that I be explicit about how I intended to understand and conduct 'feminist research,' given that I intended to approach the project from a feminist standpoint. If sexism is the central problem that feminism seeks to solve, then males, to put it very simply, are vital to the continuation and disruption of these relationships (Stanley & Wise, 1993). Thus, even while we recognize the importance of doing research on women in particular, feminist research should not be limited to one field. Rather, feminist study ought to broaden its scope to embrace all members of society including men and all aspects of social reality (Stanley & Wise, 1993). This encourages a more inclusive investigation of the complex relationships and power dynamics that exist within society and moves beyond a binary understanding of gender issues. It aims for a more comprehensive knowledge of the intricacies inherent in gender relations by expanding the focus of feminist study to include the experiences, contributions, and difficulties faced by both men and women. Feminist research ought to broaden its scope to encompass the roles and experiences of males as part of its dedication to confronting and destroying sexist institutions and gender inequality. This enlarged viewpoint advances our understanding of the complex interactions between genders in forming social realities and is consistent with the larger objectives of gender equality.

As I developed my feminist research framework, I emphasized a number of important ideas that are consistent with the main ideas of studies on men and masculinity. First of all, I made a commitment to go beyond stereotypes and acknowledged the complexity of masculinity. This is in line with the main goal of research on men and masculinity, which is to examine the variety of men's identities, experiences, and manifestations of masculinity.

Second, I adopted the notion of examining gender-related power relations in my research method. Specifically, I wanted to look critically at hegemonic masculinity and how it shapes society's expectations of males. In order to be in line with research

on men and masculinity, this alignment required a dedication to figuring out how various social categories interact with dominant forms of masculinity to shape the experiences of various groups of men.

Furthermore, I realized that it was important to counteract negative preconceptions connected to masculinity using my feminist research methodology. This was in line with the goals of studies on men and masculinity, which are to refute inaccurate and harmful stereotypes of masculinities, which is key to more equity. In order to emphasize more positive and varied forms of masculinity that might be obscured by conventional norms, the research attempted to investigate alternative narratives. The military setting, being a homosocial institution, offers an exceptional scenario to investigate whether homosocial environments can encourage questioning conventional masculinity norms. In short, I sought to close the gap between these interrelated fields by deliberately integrating the tenets of men and masculinity studies into my feminist research strategy. This integrated method aimed to further an in-depth investigation of men's experiences and representations of masculinity, in addition to fostering a more thorough understanding of gender.

This study aims to explore the relationship between military service and masculinity ideals and whether or not the significance given to military service as a rite of passage of manhood changes among the Turkish male. This aim is in line with feminist aims and feminist research methods as it focuses on a homosocial setting where masculinity is (re)constructed and as such aims to understand the gender inequalities, questioning the possibility of change. This study does not embrace a feminist standpoint because it is conducted by a woman but because its aim is to understand power relations (both between different genders and among different men/masculinities). It aims to analyze the gendered character of the tasks assigned to individual by the society throughout their life. The goal of achieving gender equality and challenging conventional gender norms and stereotypes is at the core of the feminist movement as a social and political movement. Feminism has traditionally concentrated on tackling the obstacles and injustices that women encounter. But as feminist theory has developed, it has come to understand how critical it is to scrutinize and question cultural norms and expectations that are connected to all

genders, including men. Studies on men and masculinities support feminist objectives by contributing to the dismantling of conventional gender norms and stereotypes, especially through interrogations on hegemonic masculinity, toxic masculinity, gender norms, gender fluidity, intersectionality, homophobia, and misogyny.

It is important to note that all knowledge is biased and inadequate. Historically, women have been excluded from or silenced in knowledge production. This has led to questionings about what 'objectivity' means in social research. Haraway (2016) argues that "Situated knowledges require that the object of knowledge be pictured as an actor and agent, not as a screen or a ground or a resource, never finally as slave to the master that closes off the dialectic in his unique agency and his authorship of "objective" knowledge" (p.592). Furthermore, knowledge is not something to be discovered but instead, it depends on a power-charged social relation of conversation (Haraway, 2016). Haraway (2016) suggests a more complex and dynamic relationship between the world, language, and human interpretation, urging a critical reconsideration of traditional humanist perspectives where the world does not communicate its essence without human interpretation, nor does it cease to exist if not decoded by a 'master decoder'. Therefore, there is no fixed, unchanging set of meanings embedded in the world, independent of human engagement. Instead, Haraway (2016) contends that *feminist objectivity* means *situated knowledges*, highlighting how crucial it is to understand the particular social, cultural, and individual circumstances that shape the formation of knowledge. Essentially, the perspective of the researcher, influenced by their multiple identities, becomes a crucial element of the research methodology. This viewpoint highlights the need to accept subjectivity and recognizing the situational aspect of knowledge generation, encouraging a more nuanced conception of objectivity.

2.1.2. Self-reflexivity

Johnson (2018) defines reflexivity as "the rhetorical process of looking in on the self and how our performances of identity connect politically and personally to the world" (p.2). Self-reflexivity urges us to be mindful of the language, performative,

and material elements that define our identities and shape our understanding of gender as either reinforcement or resistance in our daily lives, whether subconsciously or consciously (Johnson, 2018). According to Alvesson, Hardy and Harley (2008), reflexivity plays an instrumental role for the research as "reflexivity is not primarily an end in itself, but a means to improve research in some ways" (p.495).

Hearn's (2013) positioning of non-male researchers studying masculinity is very important to note, which argues that "studying men cannot be left only to men, or to non-feminists. Men's knowledge of men is at best limited and partial, at worst violently patriarchal. Subject positions are intersectionally different for women and men: women are researching/writing in relation to another object, 'men'; men are in relation to a similar object, a category of which they are part" (pp.34-35). Also, one should always bear in mind that "masculinity does not exist in isolation from femininity" (Crawford, 2003, p.1423). I do not identify myself within the binary sex category, but instead think of myself as nonbinary. However, as I can be easily assigned as female in the eyes of the participants, I will take the concerns about women studying/interviewing men into consideration in the following sections of the chapter. Being a non-binary researcher, I am committed to investigating how varied masculinities are experienced inside the military because my personal experiences navigating gender identity have greatly inspired my scholarly curiosity. I am sensitive to the diverse ways people negotiate and show their masculinity, particularly in settings that have historically upheld traditional gender standards, having personally dealt with the challenges of gender identification. I understand that the study procedure may be naturally influenced by my non-binary identification. This recognition gives me a unique point of view that can help advance knowledge of gender dynamics in military settings, thus I see it as not a drawback but a strength. I am steadfast in my dedication to reflexivity and honest in my handling of any potential biases resulting from my positionality. I believe that my gender identification and its fluid character increase my curiosity and makes me want to explore areas restricted to one specific gender. Military as an institution has long been a men-only area where masculinity is produced and reproduced constitutes a unique context in this regard.

Altınay (2013) also points out to difficulties of studying militarism and masculinities as a woman by stating that many of the interviewees were sure that she would never be able to fully understand their experiences of military service just by listening to their stories. After all, she had never "been there" and would never be able to enter the barracks, a man's world, through the well-guarded barracks gates. I find myself inhabiting a unique position that incorporates aspects of both insider and outsider perspectives in the discourse surrounding my function as an insider or outsider in this endeavor. My identification is multifaceted; as a non-binary person who does not personally serve in the military, I fall into a category that is difficult to categorize as either insider or outsider. One could argue that, since I am not a man, I am an outsider and hence not subject to the experience of compulsory military duty. This distinguishes it clearly from the first-hand experience with obligated service, which is a major part of the military experience for men. Nonetheless, it is imperative to acknowledge that the military establishment surpasses the limitations of compulsory service and goes beyond the exclusive domain of a male-only encounter.

Every element of society is influenced by military culture, including language, customs, and interpersonal relationships. In this larger sense, the military institution has a significant impact on people who are not explicitly obligated to perform community service. The effects of the military extend beyond the domain of fit, straight men; it also fosters an atmosphere in which women and LGBTI+ people are disproportionately impacted. Within the military culture, these groups operate in a special area that is frequently marked by discriminatory policies and a lack of acknowledgment. Because of this, my non-binary identification serves as a prism through which to examine the military institution's wider ramifications, which go beyond the limited scope of compulsory service and exclusively male experiences. As a researcher navigating this complex terrain, my approach hinges on acknowledging the multifaceted interactions between internal and external dynamics. I recognize that the military institution exerts influence on individuals in diverse ways, extending beyond mere obligatory duties. My commitment to unveiling the intricacies of gender, identity, and cultural norms within the broader framework of the military institution is shaped by this nuanced comprehension.

Throughout the interviews, a fascinating dynamic surfaced as the participants I spoke with came to understand my feminist position. When they realized they may have spoken something interpreted as sexist, they frequently took a moment to apologize, indicating that they were conscious of their mistakes. I constantly reminded them at these points that candid and open communication was valued. It became clear that my feminist viewpoint affected the study environment whether I was aware of it or not. The language used in the question set and the natural flow of our discussions both may unintentionally reflect my feminist point of view. The participants demonstrated a heightened sensitivity to feminist considerations by responding to perceived violations with self-censorship, suggesting that they were attuned to this perspective. This dynamic brought attention to participant caution, but it also showed how my positionality affected the research process.

The way that my personal history and feminist viewpoint are woven into the research framework has important ramifications for the investigation of men's experiences serving in the military. I offer a distinctive perspective to the investigation of how men negotiate and understand their responsibilities in the military since I grew up in a household where my father and brother fostered traditional ideas of masculinity. The intricacies of masculinity, especially in the context of military service, are more noticeable when one observes them through the eyes of someone who has seen the conventional gender norms embodied. The analysis of men's military experiences is further complicated by the middle-class setting in which I grew up. Economic considerations, which are frequently entwined with ideas of masculinity, might influence people's judgments about joining the military, particularly if short-term service is an option. One aspect that is consistent with the larger research investigation into the changing meaning of military service for Turkish males is the impact of socioeconomic position on views of duty, honor, and masculinity. Interestingly, the story becomes more complex because of my brother's decision to do short-term military service despite the dominant heritage of masculinity in our home. It emphasizes that decisions made by individuals about military duty are impacted by a variety of circumstances, such as personal preference and societal changes, and are not only determined by the values upheld in the home.

Recognizing my identity as a queer feminist scholar draws attention to the gender dynamics that exist in the military on a larger scale. It makes one think about the ways in which different forms of masculinity are negotiated within a system that has historically upheld gender norms. via nuances that may be missed via more traditional lenses, the queer feminist perspective invites a critical analysis of language, power systems, and the lived realities of males in the military. Simply the way my identity intersects with the dynamics of the research provides a comprehensive understanding of the intricate interactions that exist between personal experiences, societal norms, and the larger background of military service. It supports the notion that the subjectivity of the researcher, far from being a barrier, can be an important instrument for separating out the complex stories that shape the changing terrain of masculinities in the armed services.

2.2. Methodological Framework

2.2.1. Why Qualitative Research?

The decision to use qualitative approaches in this study was based on the understanding that different people have different perceptions on social reality. Qualitative procedures are seen to be better suited for exploring the complex fabric of descriptions and experiences than quantitative approaches, which work with numerical data. Qualitative study provides a depth that transcends the limitations of numerical data in order to comprehend men's individual experiences within homosocial groupings, enabling a more nuanced exploration.

Within the field of studies on masculinity, qualitative approaches are preferred. Quantitative methods have a tendency to consolidate masculinity by reducing it to a static psychological feature, as described by Schrock and Schwalbe (2009). They argue that “qualitative methods provide the best insight into how men present themselves as gendered beings” (Schrock & Schwalbe, 2009, p.279). Validating the choice of a qualitative research technique, life experiences—especially those associated with homosocial interactions and military service—are best articulated through personal connections and in-depth study.

The choice to use qualitative methodologies is also consistent with the more general conversations in the field of masculinity studies. According to Hearn (2013), men and non-feminists cannot be the only ones who study men. Rather, it calls for a more inclusive and expansive viewpoint that goes beyond gender stereotypes. In order to acknowledge that men and women are equally gendered within gender relations, it is imperative that the gendered category of men within the social sciences be made evident.

The present study indicates that qualitative methods, specifically semi-structured in-depth interviews, are the most efficacious approach for deciphering the intricate narratives pertaining to men's experiences serving in the military. Exploring the complex dynamics of homosocial interactions in the military context requires the use of qualitative approaches, which facilitate a deeper understanding of individual viewpoints and demolish conventional concepts of masculinity.

2.2.2. Semi-structured In-depth Interviews

The qualitative methodology used in this study is based on semi-structured in-depth interviews, which were selected for their capacity to dive deeply into participant narratives and offer nuanced insights into how men create and portray their gendered identities. The choice to eschew quantitative techniques, such surveys and questionnaires, is based on the conviction that the complexity of the topic demands a more thorough and intimate investigation. Establishing a secure environment where individuals feel comfortable disclosing sensitive or traumatic experiences is crucial, and in person relationships help build trust and enable a deeper examination of their viewpoints.

Talja (1999) offers a fascinating perspective on the nuances of narrative interpretation when she compares interview analysis to a jigsaw puzzle. A more nuanced viewpoint replaces the traditional method of presenting interviews as coherent narrative with distinct messages. The analysis in this study avoids applying a predetermined narrative framework to the testimonies of the participants. Rather, it welcomes the complexity that comes with different stories. Interviews can be thought

of as jigsaw puzzle pieces, with each participant adding a special piece to the overall picture. The focus switches from looking for overt messages to spotting minute patterns of similarity and difference amongst participant accounts. This method recognizes the value of a variety of experiences and viewpoints and enables a more comprehensive understanding. Taking on Talja's viewpoint transforms the analysis into a dynamic process of solving the puzzle while navigating the complex relationships between stories. The emphasis is on the subtle subtleties, variances, and consistencies that emerge collectively in addition to what is clearly given. This strategy is in line with the study's dedication to documenting the complicated and varied aspects of men's experiences serving in the military, accepting the intricacy of the tales as essential pieces of a bigger, more intricate picture.

2.2.3. Purposive Sampling

Purposive sampling was used in this study as a deliberate and strategic method of participant selection. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique that is distinguished by the deliberate selection of participants according to standards that coincide with the study goals. By concentrating on circumstances that are rich in information and pertinent to the research goal, this approach was selected to enable an in-depth investigation. When the objective is to examine circumstances that have distinctive qualities or satisfy predetermined criteria, purposeful sampling becomes especially useful (Başaran, 2019). To explore the natural and social dynamics surrounding military service experiences and perspectives, I chose participants based on the characteristics that are linked to the study's main themes. Purposive sampling is used, which is consistent with the qualitative character of the study and highlights the significance of comprehending and placing participant experiences within the selected contexts. This methodological decision contributes to a thorough understanding of the investigated topic by enabling a nuanced exploration of the complex relationships between individuals, their perspectives, and the larger society context.

Because military service experiences vary widely and the Turkish socio-cultural setting is changing, purposive sampling makes it possible to include participants who

embody distinct viewpoints and traits. Participants with six or twelve months of compulsory military service and those experiencing short-term military service provide unique perspectives that advance a thorough investigation of the study concerns. Essentially, the utilization of purposive sampling functions as a methodological approach that is closely linked to the qualitative character of the study. It guarantees that the chosen individuals offer complex viewpoints, promoting a greater comprehension of the complex dynamics pertaining to men's perceptions and experiences with military duty in the Turkish setting.

2.2.4. Snowball Sampling

The research on men's evolving experiences with military service in Türkiye benefited greatly from the use of snowball sampling, which increased the number of participants and improved the diversity of viewpoints. The snowball sampling technique was deliberately used to capitalize on preexisting relationships and increase the range of participants included after the initial purposive sample interviews. The first people chosen by purposive sampling provided their perspectives on their experiences serving in the military, and this started the process. These participants were then requested to suggest more people who could provide insightful viewpoints for the study. The identification of more participants was made possible by this cascading referral mechanism, which also created a network of interconnected insights within the study.

When people did not fit the first set of requirements—such as those with different income levels and lengths of military service—the snowball sampling method worked very well. The research was able to gather a wider range of perspectives and experiences connected to military service thanks to participant recommendations, which enhanced the scope and depth of the study. Through the utilization of snowball sampling as part of the sample approach, the study was able to reach participants that might not have been initially found using purposive sampling in segregation. This method added to the overall depth of the research findings by fostering a more thorough understanding of the variables impacting men's decisions on military

service. A total of 4 participants, 1 of which went for short-term military service, was involved through snowball sampling.

2.2.5. Research Design

The research is strategically designed to offer complex insights into middle-class men's perspectives and experiences of masculinity in Türkiye, with a special emphasis on their decisions to enlist in the military. Fourteen individuals, who ranged in age from 24 to 34 during the study period, were chosen to participate in semi-structured in-depth interviews. This age range was selected to ensure the study's relevance to the participants' experiences in real life at a critical juncture when people are most likely to enlist in the military. The chosen age range corresponds to a critical life stage during which people usually enlist in the military. Due to the significant identity construction that occurs during this time, it offers an ideal setting for investigating how military service experiences affect ideas of masculinity.

Intentionally, the sample was divided into two groups according to military service experiences. Seven of the participants chose to serve in the military for short-term, four finished the standard 12-month service, and three served for six months. The purposeful inclusion of these categories was to disentangle the intricate dynamics affecting middle-class men's decision-making with respect to the length of military service and financial commitment.

Participants who chose not to serve in the armed forces for pay were further limited to those who served in the armed forces after 2019 in order to guarantee a thorough investigation. This temporal limitation is consistent with the 2019 legal rearrangement of the military service system. By concentrating on individuals who joined after 2019, it is possible to examine those who made the decision to enlist in the military with greater clarity, highlighting their choices in light of updated financial and legal structures. By revealing value judgments, socioeconomic factors, and changing ideas about masculinity, this purposeful decision gives the study's analytical framework more nuance and perspective.

The middle class was chosen on the grounds that members of this social class typically have the resources to choose to serve in the military for pay if they so want. Nonetheless, the choice not to proceed could be influenced by complex value assessments. Although it is acknowledged that those from lower socioeconomic classes may encounter obstacles to enlisting in the military, the purpose of this research is to specifically concentrate on the decision-making processes of middle-class persons. This focused method offers a context-specific knowledge by enabling a nuanced investigation of the relationship among masculinity, socioeconomic position, and military service. By using this approach, the study provides a rationale for its scope and relevance while providing answers to particular issues about the -middle-class milieu. The special goal of investigating the decision-making processes within a socioeconomic category that could have to choose between short-term and long-term service justifies the decision to not concentrate on the lower class. This focused method enables an in-depth analysis of the selected demographic's value assessments, socioeconomic factors, and masculinity perceptions.

In order to ensure an equitable representation, the participants were further divided into two groups: those who served for six months and those who served for twelve months. During the recruiting process and casual conversations with others in my network, there was a general consensus that the 12-month military service duration was preferable because it would provide income and minimum expenses.

Income level was an additional consideration in the participant recruitment procedure. I set a minimal salary level in order to explore the reasons why men choose not to serve in the short-term military even though it is both legally and financially feasible. For the purposes of this study, those who earned at least twice the federal minimum wage while serving in the military were included. The objective of this criterion is to encompass the various financial factors that impact people's decisions about enlisting in the military.

Another criterion in participant recruitment process was that they self-identify their sexual orientation as heterosexual. Because there is an inherent connection between heteronormativity and military duty, this criterion was put into place. Being attracted

to men is a requirement for being exempt from military duty; this is called "*pembe tezkere*" (pink bill). Section 121 of the Turkish Military Penal Code has been invoked as the legal foundation for expelling people on the grounds of their sexual orientation. Since the LGBTI+ community is not welcome in the military, as indicated by Article 17/D-4 of the medical capability regulation, which classifies "sexual identity and behavior disorder," the study aims to investigate the intertwined dynamics of hegemonic masculinity and military service, making the heterosexual sample more contextually relevant[5].

2.3. Research Phases

2.3.1. Participant Recruitment Criteria

Based on the main variables influencing military service experiences, categories were created: decision-making of a short-term military service and the length of service (6 or 12 months). People were specifically sought out during the recruitment procedure in order to meet the predetermined quotas in each category. To find participants who fit the requirements, this required contacting several types of offline and online networks. The study employed a particular income threshold of at least twice the minimum pay just before the military service time for those who went for 6 or 12 months as a means of obtaining an understanding of the decision-making processes of those who satisfied this financial need. This criterion was essential to investigating the reasons for selecting or avoiding short-term military service. Research subjects are comprised of participants who completed compulsory military service. As the fundamental aim of this thesis is to understand whether significance attached to military service is declining, I decided to divide the participants in two main parts: who went for long-term military service (7 person) and who went for short-term military service (7 person).

A certain level of flexibility was kept to account for changes in participant availability while still meeting the pre-established quotas. Due to this, recruitment could be conducted in a dynamic and flexible manner. Several potential participants who otherwise fulfilled the requirements were just below the salary barrier, even

[5] https://kaosgldernegi.org/images/library/2016saglik-bakanligi-iin-lgbt-haklari-el-kitabi.pdf

after months of intensive work to find those who meet the criteria. Disappointed with the results of the long search for participants who exactly fit the predetermined parameters within the allotted time, the decision was made to include those who were just below the income barrier. Though first discouraging, this setback has a noteworthy consequence. It highlights a larger problem in the field of research: it is hard to find people who have the resources to do short-term military service but decide against it. There are not many participants that fit the exact requirements, which draws attention to a subtle portion of the research question by highlighting how uncommon or even reluctant it is for people to fit into this particular category. This acknowledgement adds another level of nuance to the research and makes one think about the complexities of investigating the reasons and choices made by people who can afford to do short-term military service. This methodology is consistent with the research's dedication to adaptability, guaranteeing a more diverse range of participant representation and advancing the thorough investigation of views and experiences related to military service.

As explained before, in the previous military service system, people other than university, master's or doctorate graduates were obliged to do compulsory military service for 12 months. According to the new regulation, the duration of compulsory military service has been reduced to 6 months regardless of education. One month of the 6-month military service consists of basic military training. In this context, the service period was determined as 6 months for conscripts and privates and 12 months for reserve officers and reserve non-commissioned officers. The conscripts and privates who wish to continue their military service after 6 months can continue their military service in the number deemed appropriate by the Ministry of National Defense as of the date they are entitled to be discharged with the positive evaluation of their line disciplinary superiors, limited to a period of 6 months, and may be discharged at the end of this period.

2.3.2. Information About the Participants

A table with the interviewees' pseudonyms they chose, ages, occupations, lengths of military service, and ages at which they served in the military is presented in the following page to give an overview of the group.

Table 3. Participants' Profile

Pseudonyms	**Age**	**Occupation**	**Education**	**Type of Military Service**	**Age at Military Service**
Karanfil	26	Food Engineer	University	Short-term	25
Joker	29	Assistant Specialist	University	Short-term	28
Muzi	28	Systems Engineer	University	Short-term	28
Aki	32	Real Estate Agent / Contractor	High School	Short-term	28
Mirket	28	Industrial Engineer	University	Short-term	28
Legolas	27	Lawyer	University	Short-term	25
Aslan	28	Businessperson	University	Short-term	28
Haunter	34	Researcher	University	6-months	29
Momo	28	Gaffer	High School	6-months	25
Özgür	33	Manager	University	6-months	30
X	24	Civil Servant	University	12-months	23
Gri	26	Bartender	High School	12-months	25
Orman Kanunu	27	Lawyer	University	12-months	25
Farazi	27	Civil Servant	Upper Secondary Education	12-months	26

The interviews took place in June and August of 2023. For convenience, I started with my close friends, and later on, I found participants through ties with other people. Of the seven individuals who did short-term military service, three were people I knew directly but did not know well, and the others got in touch through other people. The utilization of social media channels, namely Instagram, was crucial in the recruitment process for participants. Three of the five participants chose to do

short-term military service reached me after friends reissued the invitation to share their stories. Two more individuals became interested through further engagement through the Middle East Technical University's Facebook groups, *100. Yıl Sakinleri* and *100. Yıl Evleri.*

Any qualitative research project needs trust, especially when exploring delicate subjects like individual experiences with military service. Throughout the study, building trust between the participants and the researcher was a continuous and dynamic process. Participants received assurances that their names would be kept private and that the results would be reported using pseudonyms to preserve anonymity. The significance of maintaining the privacy of personal information apart from study findings was emphasized in an effort to allay privacy fears. During the interview procedure, participants' identities and anonymity were preserved by using pseudonyms. The freedom to select a name that suited them was granted to the participants, enabling them to be private and have open conversations. In addition to acting as a safety precaution, these selected pseudonyms were essential to the succeeding coding procedure. The chosen pseudonyms were employed as codes throughout data processing, which allowed for a methodical arrangement of responses while maintaining a veil of secrecy. This coding scheme helps to provide a detailed knowledge of individual opinions within the larger research setting while simultaneously protecting the participants' identity. In order to ensure that the results are both significant and protected, the use of pseudonyms adds an ethical component to the coding process and respects the autonomy of participants in crafting their story.

The interviews, ranging from 1 to 3 hours, aimed to capture the depth and richness of participants' experiences. Some of the questions were open-ended, so participants could choose how quickly and how much they revealed. This led to a variety of responses. The one and a half-hour interview catered to a range of communication styles, with participants selecting between concise, straightforward statements and longer, more expansive tales.

Participants received comprehensive information regarding the goals of the study, possible results, and the voluntary nature of their participation before to each

interview. The informed consent procedure made it clear that participants might quit from the activity at any time without facing any repercussions and that participation was completely voluntary. The objective of this transparent method was to foster a sense of agency among participants and empower them in the study process.

A comfortable and relaxed environment was attempted to foster during the interviews. Participants were able to ease into the conversation by starting with less delicate subjects and progressively developing rapport. In order to create an atmosphere where participants felt heard and understood, I tried to actively listen, validate their experiences, and show empathy. Recognizing the participants' varied experiences and backgrounds, I was adaptable in how the interview was conducted. The participants were allowed to tell their stories at their own pace and in their own way. Building trust required the researcher to be steadfast in honoring the viewpoints, feelings, and opinions of the participants.

Encouraging comments from participants during the interview process facilitated continuous improvements. The fast resolution of participant concerns strengthened the collaborative nature of the research. The study approach was continuously improved as a result of this iterative feedback loop. Establishing a relationship between the researcher and participant that is marked by openness, mutual respect, and a shared commitment to the research objectives required navigating these trust considerations.

A key component of methodological design is taking inspiration from previous research, especially in areas where there are not many in-depth investigations. The foundational work *Erkekliğin Türkiye Halleri* (Forms of Masculinity in Türkiye) and the master's thesis on short-term military service by Yirmidokuz (2021) are important points of reference for this study. This corpus of prior study offers insightful information and serves as a foundation for the investigation. A particular focus in the thorough analysis of these works was to grasp the subtleties of the question sets used. In order to examine the complex aspects of men's experiences within the framework of military duty, these issues are crucial building blocks. Each of the carefully created questions in the intended set has a clear justification, supported by knowledge from the body of current research. The procedure entails more than just

reproducing questions; it additionally requires carefully crafting an adaptation to make sure it aligns with the particular goals of the current investigation. To improve clarity, openness, and relevance in addressing the nuances of short-term military service experiences, each question's purpose is explained during the drafting phase. This methodological decision builds on the groundwork established by earlier research and demonstrates a dedication to a knowledgeable, context-specific investigation.

With the question form consisting of a total of 77 standard questions for short-term, differing for 6-months 12-months, I organized my questions under seven main headings as follows:

a. Demographic/personal information
b. Perceptions of masculinity
c. Perceptions of military service
d. Experiences before the military service
e. Experiences during the military service and narratives
f. Experiences after finishing the military service
g. Narrations about military service (advices)

Despite best efforts, the natural flow of the discourse sometimes dictated changes to the question sequence. This adaptability was intended to preserve a casual, welcoming atmosphere that encouraged truthful answers. The same set of questions were often posed to respondents, although the order occasionally changed to account for differences in conversational style. Question set can be found in the appendices.

Power dynamics must be recognized and addressed in the field of qualitative research, especially when working with personal narratives. There are inherent power disparities between the person with information and the person looking for it, as one participant wisely pointed out. Knowing this, I made an effort to build relationships with interview subjects that were based more on balance than hierarchy. Intentionally framing the interview as a collaborative conversation instead of a hierarchical interrogation helped to lessen traditional power differentials. A sincere and casual environment was fostered, participants were encouraged to speak freely without fear

of censorship, and it was emphasized that their contributions were anonymous and confidential. The goal of this strategy was to give participants a sense of agency so they could feel in charge of their stories. Rather than being presented as a professional interview, the dialogue was structured as a casual discussion. In order to create a more relaxed atmosphere, participants were encouraged to speak honestly about their ideas, just like they would while conversing with a friend. These steps were taken to make sure that participants felt empowered and in charge of the study process in addition to gathering genuine and unfiltered narratives. This kind of participant empowerment was essential to the study's ethical conduct and the accuracy of the data collected.

2.3.3. Challenges Encountered During Fieldwork

Finding individuals who had the financial means to choose short-term military duty but declined to do so was a major difficulty that arose during the research procedure. After my first attempt to find someone in my close circle did not work out, I tried reaching out to people in their social networks. Even after all of this time, the pool of possible participants was still not meeting the guidelines in terms of income brackets. The difficulty lay in the unique nature of the study; it needed a certain type of people, those who could afford to serve in the military but purposefully chose not to. The combination of this strict requirement and the delicate nature of financial conversations made it difficult to find appropriate participants. The first setback forced a reevaluation of recruitment strategies, which resulted in a more deliberate attempt to expand the search over wider social networks. This process brought to light the complexity of studying a specialized subject that depends on particular socioeconomic circumstances. The experience made clear the necessity of adaptability and flexibility in the research methodology, leading to changes in recruitment tactics to guarantee the inclusion of a range of viewpoints and experiences in the study. The difficulty was compounded by the deteriorating socioeconomic conditions in Türkiye and the progressive decline of the middle class. It was challenging to find individuals who fulfilled the prescribed income requirements because of financial limitations in my social circles and their wider networks.

Apart from the difficulties in locating participants who had the necessary financial resources, another important consideration was the variety of answers that were received during the recruitment and interview stages. While trying to reach to target group of the project, I have observed that especially men who did their military service 6 or 12 months have concerns in sharing their experiences. One of them said to me before the interview that “I am thinking about how honestly I can answer the questions you might ask”. And when I tried to comfort him about the anonymity, he said “I see. You can ask. If there is anything that I cannot be honest about, I will tell you that I will lie”. Another connection that reached out to me withdrew because he was a civil servant and very afraid to contribute to research even though I told him that he is not obliged to answer the questions that he does not want, and all the data will remain anonymous. While in social sciences the researcher can never know the exact credibility of the knowledge provided by the interviewee, such an obvious articulation attracts attention.

An additional level of complexity was introduced by the phenomena of participants "ghosting" at the time of the interview. When the time came for the interview, some people stopped responding or could not be reached, even though they had first expressed interest. This presented difficulties in terms of recruiting candidates on time and required extra work in terms of follow-ups, rescheduling and time management. The unpredictable nature of these dynamics necessitated a careful balancing act between the researcher's time and effort and the participants' concerns. The different answers made clear how crucial it is to respect participants' individuality and preferences while negotiating the complexities of a study issue including intimate and sometimes delicate accounts. The experiences of study participants who declined or stopped participating helped to clarify the intricate relationship between personal decisions and research dynamics in the setting of shifting socioeconomic circumstances.

The way that research study questions are phrased can have significant effects on the answers that participants provide. A conscious attempt was made to create questions in an impartial and neutral manner throughout the research process because it was recognized that question framing could have an impact on the authenticity and

quality of the data. Minimizing unintentional influences on participants' responses and ensuring that their viewpoints were accurately recorded were the main objectives. The foundation of this strategy was the promise to refrain from passing judgment or making recommendations on questions, thereby fostering an environment where participants felt free to voice their opinions. Participants' feedback revealed a common belief that the researcher was not taking any particular position and that the questions were objective. Ensuring that the researcher's aim and the participants' views are in alignment is crucial for upholding the study's integrity. The study aimed to uphold strong methodological standards and provide a comprehensive analysis of the interaction between financial decisions and military service choices by identifying the potential impact of question framing on participant responses and actively attempting to eliminate biases.

Unfortunately, a limited number of feminist analyses of women interviewing males are available, in sharp contrast to feminist interest in the dynamics of woman-to-woman interviews (Lee, 1997). Conducting interviews as a woman with men may present unique challenges that require thoughtful consideration and strategic approaches. Lee (1997) draws attention to this by arguing that because there is no prior knowledge about the subject, the interviewer faces a unique problem due to the fundamental nature of a single, one-off interview.

When talking with the applicant in the private setting of the interview, this lack of familiarity makes it challenging to determine whether there might be any possible threats or worries. Lee (1997) digs into her own set of personal safety methods and discusses the complex issues connected to control, rapport-building, and reciprocity that arise from using these tactics, in contrast to the minimal emphasis given to this problem in previous talks on interviews. Lee (1997) further suggest that women should still proceed with caution to the extent that makes them feel comfortable. Such concern that Lee carries has some reflections in my research process as well. This is the reason why I have decided to conduct the interviews online. My very first interview was with an acquaintance that I knew from high school and had common friends with. Hence, I did not have much hesitancy with regards to safety and conducted the interview face-to-face. However, later on, I realized that meeting with

people that I do not know and have any prior information created some safety concerns for me. Meeting someone I did not know in person presented possible safety risks such as violence or harassment, especially in light of the pervasiveness of prejudice and violence against women in Türkiye. Like numerous other countries, Türkiye has witnessed an increase in cases of harassment, discrimination, and violence against women and LGBTI+s based on their gender[6].

Physical safety, particularly when conducting interviews in unfamiliar or quiet places is an important issue in this regard. The fact that interviews contain questions that some can find intimate may lead to emotional outbursts, which may lead to intimidation and anxiety for the researcher. In light of the pervasiveness of gender-based violence and the lack of sufficient protection for women, interacting with individuals face-to-face in such a setting as a researcher made me anxious. The concern of being in circumstances where my safety could be jeopardized fueled my decision to conduct online interviews, which provided a safer alternative for communicating with participants while minimizing potential risks.

Also, the fact that both me and my participants were full-time workers at the time of research caused us to meet after work hours (after 7 pm earliest). In addition, given the long duration of the interviews and the transportation problems associated with meeting in places convenient for the individuals (such as long duration, late hours) and the scarcity of suitable places to conduct interviews, I concluded that it would be better to conduct online interviews. Face-to-face interviews conducted in an open

[6] Studies and reports have shown how common these problems are, both in public and in private settings. In 2023, 315 women were killed by men, and 248 women were found suspiciously dead. These figures highlight how widespread gender-based violence is in Türkiye, where the dearth of effective safeguards and preventative initiatives has made violence against women frighteningly ubiquitous. While femicides, or the intentional killing of women because of their gender, represent the most extreme form of violence, they are just one manifestation of a larger systemic issue. Women in Türkiye frequently experience harassment, discrimination, sexual violence, and domestic abuse, among other forms of violence. Many causes, such as deeply ingrained patriarchal attitudes, cultural norms that tolerate or condone violence against women, and inadequate institutional and legal frameworks to confront and prevent gender-based violence, can be blamed for the prevalence of this kind of violence. The withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention further exacerbates the situation by weakening the legal protections and mechanisms designed to prevent violence against women. The Istanbul Convention, formally known as the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence is a landmark international treaty aimed at preventing and combating all forms of violence against women and domestic violence. And the withdrawal represents a setback for women's rights and safety in Türkiye.

environment where someone may overhear could have an effect on the participants' answers. Men may feel pressured to inflate or alter how they demonstrate their masculinity and strength, particularly if they think someone else is listening. This can cause them to misrepresent their actual viewpoints.

However, it is important to note that, despite the anxiety I had about safety, especially regarding the fear of inappropriate attitudes and actions from men, none of the participants said or did anything that was discomforting. Still, I find it essential to share such concern I had, given how precarious the safety of women and LGBTI+ people in Türkiye is. Because of this, choosing to conduct interviews online offers a safer option that still permits meaningful connection with participants while reducing the risks involved with in-person conversations.

In short, the research process has benefited from and encountered obstacles by the use of online meetings. The ease of use and accessibility provided by online platforms is one important benefit, as it allows for efficient interaction with participants even in cases when they are geographically separated. This has made the pool of participants larger and more varied. But during video calls, participants can observe my physical surroundings, which creates a different dynamic. Positively, it adds a personal touch to the exchanges by giving participants a peek inside the researcher's workspace and possibly encouraging a sense of community. However, this visibility also prompts questions about unintentional disclosure of private or distracting background information, which could change the tone of the conversation. In order to successfully navigate the complicated nature of online interactions, it becomes imperative to strike a balance between the advantages of improved connection and the requirement to maintain a professional research setting.

I believe that there is also a fair concern that the person will open up and give honest answers when he is interviewed by a woman. There is a possibility that some may resist taking direction or being questioned by a woman, especially if the study involves questioning traditional notions of masculinity. Another concern is about access, as building rapport and gaining access to male-dominated spaces or groups might be challenging, particularly if there are preconceived notions about a woman's

role in those settings. In my case, as women seem to be generally thought as an outsider to military institution, talking about military with a woman can be challenging. Male participants may feel distant from the female researcher and may remain more distant and limit their narratives. It can also be argued that there exist some advantages of conducting interviews as a woman with men. For one, there can be increased comfort for participants as some male participants may feel more comfortable discussing sensitive topics or expressing vulnerability with a female researcher, breaking away from societal expectations of emotional stoicism (not showing emotion or vulnerability and filter their views and narratives). Even though this may seem conflicting with that is said above, each person's reaction can be different; thus, both ideas need to be taken into consideration.

Throughout my academic trajectory, I have been interested in men and masculinity studies. For my bachelor's graduation thesis, I have focused on the silence on male sexual violence survivors in conflict-affected zones. Hence, I had gained the foundational knowledge and theoretical framework in masculinity studies, and this provided me with a valuable backdrop. However, I was never engaged in research where I applied semi-structured in-depth interviews as the research method and the unique dynamics of conducting interviews posed distinct hurdles. Despite being challenging as it was the first application of the method for me, it was also insightful and illuminating experience for me. One satisfying feature of the interviews was learning about the varied experiences and perspectives that the participants shared. The difficulties were compensated for out by rewarding moments stemming from gaining new perspectives, forming relationships with participants, and expanding the body of knowledge in the subject of masculinity studies.

2.3.4. Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) explain six phases of thematic analysis: familiarizing yourself with your data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report. Following these meticulous steps allowed me to find and clarify important trends in the qualitative data collected. This demonstrates the worth and potency of theme analysis as a

reliable technique for investigating and comprehending intricate phenomena in qualitative research. Thematic analysis advances knowledge and generates insights that are based on the data and representative of the experiences of the participants by means of transparent reporting and presentation of findings.

The qualitative data analysis was facilitated by the utilization of MAXQDA 2022, a software program tailored for such purposes. This tool streamlined the organization, coding, and thematic analysis of the interview transcripts, enhancing the efficiency of the process. Recurrent themes and patterns within the data formed the initial codes, which were subsequently refined through continuous comparison and theoretical sampling. The analysis focused on identifying significant themes and insights pertaining to the construction of masculinity, perceptions of military service, and decision-making processes.

The foundation of the data analysis procedure was thematic coding, which made it possible to systematically examine the experiences and narratives of the participants. After carefully reading over interview transcripts, significant data units were found and divided into several topics or groups. Both deductive and inductive methods were used in this process, with the research questions and theoretical frameworks serving as the basis for the original codes as well as any emergent themes that came to light during the coding phase. Key concepts, ideas, and trends in the data were captured by applying codes to pertinent text segments. The process of coding and recoding iteratively led to the development of an extensive coding scheme that covered several thematic domains such as masculinity, class status, and military service.

The method of thematic coding resulted in the identification of overarching themes and sub-themes that effectively summarized the principal discoveries of the research. These themes were distinguished by their applicability to the study questions and their capacity to offer insightful perspectives on the relationship between military service, class status, and masculinity among middle-class males in Türkiye. A more nuanced knowledge of the complexity inherent in the lived reality of the participants

was made possible by the thematic analysis that resulted, which served as the basis for further interpretation, discussion, and theorization.

2.4. Methodological Limitations

This study recognizes several inherent constraints that could potentially impact the robustness and generalizability of its findings. Explicitly addressing these constraints is crucial for bolstering transparency and fostering a nuanced interpretation of the results. To begin with, a fundamental constraint of this study concerns the relatively small sample size utilized in the semi-structured, in-depth interviews. Although this intentional decision gives individual narratives more depth and richness, it also inevitably leads to a reduced representation of many viewpoints among Turkish men as a whole. The qualitative aspect of semi-structured, in-depth interviews is what sets them apart; they prioritize depth over breadth when gathering data. A thorough examination of each participant's unique experience is made possible by giving priority to the narratives' richness and complexity. The small sample size is attributed to the limited number of participants, which was a deliberate trade-off made to prioritize depth of analysis over breadth. The deliberate choice to concentrate on a limited sample is based on the conviction that in-depth observations from a chosen subset can provide complex insights and disclose subtle aspects of the research subject. This methodology permits an in-depth examination of the experiences of the selected participants, but it also recognizes that the entire range of variation found in the broader community cannot be fully captured. Hence, the results ought to be regarded in light of this deliberate emphasis on depth, bearing in mind that the small number of participants in the semi-structured, in-depth interview approach may limit the ability to draw wider conclusions.

Additionally, conducting interviews in Turkish and subsequently translating them into English poses a risk of losing subtle nuances during the translation process. The cultural richness and intricacies of participants' expressions might not fully translate across language barriers, even with careful efforts to maintain accuracy. This drawback emphasizes the necessity of exercising caution while interpreting the data and keeping in mind any differences that might exist between the translated and original interview transcripts.

The research topic adds levels of complexity to the anticipating of restrictions by exploring the complex dynamics of Turkish men's military service experiences. Despite its importance and popularity, short-term military service is still largely neglected, which makes it difficult to predict potential problems. This particular feature highlights the necessity for an adaptable and flexible research methodology, recognizing that the unexplored field of compensated military service may provide unexpected difficulties. The absence of existing literature highlights the groundbreaking significance of the research as well as the pressing need for filling the knowledge gap on short-term military service. Although short-term military service has become a prevalent and significant part of military service in Türkiye, there has not been much research done on it, which emphasizes how important it is to investigate this component. Recognizing this constraint, the study attempts to shed light on the nuances of men's experiences within the setting of short-term military duty, providing important insights into this overlooked field.

CHAPTER 3

LITERATURE REVIEW

The central focus of this thesis is the examination of masculinity, class identity, and compulsory military service, which explores the complex views and experiences of middle-class males in Türkiye. The fundamental ideas of masculinity, socioeconomic status, military service, and decision-making processes are at the heart of this research. A comprehensive literature search was carried out utilizing a range of academic databases and search engines such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and academic journals on gender, masculinity, and sociology, in order to identify relevant research, through the key words such as *militarism, masculinity/manhood, hegemonic masculinity, compulsory military service, short-term military service, paid military service, nationalism, patriotism, citizenship*. The search has been restricted to both national and foreign literature published between the 1990s (where masculinity studies started to emerge) and the present. It is important to highlight that, despite the fact that the relationship between masculinity and military duty has been widely studied in international literature, frequently within the framework of feminist theory, the conversation in the Turkish context has developed gradually. Talks about masculinity and military service in Türkiye have always been entwined with larger nationalist, citizenship, and gender roles themes. But in recent years, there has been a growing interest in taking a more nuanced approach to these topics, taking into account how class factors affect how men perceive and feel masculinity in the context of military service.

3.1. Military Studies Through a Gender Studies Lens

3.1.1. Masculinity Studies

Contemporary studies on masculinity are influenced by various theories, including feminism, humanism, and poststructuralism, while current feminist theories are also

evolving through the influence of masculinity studies. It is also possible to say that they reached a consensus about once-troubled issues, such as the recognition that masculinity is itself a form of gender, signifying men, like women, have experienced historical and cultural developments in their gender identities, resulting in unequal distributions of power and privilege and that that masculinity is not a singular, unchanging concept. Instead, it represents the intersection of various processes and interactions, leading to diverse outcomes for individuals, groups, institutions, and societies. Also, feminist and masculinity theories are that both genders can and should cooperate both intellectually and politically, meaning that women make contributions to the study of masculinity, just as men do in the realms of feminist theory and masculinity studies. Another consensus point is methodological; being skeptical about essentialist conceptions of sex and gender (Gardiner, 2002).

The three waves of the feminist movement are in fact closely correlated with the evolution of masculinity studies, reflecting the shifting intellectual paradigms and social contexts of each period. In the first wave of masculinity studies, which corresponded with the second wave of feminism, scholars mainly relied on sex role theory. This approach focused on understanding how social constructions shape masculinity and how traditional masculine roles and behaviors are internalized by men as natural. Despite the advancements made during this period, masculinity was still frequently discussed as a single, monolithic category.

The first generation of masculinity studies reacted to the conventional idea that gender differences were natural and that some men might be discontent about dominant masculine roles. It is argued that not only femininity but also masculinity is not the products of God or nature but instead of historical processes (Brod, 1987). Much has been written about the negative consequences for men's lives of trying to conform to dominant masculine values and the price they pay (Sancar, 2009). Pleck (1987) has focused on the theory of male sex-role identity, which argues that “for individuals to become psychologically mature as members of their sex, they must acquire male or female ‘sex-role identity,’ manifested by having the sex-appropriate traits, attitudes, and interests that psychologically ‘validate’ or ‘affirm’ their biological sex” (p.21). He criticizes the determinism of the sex role theory and

instead emphasizes the fact that masculinities and femininities are not preordained or intrinsic qualities but are instead actively constructed and perpetuated through complex power dynamics, reflecting on societal norms, cultural influences, and power structures. The pioneering work linking the analysis of masculinity and the critique of power is also by Pleck and Sawyer (1974), which serves as an illustrative case of exploring men's experiences within a framework that incorporates feminist criticism of conventional gender roles. Pleck's (1981) later work is accepted to be first real critique of masculinity. Pleck is the first to argue that power struggles and power hierarchies between men are related to the subjugation of women: in these struggles between men, women are used as symbols of success or as instruments of competition between men, and in each case, they are subject to masculine domination (Sancar, 2009). Pleck highlighted that conventional expectations associated with male gender roles frequently enforce strict and confining standards on men, resulting in what he referred to as 'male sex-role strain.' This concept prompted researchers to delve into the intricacies of male identity and the consequences of these cultural norms on men's experiences.

Not until the late 1970s and early 1980s did a new wave of critical thinking within academia emerge, signaling the start of the second wave of masculinity studies. In 1980s, feminist studies stressed that there is no uniform womanhood by spotting changing experiences based on age, class, ethnicity, etc., and it cannot be treated as a passive experience. This paved the way for studying differences between men, which resulted in the introduction of the term hegemonic masculinity and discussions around it which can be grouped as the second generation of masculinity studies. Key theorists that must be mentioned in this regard are Connell, Messerschmidt, and Kimmel.

Grounded in the feminist movements, especially the third wave's postmodernist viewpoints, the study of masculinity has shifted from viewing masculinity as a single, monolithic construct. A more sophisticated approach that acknowledges the range and complexity of male identities has been welcomed by scholars. Connell's work has been instrumental in the field of masculinity studies by showing that there is no uniform male experience with the concepts of plural masculinities and

femininities. The seminal article "Towards a New Sociology of Masculinity" by Connell (1985) stands as an influential work in the realm of men and masculinity studies. This article marks the inception of a new era in the study of masculinity and has significantly influenced subsequent research in the field. By introducing novel concepts like "hegemonic masculinity" and the pluralistic notion of "masculinities", such as subordinate, marginalized and complicit, into the discourse on gender, R.W. Connell has orchestrated a profound transformation in the landscape of masculinity studies. Connell's work has not only shed light on the power dynamics inherent in masculinity but has also paved the way for a more nuanced understanding of the diverse ways in which men express their gender identities.

Messerschmidt (2016) provides a thoughtful analysis of how masculinity is a social construct. The central thesis of the book is that masculinity is the result of a complex interaction between cultural, social, and historical elements rather than an innate or set quality. Through a multi-angle analysis of masculinities, Messerschmidt draws attention to the fluidity of masculinity and how it changes depending on the situation. In a later work, Messerschmidt (2019) re-examines the concept of hegemonic masculinity, focusing on misunderstandings, reformulation, and amplification of the concept. It is argued in this piece that despite today's variety, hegemonic masculinities all serve to legitimize unequal gender relations. They include relationship practices and symbolic meanings that uphold different interpretations of masculinity, gender identities, and unequal relationships between men and women. Together, these behaviors create a social structure, and they are shaped by and contribute to the maintenance of gendered relational and symbolic frameworks in particular settings. They define what gender practices are and are not acceptable in specific social contexts, hence influencing social interactions and meanings, demonstrating how important Connell's idea of hegemonic masculinity has remained for comprehending and examining unequal gender relations (Messerschmidt, 2019).

These concepts have helped shed light on power dynamics within masculinity and showed the importance of taking masculinity not as a monolithic and unchanging concept but as a multifaceted, dynamic, and socially constructed aspect of identity.

Kimmel is also a prominent figure in the field of masculinity studies, focusing on the intersection of gender and power, hegemonic masculinity, fatherhood and caregiving.

Early in the 1990s, the third wave of masculinity studies developed, driven by social construction theories and post-structuralist methods. Scholars investigating the construction and performance of masculinity in diverse social, cultural, and institutional contexts constituted an interdisciplinary shift throughout this phase. In the 1990s, with the effect of social construction perspective, studies focused on differing male experiences and evolving masculinity experiences of the same man in different periods of his life (life course perspective) (Sancar, 2009). Social construction theories cast doubt on essentialist conceptions of gender identity by highlighting the flexibility and diversity of masculinity.

Also, in late 1990s, issues on men and masculinity started to take space in international forums such as UN peacekeeping operations, resolutions and international relations. In short, it can be said that in 1990s masculinity studies have become enriched and matured as an independent field of study and feminist studies started to support masculinity studies, leaving the antagonisms behind. Masculinity studies has evolved by embracing an intersectional perspective. Scholars began considering how various intersecting factors, such as race, class, sexuality, and ability, shape expressions of masculinity. The intersectional lens allows for a more comprehensive analysis of how different identities and social structures contribute to the diversity of masculinities. Moreover, the influence of queer studies, which challenges traditional norms of heteronormative masculinity, has significantly enriched the field. This perspective fosters a more inclusive understanding of gender and sexuality, encouraging scholars to explore the fluidity and diversity of male identities. Masculinity studies also focused on the possibility of change and men's role for achieving more egalitarian society. bell hooks (2004) focus on the importance of men's self-examination and need/possibility to change by examining toxic masculinity and emotional repression. For hooks, the need to exert power and control is rooted in insecurity and fear and feminism can act as a tool for challenging and redefining traditional masculinity norms and turning into a more egalitarian setting.

3.1.2. Towards an Understanding of Multiple Masculinities

As mentioned before, R.W. Connell has brought about a significant change in the field of studies on masculinity. In addition to illuminating the power dynamics ingrained in masculinity, Connell's work has opened the path for a more complex comprehension of the various ways that men express their gender identities.

As emphasized by Connell's (1985) pluralistic masculinity notion, masculinity is not uniform but rather internally divided, showing diversity. Men can exhibit and embody aspects of masculinity that, depending on the situation, fit with different norms and values owing to the inherent divisions within masculinities that enable the performance of tension. Hence, there is a performance dimension of masculinity, and those performances can also conflict with each other in different spaces or environments even for the same person. For instance, a man can be affectionate and vulnerable in his romantic relationship but in the military setting he may need to perform harsh and show no emotion.

Connell (1985) also highlights the fact that masculinities change throughout time within certain historical and cultural contexts and are not static. The ideas and behaviors connected to masculinity evolve along with society expectations and standards. Because of this fluidity, masculinities can be contested, criticized, and transformed as people and groups try to challenge or reconstruct what it means to be a man and question established standards.

Connell (1985) lays the groundwork for a more in-depth investigation of masculinity in particular social circumstances by examining a variety of masculinities—hegemonic, hybrid, and complicit—that are impacted by internal conflicts and historical contexts. These diverse masculinities are most evident in settings where institutional standards and traditional gender roles collide. These masculinities are molded by individual experiences as well as societal expectations. In these kinds of situations, the military offers a fascinating setting for examining how various masculinity expressions interact and affect both individual actions and group dynamics because it is a microcosm of larger society dynamics. Examining the

complexities of gender relations and power dynamics within military institutions requires a comprehensive understanding of masculinities. For this reason, the next three titles focus on different theories on masculinity in order to ensure a more nuanced approach towards masculinities.

3.1.2.1. Hegemonic Masculinity

Thus, there is no specific innate trait that determine masculinity or femininity. While there exists 'ideals' of masculinity, in real life there are varying masculinity experiences. In such context, Connell (1993) developed the concept of hegemonic masculinity from Gramscian theory of hegemony. Hegemony, for Gramsci, refers to a state of power accumulated by the powerful through the acquisition of the consent of the subordinated (Burawoy, 2003). Through this concept, he urged to understand the role of ideology within the examination of how power is accumulated or contested by shaping people's subjectivities, i.e., their understanding of the world and themselves. To him, the powerful accumulates and exercises its hegemony by securing the consent of the subordinated through the diffusion and popularization of the powerful's worldview (Cammaerts, 2015). In doing so, the powerful carries out a moral and intellectual leadership, through which it persuades the subordinates to think that the status-quo works in favor of their subaltern interests and to accept their dominated position within the intersection of existing social, political and social systems (Burawoy, 2003). Such leadership materialize and proceeds within the domain of civil society, which is the institutional sphere of ideological apparatuses such as schools, religious organizations, media entities, and interest groups (Avci, 2018). Additionally, the State forms the backbone of hegemony as the accumulation, contestation, and conservation of power takes place within its spheres, especially in the sphere of civil society.

Though the hegemony seems to lock the subordinates into an unchallengeable state of domination, it would be wrong to assume that the grasp of hegemony is fixed and indefinite as the hegemony is continuously being challenged by overt and/or latent counter-hegemonic strategies. The former, in Gramscian terms, is called as the 'war of manoeuvre', which refers to the physical struggles against the hegemony, such as

protests, general strikes, and armed conflicts (Gramsci, 1971). The latter is called as 'war of position', which refers to intellectual and cultural struggles seeking to disorganize consent, disrupt hegemonic discourses and practices (Carroll & Ratner, 1994), and to create new political subjectivities, in which the world is not understood through the one's terms (Gramsci, 1971).

Connell (1993) argues that, like ideologies in Gramscian theory, there are multiple forms of masculinities, and one specific form of masculinity manages to culturally exalt itself as a result of existing power struggles within the status-quo (Connell, 1993). This superior and dominant form of masculinity is called as the hegemonic masculinity. Like the Gramscian theory, hegemonic masculinity establishes a common-sense through a cultural leadership, in which an 'ideal' and 'proper' type of men is identified, diffused, and popularized to the rest of the society. Although there are some common characteristics of hegemonic masculinity such as non-femininity and heterosexism, the ideal portrait of masculinity may vary from time to time and from culture to culture (Aktaş, 2009, p.16).

Hegemonic masculinity works in complex ways. It can act as a glue; creating a common respect and admiration for the ideal model while masking differences based on class, age, rank, etc. (Duncanson, 2015). On the other hand, it is the result of clashing differences, power struggles and rivalries between different groups of men and their masculinity (Duncanson, 2015). As mentioned before, masculinity studies have shown the existence of multiple masculinities. Hence, hegemonic masculinity is not shared by all men; instead, it is performed by a limited group of men (Traşçı, 2021). Still, it is possible to talk about key characteristics of the hegemonic masculinity as it is characterized by heteronormativity. These characteristics are also key to understand military institutions as they are highly embedded within it.

3.1.2.2. Hybrid Masculinity

Hybrid masculinity is defined as "men's selective incorporation of performances and identity elements associated with marginalized and subordinated masculinities and femininities" (Bridges & Pascoe, 2014). Studies of masculinities in the past have

consistently shown that they are dynamic and changing, and changes in the present have sparked a lot of theoretical discussion, research projects, and discussions. While not widely accepted in the field of masculinities studies, the idea of hybrid masculinities becomes apparent as a useful conceptual framework for understanding the growing corpus of research devoted to these continuous transformations. Although not often used by academics in the field, this word provides a critical framework for interpreting a sizable body of work that explores the causes and consequences of contemporary changes in masculinities. This theoretical paradigm questions the idea of a single, monolithic masculinity and acknowledges that, depending on the situation, culture, and personal identity, men may embody and enact numerous, sometimes contradictory, facets of masculinity.

Hybrid masculinities develops in part as a reaction to or adaptation of the hegemonic masculinity. A break from the rigid adherence to hegemonic norms is represented by hybrid masculinities, which make it possible for a more inclusive and diverse definition of masculinity. Hegemonic masculinity aims to preserve its position of dominance, whereas hybrid masculinities challenge and broaden the definition of what constitutes appropriate masculine behavior. Those who embrace hybrid masculinities may embrace a wider range of characteristics and identities while rejecting some hegemonic norms.

In the military studies context, Spector-Marsel and Gilbar (2019) focus on the existence of hybrid masculinities. They indicate the adverse effects of military service, specifically being veteran, on mental health, by focusing on the methods of coping strategies leading to a transition from traditional military masculinity towards hybrid masculinities. The study highlights the importance of modifiability of the masculinity perceptions. I argue that even in the absence of traumatic events that can be observed during military service, men experience complex incidents, which may change how they think, feel and behave.

3.1.2.3. Complicit Masculinity

Connell's concept of "complicit masculinities" does, in fact, expand our understanding of masculinity beyond the old binary of hegemonic and subordinate

masculinities. While complicit masculinities do not always fully embody the traits of hegemonic masculinity, they nevertheless play a significant role in maintaining and benefiting from patriarchal structures. Hegemonic masculinity is the idealized form of masculinity that upholds dominance and control within these structures. The phrase "complicit masculinity" describes a kind of masculinity that does not actively participate in or embody hegemonic masculinity, but rather gains advantages from patriarchal systems and structures. Collaborative masculinity functions more subtly than hegemonic masculinity, which is defined by overt displays of power and dominance. It reaps the benefits and privileges of patriarchal norms without actively contributing to their upkeep.

Connell (2005) explored the idea of the "patriarchal dividend" in relation to complicit masculinity, which provides insight into how certain men enjoy patriarchal perks without actively supporting or opposing patriarchal structures. Although these men are aware of the benefits the patriarchal system offers them, they neither actively seek to take use of nor uphold these rights. The capacity to operate within patriarchal structures and reap the benefits of hegemonic masculinity without overtly adopting all of its characteristics or making overt shows of dominance is what defines complicit masculinities. Even if these men do not always fit the mold of hegemonic masculinity, they nevertheless opt to cooperate with its norms by neither questioning or opposing them.

A fundamental feature of complicit masculinities is their avoidance of the dangers and conflicts that come with leading the charge in patriarchy. Complicit masculinities function more surreptitiously, reaping the benefits of patriarchal payouts without calling attention to themselves, in contrast to hegemonic masculinities, which frequently encounter obstacles and pushback.

3.1.3. Feminist Perspectives in Military Studies

The relationship between gender and military studies has received significant scholarly attention by feminist researchers. Different waves of feminisms have differing ideas regarding military and women’s role. Within the first and second

waves of feminism, in particular, early feminist critiques frequently highlighted women's absence from formal military organizations and decision-making processes. Some asserted that, in contrast to conventional masculine characteristics linked with aggression and domination, women are essentially peaceful and nurturing. This viewpoint challenged the male-centric narratives that dominated military studies and emphasized the significance of bringing women's viewpoints and experiences into conversations about war and peace.

Not only academic studies but also United Nations Resolutions have highlighted the value of women's involvement in peacebuilding initiatives and have argued for their greater participation in processes of conflict resolution and post-war reconstruction. But this viewpoint frequently rests on essentialist justifications that uphold gender norms, depicting males as violent warriors and women as naturally peaceful. This presumption ignores the varied experiences and agency of people of different genders and oversimplifies the complexity of gender interactions. Through the essentialization of gender roles, these viewpoints uphold strict and binary gender norms, which may marginalize people who do not fit the mold. Furthermore, they neglect to recognize situations in which males actively participate in efforts to promote peace or in which women may be involved in acts of violence. Consequently, even if women's involvement in peacebuilding is important, it is crucial to go beyond essentialist viewpoints and promote a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in conflict and peace situations, even as we acknowledge the significance of women's involvement in peacebuilding.

While questioning women’s underrepresentation and hyper-masculine culture of militaries, these approaches took women as a uniform and homogenous group, irrespective of racial and class differences. Subsequent feminist movements, on the other hand, offered more complex viewpoints on gender and militarism, emphasizing the various ways that women are both involved in and impacted by violence. For instance, third-wave feminists highlighted the ways in which gender is entwined with various social identities, including sexual orientation, race, and class, and they brought attention to the experiences of marginalized women living in militaristic environments. This method made clear the multifaceted and frequently incongruous

roles that women play in aiding, opposing, and lessening the effects of conflict. Feminist theorists have examined how gendered power dynamics affect people's connections with violence, authority, and militaristic structures rather than assuming that women are naturally peaceful. This viewpoint challenges presumptions about inherent gender disparities in attitudes toward war and emphasizes the significance of critically examining gender norms and stereotypes within military contexts. The fusion of feminism and military studies has produced insightful research on the gendered aspects of conflict, advancing our knowledge of how gender influences perceptions, actions, and experiences during peacekeeping and conflict resolution. Thanks to these works, traditional narratives are challenged and marginalized voices are also heard.

With the influence of feminist studies, queer theory, and poststructuralism, masculinity studies have matured into an independent field of academic work. However, the relationship between gender and masculinity studies had also been tense. Second-wave feminism, which emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, is often characterized by the rhetoric of its most outspoken, if not necessarily most numerous, perspective. This perspective, often associated with radical feminism, at times accused men as a collective of being the adversaries and oppressors of women, viewing men's masculinity as a symbol and tool of their authority, characterized by the Redstocking Manifesto in 1969, which claims ‘all men have oppressed women’: ‘we do not need to change ourselves, but to change men’[7]. This rhetoric was not welcomed by liberal feminists who sought equality for women in terms of power, status, and societal roles compared to men and feminists of color who incorporated race and social class, in addition to gender, into their analyses, by blaming the social structures rather than individual men (Gardiner, 2002). The reaction of second-wave feminism also met with similar reactions from men initially, through ridiculing feminist analysis of disadvantaged positioning of women. However, a smaller group of pro-feminist men, who identified as allies of the women's liberation movement and worked to eliminate sexism from within male domains, occasionally challenging traditional masculinity, had also emerged. Pro-

[7] https://www.redstockings.org/index.php/rs-manifesto

feminist men contended that it was essential for men to support feminism because the idealization of traits associated with socially powerful men, and the definition of masculinity in opposition to women and marginalized men, especially gay and black men, were detrimental to most men. They argued that this situation harmed all men by limiting their choices, constraining them within restrictive roles, suppressing their emotions, hindering their relationships with other men, obstructing intimacy with women and children, enforcing sexual and gender conformity, distorting their self-perceptions, curtailing their social awareness, and subjecting them to perpetual and degrading fear of falling short of societal masculinity standards.

3.1.3.1. Women's Place in Military

Understanding the extent to which women exist in the military, a field dominated by men, will provide a more comprehensive perspective to the study of masculinity. For this aim, feminist critiques on women's place in military will be briefly mentioned in this section.

Within the research of military and gender, women's place and integration into the military institution have been studied extensively. The views held by feminist researchers about women's integration into the military are varied and complex, representing a spectrum of arguments and points of view within the feminist movement. The fact that feminist scholars cannot agree on how much women have integrated into the military is one noteworthy feature.

It can be noted that there are three main camps in this discussion: those supporting partial inclusion of women, those supporting full inclusion of women and those who are against inclusion of women. Citing worries about possible damage, gender-based violence, and the maintenance of patriarchal norms within military organizations, some feminists argue against the inclusion of women in the military. Some feminist academics support women's partial integration, especially for combat positions. They contend that if women fulfill the same qualifications and standards as males, they ought to be granted the same opportunities to serve in combat roles. The identification and analysis of the difficulties and obstacles that women encounter in

military contexts is one of the major areas of concentration. Researchers look at things like harassment and discrimination, prospects for career progression that are limited, and the difficulties of juggling family obligations and military duty. This camp, which can be termed as anti-militarist, that opposes women's incorporation to the military institution argue that patriarchy and war are complimentary forces that support one another's existence is the fundamental tenet of anti-militarist feminism.

Despite these concerns, proponents of liberal feminism contend that closing the gender gap in terms of opportunities and rights can be greatly aided by expanding the proportion of women in important institutions like the military. In the pursuit of gender equality, liberal feminists push for more representation of women in organizations like the military, political parties, and governmental agencies. But their view of women's equality in the military tends to concentrate on particular roles—combat responsibilities in particular. Liberal feminists think that by increasing the number of women serving in the military, more general cultural views regarding gender roles can be questioned and changed. They emphasize that historical socialization processes that have maintained discriminatory attitudes and practices are a contributing factor in gender inequality, in addition to biological inequalities. Liberal feminists think that by increasing the number of women serving in the military, more general cultural views regarding gender roles can be questioned and changed. The idea that increasing the number of women in traditionally male-dominated areas can lead to a more equitable society is a fundamental component of the liberal feminist perspective. They contend that removing obstacles in domains like the military can benefit other fields.

Women joining the military may not always bring equality because the military is a place where traditional perceptions of masculinity are deeply rooted and entrenched. On similar lines, Sasson□Levy, and Amram□Katz (2007) focus on the case of Israeli army, where women are also involved compulsory military service, concluding that women's participation in military creates gender disparities to be unduly highlighted or even made worse, a phenomenon known as 'overgendering'. Additionally, it exacerbates various types of division and overgendering inside the military environment instead of creating a welcoming and equitable place.

Given that, the exclusion of women from the military has a deeply rooted male character that shapes the entire organization of the armed forces. The conventional idea that the military's duty is to act as the "protector" of the country justifies this exclusion. It is therefore argued that if women and men participated in the military on an equal basis, the idea of protection would become unnecessary, and the military institution would no longer be necessary. Thus, efforts to maintain a specific type of masculinity known as "military masculinity" demonstrate resistance to changes in masculinity outside of the military. The idea of military masculinity is entwined with ideas of bravery, strength, and the conventional duties that men are allocated in both war and defense. Advocates of military masculinity seek to preserve the conventional qualities of masculinity by enforcing a gendered split within the military; they frequently see women serving in combat jobs as a challenge to these long-standing standards. The argument is based on the idea that having more women in combat roles will weaken the unique qualities of military masculinity and put the institution's established power structures and hierarchy under strain (Kuloğlu, 2005). Military service is not compulsory for women on the grounds that women are not fit to fight, and the criminalization of homosexuality is legitimized and normalized through state practices. As a result, militarism, with its strong link to the values of dominant masculinity, leads to a gender regime in which women and other men are defined and positioned in a rigid and exclusionary manner (Akgül, 2010).

3.1.3.2. Nationalism, Masculinity, and Militarism

Nationalism studies, since the influential works of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) on inventing traditions and Benedict Anderson (1991) on imagining a national past and present, have argued commonly that nations, however old they claim to be, are in fact groupings invented by new nationalisms on the basis of artificial similarities, and the "invention of tradition" has been an integral part of the processes of nation building. Meaning that, nations have not created nationalisms, but nationalisms have created nations (Altınay, 2013).

The idea of internal unity—the situation in which members of a nation are bound together by shared political, cultural, or historical characteristics—is central to the

concept of nationhood. Nonetheless, the "Other" is frequently used to define this sense of unity. The "Other" refers to people or groups that are seen as being outside of the country's borders, such as foreigners, immigrants, refugees, or people who are thought to be distinct from the local populace (Slootmaeckers, 2019). As a result of the hierarchical nature of othering, those who are viewed as different or outside the norm are marginalized and oppressed, and prejudices and discriminatory practices are created and maintained. Gender dynamics within nationalist narratives and identity constructions are directly linked to this Othering dynamic. Gender norms and roles are utilized in many nationalist discourses to establish the binary between the Other (often linked with femininity or non-conformity to traditional gender roles) and the "ideal citizen," who is generally portrayed in terms that are masculine. This othering dimension is not only between women and men but also among men (differing masculinities). Mosse (1998) emphasizes how nationalist agendas have molded and appropriated ideas of masculinity, especially when it comes to what makes a desirable or progressive guy. This pattern shows that nationalist ideologies and causes have frequently been mobilized through the use of ideas of manliness, valor, and strength as tactics. I argue that nationalism, by its very definition, inherently excludes some groups. Sometimes it is different nationalities, sometimes it is women, sometimes it is varying masculinities or gender identities. In opposition to diversity, the aim is to create an ideal uniform citizen.

The growing literature on nationalism has opened the gate for feminist studies that argue that gender stands out as a constitutive, rather than secondary, element of constructions of nationalism. Joane Nagel’s works have been influential in explaining the relationship between masculinity, nationalism, gender, and sexuality in the context of nation-building. Nagel (1998) argues that nationalist politics serves as a significant platform for 'achieving' masculinity for several reasons. First, state is a masculine institution as can be seen through hierarchical authority structure, male domination in decision-making positions and processes, internal division of labor characterized by male superiority, the legal regulation of female rights, labor, and sexuality by males. Second, the culture of nationalism is intentionally shaped to highlight and resonate with themes traditionally associated with masculinity such as honor, patriotism, cowardice, bravery, and duty. Patriotism, especially during

political crises, exerts a powerful influence that few men can resist. Those who do resist risk facing the disapproval or even more severe consequences from their communities and families, sometimes including their mothers. Nagel (1998) further argues that the fear of being labeled as cowardly is not the sole factor drawing men toward patriotism, nationalism, or militarism. There is also the masculine appeal of adventure. Men frequently describe their enlistment in wars in terms of anticipation, excitement, and a sense of embarking on a significant adventure and not being 'left behind' or excluded from the grand quest that the war represents.

Nagel (1998) also points out the women's symbolic role in the nationalist culture, which mirrors the definition of femininity and women's proper place. At this point, it is significant to mention the work of Yuval-Davis and Anthias (1989), describing the five ways of women's involvement in national and state practices and processes; "(a) as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities; (b) as reproducers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups; (c) as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture; (d) as signifiers of ethnic/national differences – as a focus and symbol in ideological discourses used in the construction, reproduction and transformation of ethnic/national categories; (e) as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles" (p.7). They explain for the first one, as biological reproducers of members of ethnic collectivities, that Women are seen as biological reproducers of members belonging to ethnic collectivities. In this context, their role is often linked to the perpetuation and growth of specific ethnic or national groups through childbirth. That is why immigration controls and physical expulsion of particular groups took place (Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989). Second one, as producers of the boundaries of ethnic/national groups, means not only physical reproduction but also the social and cultural aspects that delineate and define the limits of these groups. Third one, as participating centrally in the ideological reproduction of the collectivity and as transmitters of its culture, draws attention to women's role as transmitters of cultural values, traditions, and beliefs within the ethnic or national context through preservation and transmission of the collective culture. Forth, as signifiers of ethnic/national differences, refers to the actual symbolic figuration, bearing in mind the nation's being similar to a loved woman in danger and behave in certain way.

Lastly, as participants in national, economic, political and military struggles, women can take part in national liberation struggles but generally they are in supportive and nurturing relation to men (Yuval-Davis & Anthias, 1989). Thus, within the nationalist discourse, women mostly remain in “supportive, symbolic, often suppressed and traditional roles” (Nagel, 1998, p.253).

In works on nationalism, it is also stated that in nationalist discourse, the nation is likened to a family and in this family, men and women play their traditional roles identified by the patriarchal system. Women are given the role of helping and supporting the warrior men in the newly established state and that while men actively participate in the nation state as warriors, women represent silence and dignity as those who wait behind in the modern state (Akgül, 2010). Najmabadi (2013) focuses on the modern nation and family metaphor. Especially the construction of the national community as a fraternity of brothers points to the centrality of male bonds in the creation of the spirit of nationalism and the exclusion of women from the social contract. As pointed out by Hunt (1992), within this social contract women were subjected to men’s power and there were complementary bonds between men. Furthermore, “social organization sublimated an underlying, highly charged, male bonding. Women had no place in the new political and social order except as markers of social relations between men” (Hunt, 1992, p.7).

Nationalist discourse has often used the representation of the homeland as a female body to construct a national identity based on the unity of men in a nation of brothers. The geographical borders of the newly established state are also gendered and sexualized by likening them to a woman's body, “the body of a woman to love and devote, to claim and protect, to die for and kill for” (Najmabadi, 2013). By "likening the homeland to a woman's body to be loved, devoted and protected", a discourse that subordinates women to the protection of men is created. The homeland must be protected from the attack and occupation of the "other", the "foreigner" and it must always belong to the men of the nation (Akgül, 2010). The depiction of the borders through the metaphor of the female body dominates the belief that it is open to foreign invasion and attack, which justifies military institution and military service.

For Najmabadi (2013), in addition to the homeland as the beloved woman, there was another female body in patriotic discourse: homeland as mother. The homeland was both the beloved woman and the mother. The writing of the homeland as both the object of male desire and a female figure protected and owned by men created a discursive space that rendered women's citizenship contradictory: on the one hand, women claimed equality, and on the other, they were subject to the protection of men. Women are assigned a secondary duty: motherhood, in place of the 'most sacred' and 'primary' duty of citizenship, which is military service. It is expected of women to voluntarily give up their lives for the sake of their families, children, and, if needed, the country or the 'motherland'. In reality, the domains of war and military forces have not been exclusively limited to men (Kancı & Altınay, 2007). According to Yuval-Davis (1997), women have continuously filled particular, frequently vital positions in various domains. But usually, compared to men, their participation has not been equal or nondiscriminatory. No matter how important the contributions made by women are, they have always been seen and categorized as 'support'. Given this background, there is a strong citizenship between the ideal citizenship and nationalism. Therefore, establishing ideal citizenship in the nationalist context should be investigated with a gender critical lens.

3.1.3.3. Military Service, Masculinity and Citizenship

The historical complexity of the concept of citizenship is highlighted by Walby (1994), which implies that its development was not a uniform process. At various points in time, various social groups—including those identified by gender and race—experienced the attainment of citizenship privileges. Major issues concerning the inclusiveness of citizenship across various populations are brought up by this historical variance. The differing timelines for the citizenship framework's incorporation of white men, white women, and members of minority ethnic groups are indicative of the various strategies that various nations have adopted. There are numerous developed countries where women do not receive political citizenship for a long period after males do. This is in sharp contrast to the circumstances in many developing countries, when women were granted the right to vote concurrently with men and with the achievement of independence from colonial powers. Women in

first-world nations have only lately attained full civil citizenship, while the majority of men in these countries obtained civil citizenship prior to political citizenship. The cause of the holdup is the relatively recent progress made in granting women the right to control their bodies, the freedom to choose not to get married, and the opportunity to work in any field. For women from first world countries, the process basically entails obtaining political citizenship before obtaining full civil citizenship, which is the opposite of what is commonly seen for men. For Walby (1994), the main barrier to women's full social citizenship is the care work within the family, which prevents women from participating in employment and welfare. Steans (1998) develops this idea by explaining the militarized nature of citizenship as follows:

> Historically, the rights and duties of citizenship have been closely linked with the ability to take up arms in defense of the polity. Indeed, historically, this linkage has provided one of the main justifications for the exclusion of women from the public realm and citizenship, and has provided a powerful justification for the subordination of women. (p.81)

Military service has the function of perpetuating gender norms (Altınay, 2004). Military service has been historically regarded, and in certain nations continues to be seen, as a primary institution integral to the shaping and manifestation of citizenship. On the other hand, from a more individualist perspective, it provides certain privileges for men. The relationship between citizenship and conscription can be seen as that male conscription serves as a symbol of attaining citizenship and full inclusion in a nation-state, ensuring conscripted men are granted equal rights (Kwon, 2010). Men are expected to uphold their status as fully acknowledged and enfranchised members of society/nation, entitled to the privileges and obligations that accompany citizenship, by carrying out this commitment. This also means that not fulfilling conscription duty comes with several sanctions such as administrative fines, restrictions on travel abroad, and termination of employment. However, feminists criticize the equation of citizenship with military service on the grounds that it results in a citizenship model based on men's life cycles, thereby establishing an uneven and hierarchical system for men and women as it tends to reflect and prioritize the life trajectories and experiences of men over those of women (Sasson Levy, 2002). It inadvertently downplays the experiences and contributions of women

by reinforcing and maintaining gendered norms that are consistent with these male values.

The discussions about gender and citizenship have been evolved around the concepts: ‘full citizenship’, ‘first-class citizenship’, ‘true citizenship’ (Kwon, 2010). It is argued that men have a dual obligation to protect the country: it entails both the recognition of the possibility of losing one's life in the process, as well as the freedom to take part in acts of killing when needed. Men's citizenship stands apart from women's citizenship in that it is dual in character, which emphasizes its legitimacy as the sole authentic form of citizenship in the context of society. The belief is that men, by virtue of their role in national defense, possess a unique and fundamental connection to the essence of citizenship that distinguishes them from other members of society (Kwon, 2010). When exclusive to men, military service inherently shapes the definition of male citizenship and masculinity in contrast to female citizenship and femininity. Continuous, mandatory, and widespread peacetime military service intertwines masculinity, first-class citizenship, the state, and the military as integral components of a complex unity. The statement underscores that, despite the existence of equal suffrage rights, compulsory male conscription remains a citizenship practice that starkly distinguishes between men and women (Kancı & Altınay, 2007).

3.1.4. Masculinity Studies in Military Research

The intersection between masculinity and military studies covers variety of themes including constructions of masculinity, gendered character of military, military masculinity, sexual violence in conflict-affected areas and intersectionality.

Regarding construction of masculinity, it can be argued that military service is often considered as an important step in men’s lives and status, where the focus is on the ability to protect the nation. Military institution is constructed as a key ‘masculinity maker’ and compulsory military service is constructed as disciplinary rite de passage, turning boys into men (Christensen & Kyed, 2022). While there are some female military personnel, compulsory military service generally male-exclusive spaces,

including in Türkiye. Such exclusion of females from military cannot be explained solely by biology. Not only the biological maleness but masculinity is the “sine qua non of effective and trustworthy soldiering” (Enloe, 1993, p.52). Through fulfilment the military service, it is believed that men transition from being boy to men.

The literature also focuses on the gendered character of military. According to Sasson-Levy (2003), militaries are regarded as masculine organizations not just because the majority of its personnel are men, but also because of their substantial impact on the construction of masculine identities and the general shaping of social ideas of masculinity. Certain characteristics and actions are pushed as ideals of masculinity in military settings. These could be attributes like bravery, physical prowess, resiliency, and a readiness to participate in high-risk activities like combat. Furthermore, the military's hierarchical structure frequently gives precedence to traits of leadership that are typically associated with men, like decisiveness, assertiveness, and strategic thinking.

At first, formal military environments—that is, national and state militaries—were the main focus of research on military masculinity (Henry, 2017). In feminist study, military masculinity was frequently represented as a tangible thing that was formed, attained, or assimilated by military socialization and embedded in military culture. Drawing on Connell's early concepts of hegemonic masculinity, this approach saw military masculinity as singular manifestation of gendered practices, with the notable exception of Enloe's work in 2002. But as time has gone on, the idea of military masculinity has expanded beyond feminist discourse to become a complex lens and a field of empirical study (Henry, 2017). Though mostly for the sake of improving operational effectiveness and efficiency, gendered and racialized dynamics inside military organizations are increasingly often examined in modern assessments of these institutions by numerous academics.

With respect to studies on sexual violence, within the military and masculinity studies, rape as a weapon of war can be mentioned as one of the key research topics. Rape, sexual assault, and coercion are examples of sexual violence that is used as a tactic to retain control over civilian populations by establishing terror, asserting

power, and instilling fear. Armed forces, paramilitary organizations, and state actors frequently use this strategy to accomplish strategic goals, establish control, and destabilize communities. Scholars like Cynthia Enloe have written a great deal on how rape is deliberately used in conflict areas to intimidate and control civilian populations, especially women and girls but also men and boys. Rape is employed as a weapon of war in these situations, dehumanizing and demoralizing entire populations, undermining social cohesiveness, and upsetting resistance groups. A culture of silence, stigma, and systemic impunity also shields offenders from responsibility, allowing them to behave with impunity most of the time. While gender inequalities and militarism have been researched significantly in the literature during conflict times or in conflict zones, the effects of militarism and is entwinement within social values and social life during peace times require further research. This gap is important because it ignores how militarism continues to influence cultural views, societal norms, and people's behavior outside of overtly combative situations. Gaining an understanding of the more subdued forms of militarism in daily life is essential to appreciating its ubiquitous impact on gender relations, power dynamics, and social structures in both peacetime and conflict situations.

Henry (2017) investigates the variety of masculinities that exist in military settings critically, highlighting the necessity of applying the intersectionality idea to comprehend the hierarchies and vulnerabilities that exist in these settings. The author stresses the significance of tying issues of intersectionality and military masculinity to the seminal work of black feminism, especially when it comes to ideas like viewpoint, situated knowledges, and black and double consciousness. The idea of masculine vulnerability inside military systems is also explored in this piece. It exposes the intricacies of power dynamics within military hierarchy and challenges conventional notions of masculinity as fundamentally strong and unflappable. The writer undermines popular conceptions of military masculinity by recognizing male vulnerability, especially among underrepresented or non-dominant groups inside the armed forces. Henry (2017) urges prudence and critical thought while reconsidering feminist theories, masculinities, and militaries. It invites academics to approach intersectionality and other feminist ideas with complexity and historical awareness,

thinking about the consequences of applying these frameworks to the analysis of power relationships and vulnerabilities in military organizations.

3.1.4.1. Hegemonic Masculinity and Military

Institutions dominated by men have played an important role in developing and promoting masculine and heterosexual attitudes and practices. Military is among those institutions which have come to represent what is known as hegemonic masculinity. As argued by Connell (2005):

> Hegemony is likely to be established only if there is some correspondence between cultural ideal and institutional power . . . So the top levels of business, the military and government provide a fairly convincing corporate display of masculinity, still very little shaken by feminist women or dissenting men. (p.77).

According to Goldstein (2001), military and defense organizations have continuously maintained particular gender stereotypes. This is a phenomenon that is astonishingly consistent across various cultures and historical periods. These establishments have historically functioned as pillars of hegemonic masculinity, an idea that is essential to understanding more general gender dynamics.

Hegemonic masculinity is often linked with a readiness to employ violence and dominance to assert authority. It discourages the open expression of vulnerability and emotions, instead promoting emotional restraint. The military offers a strong sense of identity and belonging for those who conform to the norms of hegemonic masculinity. Men who embody these norms may feel a heightened sense of camaraderie and validation within the military community.

The relationship between military and (hegemonic) masculinity is complex and highly intertwined. Military provides the environment where men learn and relearn the hegemonic masculinity ideals and have a chance to practice them. The military often reinforces and exemplifies the norms associated with hegemonic masculinity, such as physical strength, emotional restraint, risk-taking, and the demonstration of

authority. Akgül (2011) defines military service as the practice of constructing hegemonic masculinity in men recruited for service in accordance with its own function and to facilitate its functioning. Militarism is created through the articulation of the micro cultural practices of hegemonic masculinity into the 'macro' power and political mechanisms of the state (Sancar, 2009).

3.1.4.2. Homosociality

Homosociality means social bonds, interactions, or relationships between individuals of the same sex and within the masculinity studies it is defined as “as a mechanism and social dynamic that explains the maintenance of hegemonic masculinity” (Hammarén & Johansson, 2014, p.1) The concept of homosociality has been coined by Lipman-Blumen (1975). She defines ‘homosocial’ as “the seeking, enjoyment, and/or preference of the company of the same sex”, which “does not necessarily involve (although it may under certain circumstances) an explicitly erotic social interaction between members of the same sex” (Lipman-Blumen, 1975, p.16). This concept is often employed to elucidate how men, by means of their friendships and close collaborations with other men, uphold and safeguard the established gender norms and patriarchal structures. Sedgwick (1985) reevaluates the concept by focusing on desires, emphasizing the potentially erotic aspects. She hypotheses about the possibility of an uninterrupted continuum between homosexual and homosocial experiences and argues that to comprehend the intricacies of male relationships, one must acknowledge the connectivity between the two (Sedgwick, 1985).

Within military organizations, homosocial socialization serves as key for promoting a sense of unity among men while also constructing barriers that keep outsiders out, especially women and other minority groups (Linehagen & Wester 2023). Soldiers create strong friendships based on shared identities and experiences, which is a common feature of the military environment. But this brotherhood can also result in the marginalization of those who do not fit the mold of what it means to be a man; males define themselves against the "other," who is frequently portrayed by women and civilians, in order to create their masculinity within the military. This procedure perpetuates the idea that the military is a place where men rule, and femininity-

related characteristics are either minimized or suppressed. İt is crucial to remember, though, that not all men follow the rigidly accepted standards of masculinity that are prevalent in military settings. According to Eichler (2014), as society norms progress, the romanticized portrayal of militaristic masculinity may come under examination, which could lead to changes in gender relations and hierarchy. However, these changes may not always translate into improved gender parity in military institutions. Rather, disparities in gender roles and identities could surface, mirroring more extensive societal shifts in attitudes and anticipations. This thesis aims to critically shed light on perceptions of ideal masculinity in the military and to show changes - or at least elasticities).

In the literature on masculinity on homosociality, there are two contrasting perspectives. While one group of scholars, such as Bird and Sedgwick, emphasize the role of homosociality in perpetuating stereotypical images of masculinity, the other group argues for a more nuanced and complex understanding, focusing on the potential shifts and redefinitions of hegemonic masculinity. Bird (1996) adds to Lipman-Blumen's theorization that "homosociality promotes clear distinctions between hegemonic masculinities and nonhegemonic masculinities by the segregation of social groups" (p.121). Bird (1996) argues that in homosocial circles among heterosexual men, the collective understanding that masculinity is synonymous with emotional detachment, competitiveness, and objectification of women contributes to the daily reinforcement of a system that marginalizes femininity and non-hegemonic forms of masculinity. The meanings and traits that adhere to this hegemonic ideal of masculinity are actively supported and promoted by the interactions that occur inside these homosocial environments. In addition, they frequently minimize or suppress masculinity expressions that diverge from these idealized standards. Through this process, a hierarchy of gender identities is further perpetuated by supporting traditional gender norms and a societal framework that emphasizes particular actions and attributes as more culturally acceptable within the context of masculinity. Bird (1996) contents that homosociality works in hand in hand with hegemonic masculinity through three main ways: emotional detachment, competitiveness, and sexual objectification of women play key roles. However, this approach was criticized on the grounds that it reduces homosociality "exclusively to

a heteronormative, androcentric and hierarchical term, used to show how heterosexual men bond and defend their privileges and positions" (Haywood, et al., 2017, p.66). Within the second camp on the literature on masculinity and homosociality, which focuses on the potential to change, it is important to mention Anderson's (2008) work. In this ethnographic research on constructions of masculinity among heterosexual men, he finds that there is a more inclusive understanding of masculinity in fraternities. According to this alternate paradigm, fraternity culture respects women, supports racial parity, and promotes social equality for gay men. Crucially, among fraternity members, this alternative masculinity promotes emotional intimacy as a means of fostering fraternity (Anderson, 2008). Given the one-dimensional approach of the first camp, Haywood and the colleagues (2017) introduce a distinction between vertical/hierarchical homosociality and horizontal homosociality. Hierarchical homosociality can be seen as what the first camp argues, focusing on means of strengthening power to maintain and defend hegemony. Horizontal homosociality, on the other hand, focuses on the "relations that are based on emotional closeness, intimacy and a non-profitable form of friendship" (p.67). They further argue that there are no clear-cut boundaries between these two approaches. Such theorization and elaboration on the concept of homosociality is key to understand the complex relations between men.

While, military might be seen among the key institutions that perpetuates the traditional gender roles and hegemonic masculinity ideals, there can also be horizontal relations where men support each other in a very harsh and challenging setting. Military, traditionally, was seen as rite of passage for manhood, where men learn how to be a 'proper man' and functions as a service that feeds men's construction of masculinity and intensely adds masculinity to their identities in the construction process. Military service acquires its homosocial structure by excluding women and feminine characteristics. In an environment where there is no place for women or feminine traits and where 'manly' attitudes are glorified, men's methods of humiliating each other are realized through the negative use of feminine traits as a consequence of this situation (Barutçu, 2013). Additionally, the uniform is one of the most obvious visual symbols of the homosocial structure of military service. The manifestation of a hierarchy between men in a structure such as military service,

where everyone is uniformized, can only be realized through the exclusion of men who exhibit feminine attitudes and behaviors. According to Barutçu (2013), it becomes consistent to define military service as a homosocial structure due to the fact that military service is compulsory for everyone regardless of cultural, economic or sexual differences, that men are dressed and surrounded in the same way, and that they are not even allowed to recognize their friends.

3.1.5. Masculinity and Military Literature in Turkish Context

The late 1990s saw the rise of masculinity studies in Turkish academic discourse, which signaled an important evolution in scholarly concentration toward comprehending the complexity of gender, especially with regard to men and masculinity. New insights into the social construction of masculinity, the dynamics of power and privilege, and the intersections of gender with other categories such as class, race, and sexuality. were made available to Turkish academics and intellectuals through these translated writings. With the growing literature around masculinity in Western academia, researchers in Türkiye started to critically engage with the nuances of masculine identities, questioning stereotypes and looking at the connections between masculinity and problems like violence, mental health, and societal injustices. The emergence of masculinity studies in Türkiye was part of a larger global movement to broaden the scope of gender studies beyond a narrow focus on women and toward a more comprehensive analysis of gender dynamics.

In Turkish academia, studies on masculinities, particularly those related to the military, began to garner attention in the 2000s. Especially, the works of Sancar (2009), Selek (2014), Boratav et al. (2018), Altınay (2004; 2019), Kancı and Altınay (2007), Sinclair-Webb (2006), Mater (1999), Ozbay (2013), Açıksöz (2017) and Karacagil (2017) worth mentioning here.

In order to examine the idea of masculinity and how it manifests itself in different contexts Sancar (2014) looks into the intricate relationship the two in her book *Masculinity: Impossible power: Men in the family, in the market and on the street*. The book explores how masculinity is constructed socially and challenges the power relationships that influence how men define themselves. It looks at how institutional

institutions, cultural norms, and societal expectations affect how men behave in public, in the workplace, and in relationships with their families. The book critiques the idea that there is a single male identity that is the "only and natural form of masculinity," even as it highlights the diversity of masculinities. According to Sancar, while popular masculinity norms in Türkiye are changing quickly, the institutions that uphold male dominance—the family, the market, the state, the military, and the law—manage to hold onto their influence without suffering a major decline. Traditional systems such as heterosexual male-focused marriage, the family-centered male breadwinner, and the "honor" idea aimed at controlling women continue to exist despite tremendous conflicts. In her analysis, Sancar (2014) defines military service as an experience of learning the realities of the state and masculinity.

Moving on with masculinity studies Selek (2014) focuses on how gender stereotypes place pressure on men in society and the challenges that arise when trying to live up to these expectations in her book *Sürüne Sürüne Erkek Olmak*. The English translation of it is "to become a man by crawling". It presents the idea of the difficult and demanding process of growing up to be a man, implying a feeling of struggle, adversity, or trouble meeting social standards or expectations related to masculinity. The book explores the ways in which traditional ideas of masculinity constrain and put pressure on people, emphasizing the difficulties encountered by those who try to live up to these standards. By analyzing the effects of conscription, which has the power to impact future lives and have long-lasting consequences, on young men who spend a particular time in a separate "men's community," it highlights the role of military service in forming masculinity. The book explores how gender biases impact militarism and how military mechanisms shape masculinity, highlighting the application of feminist theory to the study of military experiences. The goal of the study is to clarify how military service affects the development of masculinity and identity while taking socioeconomic status, educational attainment, and ideological and political inclinations into account. In conclusion, this study aims to further the conversation about violence, power dynamics, and the myth of masculinity, especially as it relates to Turkish military experiences. By looking at how various circumstances affect men's perceptions of masculinity both inside and outside of the military, it seeks to shed light on the varied experiences of men.

This research of Boratav and colleagues (2018) makes a significant contribution to our understanding as it provides an analysis focusing on different aspects of construction of masculinity such as alcohol consumption and sexuality. It is also novel in the sense that it provides a generational aspect, not only focusing on father-son relationship but also mother-son and with their children. The research shows that sexuality and alcohol drinking are key themes of the first time they felt that they were men or their first transition to manhood. The findings show that having completed military service is defined as an important turning point in the transition to manhood. Most of the participants who said that military service did not play an important role in their lives stated that they learned many things, reviewed their lives, made decisions about the future and that it was an overall maturing process. While military service plays an important, albeit indirect, role in the transition to manhood, not doing military service is defined as being incomplete, not being complete. Moreover, their research proves that another important stage in the transition to being considered a man is finding a job. When there is no work, when there is no money to be made, masculinity is felt to be damaged in the eyes of others, especially the wife (Boratav et al. 2018).

Another critical analysis has been made by Boratav and colleagues (2018) that they examine the relationships that married men build with their parents, kids, and spouses while residing in various Turkish areas and economic strata. Boratav and colleagues (2018) explores the ways in which male identities are organized in a range of contexts and developmental stages, from the home to society. It investigates the social and cultural constructions of masculinity as well as the factors that reinforce them, looking at the processes that define masculine identity. The book not only discusses common acts that define masculinity but also looks at how they differ from one another.

Altınay provides theoretical framework on militarism while aforementioned works focused on the societal aspect of military service and masculinities. Altınay's (2004) influential work, *The Myth of Military-Nation,* has gained prominence for its exploration of the military's role in shaping the nation-state throughout history. She delves into the process of how the military becomes intertwined with culture. She

examines the normalization and acceptance of military service by attributing cultural significance to it through two primary avenues: the perpetuation and promotion of the idea of the soldier-nation through educational channels, and the establishment of unequal gender relations, both among men and women and between those who serve in the military and those who do not for various reasons. Drawing on Foucauldian perspective, Altınay explores the disciplinary side of military duty in addition to its significance in national identity and masculine reinforcement. This viewpoint explores how military service functions as a control and discipline mechanism, molding people's identities and behaviors to fit social standards and hierarchies of power. Altınay's research provides a thorough understanding of the various roles that military duty plays, emphasizing how it affects power dynamics, gender relations, and culture inside the framework of the nation-state. Altınay (2004) argues that military-nation has defined by the institution of 'citizen-army' usually based on universal male conscription. The nation-idea and state-idea is inextricably linked with each other through the military service, where men participate in the military as protectors of the families and nation. As Altınay (2004) points out "by defining national pride through masculine pride in the practice of military service, nation-state builders have simultaneously culturalized, masculinized, and militarized an emerging political process" (p.6).

The argument regarding promotion of the idea of the soldier-nation through educational channels and materials was further developed by Kancı and Altınay (2007) in their research, *Educating Little Soldiers and Little Ayşes: Militarised and Gendered Citizenship in Turkish Textbooks*, which critically examines how gender and militarism are portrayed in Turkish textbooks. They argue that while the military service was initially introduced as a necessity by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk in the late 1920s, it underwent a transformation into an 'invented tradition,' merging cultural and political dimensions within the concept of the 'military nation' (Kancı & Altınay, 2007). School history books argued that Turks excelled as soldiers due to their possession of cultural attributes conducive to military prowess and Turks have inherent 'love for military service' and demonstrated unwavering determination even when confronting formidable adversaries (Kancı & Altınay, 2007). This point is worth emphasizing because there lies a critical change in the way that military

service is viewed: it is now reframed as a cultural practice rather than solely as a political citizenship exercise. The result of this realignment was the exclusion of military service from the discussion of politics and historical swings. It became an apparently unchangeable feature of Turkish society by being more closely linked to cultural identity, making it less vulnerable to shifts in political beliefs or governmental regulations. While there have been some changes with new curriculums in the history books, the general idea that military service is a national/cultural attribute and is a primary and sacred duty of citizenship did not change (Kancı & Altınay, 2007).

In a more recent piece, *Undoing Academic Cultures of Militarism: Türkiye and Beyond*, Altınay (2019) calls for a reassessment of the connections between knowledge production, education, and military discourse by exposing the ways in which academic cultures may unintentionally support militarism. She presents the idea of "methodological militarism" as a means of comprehending the deeply embedded mechanisms of militarism in the creation of academic knowledge.

Sinclair-Webb (2006) argues that military service is not just an obligatory duty for Turkish males, but also a significant rite of passage that shapes and upholds their traditional ideas of manhood and bravery. The book clarifies how serving in the military is frequently viewed as an essential step in demonstrating one's manhood and gaining respect from society, which has a significant impact on how people perceive themselves and their identities. She draws attention to the dichotomy between enthusiastic public celebration and individual reluctance to serve in the military. In the eyes of the public, military service is idealized and strongly associated with ideas of manhood, patriotism, and devotion for the defense of the country against outside threats. However, many young men secretly have mixed feelings about being drafted, which contributes to the widespread refusal to serve in the military. Young men's opinions on serving in the military are varied and complex. Owing to the delicate nature of the subject, explicit political resistance is uncommon, although some people choose not to enlist for political reasons involving a variety of ideologies. Some may simply dislike the idea of military service for reasons unrelated to political convictions; rather, their concerns may arise from an unclear

understanding of the political context, which has been made worse by the intricate and frequently ambiguous reporting of related topics in Turkish media over a number of years. This study is important because it signals that in the early 2000s the reluctance of men towards military service was felt. Now, it has been almost 20 years later since Sinclar-Webb's analysis, focusing on perceptions of young men in the face of current political and socioeconomical environment seem highly important.

While the existing literature generally focuses on the experience of military service in non-conflict zones, Nadire Mater's book *Mehmedin Kitabı* (1999), focuses the meanings for soldiers to serve in conflict-zones in Southeastern region of Türkiye. The fact that conflict zones are one of the harshest places where the military fully manifests itself, and that people who have experience in these areas tell their own stories is an important study in terms of explaining how masculinity exists in military service.The book aims to make the public hear the voices of people who have been/are forced to be the subjects of war, either of their own volition or against their will, and to ensure that the war is seen from their point of view. This work was highly important in showing what conflicts actually mean and how traumatizing they can be for the soldiers because the book was structured in a way where the main subject speaks. The humanization of these soldiers—turning them from nameless fighters to people with complex emotional landscapes and moral dilemmas—is a major point of contention in the book. The goal of Mater is to give these soldiers a forum to share their individual tales, bringing attention to the intricacies and human consequences of war. Mater encourages readers to interact with the ethical, social, and personal aspects of combat by elevating the voices of Turkish troops and humanizing their experiences. This promotes a greater comprehension of the human cost of fighting and the intricacies of war-torn areas. The book caused such a reaction that it was ordered to be confiscated and investigations were launched, after which Mater was acquitted.

Özbay (2013) argues that during the late 1990s and early 2000s, debates in Türkiye on masculinity frequently highlighted the Turkish military as not only a prominent but potentially the most powerful institution influencing masculinities in the nation. Nonetheless, robust assertions that every Turkish person is a soldier during the

political climate of the 1990s appeared to normalize militarism, violence, and machismo, so rendering them invisible. This culture linked Turkishness, military duty, and masculinity under one umbrella by emphasizing military service, the khaki uniform, barracks discipline, deference to authority, and a martial worldview. However, throughout time, this culture's impact diminished and lost its vigor. In 2012, the concept that the military is an institution that designs society, teaches citizens, and molds identities began to wane, notwithstanding the sporadic appeal of nationalist discourses. Remarkably, young men's interest in military schools, which was formerly sought after by students with high scores during the 1980s and early 1990s, now has a more moderate inclination. Globalization, communication ease, and worldwide awareness are some of the factors contributing to this change. Furthermore, the Turkish military's disregard for the "entrepreneurial self," a phrase that encapsulates neoliberal subjectivity and calls for quick advancement within an adaptable organizational structure, an emphasis on individualism, flexibility with regard to regulations, and a money-oriented mentality, might have contributed to the diminished interest in military careers among young men. He argues that in this context that young men, their families, and social circles may not view soldiers dealing with a variety of legal concerns as a desirable image of masculinity. The declining interest in military school exams, which is frequently linked to the military's cultural influence waning, is indicative of this trend. The military's strict discipline and hierarchical structure might not fit well with neoliberal values that promote entrepreneurship, adaptability, and individual achievement. This mismatch may make it more difficult for the military to create or shape hegemonic masculinity that aligns with neoliberal ideals.

Açıksöz (2017) on the other hand, approaches these discussions from the point of violence, through exploring different connections violence has with political fields. According to Açıksöz the violence that resulted from the July 15, 2016, failed coup attempt has shaken Türkiye's political culture on a number of fronts, including the interaction between nationalism, militarism, and gender. The article explores the idea of a "lynched soldier," a metaphor that captures the difficulties and changes in the field of masculinity after the coup. Açıksöz looks into how the coup attempt affected the military's reputation and, in turn, how masculine identity is constructed. The

relationship between masculinity and militarism emerges as a major issue, highlighting the connection between gender dynamics and political developments. The examination of how the coup attempt and later events have upended long-standing standards of masculinity connected to the military is a crucial component of the thesis. The general consensus in society is that young men become marriable, employable sovereign (hetero) masculine figures after serving in the military. So, the idealized male conscript is seen as both a lionized and masculinized figure and a childishly innocent figure who is lovingly called "little Mehmet" (a popular word for a soldier), suckling, and hennaed lamb. In the heteropatriarchal nexus of gender and age, the conscript is regarded as lacking the gendered authority to make sovereign judgments, notwithstanding his position in the military hierarchy. Because this gendered logic was broken after the coup attempt, the moral anger regarding the treatment of conscripts—who were portrayed as both "innocent kids" and obedient inferiors—grew stronger. The dominant narrative focused on the soldiers' alleged criminal acts and the civilian victims of the coup, despite challenges to the otherwise hegemonic gendered constructions of soldiers' "innocence" in some quarters, especially those associated with the government. Açıksöz further argues that deciphering the postcoup political scene requires analyzing the paradox of commemorating the failed military coup with a militarized symbol that elevates conscription. The aftermath of the coup suggests a tendency toward remilitarization, which is at odds with expectations of an anti- or post-militarist change. The religiously inspired exaltation of the military is expected to intensify despite the coup's disruptions of the gendered dynamics of militarism.

Regarding the military perception of long-term military service participants, Karacagil (2017) examines how military service has a transforming effect on how masculinity is constructed in Turkish society. Men's lives are portrayed as drastically changing during and after military service, with the experience influencing their identities and responsibilities. The study emphasizes how important individual experiences and sociocultural variables are in determining the relevance that men attach to their military service. The study also highlights the ways young men's military experience helps them become more resilient and self-assured, confirming their identity as "real men" in the eyes of society. In addition, males use military duty

as a platform to develop and test their own masculinity models, which they then further develop and demonstrate in civilian life. Men who serve in the military go through a great deal of suffering, challenges, and sufferings; as a result, young men grow mentally and physically and acquire endurance. They carry on with their lives, confident that they have met the final requirement to be recognized by their community as "real men" (Karacagil, 2017).

There is also a wide range of studies in an attempt to understand hegemonic masculinity dynamics in Türkiye. Like other parts of the world, masculinity is not a monolithic concept in Türkiye; rather, it is characterized by a range of expressions and power dynamics that are relevant in local, regional, and even global contexts. İt is crucial to remember that, even with patriarchy's pervasive impact, there is no one definition of hegemonic masculinity that applies to all situations. This is due to the fact that hegemonic masculinity is dynamic and ever-evolving, according to the unique sociocultural and political context of every community in which it exists. In a different setting, what is deemed hegemonic masculinity could not have the same authority or power. There are many studies on understanding hegemonic masculinity in Türkiye, across different geographical contexts, time, and socio-economic dimensions. For the purpose of this paper, in order to not lose my focus on militarism and masculinities, I will not detailly explain these studies on hegemonic masculinity in Türkiye, as though important, they are not directly relevant to my topic. To mention briefly, Bozok (2013) focuses geographically on Trabzon, highlights a complicated pattern that is typified by conservative, patriarchal, Islamist, and nationalist ideals; more speficially relationships with Natashas (women involved in the sex trade), football fanaticism, family roles and exclusionist attitude towards LGBTI+s. Tecik (2012) focuses geographically on Eskişehir with a focus on parenthood and Sungur (2011) focuses on Adana in relation to the concept of honor. Different geographic locations and cultural traditions impose different standards for a masculine style to be deemed hegemonic, even within the same temporal frame. There are also some studies that investigate the relationship between hegemonic masculinity and violence such as Laloğlu (2018), Türkoğlu and Cingöz-Ulu (2019), Tekkas (2015) and Öztemür and Toplu-Demirtaş (2023). Some studies focus on the relationship between hegemonic masculinity, military, and homosexuality through

the concept of ‘rotten report’ such as Ertan (2008), Başaran (2014) and Biricik (2011), showing the the ways in which misogyny, homophobia, and patriarchal authority interact.

Özbay (2013) highlights the challenge of comprehending the dynamics of masculinity in Türkiye and disavows the notion of a universal "Turkish masculinity" or a workable model of "hegemonic masculinity in Türkiye." He does, however, make an effort to pinpoint certain essential components of the dynamics of masculinity that are currently in place in Türkiye and concludes that subjectivity and logic of neoliberalism underlie the hegemonic masculinity structures in Türkiye especially due to the neoliberal policies that have been in place in Türkiye since Turgut Özal regime. The erosion of military immunity and the rise of conservative political figures in Türkiye are the two main factors altering the macroenvironment of hegemonic masculinity. But he also emphasizes that these shifts are the result of the neoliberal personality's pragmatism and fast thinking.

While these works are crucial in understanding how complex hegemonic masculinity can be and how context, space and time dependent it is, they provide a general view around what it means to be masculine, which are associated with toughness and aggressiveness. However, although many men hold this ideal as a standard, not all men fully adhere to it. Instead, individuals could endeavor to assume the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity while simultaneously modifying and customizing their actions in response to unique situations and personal values. The experiences and viewpoints of men who do not quite conform to hegemonic norms should be acknowledged since their varied backgrounds have the power to question and reshape conventional ideas of masculinity. We can learn more about the nuances of gender identity and masculinity as well as potential paths for advancing inclusive and varied conceptions of masculinity in society by investigating the lived experiences of men who reject dominant standards.

These works will be continuously referred throughout the thesis. These works are highly influential in showing that masculinity is a discursive phenomenon that is constructed throughout life and there are some rituals and responsibilities

accompanying them such as circumcision, being a father, having a job, and military service. In short, critical masculinity studies reveal that not everyone (or not every man) benefit equally from the patriarchal order. By revealing the existence of multiple masculinities, it provides us room for seeing the hegemonic and subordinated masculinities.

3.1.5.1. Stages of Masculinity

One of the focal points of studies on military in masculinity studies is the construction of masculinity. There are numerous studies aiming to understand the construction of masculinity for Turkish men. The current study focuses on men's perceptions of military service, nationalism and gender in addition to the construction of masculinity.

Masculinity is a phenomenon that is constructed constantly throughout life and there are certain bodily and social responsibilities and rituals related to it (Boratav, et al., 2018). Those rituals are mainly circumcision, sexual experience, marriage, having a son, being a father, having a job, and military service (Boratav, et al., 2018). In similar lines, Selek (2014) argues that traditionally, there are 4 main important points of a man’s life in Türkiye; circumcision, military service, having a job, marriage and Barutçu (2013) adds sexuality as the fifth dimension here. Marriage and being a father can be considered as within the same period the latter following the former. Circumcision ritual is one key rite de passage of manhood. For Barutçu (2013), circumcision is the first physical stage that boys in Türkiye must overcome. In Türkiye, the first major initiative expected of a boy is to gloriously accept the intervention on his genitals (Barutçu, 2013). Kırımlı (2010), in similar lines, argues that circumcision should not only be seen as a religious tradition, but it is also an indicator of social status where the child enjoys a spectacular ceremony that remarks his first step into manhood. In conversations about circumcision, the expression "a little bit from the tip" is commonly used. According to Altınoluk Düztaş (2019), short-term is carried out as a "little bit from the tip" as an escape point from compulsory military service, where men go only for a period of basic training.

Military service is often constituted as preconditions of other stages, especially being employed and getting married. Sinclair-Webb (2006) explains that it frequently denotes an important point in which a man's employment status remains temporary limiting his capacity to gain economic independence from his family. This feature emphasizes how important it is to serve in the military in order to become financially independent and self-sufficient outside of the family. To be regarded as an acceptable marital partner in the framework of society, serving in the military is also frequently seen as a requirement for that status. Reaching this goal is sometimes interpreted as a sign of a man's commitment, maturity, and responsibility—qualities that are highly regarded in the context of marriage. Therefore, serving in the military has societal ramifications for one's eligibility for marriage and starting a family in addition to symbolizing a shift into maturity. Sünbüloğlu (2013) states that in Türkiye, militarism, especially through compulsory military service, has been an important element of power that shapes men's socialization processes, regulates the citizenship relationship they establish with the state and positions men within the gender regime of the state. By fulfilling the military service duty, men can fully access their citizenship rights that enable them to enjoy rights and rewards (Barutçu, 2013). One of the most important components of the myth of the military country is the idea that ‘every Turk is born a soldier,’ which has strong gender implications, every Turk meaning every male Turk. Enloe illustrates how military masculinity establishes a connection between males and public life using a Turkish example. The Turkish military continues to rely only on male conscription, much like other NATO forces that do the same (including France, Germany, and Italy). This decision upholds a masculinized conception of military citizenship in the country. A young Turkish man may not look forward to serving in the military, and his sister may be happy to continue her studies or find employment outside of the military, but there are benefits to serving in the military. These benefits go beyond specific males and help all men who stand to gain politically from the public perception of masculinity as a priority (Enloe, 2000).

Conscription is acknowledged as a crucial institution for forming the "normal" and "adult" characteristics of males in addition to being a required mechanism for developing traditional and mature masculinity. It serves as a secondary school,

successfully teaching young men vital life skills (Kwon, 2010). People view military service as a transitional experience wherein conscripted individuals develop into responsible men who can support their families and comply with civil society norms. An honorable discharge from the military signifies the end of adolescent doubt and resistance of social conventions and the entry into a more reputable and established role in the social hierarchy (Kwon, 2010). Altınay (2004) canvasses that military service brings different men from different backgrounds, education levels, economic status, ethnic identity together and make them share the barracks but one difference that is fundamental and beyond negotiation in military is men's difference from women; it is "a part of a joint obligation to become proper *male* citizens of their state and 'survive' through this rite of passage into adult (heterosexual) masculinity" (p.77). As pointed by Biricik (2011), "male conscription is a practice whereby the relationship between the individual Turkish male and the Turkish state is regulated and maintained" (p.77). It makes 'manly man' and "functions as a system of surveillance in controlling the order of 'proper' male citizens … and inevitably male bodies" through various sanctions such as not being able to leave the country if not fulfilled the duty on time (Biricik, 2011, pp.77-78). However, the discourses on military nation and glorification of being a soldier are not as strong as before. I argue that the importance military and military service holds on people's lives becoming smaller because of the recent changes in compulsory military service regulations and individuals' readiness to engage in military service.

In addition to these, the fact that society in general positions military service as a condition for marriage increases the transitional ritual characteristic of military service (Turan, 2013). As mentioned above, after fulfilling the military service, having a job and being married are often considered to be the most defining characteristic of becoming a man. Sancar's (2009) research has also proves that the most common point in the construction of male identity in Türkiye is to be the head of the household and the breadwinner. The 'family father' model means both providing for the family and being represented in the public sphere.

Altınoluk Düztaş (2019) focuses in her doctoral thesis on the reconstruction of the hegemonic masculinity in Turkish academia, focusing on perceptions of male

academics on stages of masculinity based on Selek's and Barutcu's analyses on stages of masculinity, which are circumcision, military service, finding a job, sexuality and marriage. She argues that with the increase in the level of education, short-term (6-months) and paid military service (in this paper termed as short-term military service) options have become the preference of men. It is argued that these preferences are aimed at preventing the loss of time in academic life rather than the rejection of compulsory military service or militarism. The relationship between increase in the level of education and desire to spend shorter time in military service is noteworthy here. Especially with the increase in the level of education, compulsory military service is seen as a hindering and problematic factor in terms of economic life and career.

3.1.5.2. Literature on Short-term (*Bedelli*) Military Service in Türkiye

Historically, with the adoption of the army-nation mentality, the Ottoman Empire also began to work on compulsory military service. "Institutionally and legally, after the 1908 Revolution, the Ottoman government was in an effort to establish a system of compulsory military service, and as a result, it enacted the compulsory military service law in 1909" (Cora, 2013). Although various regulations and amendments have been made since then, conscription has never been abolished in Türkiye (Barutçu, 2013).

Military service is the right and duty of every Turk in accordance with Article 72 of the Turkish Constitution. Every male citizen of the Republic of Türkiye is obliged to perform military service. This "right and duty" mark an important point in their lives as every man who wants to have the dominant position of masculinity that exists in the society has to join the military to pay his 'homeland debt' without delay. Military service functions as a service that feeds men's construction of masculinity and intensely adds masculinity to their identities in the construction process (Barutçu, 2013).

The year 2019 marks an important point for military service system in Türkiye as the new military service system was introduced with the Military Service Law no. 7179.

The law proposal brought two main changes regarding the duration of compulsory service and permanence of the short-term military service. In the old system, people other than university, master's or doctorate graduates were obliged to do compulsory military service for 12 months. According to the new regulation, the duration of compulsory military service has been reduced to 6 months regardless of education. After 6 months, there is a chance to continue and receive salary for another 6 months for those who wants. One month of the 6-month military service consists of basic military training. In this context, the service period was determined as 6 months for conscripts and privates and 12 months for reserve officers and reserve non-commissioned officers. Additionally, short-term military service system was made permanent.

When looked at the meaning, *bedelli askerlik* in Turkish, *bedel* means equivalent, value, worth, cost, price, a substitute for something. In the Conscription Law, short-term military service is defined as follows: military service fulfilled by those who are selected for military service for a fee, provided that they meet the conditions for benefiting from military service specified in the law, on the condition that they pay the determined price and undergo basic military training.

This type of military service has been in practice since the Ottoman Empire in different types. During the Ottoman Empire, there were two main types *bedel-i şahsi* and *bedel-i nakdi.* The first one meant the person who was going to be conscripted had to have someone else do the military service instead of himself. The latter meant a conscript was exempted from military service if he paid a predetermined price. During the Republican Period, until 1986, short-term military service was not practiced. The practice of performing short-term military service has been implemented three times in the recent period, in 1987, 1992 and 1999, with legal regulations numbered 3358, 3802 and 4459 (Provisional Articles 20, 33 and 37 of the Military Service Law). In the 1999 application, while the earthquake justification was clearly stated in the law, when the limits of the other two applications are examined, it is seen that the main justification was the elimination of the accumulated number of *kaçak (draft dodger) -saklı (hidden) -bakaya (deserter)* conscripts. A total of 125,834 people, including 18,433 people in 1987, 35,111

people in 1992 and 72,290 people in 1999, have benefited from the military conscription for payment.

In 1999, after the Gölcük earthquake, short-term military service was implemented to contribute to the country's economy. In the short-term military service in 1999, those born before January 1, 1973 short-term 15,000 marks (4,500 TL) and those born before 1960 short-term 20,000 marks. At that time, 1.1 billion marks of revenue was generated. It was clearly stated with the implementation of 1999 that the aim of it is to generate wealth for the earthquake-affected economy.

Since 1999, short-term military service system was implemented in 2011, 2014 and 2018. In 2011, the first short-term military service was implemented during the Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi, (Justice and Development Party) (AKP) era.70,179 people benefited from the application. In this period, the age limit was 30 and the price was 30 thousand liras. A total of 2.2 billion TL revenue was obtained (Evrensel, 2018). In 2014, the AKP introduced the second short-term military service. 203,905 people benefited from the short-term military service, the purpose of which was announced as "to eliminate the accumulation of problematic, illegal, hidden and unaccounted for conscripts and to provide resources for the defense industry". In this application, the age limit was 27 and the price was 18 thousand liras. In total, 3 billion 671 million 100 thousand TL revenue was obtained (Evrensel, 2018). In 2018, AKP brought the third short-term military service application to the agenda on the grounds that the number of draft evaders and absconders has been increasing in the country in recent years, and there have been demands from large segments of society to prevent the accumulation of this issue. The application was implemented with a 21-day military service, a price of 15 thousand TL and an age limit of 25 (Evrensel, 2018).

In 2019, new military service system was introduced. The law proposal brought two main changes regarding the duration of compulsory service and permanence of the short-term military service. In the old system, people other than university, master's or doctorate graduates were obliged to do compulsory military service for 12 months. According to the new regulation, the duration of compulsory military service has been reduced to 6 months regardless of education. One month of the 6-month

military service consists of basic military training. In this context, the service period was determined as 6 months for conscripts and privates and 12 months for reserve officers and reserve non-commissioned officers. Additionally, short-term military service system was made permanent. Thus, short-term military service has been implemented from time to time but it was incorporated into the military service permanently in 2019. And it was always explained based on economic terms. This marks a significant point in military service system and its effects on ideals of masculinity needs to be studied. Stating that the military recruitment activities are carried out within the framework of the law put into force in 2019, Minister of National Defense Güler said, "Since the provisions of the law in question entered into force, 2 million 817 thousand 600 people have done military service and 641 thousand 544 people have benefited from the short-term military service" (DHA, 2023). Such a preference implies that a sizable segment of the populace considers short-term military service to be a more desirable or feasible choice, perhaps as a result of a variety of variables like perceived benefits, flexibility, or financial considerations. This disparity in numbers draws attention to the shifting dynamics and decisions made during military duty, which are a reflection of both changing public perceptions of military service and personal priorities.

Short-term military service has been implemented from time to time, but it was incorporated into the military service permanently in 2019, as explained before. And it was always explained based on economic terms. This marks a significant point in military service system and its effects on ideals of masculinity needs to be studied. Short-term military service is a considerably new form of fulfilling the “right and duty of every Turk”. As such, it started to receive attention quite newly. Following paragraphs will focus on the research conducted on short-term military service in Türkiye. While it is a highly contested and hot topic of discussion, the academic attention toward the concept remains significantly low.

Gençoğlu Onbaşı (2016) is among the very few scholars that focused on short-term military service. She concentrates on short-term military service and conscientious objection and their legitimacy and illegitimacy with a focus on the interconnection between militarism, nationalism, patriarchy and capitalism. She argues that there is

an overlapping consensus on the legality of the right to being exempted from compulsory military through short-term, *bedelli*, military service and the categorical rejection of conscientious objection. She compares the changing responses towards short-term military service and conscientious objection; where the former's "'disloyalty' is met with a general 'forgiveness'" and latter is not tolerated because the rejection of not going for compulsory military service is based on ethical-political principles (p.2). Furthermore, she asserts that with short-term military service, capitalism (through stress on economic rationality) is added to the close working and interconnectedness of nationalism, militarism and patriarchy and by this way secure its hegemony (Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2016). In addition to the close interplay between nationalism, militarism, and patriarchy; capitalism and "'economic rationality' – with an emphasis on self-interest, cost and benefit type of thinking, and profit maximization" play an important role in contemporary mainstream politics in Türkiye (Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2016, p.4). The research reveals that debates on short-term military service share a common ground of capitalist understanding of economic rationality, meaning that texts either explain how profitable and practical or how unfeasible and unprofitable it is. One key theme appear in this regard is the time spent during compulsory military service; it may seem unproductive because it takes significant time from a man's life, causes a change in economic conditions, and damages economy of the country instead of doing more efficient, effective, beneficial, profitable work because it does not match with individual's true capacity/capability (Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2016). Another key theme is size of the army and number of soldiers, meaning the army is already among the largest armies in the world and thus it is not need to more soldiers and the expenditure on equipment of soldiers create burden on the economy and it is not cost-effective. Last theme is the money collected through short-term military service, which can be used in financing social services for those in need. Those who are against the short-term military service still base their arguments on economic rationality; arguing that it underlines the socio-economic inequalities between who can pay and who cannot. Some argue that national security is a public good and it should be produced collectively as such short-term military service is a case of free rider. Moreover, skepticism about the allocation of resources appears as another key theme; there is significant amount of money collected through short-term military service and one can never be sure about

whether this money is used for those in need instead of using it to compensate budget deficit. Gençoğlu Onbaşı (2016) further asserts that paying can be taken as another version of 'manly behavior' for those who do not want to be soldier but expected to prove their masculinity; demonstrating their power "as a man to earn, control, and spend his money in accordance with the principles of rationality, profit maximization and productivity" (p.10).

Another piece of work on short-term military service is by Yirmidokuz and Kahraman (2021), which aims to understand the production and reproduction of short-term military service on masculinity/masculinities. While the method of the study is similar to my work, their work is geographically limited to those living in Kayseri, while I chose to not limit myself geographically. Instead of geographical focus, I find it more useful to conduct a class-based analysis. Thus, I hope to create an academic dialogue where the findings of their work can be tested for broader geographical context with a class-based focus. They argue that when compared to long-term military service, short-term military service involves less strict training period. Physical competence is one of the most important elements of the militarist male model and both masculinity and the military are constructed through this competence. In line with men's physical characteristics, their bodies become more suitable for both fighting and defense during the process of becoming a soldier. However, physical competence that proves hegemony, leaves itself to different dynamics; the physical capital is replaced by symbolic capital, and those who went for short-term military service maintain their hegemony through the status, title, economic freedom or the habitus they have grown up in. They conclude that the main reason for the preference of doing short-term military service is the rise of the capitalist model of masculinity; which puts his job at the center of his life and evaluates everything else according to his job. Their work indicated that the main dynamic of preferring short-term military service is the capitalist mindset; fear of individuals not quitting their jobs or losing their jobs when they return. Thus, there exists a rational evaluation process for men about military service and based on a cost-benefit calculation they find short-term military service more pragmatic. It can be argued that findings of this research support Gençoğlu Onbaşı's (2016) analysis on capitalism and economic rationality. Moreover, they argue that as a new social

phenomenon, short-term military service will bring changes in the long term. In addition to the changing perspective on military service, it is possible that there will be new openings regarding masculinity and masculinity practices. At this point, they argue, short-term military service should be seen as a buffer mechanism, which is used to reduce the reactionary reactions of the society. The short-term military service, which is tried to replace the military service, which has a culturally distinct position in the society, mitigates the reactions that may occur, and these reactions are neutralized by the people who do short-term military service, and rational values are attributed to the short-term military service. They distinguish military service as full of cultural and symbolic meanings for society and short-term military service as rationalized version of military service (Yirmidokuz & Kahraman, 2021).

Nevertheless, I argue that while the shorter time period or attitudes of superiors create significant differences, the meanings attributed to military service and the general disciplining and unthinking practices of the institution of military service still persists for the short-term military service. Yirmidokuz and Kahraman (2021) argue that the narratives of the participants of the study who did short-term military service are shaped in a way that was distant from gender perception, while the language of gender and masculinity was more dominant in the narratives of those who did their military service for a long term. They further deem that that the assumptions about masculinity have changed among interviewees who did short-term military service and some of our interviewees who did their military service for a long term. They argue that the existing assumptions of masculinity in Türkiye condition men to be especially tough and detached from their emotions, delegate the task of providing for the household to men without the financial support of women, and direct the idea of masculinity in a profile that excludes women and all female roles; however, these assumptions seem to change in their interviews. They address this change as a masculinity crisis, which are instrumental in changing and transforming the idea of masculinity.

Another study concentrates on the role of military in Turkish context and changes in the standpoint towards military service in Türkiye by Çetin (2018). For her, the process of transition of the army towards professional military service is being

prepared with the shortening of the duration of military service and the standardization of short-term military service. Military service is still a compulsory service for male citizens, but the transition to professional military service is being accelerated by changing the duration and the way it is performed. Hence, she argues that short-term military service acts as a steppingstone. Furthermore, she proclaims that when we look at the case of Türkiye, we can see that the view that military service is equal to love for one's homeland is weakening. Albeit many people who love their homeland also think that military service is unnecessarily long. The fact that the duration of military service is being shortened day by day through laws shows that these opinions are also accepted by the state. Moreover, there are no longer any harsh reactions in the society to those who do their military service for a short term or those who want to do short-term military service. It has been seen that those who do short-term military service are not actually people far from Turkish culture, they do not run away from patriotic service, they benefit from such a right to the extent of their means, and over time, this situation has become less strange in society.

İşleyen (2019) takes on the case of short-term military service through the intersection of Habermas' concept of public sphere and democracy through a website called *Ekşi Sözlük*. It looks at how social media sites like *Ekşi Sözlük* influence public opinion formation, idea sharing, and the discussion of social and political topics. The examination of *Ekşi Sözlük*'s comments makes two main findings about the type of debate that occurs on the platform. First, it is observed that there is frequently aggressive content with swearing in the comments, which generally lack a reasonable attitude. Furthermore, the content frequently contains statements that trivialize the topic at hand by removing it from its true context and scope. Second, the research emphasizes is the stark difference that exists between people who have economic power and those who do not, and this difference is frequently brought up in conversations on public opinion. The texts under analysis were found to be illogical in their treatment of the problem, even in light of the evident socioeconomic divide and the ensuing public discourse.

Although the legitimacy of military buy-out laws is suggested by their approval in Türkiye, Çakatay (2019)'s research argues that these exemption practices may have

an influence on social equity by using the Population Representation Model, initially introduced by M.J. Eitelberg in order to evaluate the short-term military service system in Türkiye. It investigates whether the current exemption laws that have been implemented by different Turkish administrations unintentionally result in a societal segment's underrepresentation in the military. Paid exemptions can help create a more professional military, but new laws have made the historical disparity within the draftee corps even more pronounced. As a result, the study recommends reevaluating the paid exemption option and moving toward permanent regulations in the event that there are more eligible people than there are, upholding the idea of 'equality before the law.' It argues that because of the individualist, economically rational, and utility-maximization type of thinking, enlisting in the military at the age of 20 no longer holds the same significance as the traditional male coming-of-age experience in Turkish culture. This is particularly relevant for young men from more affluent families, who view the mandatory military service both as a genuine patriotic duty and as a potential hindrance to their educational and career aspirations.
Therefore, the literature around short-term military service, *bedelli askerlik*, is quite new and can be said to be in the maturation stage. The existing literature tried to understand the motivations behind doing it and public attitude towards the service. While the economic dimension was often emphasized by these works, the investigation with respect to those who can afford but deliberately decide to not do it was not studied yet. Hence, this thesis aims to fill this gap and contribute to the literature. I hope that this thesis can also pave the way for subsequent studies that, for example, focus on different classes.

3.2. How is This Thesis Situated in the Literature?

In navigating the diverse and often contentious landscape of masculinity studies, my position is anchored in a feminist standpoint that acknowledges the ever-changing and non-fixed nature of gender identity. Taking inspiration from academics like Judith Butler, Cynthia Enloe, and Raewyn Connell, I view masculinity as a socially constructed term that is constantly negotiated in different circumstances rather than a static essence. Using a feminist lens helps me better understand the complex relationships that middle-class males in Türkiye have between military duty,

socioeconomic position, and masculinity. Recognizing the gendered power dynamics ingrained in social systems, my research aims to provide complex viewpoints that go against conventional ideas about what it means to be a man.

A fundamental component of my work, the intersectionality framework directs my analysis of the ways in which several facets of identity—including class—intersect and shape male experiences. This lens, which draws inspiration from the writings of bell hooks and Kimberlé Crenshaw, makes it easier to comprehend how socioeconomic variables affect people's stories in the unique setting of military duty. Moreover, my research delves critically into the intricacies of homosocial establishments, specifically the Turkish military, acknowledging the spaces' exclusive character towards women. By situating my study at the nexus of gender, class, and militarism, I hope to challenge and broaden our understanding of masculinity in modern Türkiye while also making a significant contribution to academic discourse and larger conversations on cultural norms.

My study is a reflection and a critique of the theoretical frameworks and debates surrounding masculinity studies, as I attempt to give voice to underrepresented groups and provide new insights into the dynamic field of gender identities in Türkiye. My work is positioned to shed light on the intricate relationships between masculinity, class, and military service by utilizing feminist, intersectional, and socio-culturally sensitive approaches. This will facilitate a more thoughtful and inclusive discourse within the academic community.

Beyond the experiences of individual men, military service in Türkiye has enormous societal significance. The importance of military duty and its cultural connotations are deeply ingrained in Turkish society, impacting views on citizenship, honor, and national identity. Being a representation of power and nationalism, the military assumes a pivotal role in establishing social standards and anticipations. This has an effect on males who enlist in the military, but it also has an impact on larger social systems. The significance that society places on military service is especially evident in how it affects gender norms. Stereotypical ideas of masculinity and femininity are reinforced by the narratives surrounding military service, which are strongly

ingrained with traditional gender norms. In this particular setting, women are frequently confined to particular positions within the framework of narratives surrounding their military service, which serves to reinforce gendered expectations. By looking at the experiences of males from the middle class, the thesis advances knowledge about how these deeply ingrained gender norms interact with socioeconomic position and influence people's ideas of what it means to be a man.

Moreover, the significance of military duty in society crosses over with inclusivity and diversity concerns, particularly pertaining to women and the LGBTQI+ population. Openly gay people have long been denied entry into the Turkish military, while women are limited in their ability to participate directly. Comprehending the dynamics of masculinity within this homosocial establishment is crucial for analyzing the ways in which these exclusions and limits are sustained, as well as for comprehending the ways in which societal expectations materialize within the intricate interactions among military service, gender, and class. Thus, this study presents a critical investigation into the wider ramifications of the significance attached to military duty, shedding light on how it affects not only men's lives but also the larger social environment, which includes women's and LGBTQI+ communities' experiences.

This study fills a crucial vacuum in the literature by concentrating on a group of males from the middle class who are still understudied, especially when it comes to short-term military service. By shedding light on the complex ways that socioeconomic position influences experiences and conceptions of masculinity within the unique context of military duty, this study advances the field of masculinity studies. This study's investigation of the relatively new and under-studied topic of short-term military service demonstrates its importance. The research explores unexplored area on a topic that came to light after legislation changes in 2019, with the goal of illuminating the attitudes, experiences, and decision-making processes of persons who choose compensated service over the traditional 6–12 months of military duty. In doing so, it deepens our comprehension of the ways in which class, masculinity, and shifting military service norms interact within a population that can afford to make these decisions. Furthermore, a more

comprehensive understanding of gender identity is facilitated by the study's intersectional methodology, which draws inspiration from feminist and military studies. It explores the nuances of masculinities in a homosocial organization such as the Turkish military, illuminating the relationships between social norms, personal experiences, and power structures. A more complex explanation is made possible by the emphasis on intersectionality, which provides a deeper understanding of the ways in which many social categories interact to form the experiences of middle-class men in the context of military service.

To sum up, this study not only fills a gap in the literature, but also makes significant additions beyond it. In order to disentangle the complicated relationships between masculinity, class, and military duty in the Turkish context, it puts the experiences of middle-class men front and center, investigates the uncharted territory of short-term military service, and engages with rigorous theoretical frameworks. By doing this, it hopes to start meaningful conversations, question conventional assumptions, and promote a more inclusive conversation about how gender identity is evolving.

CHAPTER 4

PERCEPTIONS OF GENDER AND IDEAL MASCULINITY – NAVIGATING THE MASCULINITY NORMS

This chapter aims to provide a picture on participants' masculinity and gender perceptions, on questions such as how they see ideal masculinity, is there anything that can distort masculinity and is there any differences between women and men. It is found here that there create connections between ideal masculinity and both physical and non-physical characteristics. Short-term military service often emphasizes the humanity dimension, irrespective of gender and provide answers such as being respectful. However, they also include traditional gender roles and norms in their answers such as power, charisma, being able to protect. For long-term, the emphasis on humanity is considerably low but answer still include what can be termed non-traditional gender norms and traditional gender norms. With respect to things that distort masculinity, the common answer between two groups is exerting power (over weaker ones). Additionally, again, short-term participants emphasize humanity dimension and mention taking responsibility, being protective, not break the bro-code. For long-term service the answers also include not being kind and gentle and talking behind other's back. Regarding the differences between women and men, physiological differences appear as a common popular answer, including hormones, reproductive systems, muscle structures, etc. In addition, ways of thinking and ways of approaching an issue, emotionality were also mentioned.

The influence of gender norms and masculine ideals on men's life is a varied and intricate topic that has received considerable amount of attention in scholarly discussions. Men are frequently indoctrinated from an early age to conform to specific masculinity norms, which can have a significant impact on their behavior, sense of self, and social interactions. Men navigate their identities and obligations inside a framework created by these gendered expectations and norms, which shapes

their experiences and affects how they see other people and themselves. It is a demanding and continuous process to go beyond conventional masculinity ideals and gender standards; it calls for critical thought, self-awareness, and a willingness to question social norms.

Men frequently get caught up in a web of social norms that prescribe their ideal ways of acting, thinking, and feeling. It can be difficult to navigate these expectations because they are frequently firmly embedded in social dynamics, cultural norms, and historical circumstances. Men often struggle with the pressure to live up to traditional ideas of masculinity, which can be at odds with their own beliefs, feelings, and goals. The social stigma associated with emotional expressiveness and vulnerability exacerbates this conundrum, making men choose between living up to expectations and being true to who they truly are.

This study employs a social constructionist approach on identity, which holds that identity is a dynamic and changing construct made via social interactions, based on narrative data and observations made during the interviews with two different group of men. Understanding masculinity as a socially created identity that is constantly enacted and reinforced through actions, gestures, and expressions is made easier by Judith Butler's concept of gender as a performative act. This viewpoint emphasizes the influence of societal norms, expectations, and power dynamics in constructing male identities, challenging essentialist ideas of masculinity as an innate or unchanging feature.

The findings suggests that men move between norms, ideals and practices. there is a normative perception of masculinity (norms about being masculine in society) including many physical and characteristic things. These norms are constantly in play. The participants are well-aware of these norms. but they are selective towards them. On the other hand, there are also practices. although people say that they are not affected by the ideals or that they are affected and adapt to them, contrary to what they say, the points where they are affected or cannot adapt appear in the interviews as contradictions as slips of the tongue. As Sancar (2009) says, masculinity is an impossible state of power. It may never be possible to achieve it completely. Living

with these norms and expectations and negotiating them is an important part of masculinity.

The study follows Butler's theory of gender as a performance by showing how men act out and negotiate their masculine identities in various circumstances. In addition to exhibiting variances and complexity in their performances, participants engaged in a variety of actions and expressions that mirrored prevailing ideas of masculinity, such as strength, discipline, and authority. This study emphasizes that masculinity is a dynamic and context-dependent performance rather than a fixed essence, highlighting its fluid and contextual nature. We can learn more about how people actively create and negotiate their gender identities within larger societal frameworks by looking at masculinity via a performative lens. This viewpoint promotes further critical examination of gender norms as well as a more complex comprehension of the range of masculine experiences.

Some respondents show a general lack of clarity or ambivalence on the concept of ideal masculinity, which suggests that these individuals do not completely define or follow conventional gender standards. It could be a sign of disgust for gender stereotypes as they are applied to society and a refusal to conform to expectations of what it means to be a man. However, it could also be a reflection of a sense of disillusionment or skepticism about the idea of ideal masculinity in general, perhaps brought on by personal experiences or observations that defy accepted notions of gender norms. The responses from people in short-term military service generally explicitly highlight ideal humanity, awareness of societal norms, and selected opinions. Attention is also paid to their denial or mistrust of the conventional definition of perfect masculinity. In general, the participants express support for gender equality, while at the same time expressing inherently sexist comments based on essentialist arguments.

According to the data gathered, participants do not seem to establish a direct correlation or equivalency between military duty and nationalism or patriotism. One could argue that loyalty and love for the country are characterized by one's ability to benefit it through military duty as well as—and perhaps more importantly—through

other constructive ways like education, skilled work, and social progress. A noteworthy observation from the interviews is that the participants frequently disassociate themselves from the "ordinary" men, who are characterized by low socioeconomic position and low levels of education. There is a common argument that individuals who are mostly impoverished or originate from rural and undeveloped regions of Türkiye stand receive benefits from military service. Closely related to this, it is sometimes asserted that serving in the military gives them access to a setting in which they can observe Turkish society. Another issue that emerges from the interviews is the perception that men have of serving in the military as a transient adventure or as temporarily entering and leaving a new simulation. The impression of distancing from cozy surroundings may contribute to a person's experience of self-discovery and independence.

4.1. Ideal Masculinity

This section focuses on the participants answers to the question on ideal masculinity. They were asked during the interviews whether there is anything called ideal masculinity and if yes how they define it. I will first focus on answers of short-term military service participants, then move on the long-term military service participants answers, which will end with a comparative conclusion.

Short-term Military Service Participants

One direct question in understanding how the participant understand ideal masculinity was “do you think there is anything like ideal masculinity”. The responses included different aspects, both physical and characteristic. The main point that is seen here is physical and social power. These are expressed through variety of ways such as height, financial strength, being a protector over the woman. One participant mentioned tallness (as an expectation of women) in addition to financial strength:

> *According to Turkish girls, there is, which is above 1.85, with a salary of 100.000 TL or something like that. You look at a girl, she is 1.35 tall, she*

> *says, what's your height, ah, I cannot be with someone under 1.90, for the simplest... Look at yourself first and then look at the other person. You know, they attach importance to material status, you know, they say that a real man is a man if he has money, okay, this is a man, etc. and we know how many people who have money are presented to humanity. (Aki)*

Here, the participant focuses on the societal expectations regarding men's physical appearance and ability to financially provide. The important point to be noted here is the criticism and discomfort of the interviewed. Also, there is a narrative as if women have created the ideal masculinity and women have such an expectation. He also thinks that those who demand this perception should have characteristics that are in line with their expectations, only in this case they claim that they can deserve it from the other side. The participant draws attention to girl's expectations and ideal masculinity associated with tallness and financial strength and how some with financial strength can act improperly.

On similar lines, another participant draws attention to 'being powerful and charismatic' with regards to ideal masculinity, again reflecting on the societal expectations:

> *This is crucial both in male-female relationships and in societal interactions. When one appears strong, the other person tends to take them more seriously. Women do not bear this responsibility as much, but men do. (Aslan)*

Aslan's point of view emphasizes the social norm that men should demonstrate a high level of strength in order to be accepted and approved in social systems. The point made here signals both financial and physical power. According to Aslan, women do not face the same pressure to consistently demonstrate their strength in stereotypically masculine ways. Women could be able to express their emotionality, sensitivity, and vulnerability more freely than men do, without having to worry about the same level of criticism or scrutiny. Also, they do not feel the pressure of working and earning income, as much as men feel. Men and women's experiences with the need to project strength in order to survive and stand out in society varies greatly as a result of these divergent societal expectations. The narrative is further developed by him as follows:

> *For the society, there is. Power, first and foremost. This power can be explained in various ways: Money is power, charisma is power, tone of voice is power, muscles are power, character is power... İt is necessary for a man to be strong within a society. So, it is not really about the individual; it is about nature. Like how a lion needs to appear strong in the jungle. An elephant's male needs to appear strong as well. (Aslan)*

Aslan contends that the need for masculine strength is deeply ingrained in nature and is not only a socially enforced gender standard. He makes comparisons to animals such as elephants and lions, in which dominance, resource-gathering, and mating all depend on male power. According to this viewpoint, the expectation of masculine power is based on biological requirements and the way that males have evolved within ecosystems, rather than societal constructs.

Here, there seems to be a more alignment with the society's view and participant's view. Power, here, is associated with dominance and authority. Financial strength is associated with being able to take care the family, being the breadwinner and also with social status and respect. Also, physical strength is closely related to being able to protect both himself and their loved ones (especially women around them). As such, this comment can be argued to be closely in line with traditional gender norms.

Previously quoted participants above focus on the societal expectations regarding masculinity. One can see here that they are well-aware of such expectations. To some extent they approach it critically and to some extent they agree with those. Hence, they are acting selectively to such norms. On the other hand, another participant, uses the language 'I', while mentioning being possessive/protective (of women around him) as an important characteristic of masculinity:

> *I would like to protect my girlfriends, my normal girl friends or my girlfriends in a relationship. I think every man should protect any woman next to him because women are physically weaker than men in general. I want to protect them. I think every man should be like that. So, he should not run away. If there is an attack on a woman, he should intervene. (Karanfil)*

The concept of being brave and being the protectors is closely linked to traditional gender roles. The idea that men have to be strong and brave stems from the idea that women are vulnerable and in need of protection, pointing out the imbalance of power

and capability. Representing men as "the protectors" and women as "the protected" contributes to preserve militarism in society. In keeping with this portrayal, men are given a voice and a presence in the public arena since they are perceived as defenders. Men are given a sense of power and entitlement when they are portrayed as protectors, especially when it comes to issues of national security, defense, and interest. Men with this authorization frequently hold important positions in the public arena, such as leadership posts in the armed forces, politics, and policymaking sectors. Men's perceived importance and influence in forming societal norms, laws, and narratives related to militarism are reinforced by the identification of men with protection and defense.

With a focus on physical strength, considering men stronger and women as in need of protection, the participant aligns with the societal expectation and proudly mentions this. Men who are successful in upholding the ideals of masculinity frequently feel validated, accepted, and a part of the norms and expectations of society. Feelings of security, confidence, and recognition from peers and society might result from this conformity. Men may think they fit the mold of what it takes to be a "real man," which can make them feel proud of and accomplished. Men who successfully adopt traditional masculinity standards face a complex interplay of social dynamics, personal identity building, and cultural expectations that extends beyond feelings of pride and affirmation. Fundamentally, this event illustrates the subtle way that masculinity affects men's lives by negotiating the conflict between personal autonomy and social pressures.

Being powerful and protecting others, specifically the nation and the women, are among the key fundamental concepts of traditional masculinity. Within the nationalist discourse, there exists great emphasis on masculine attributes like bravery, strength, and protectiveness, which elevate men over women and perpetuate established gender roles. Regarding this, Gilmore (1990) explains that to protect dependents from danger is one of the aspects of the traditional and stereotypical view of masculinity.

A patriarchal family structure, in which men are viewed as the main providers and guardians for their families and, thus, for the country, is usually idealized by

nationalism. In doing so, it perpetuates the idea of women's subordinate place within the nationalist framework by portraying them as dependents in need of male protection. This reduces women's agency and prospects outside of the traditional domestic sphere by confining them to limited and romanticized roles. Women's supportive roles in society are typically defined as nurturing, caring for others, and upholding the social order, whereas men are praised for their protective and protective behaviors. As explained clearly by Enloe (1990), in nationalist movements and battles, women are frequently reduced to symbolic and subservient positions. They are portrayed as either symbols of the nation to be upheld and glorified or as battlefield goods and property to be dishonored by occupying armies. The focus on men's responsibility to safeguard women can result in the depiction of them to be powerless subjects in need of male protection rather than independent, self-governing beings. This strengthens the perception that women are weak and in need of male care and direction, solidifying their subordinate status in social hierarchies.

It is also important to note here that great majority among the short-term military service group specifically mention they are not answering for ideal masculinity, but instead humanity. Thus, one can argue here that societal pressures to conform rigid ideals of masculinity are widely felt by the group. Still, as seen above, answers can include traditional masculinity norms.

Another answer that is character-focused can be generally grouped under being respectful and non-restrictive towards others, reflecting a more nuanced understanding of masculinity that values empathy and consideration for others' autonomy and independency. This emphasis conflicts with the one of the main dimensions of military service, which is exerting control or authority over others. Respect is seen as an important component of ideal humanity, signifying strength through interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence as opposed to dominance or hostility.

> *I am so disgusted that I can also say that the commodification of such concepts, such commodification of men, does more harm than good in their own minds. Because on the one hand, there is always manliness, always masculinity, always the ideal man, none of this is valid for me. Rather than*

> *the ideal man, I would define the ideal person as a person who can think freely, who can respect whatever the other person thinks, who can listen, this is the most important thing. (Joker)*

Here, participants use the 'I' language in expressing his views, showing the subjectivity and selectivity with respect to ideal masculinity. However, the same participant, for another similar question, thing that distort masculinity, argues that "It comes to my mind, but if you mean it as sexual orientation, there I am hetero, the other side of course I like women. I ca not say well, I cannot say it does not matter". Here, at the point where he stops for a moment and later, he thinks of sexual orientation and says that 'of course' he likes women. Although it is not explicitly stated here, it is remarkable that non-heterosexuality comes to mind in the section of things that are contradicting to masculinity. Therefore, one can argue here with a slip of the tongue, heterosexuality seems like the ideal type.

In general, in the responses of the participants of the short-term military service, we see that the participants are quite aware of the societal expectations of masculinity and at this point, under this pressure, they turn their faces towards ideal humanity rather than ideal masculinity. In this way, it is possible to be free from some tiring ideals to a certain extent. We can see that there are ideal masculinity norms and expectations of society in the minds of the participants. People go back and forth between these expectations and realities. Some points about the norms of masculinity or the advantages that masculinity provides may be internalized and can be used. But people may also turn their backs on some ideals and use agency when they feel pressured, challenged or when they do not conform to their personal ideas. This shows us that masculinity needs to be treated as a performance. It also provides information about the complexity, maneuvering and reconstructions of the concept of masculinity.

Long-term Military Service Participants

When the answers to ideal masculinity are evaluated between shorter- and long-term military service, the points of being possessive/protective and respectful are common. However, long-term military service participants provide nuanced answers.

They do not emphasize ideal humanity as much as it is emphasized by short-term military service participants. Additionally, they add being dominant and reliable as an answer. Also, the answer 'I do not know' and 'there is no such thing' also appear among the answers.

A similar pattern on navigating between norms, ideals and practical reflections can also be seen among long-term military service participants. One participant, similar to a participant in short-term military service, mentioned being possessive/protective as an important characteristic of masculinity.

> *Yes, it is a bit like that, and this state of protection is a part of this, you know, being a guardian of the household, you know, being in a state that needs to complete its work and deficiencies. (Momo).*

Again, we can see here that it is reflected as a societal expectation, a norm to protect and provide. On similar lines, being responsible and taking care of household as societal expectations were mentioned by another participant.

> *Hmmm I do not know, in general terms, men should be someone who are reliable, who are more responsible, who are reliable, who stand firm. (Gri)*

Being dominant also emerges among the answers for ideal masculinity.

> *I mean, a man should be decisive, a doer, I mean, it is not a complete definition, but a man with high self-confidence should have prominent personality traits, some of the traits that make a man a man (X).*

These answers align with traditional masculinity norms to a great extent. As discussed in short-term above, financial power and stability and being able to protect are among fundamental masculinity norms. Additionally, standing firm and being dominant are highly associated with traditional masculinity norms, where men have the last word, make and implement decisions, stand strong and reliable.

Despite the traditional masculinity norms, being respectful and gentleman emerges as a popular answer among long-term military service participants. Two participants

under this category mentions these traits. However, it is important to mention that they are indicating the divergence with societal expectations in this regard.

> *Hmmm I think the perception of masculinity in our society is unfortunately very different, I do not know, for me, it is to be a gentleman and respectful. (Özgür)*

With regards to being respectful, another participant expresses himself as:

> *I think the ideal man should be a caring person. Apart from that, he should be thoughtful, empathetic, not selfish, that is, he should not be self-centered, what else can it be, that is, he should not be a bigoted person in terms of thought, first of all, that is, he should respect the person in his life in every way, he should encourage his thoughts and discourses more, he should be proud of his successes, that is, he should not be jealous, that is, he should not hurt the self-confidence of the person in his life, rather than something else, I cannot think of anything else, so I can define this. (Farazi)*

This answer also includes an emphasis on being caring, thoughtful, empathetic, not selfish, not be self-centered, not bigoted, supporting the partner and not be jealous. This answer can be taken as conflicting with traditional masculinity norms, which can be defined as not showing and reflecting emotion, being self-centered and aggressive. The fact that being kind, considerate, and empathic is mentioned alludes to a shift from the idea that masculinity is only determined by dominance or physical strength. Rather, these attributes emphasize how crucial interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence are in forming a man's sense of self. The idea that being a man is inherently egocentric or self-serving is also challenged by the emphasis on not being selfish or self-centered, highlighting the importance of kindness and consideration for others. In addition to highlighting the value of respect, equality, and mutual support in relationships, the rejection of intolerance and the emphasis on standing by one's partner challenge established power dynamics and advance a more egalitarian viewpoint.

One critical viewpoint was expressed by a participant based on the ability/power to do everything, again reflecting on the societal double standards towards men and women.

> *It is very different, you know, being a man means he can do he can act he can behave however he wants. I am talking about the perception from previous generations, and unfortunately, that perception still continues today (Özgür).*

Additionally, significant number of people from long-term military service group answered, "I do not know' or 'there is not anything called ideal masculinity". One participant draws attention to the societal expectations but argues that he does not agree with it.

> *I do not think so, but I think there is a state of knowledge that has been coming back for many years and when doing something like this, they can do it more easily, for example, because they have been doing that since childhood, they have been taught, I do not know, plastering, you know, when it is a tiring and more brisk job, it is as if they have learned more there, I think there is something that they have learned more there, I think there is something that they have equalized the events more.... No, I do not think there is an ideal man, I think there are some things that man does easily, but I think it is very difficult to have an ideal protative thing. (Momo).*

Here, one can also see the socialization dimension of internalization of gender roles and ideals.

Another response reflects the judgment of society when men do not comply with the masculinity norms:

> *I do not know, I do not think so, but maybe that's what I am saying, maybe I am judging people in social life, but now I cannot say that this is what makes a man a man, I cannot say that, I mean, I cannot tell a lie. (Orman Kanunu)*

This judgmental attitude reflects the deeply ingrained societal expectations and gender roles.

Overall, the respondents show some ambiguity or ambivalence about their perceptions of ideal masculinity, implying that these people do not fully define or adhere to traditional gender norms. It might indicate a distaste for conventional gender stereotypes and a resistance to living up to social norms of what it means to be a man. On the other hand, it may represent a feeling of disappointment or doubt regarding the concept of ideal masculinity in general, maybe as a result of one's own

experiences or observations that go against conventional ideas of gender norms. This response demonstrates the complexity of masculinity as a social construct formed by personal views, experiences, and cultural influences, as well as the range of viewpoints within the long-term military service group.

4.2. Emasculating Situations

Another question to understand the gender and masculinity perceptions of the participants was about things that are inconsistent with masculinity, i.e. things that undermine manhood. The answers provide important insights into how participants define masculinity and what characteristics or actions they believe to be at odds with conventional ideas of manhood. I will first focus on answers of short-term military service participants, then move on the long-term military service participants answers, which will end with a comparative conclusion.

Short-term Military Service Participants

This question reveals similar themes and approaches with the question above. Again, humanity dimension was expressed greatly instead of masculinity, which may signal a desire to go beyond strict gender stereotypes and embrace a more inclusive vision of human identity, demonstrate this rejection of traditional gender conventions. This shows that these individuals are open to questioning society norms and investigating gender identities that go beyond conventional binary classifications.

A participant draws attention to not taking responsibility, emphasizing the societal expectations about men to take care and provide.

> *I told you before, not shouldering the responsibility, you know, running away. No one thinks it is appropriate. I think it should be appropriate, but I also still do not think it is appropriate. (Legolas)*

Gender roles and taking responsibility are entwined ideas that are ingrained in society standards and expectations. Gender roles have historically given men and women distinct responsibilities. Traditionally, men have been given responsibilities

that include taking on leadership and protective roles, making critical decisions, and financially supporting the family. However, women have historically been expected to place a higher priority on running home affairs, providing care, and offering emotional support to others. Cultural norms and socialization processes frequently perpetuate these roles. Men may experience a sense of obligation or duty to carry out specific tasks that conform to the social standards of what it means to be a man. This could be managing the financial affairs of a family, providing the majority of the income, or taking on leadership roles in other contexts.

Traditional gender roles persist even in couples where both partners work, with women mostly handling childcare and household chores and males typically handling money affairs. Men frequently handle financial administration duties primarily, despite the fact that women are becoming more and more represented in the workforce. This underscores the continued impact of conventional gender norms, which view men as the primary providers and women as taking on domestic and caring responsibilities (Fulcher & Coyle, 2011). Therefore, taking responsibility for men mainly means providing finance and meeting financial needs, while emotional labor is mostly given by women. This pressure on provision is said to be felt by the participant. In the face of difficulties, men should not run away because running away is cowardly. Instead, he should face the difficulties, not only for himself but his family and loved ones.

The point of exerting power that raised by two participants from short-term military service on the grounds of sexual violence.

> *I do not know if we can call it masculinity. I can say like this, for example, if a man is physically stronger than another man or woman, for example, he should not use it against them, that kind of behavior. But as I said, I am saying this again because you say women and men, because after all, there are female body builders, our big sisters (ablalarımız), so as to speak, and they should also not apply that to weaker men or women either. I mean, we do not see much here right now, but I think there is something called female violence in America, I mean all over the world. Women can also commit violence, including rape, against people, and I am not approving that. So, at the end of the day, whether you're a man or a woman, do not do bad things. (Muzi)*

On similar lines, with a focus on sexual violence, the response of the another participant reveals some insights on the dilemma between norms and practical reflections.

> *Rape, I think. If it counts. Either being scared and running away, now not everyone has the same opinion. Nowadays, there is a possibility of going to jail for protecting. People may also have this hesitation. That's why I do not judge them either. The man says why take the risk. Maybe there is an attack with a knife, and he will accidentally stab someone with it. He may say why should I intervene in such a thing myself. So, I respect that too. Because these are the conditions of today. (Karanfil)*

The passage quoted highlights a serious conundrum that traditional masculine ideals about being protective and possessive. One way that conventional masculinity promotes power, assertiveness, and the duty to protect others—especially women and children—is by emphasizing the role that men play as providers and guardians. Men are expected to exercise control and power over their environment, including people and resources, and this standard fosters the idea of possession. But the real world adds a complexity to this standard, particularly when one takes into account circumstances in which one's life could be in danger. The idealized expectation of protection and the pragmatic concerns of personal safety clash because of the inherent risk involved in protective activities, such as interfering in potentially dangerous or violent circumstances. In these circumstances, men might pause or hesitate to step in or decide against it since they are aware of the possible risks and want to protect themselves first.

This conundrum demonstrates the conflict between the pragmatic reality of handling dangerous or hazardous situations and societal standards of masculinity, which elevate possessive and protective actions. Men could carefully consider the possible repercussions of their actions before interfering since the expectation to be protective can conflict with the desire for self-preservation. This internal struggle is a reflection of how complicated masculinity norms are and how they interact with risks and problems in the real world. Overall, the quotation highlights the complex balance between society standards and personal safety considerations in decision-making processes, capturing the complex issue males experience while navigating

conventional masculinity ideals associated to possession and protection. Men are therefore frequently not chastised heavily for putting their own safety first when presented with circumstances in which intervening could endanger their own wellbeing.

In another part of the interview, the same participant states that “I think every man should be like that. He should not run away. If there is an attack on a woman, he should intervene.” Therefore, it is clearly stated there that this is the ideal masculinity for him. And there is an implied criticism against non-intervention, this criticism is not against men who do not interfere and protect but against the system. There is an attitude that would support this if it had a basis in law. In an environment where there is political legal support for protecting, this is actually the way it should be. Fear of legal punishment shows resentment of the existing order.

As we have seen in the previous section, being protective was a common response in both groups regarding ideal masculinity. Being protective requires a certain kind of power. Hence, there is a distinction here with regards to how to use the power possessed; a crucial difference to be made regarding when using power is acceptable and when it is not. While it may be necessary to use force to defend against those who pose a threat or danger, it is regarded as inappropriate to use power against those who are weaker. Examples of such behavior can include bullying, coercion, abuse of power, and the exploitation of weaker people or marginalized groups. Therefore, the justification for the execution of power is the ultimate goal of protecting the vulnerable. Hence, there is also the heroic dimension of protective actions. It is also important to note here that participants exhibit an intention to differentiate themselves from those who misuse their power and cause harm, indicating a preference for more empathic and respectful styles of engagement. The emphasis here is not on gender, but on the strong not oppressing the weak, even if they are both male.

Another participant's viewpoint clarifies ideas surrounding masculinity and the so-called "bro-code," which describes unspoken guidelines or standards of behavior among male peers. This participant believes that it is unmanly for a man to breach

boundaries with his partner or ex-partners when the man is close to that friend. Here, the focus is more on the sense of ownership or belonging that certain men may have for their partners or previous relationships than it is on particular behaviors. The participant makes the suggestion that a man should avoid developing an emotional or sexual attachment to his spouse or ex-partner. This viewpoint exposes a possessive mindset in relationships, where people could consider their partners as assets or things that should not be shared or intruded upon by other people. In this context, the idea of "belonging" to someone reflects conventional patriarchal conceptions of masculinity, which dictate that males should dominate and exert authority over their romantic or sexual relationships. The bro-code serves as further evidence that there are limits that should not be crossed—perhaps not for moral or ethical reasons, but rather because doing so would violate one's feeling of territory or ownership. Relevant passage is as follows:

> *I mean, if your very close friend has a girlfriend, that girlfriend should always be your sister-in-law for you, for example. Is that manly? It does not! (Aslan)*

Thus, it can be summarized here that, short-term military service participants mention the following traits as important in the fabrication of masculinity: responsible, protective, does not abuse his power, does not break the bro-code. They also draw attention to pressures that men face under hegemonic masculinity norms and expectations such as staying strong and firm, financially care for others, not running away and showing emotional vulnerability. Ultimately, people's mental health and well-being can be significantly impacted by the oppressive nature of these societal demands, which is why it is critical to create more welcoming and encouraging environments that permit genuine expression and emotional sharing without stigma or condemnation. This can be interpreted as they are taking their guard up against the growing pressure against traditional masculinity.

Long-term Military Service Participants

While the emphasis shifted from ideal masculinity to ideal humanity predominantly in the short-term military service group, such shift was only mentioned by one participant in long-term military service group as following:

> *Disrupting masculinity ideals... No, I do not* think *so. Well, there are things that do not fit with being a man, not because they are not fitting for masculinity but because they are not fitting for a human being. But not fitting with masculinity... I do not know, for example. There is no such thing specific to man or woman. Being an asshole does not fit, for example, but it is not about being a man or a woman. It could be on both sides. Or deceiving people, telling lies, scamming... These are things that are not fitting for anyone, whether it is a woman or a man. I cannot attribute these to a specific gender. Honestly, I do not see much difference between the two sides. (Orman Kanunu)*

In answering the question of what disrupts masculinity, another participant from the long-term military service emphasizes that an alternative masculinity is possible, underlining features that can be traditionally termed as feminine behaviors, such as kindness and gentleness.

> *Masculinity... Well, you know, there are those who associate masculinity with prayer beads. Now, I mean, this concept is a bit related to the country, so I do not know exactly how to explain it. But it is possible to be a man in a very kind, compassionate, apart from that, I mean gentle. But then again, there are also men who use prayer beads. There are also those who defend masculinity in that way, those who wear weapons, those who fall into this approach. So, it is a bit of a concept...I am stuck. I am probably jammed here. (Farazi)*

Here, there exists a more sophisticated interpretation of masculinity that takes into account of its complexity. The individual in the remark appears uncomfortable or finds it difficult to openly express their thoughts or emotions, as seen by his inability to form a whole statement and his restraint. The reference to items that represent various facets of masculinity, such as weapons and prayer beads, serves as another example of this limitation. Since this answer is based on the alternative, it can be stated that masculinity is actually explained in society with the opposite characteristics such as being unkind, rude, uncaring, harsh… The speaker draws attention to a perceived gap between these traits and accepted notions of masculinity, by describing kindness, understanding, and compassion as emotion-oriented virtues. Because of its command-driven methodology and emphasis on power and authority, the military may not value or promote the expression of these feelings, which can distort or suppress some parts of masculinity. Furthermore, the speaker's hesitation to adopt a particular masculinity posture implies a reluctance to fully embrace or

identify with a particular ideal. The hesitation seen in the speaker's answer could be attributed to a concern of invading perceived "women's space" by revealing emotions or vulnerability. It may be difficult to speak freely because of this concern of straying from conventional masculinity ideals and the stigma or condemnation that comes with it.

One participant argued that he does not believe there exist such thing that distort masculinity.

> *No, I do not have any. I think I am in a very, very wide place in that regard. I mean, I walk hand in hand in shopping malls with my male friends, for me, it is not so comfortable and wide and even if it does not fit masculinity, it is not something that is very important. (Momo)*

Upon closer inspection, the statement reveals a complex picture of what it means to be a man, what society expects of him, and how he expresses himself, especially when it comes to the example of men holding hands. The statement explores a nuanced yet important point about how society standards and the concept of masculinity are perceived. Although there is an implicit belief or ideal for him could be that people should act however they want, without thinking of societal judgement and marginalization. The example of holding hands is important here because male-to-male physical gestures of affection that could be interpreted as homosexual behavior.

The fear of being judged or stigmatized overrides the act freely. Moreover, the participant’s choice of the word "wide" introduces another level of complication to the conversation. The word "wide" has negative connotations related to being overly flexible, especially in social and cultural situations. When a person says that they are "at a wide place", they are actually saying how far away they are from social judgments and in a place that is difficult to accept. The comment does acknowledge the tension that exists between his personal values with the dominant social expectations of masculinity. These expectations, which are typified by rigid gender roles, frequently stifle actions that depart from conventional norms, creating conflicts between the demands of society and the autonomy. Because of the weight of these

norms, people may find it difficult to fully embrace or live up to the idealized picture of masculinity, which emphasizes the difficulties in negotiating gender identity within preexisting frameworks.

As also mentioned by short-term military service participants, a respondent of longer- term service also mention exerting power as unmanly. Again, we can see the intention to differentiate himself from actions that cause harm or exert dominance over others.

> *Contradicting… personally, I have not faced such situation. For instance, I do not know, violence against a woman does not befit masculinity, if we are to classify that person as a man. Apart from that, I can say violence against animals, violence against a child, these are what I can say right now. (Özgür)*

The participant here says that it is improper and unmanly to associate aggression or doing injury with the idea of being a man. A key component of contemporary conversations on gender roles and stereotypes is this rejection, which calls into question long-held beliefs that associate dominance or power with violent conduct. He condemns violence in settings that transcend gender. He makes a point of saying that it is never permissible to use violence against weaker ones, such as women, children, and animals. He emphasizes the importance of empathy, compassion, and moral behavior in all spheres of society—regardless of age or gender—by bringing up these instances.

A valuable insight into the perceptions of masculinity and interpersonal behavior of two participants in the long-term military service group may be gained from their responses, which include traits like "talking behind others' backs," "manipulation," "hypocrisy," "insincerity," and "lying." These answers show a desire for honesty, integrity, and transparency in interpersonal interactions and a rejection of actions linked to dishonesty, betrayal, and lack of authenticity. These participants may be indicating a preference for moral integrity and ethical conduct—qualities they see as essential to masculine identity—by highlighting traits like sincerity and honesty:

> *Like speaking from someone's back, this kind of thing. I do not know, backstabbing, hypocrisy, I do not think these suits men at all. (Gri)*

> *I mean, if you ask me, I do not know, lying, talking behind someone's back... In short, not being sincere does not fit into manhood. Anyway, I do not have anything to do with such people anyway. So, there are usually no such people around me anyway. When I see such behavior, I keep my distance anyway. (Haunter)*

The aforementioned actions—such as talking behind people's backs, manipulating, acting hypocritically, lying, and being insincere—are frequently seen as being in opposition to conventional ideas of what it means to be a man. Strength, honor, and integrity are qualities that emphasize being honest, straightforward, and forthright. Speaking behind people's back or lying are examples of actions that might be considered as undermining these objectives because they entail dishonesty, betrayal, and a lack of authenticity. Men are required to maintain a code of honor and integrity in their interactions in many cultures, especially when they play the roles of protector, provider, and leader. Therefore, actions that do not conform to these standards could be labeled as unmanly and seen as weak or emasculating. These actions could also be interpreted as a sign of a lack of control over one's emotions and instincts, which are crucial components of traditional masculinity. Since men are frequently raised to value reason, self-control, and emotional stoicism, these may be seen as signs of emotional instability or weakness. Men may therefore experience pressure to uphold social norms of masculinity by abstaining from actions deemed to be a sign of moral or emotional weakness. These expectations support the maintenance of binary conceptions of masculinity and femininity, wherein actions are classified as proper or inappropriate according to gender standards, and they also perpetuate traditional gender roles.

Briefly, in their answers, shorter term military service participants mostly emphasize how to be a decent human being regardless of gender, rather than focusing on masculinity and the pressure of it. Here, we can sense weariness of the responsibilities and expectations that society places on men. Nevertheless, some mentioned avoiding responsibility, exerting power, breaking the bro-code as an instance of ‘unmanly’ actions. The common answers between shorter- and long-term service participants is misuse of power. We see that both groups are very aware of societal expectations. At these moments, positioning oneself differently and

defending the possibility of alternative masculinities, emphasizing qualities such as kindness and gentleness, draw attention. Also, for the long-term military service group, there emphasis on the humanity is much less or covert. There is also an ambiguity regarding those which suggests possible confusion with or disconnection from the concepts to begin with. There is also a focus on the traits such as lying, deceit and deception.

4.3. Differences Between Men and Women

This section focuses on the participants answers to the question on differences between women and men in order to better understand their gender perceptions, centering on how they explain difference. They were asked during the interviews whether there is any differences between women and men with follow-up questions I will first focus on answers of short-term military service participants, then move on the long-term military service participants answers, which will end with a comparative conclusion.

Short-term Military Service Participants

Third main question to understand the gender perceptions of interviewers was about differences among women and men. Physiological differences appear popular in both groups. Participants in short-term military service group specifically emphasizes the physiological differences, with reference to physical appearance, hormones, genital organs and muscle structures. Additionally, way of thinking and emotionality receive significant attention.

> *Well, of course it exists. After all, there may be physical tasks that a man can do that a woman may not be able to. Okay, now there are examples of women who do this actually, strong women, but many physical tasks may not be suitable for women. However, women excel in other areas, you know, there's not much of a difference between them. (Aki)*

The statement offers a complex viewpoint on gender differences that is based on comprehension of both biology and cultural viewpoints. It is argued here that men may naturally be better at some physical tasks due to differences in physical

characteristics like strength and muscle mass. This and the statement that "many physical tasks may not be suitable for women" shows that potential physiological restrictions are a concern. This reflection shows us the essentialist interpretations that uphold gender stereotypes or limit chances due to alleged biological limits.

> *Well, there are differences in creation. Not as a distinction. Where women are superior is different, where men are superior is different. This is actually a matter of balance. For example, in things that require physical strength, a man is far superior to a woman, but when we look at it from an emotional point of view or in terms of intelligence, in terms of detailing, a woman is far ahead of a man. (Aslan)*

By admitting "differences in creation," he admits that males and women are different biologically but also refuses to see these distinctions as a hierarchy or a means of division. He describes them as a component of a larger balance, implying an understanding of how complementary each gender's strengths and shortcomings are. This implies that the tasks that are women and men are good at are separate from each other, reflecting an essentialist view.

The answers also point out socio-cultural dimensions. There are also expressions regarding how societal norms negatively affect women and their possibilities. Joker's point of view encourages us to critically analyze current norms, biases, and practices that may perpetuate uneven treatment or opportunities based on gender, which acts as a catalyst for a deeper investigation of the societal consequences of gender inequalities.

> *In some regions, despite there being a physiological difference between women and men, it seems like women do not exist at all, and the male body is just considered to be the norm, which actually results in unfairness towards women. (Joker)*

The claim that “it seems like women do not exist at all " is an indicator of how men are typically prioritized and considered the default or normative standard in society. Whether deliberate or unintentional, this prejudice can show itself as various forms of unequal treatment or prejudice against women. The viewpoint challenges us to think more broadly about the effects of how society views and appreciates gender

differences. It makes people think about how these views, when distorted or prejudiced, might exacerbate systemic problems like unjust treatment, gender inequality, or limited opportunities for women. Such awareness regarding unjust treatment is also reflected in a stance that challenges those societal norms and prejudices.

> *I realized that women and men are not equal in socio-cultural terms, but they should be. So, why is there such tension about this... Well, I always defend that women and men are equal. But then people who come to argue with me come up mythologies, hormones, and so on. So, I started to say, I started to use this term: men and women are equal in socio-cultural terms. ... Women can play football, they can play basketball, they can drive cars. Most things that have been designated for men, most of them, not most, all of them, women can do them. Because we can, you know, that's how clear it is, we can do it. You get it? But, no, they think they cannot do it as well as men. "Have you ever seen a female sewer worker? Have you ever seen a female miner?" Bro, the reason we do not see them is not because they cannot do it. These are male-dominated sectors. Can a woman be comfortable to work on her own in these sectors? Maybe she can, I do not know. Maybe it does not exist in Türkiye, but it does in Europe, it might not exist in Europe, but it does in Brazil, it does in Cuba. Can they do it? Yes, they can, bro, there is no obstacle to it at the end of the day. (Muzi).*

The participant here challenges the idea that men and women are inherently superior or inferior based only on their gender by claiming that they are equal and capable of the same accomplishments. His focus on socio-cultural equality draws attention to the larger social context in which gender dynamics function and emphasizes the necessity for a change in the attitudes, actions, and institutional frameworks that support inequality. This embodies the overall theme shown throughout the narratives, highlighting the necessity of questioning traditional practices, encouraging inclusivity, and establishing settings that enable people of all genders to succeed and contribute to society.

Also, some participants associate emotionality with women. The participant's comments that women are more detail-oriented and emotional provide insight into cultural attitudes and prevalent gender stereotypes. This viewpoint is consistent with popular cultural narratives that characterize women as being more sensitive to emotions and detail-oriented than men. It is a reflection of a larger social construct in

which particular characteristics are linked to particular genders, influencing standards and expectations related to what it means to be a man or a woman.

On the other hand, another participant argued that women are smarter compared to men. He draws attention to socialization processes and expectations based on gender, arguing that men also can be emotional, but they are not comfortable to openly express those emotions.

> *Women are smarter than men. That's it... in my opinion, they are in every aspect. They make more rational decisions.*
>
> *Researcher: Oh, do you think so? Usually, they say women are more emotional and men are more rational.*
>
> *No, that's definitely not true. Women can be more emotional, but there are emotional men too. They might just reflect it less compared to women. Because women being emotional is not something that stands out too much. Because there's this perception that women are emotional in everyone's eyes. Could it be feared or frowned upon? I think it could be. Women are more rational in any case. (Karanfil)*

Given that it touches on highly embedded cultural beliefs and assumptions about gender-based differences in cognitive ability, this assertion deserves close examination. Additionally, the analysis becomes more sophisticated due to the assumption that they make more reasoned decisions. This claim contradicts conventional wisdom that primarily links men to reason and logical reasoning. It demands a critical analysis of the ways in which gendered stereotypes affect how people view decision-making processes and asks if these assumptions are based on prejudiced presumptions or actual data. In addition, the discussion highlights more general concerns about gender biases and societal expectations around emotional expression ("because women being emotional is not something that stands out too much"). This comment highlights the influence of social standards on how gendered acts are perceived, as well as the possibility of prejudice and discrimination based on these norms. It encourages a closer look at how cultural norms influence people's attitudes and ideas about gender and emotions.

The comments about differences in gender do, in fact, highlight a similar theme: support for gender equality. This campaigning takes many forms, challenging

conventional preconceptions and highlighting the value of appreciating people's strengths regardless of their gender. But even with these progressive perspectives, it is important to recognize that some responses contain ingrained sexist beliefs that are based on essentialist presumptions. The idea of essentialism, which holds that specific qualities or attributes are innate to a specific gender, is one topic that is discussed in the responses. This idea frequently encourages stereotyping and the upholding of gender norms. Moreover, the reference to responsibilities or tasks that are considered appropriate or inappropriate for a particular gender represents a mindset shaped by essentialist presumptions. Assigning physical activities to males exclusively or linking emotional labor to women, for example, might perpetuate gender stereotypes and prevent people from realizing their full potential outside of these constrained parameters. Acknowledging these inherently discriminatory perspectives is essential because it draws attention to the continued difficulties in achieving true gender equality. Deeply embedded essentialist prejudices continue to influence attitudes and actions in society despite the push for equal rights and opportunities.

Long-term Military Service Participants

Similar trends can also be seen within the long-term military service group. To start with, physiological differences again is a highly popular answer.

> *Yeah, differences... Apart from physical differences, I do not think there's any other difference. Women can do any job just as men can. I do not know, I think ther i's no difference or distinction other than physical differences. (Özgür)*

This statement challenges the traditional gender norms and stereotypes. Aside from physical distinctions, Özgür rejects the idea that genders differ significantly. This point of view implies a conviction in the basic equality of skills and capacities between men and women, independent of roles that are customarily allocated based on gender or cultural expectations. Upon closer examination of this statement, Özgür's viewpoint is consistent with inclusion and gender equality ideals. Özgür rejects the notion that there is innate gender-based constraints in abilities or

competencies by highlighting the fact that there are no other distinctions aside from physical ones. This analysis represents a progressive perspective that puts individual ability and merit ahead of stereotypes about gender roles and skills.

In addition to the physiological differences, differences with respect to emotional intelligence and expressiveness are reflected in the answers. The assumption about men's emotional expression is brought to light by Farazi's examination of the emotional aspect of gender differences.

> *Of course, there are differences. I think there are differences both in terms of ways of thinking and physically, so I mean, therefore, they are separate topics that need to be evaluated separately, and thus there are differences. Physically anyway, you know, men are more masculine that's how they are created differently. Therefore, emotionally, their thoughts are also much different. Men are emotionless, generally more indifferent. Women are more emotional, more delicate thinkers... Therefore, both there are both psychological and physical differences (Farazi)*

Farazi perpetuates the stereotypical idea of masculinity that values traits like strength, reason, and emotional detachment by arguing that males are typically less expressive and more emotionally stoic than women. This stereotype contributes to a binary conception of gender roles and has its roots in society expectations of men's behavior and self-expression. According to conventional gender roles, women are linked with qualities like sensitivity and empathy, while men are frequently expected to display stoicism and emotional restraint. The range of acceptable behaviors and expressions for people based on their gender is thereby limited as a result of this, which perpetuates a strict distinction between masculine and feminine qualities. Such views can have important ramifications in a variety of situations, such as serving in the military, where emotional expression and resilience may be viewed differently due to gender norms.

Difference in ways of thinking was mentioned by a majority of participants.

> *Yes, I think there. I mean, I do not know, women seem to have a better, more nuanced, and detailed point of view. I believe they have a more detailed approach in grasping the issue. I do not think there are major special*

differences, generally speaking. I have observed that women can examine the issue better, and it is very fun to gossip with women. (Momo)

Momo's viewpoint is indicative of a conviction in the distinct qualities and aptitudes that women could have. Momo believes that women are better at understanding difficult events and challenges because they have a more detailed, nuanced, and better point of view. This point of view is consistent with the theory of emotional intelligence, which holds that women are frequently valued for their capacity for empathy, good communication, and deft handling of delicate interpersonal situations. Momo's pleasure in engaging in gossip with women highlights her conviction in the deep and perceptive conversations that women can have, as well as their social and linguistic abilities.

I do not know... it is very classic, you know… Women are more emotional, men are more logical beings and so on. Since I have two sisters, I always look at it with a little positive discrimination, let me say that they are more fragile, so there is such a difference in my eyes. (Gri)

This viewpoint tends to support conventional gender norms, especially when it comes to emotional display and sensitivity. He brings up the traditional belief that males are represented as rational entities and women as more emotional, which represents a binary and generic understanding of gender differences. Gri's perspective is influenced by his personal experience of having sisters; he talks on how women are viewed with a sense of "positive discrimination" because of their supposed fragility. This viewpoint could have its roots in cultural norms that impose gender-specific obligations and expectations, such as the notion that women require care or protection.

Stereotypical gender associations receive significant attention. For example, one participant (Orman Kanunu) mentions that “in general, of course, there are many exceptions, but as far as I have observed, women generally like jewelry and things like that, men like cars a lot”, perpetuating the common associations of masculinity-cars and femininity-fuss and feathers. He further continues:

If I give an example physically, in the world championship, for instance, men run the 100 meters in around 9 seconds, while women run it in over 10

seconds. Or in football, when the world's best sports club plays against women's teams, the men can win. Or in volleyball, or in tennis, where the average serve for men is 140 km/h, and when women serve at around 120 km/h, people go, 'Oh.''Also, women have been a bit left behind, both physically and socially, for years, and I feel like they're trying to catch up with men. How can I describe it? For example, these are physical things, things that everyone would agree on. Now, men are stronger than women physically, but for instance, in chess championships, there are separate tournaments for men and women. Now, why is that? Is not it weird that there are separate categories for men and women? But there are separate branches in chess; you're moving pieces and playing the game, physically speaking. Intellectually, I think women tend to think more deeply, while men are generally more straightforward. In my opinion, women are more humane, more like humans, while men are a bit more, shall I say, animalistic. That's how I can explain it, and maybe also due to religious and societal reasons, and because of the burden of motherhood, I think women have fallen quite behind socially for centuries. (Orman Kanunu)

There are couple of layers to be investigated here. He highlights perceived differences between men and women in terms of preferred activities and interests, physical prowess in sports, and emotional expression. This aligns with longstanding societal norms that associate men with strength, technical skills, and competitiveness, while women are often depicted as nurturing, emotional, and focused on domestic roles. Also, the point about men being animalistic versus women being humane requires attention as it reflects deeply ingrained gender stereotypes. A typical stereotype that places women as more naturally kind, sympathetic, and evolved and males as more violent, animalistic, and primitive is that of women being more compassionate and humane than men. Phrases such as animalistic for men and compassionate for women expose a binary and oversimplified understanding of gender roles. The customary cultural expectations about men and women's behavior based on their supposed innate attributes are reinforced by this binary vision. Men are supposed to exhibit strength, aggression, and dominance, while women are expected to embody traits related to emotional sensitivity, caring, and nurturing. This is also very much related to the point “burden of motherhood”, implying that the tasks and expectations placed on women by society, especially in relation to caring and nurturing responsibilities, support the idea that women are more "humane" or sympathetic. Additionally, in bringing up the idea of "falling behind," the speaker suggests that because of deeply ingrained social conventions, women are falling

behind or failing to live up to certain expectations in comparison to men. The interviewee makes the argument that society pressures, historical expectations, and the idealization of motherhood have all played a part in why women are seen as "falling behind." The phrase "centuries of societal perspective" alludes to a long-standing custom that assigns women particular roles, frequently related to caring for and nurturing children.

The point about physical prowess was also reflected in another answer:

> *I mean, there definitely is. I think there is. The most obvious difference is the physical difference, I mean. some people may deny this of course, but in basic things, that is, in matters that require physical strength, whether it is a working life or a sport, when we look at the evidence, when we look at the available data, the difference becomes apparent. You know, there is a serious gap in physical strength. (Haunter)*

The thought is consistent with understanding that, because of biological characteristics, men and women may have different levels of physical strength and ability. Furthermore, the speaker's reference to "when we look at the evidence" suggests that their point of view is supported by actual facts or observable realities. This implies that the speaker is quoting facts from reliable sources that corroborate the presence of gender-specific physical disparities. The speaker aims to validate his claim on the relationship between biological variations and physical characteristics. Analytically speaking, this point of view acknowledges that biological differences in physical characteristics between genders might affect how well people perform in physically demanding jobs or activities. The speaker's recognition of these distinctions points to the acceptance of distinctive gender-specific characteristics linked to physical strength and endurance, which is consistent with conventional gender roles that link men to physical prowess.

Lastly, one participant focuses on the responsibilities of men:

> *There is no superiority. but I think the man is one step ahead because he has to take care of his family. In terms of responsibilities men are superior, but in terms of freedoms they are equal. (X)*

The viewpoint of X presents a complex understanding of gender roles, obligations, and liberties in the setting of families. While acknowledging that there is no intrinsic superiority between men and women, X feels that males have a slight edge because of their familial responsibilities. This underlines a long-held belief that men should be the breadwinners and defenders of their families, providing for their material and financial needs. But X also points out that men and women have the same freedoms and rights. This feature recognizes the significance of gender parity in terms of opportunities, rights, and freedoms. It implies an understanding of the necessity of gender parity in spheres including individual decisions, professional prospects, and participation in society.

When compared, physiological differences appear to be generally accepted as a difference. Physiological differences including muscle structure, physical strength hormones are traditionally used to justify gender roles and inequalities. We can see in the both groups that with regards to differences between women and men, they first mention what they see as weaknesses compared to men, especially with regards to physical features, and then they say women are thoughtful, detail-oriented, etc. Therefore, one could consider this to be a type of hypocrisy.

What is also worth attention here is that biological references are often accompanied with cognitive traits. Women are repeatedly argued to be detailed oriented in both groups, which align with the traditional gender norms that emphasize women's emphatical and nurturing characteristics. However, the ability to pay attention to detail can be attributed to socialization and upbringing, multifaceted responsibilities and burdens that women often carry, starting from a young age. Caregiving duties, household chores, and often navigating complicated family dynamics are just a few of the many activities that women are expected to oversee concurrently. Girls are often socialized from an early age to pay attention to detail and manage several tasks efficiently, since they are frequently involved in chores at home, and other responsibilities. The development of skills that are subsequently viewed as detail-oriented may be influenced by this early exposure to multitasking and attention to detail. Furthermore, women frequently have to negotiate patriarchal structures that may place restrictions on their opportunities and freedom of movement. In these

kinds of situations, women might have to use strategic thought, cautious planning, and extreme attention to detail to get past obstacles and locate opportunities for agency and empowerment inside potentially prejudiced or discriminatory cultural systems. The idea that women frequently need to put up more effort and work harder than males in order to achieve the same level of recognition, success, or progress may also contribute to the view of women as detail oriented. This extra effort may show up as attention to detail, thoroughness, and meticulousness in a variety of spheres of their lives, such as employment, education, and personal pursuits. However, this socialization dimension was not seen by the participants. Instead, the differences are often seen as biological or innate.

In her research, Sancar (2019) found that men believe that different gender behaviors stem from the immutable nature of gender. It was found that it is common among men to believe that the simplest human traits are inherently different in men and women. The production of social practices based on gender differences and their perpetuation in various fields takes place through the practices of everyday life. Attributing the origins of social phenomena to gender and therefore thinking that what is happening is natural is one of the most important features that characterize the dominant gender regime. These findings are also reflected in and supported by the current research to a great extent.

The data collected shows us the complexity of gender perceptions and how they are practiced in real life. As I also did in the beginning, one can assume that short-term military service participants are more disconnected from traditional gender perceptions when compared to long-term military service. However, this research reveals that the relationship is not that simplistic. For one, gender norms and ideals are not that easy to quickly detach from, especially if you are benefitting from that advantaged position in many ways. Of course, there are some who made the short-term military service who internalize and support traditional masculinity norms, and there may also be those in the long-term military service who have a more flexible view of gender roles in some ways. These differences demonstrate the richness and diversity of human identities and experiences, illustrating that people might have a variety of values and ideas that do not always neatly fall into one group. Diverse

viewpoints and varied understandings of gender are revealed by a comparative analysis of masculinity ideals and gender perceptions among shorter- and long-term military service groups. While both groups acknowledge the existence of established gender norms and stereotypes, the differences in emphasis and level of analysis emphasize the intricate relationship that exists between personal experiences and society expectations. It is critical to acknowledge that a wide range of circumstances, such as upbringing, cultural influences, individual experiences, and society expectations, influence people's ideas and behaviors. Because of deeply rooted socialization or cultural norms, some people may continue to adhere to traditional ideas of masculinity despite participating in activities or settings that might encourage more progressive or inclusive attitudes or vice versa.

A careful analysis of the participants' gender perceptions reveals that participants show characteristics complicit masculinity, which recognizes that males actively contribute to upholding gender norms while simultaneously acting in ways that, in different degrees, question or defy them. Study participants show this complexity by displaying a combination of adhering to and deviating from conventional ideas of what it means to be a man. Participants exhibit actions and expressions that, on the one hand, are consistent with traditional masculinity, such as elevating physical prowess or displaying authority. These deeds reinforce social norms surrounding male behavior and help to maintain hegemonic masculinity. Alongside these conventional characteristics, participants also display actions that go against the conventional notion of what it means to be a man. As an illustration, a lot of participants stress virtues like non-restrictiveness, empathy, and respect—qualities that are frequently connected to a more progressive and inclusive conception of gender roles. This presents a challenge or kind of resistance to conventional conventions, illuminating the complex ways that men negotiate their gender identities. This relationship is better understood by using the notion of complicit masculinity, which acknowledges that males can participate in actions that both complicate and contradict traditional gender norms while also benefiting from them. Deciphering the nuances of gender relations and masculinity in modern culture requires this nuanced understanding.

4.4. Women and Military

The upholding of normative male norms in the context of military institutions affects not only how people perceive their level of safety and security but also the roles and expectations that are placed on them. The idea that males are the ones who protect and save women and vice versa perpetuates a deeply embedded gender hierarchy in which women are viewed as weaker and in need of protection and men as naturally powerful and capable of providing security. The exclusion of women from the military has a profoundly ingrained male character that shapes the entire organization of the armed forces. The conventional wisdom that the military's duty is to act as the "protector" of the country justifies this exclusion. It is therefore argued that if women and men participated in the military on an equal basis, the idea of protection would become unnecessary and the military institution would no longer be necessary. Thus, efforts to maintain a specific type of masculinity known as "military masculinity" demonstrate resistance to changes in masculinity outside of the military (Kuloğlu, 2005).

Nagel (1998) contends that taking into account the interwoven processes of nationalism and masculinity can help us better understand why women are excluded from the military institution. This exclusion serves to maintain a certain racial, gendered, and sexual conception of self in addition to upholding the institution's tradition. This idea is based on a white, heterosexual, male, and masculine identity that comes with the perks and burdens of hegemonic masculinity.

Efforts to bar women from the military, in other words, are not just about defending male privilege but also about defending the privilege of a specific male culture and identity. The ideas of dominance, strength, and authority that are typically associated with masculinity are profoundly ingrained in this culture and identity. The goal of this perspective's exclusion of women is to uphold and bolster the idea of this particular kind of masculinity's superiority and supremacy in the military.

Moreover, the exclusion of women from the military is linked to larger power and control structures in society. It both reflects and perpetuates long-standing gender

hierarchies that give precedence to the opinions, experiences, and viewpoints of men, especially in fields pertaining to national security and defense. The assumption that qualities and attributes associated with masculinity are intrinsically superior and deserving of power and authority is reinforced by this exclusion, which upholds and perpetuates the hegemonic status of masculinity.

Short-term Military Service Participants

In relation to this, participants were asked can women make military service. All participants of short-term military service concurred that women can serve in the military if they want so or if it provides them with income, but there is ongoing disagreement on whether or not they should. This acknowledges that there are no innate obstacles keeping women from enlisting in the military. The agreement among the participants on this issue suggests a divergence from conventional gender roles and norms in this context.

It is important to note here that some point out traditional gendered division of labor, even if women become part of military service. One participant of short-term military service regarding this states that:

> *Of course, I think they can, I think they have done it in the past, where they have done it in the past. As far as we know from history, in the War of Independence there were both men and women at the front, the important thing here is to do your best. When everyone does their part of the job, military service is not just about throwing guns and fisticuffs, it is also about administrative work, it is also about sanitary work, it is also about the mess hall, it is also about education... As long as this is not the case, women are needed as long as others are needed. (Joker)*

While stating that women can be included in the military, he also categorized the existing duties within the military in terms of traditional gender roles. When he says that military service is not just about picking up a gun and punching each other, he implies that this is appropriate for men and emphasizes that women can be involved in tasks that are attributed to women within the scope of traditional gender roles. Although this answer implies that women can be involved in military service, on the

other hand, it can be argued that it addresses the issue with an approach that nurtures or accepts gender roles.

Another participant from short-term military service argues that women can do any job men do but they may face some difficulties because of muscle structures.

> *She would do it, why would not she... Cannot you carry a gun? You can. Cannot you wear military clothes? You can. I mean, you can do everything a man can do... I mean, what cannot you do, I mean, as I said, apart from the reproductive roles, you can do everything physically. Then, for example, in the military, you can be a cook or a sniper. Well, there is a lot of weight of the weapon and so on. I mean, because we have testosterone, we produce muscle faster than women, it will be more difficult than women, but you get used to it over time. (Muzi)*

It is implied here that women are physically disadvantaged compared to men. While it can be seen as positive that women can do anything, it can also be seen as positive that it may take time and that men are physically stronger or that women are 'as strong as men' is a perspective that perpetuates traditional gender roles. This commentary recognizes the existence of women fighters in real world, but there is still an underlying message that feeds into a perspective that sees men from a higher place. This is parallel to Nagel's (1998) claim that women primarily continue to play supportive, symbolic, often suppressed and traditional roles within the nationalist discourse. Yuval-Davis (1997) also explains in similar lines that regardless of the significance of the contributions women make, they are consistently viewed and classified as "support."

Though women's capacity to serve in the military is acknowledged, there remains disagreement on whether or not they ought to. Some participants contend that women do not have a compelling need to serve in the military, regardless of gender. Rather, they support a system that is voluntary and allows people—including women—to decide whether to join the military based on their own interests, aptitudes, and driving forces. The emphasis on voluntariness is consistent with modern ideas of personal autonomy and freedom, in which people are not forced into roles that are inconsistent with their ideals or goals. The short-term military service group

dominantly considers compulsory military service as unnecessary, a thing that cost both money and time. Hence, there is not much point in also dragging women into this system.

Long-term Military Service Participants

The conversation within the long-term military service group over women's participation in military service displays a complex range of viewpoints based on factors such as physical capabilities, voluntariness, justice and gender norms. Some are adamantly against military service in its totality; he does not differentiate between genders and are opposed to involvement in the military regardless of a person's gender. This position questions accepted ideas about mandatory military service and represents a critical analysis of militaristic ideologies.

Another participant argues that women can do military service but there is, again, not much point in dragging also women into this system. It is a luck that state does not have such regulation now because military service is not a pleasant experience. Additionally, one participant argues women can and be able to do it if they want it, meaning that as long as it is on voluntary basis.

One participant argues that he is against the compulsory military service system, but it is not just for only men to bear such responsibility:

> *I do not think anyone should do military service, to be honest, but if one group is doing it, I think everyone should do it, because there is no difference between men and women doing military service... you know, I think it is injustice for men to do it and women not to do it. (Orman Kanunu)*

On the other hand, one participant voice doubts about women's fitness for military service, pointing to preconceived notions and biases surrounding physical strength and battle readiness by stating that:

> *I do not think most of them will be physically strong enough. There are of course those who can, but in general they cannot. Since they will never have*

> *the upper hand in terms of numbers, I think it is not suitable for them, they will always be in the minority compared to men. (X)*

Akgül (2010) mentions that women are not compelled to serve in the military on the grounds that they are unable to fight in conflicts. And because militarism is closely associated with the ideals of hegemonic masculinity, it consequently creates a gender regime that defines and positions women and other men in an inflexible and exclusive way.

Another participant, while supporting that women be a part of military, conditions that as long as she "takes a gun and go to the mountains", she can do any assigned job of military service.

> *I think it should be voluntary, those who want to do it should do it, those who do not want to should not do it, but you know, I did what I did in Istanbul, a woman can maybe do more because there is nothing difficult, you know, if you do not take a gun and go to the mountains, I think women could do everything else better, at least what I did. (Özgür)*

Another participant argue that women are able to do military service as well, but the conditions of military service are not compatible with the roles that society expects from women, and therefore women who accept this standard of living can serve in the military:

> *There is a meaning attributed to women from culture. She should be a mother and so on, she should be like this, she should be like that... so I do not think this can happen, frankly. Because there is childbirth and so on, you know, the women who do this are already, for example, there was a female commander who accepted this lifestyle and lives accordingly. She is single now; she has no children. She is in a strong position that can be self-sufficient in every sense. (Farazi)*

Thus, for him, it can be done in theory, but when we look at the reality of life, women do not seem to fit very well into the military institution. For a woman to become a soldier, she has to agree not to marry and not to have children. Because military service and these caring roles do not match, they conflict.

These viewpoints expose deeply rooted assumptions about gender roles, depicting men as naturally better suited for demanding jobs such as military duty. Lastly, one

person provides a nationalist point of view surfaced in the discussion, suggesting that all Turkish citizens—male or female—should serve in the military as a sign of civic duty and loyalty to the country. This viewpoint places a higher priority on nationalism and shared responsibility.

A noteworthy pattern becomes apparent when looking at the combined opinions of the shorter- and longer- military service groups toward women serving in the military. The long-term military service group is made up of people with a variety of viewpoints, from ardent resistance to thoughtful analysis and advocacy of women's participation. Nonetheless, the general consensus among this group tends to recognize women's potential for military service, albeit with different requirements and limitations. Of the participants in long-term military service, one specifically states that women might not have the physical strength required for military service. This position, albeit different from the majority within the same group, represents a typical gender stereotype regarding physical prowess. Even though they have reservations or preferences, the remaining members of the long-term military service usually concur that women can serve in the military as a matter of choice or as a duty to the country. Also, one participant argues that because of the roles assigned to women, they do not fit well in the military. İt is interesting to see that one person in long-term military service stands out for supporting universal military service, regardless of gender. This viewpoint emphasizes the idea that all Turkish citizens have equal civic responsibilities and places a higher value on national duty and patriotism than on gender-specific roles. The short-term military service group, on the other hand, takes a more practical and utilitarian approach. Although there are some differences in viewpoints, this group generally agrees that women can serve in the military, particularly if it suits their financial needs or personal preferences. Here, practical factors like financial incentives and voluntarism are given greater weight than limitations based on gender.

4.5. Distancing Oneself From ‘Ordinary’ Men

One significant theme that is observed on the interviews is that participants often distance themselves from the ‘ordinary’ men, who have low socio-economic status

educational background. It is often argued that those people, who are mostly poor or come from villages and underdeveloped areas of Türkiye, can be benefited from military service. But for them, it cannot teach anything new, it cannot put any value because they already have them. This is especially emphasized by the short-term military service participants.

> *For some, as I said, it can be valuable. If a man does not know how to make a bed, it is valuable for him. Because he will learn some information, but 99% of us doing short-term military service already know how to talk to a person, when to respect someone, how to keep what in the closet or how many days to take a shower, you understand? There is nothing to teach us here. But as I said, I think it is a blessing for them if they do not know. (Karanfil)*

This answer also needs to be noted:

> *I think that some people, and I am not saying this to belittle them, some people living in the east cannot leave their hometowns, they cannot go outside. I think there should be a military service at least for them to exchange ideas with other people in other ways. I mean, now imagine that you are sitting in a village, you only have a TV in front of you, maybe you do not even have internet reception at all. or you can use it very little. You are unaware of the world, the only thing you get information from is television. Unfortunately, there are still such places in Türkiye today, and when a child, a 19–20-year-old person, when he goes to the army, he says, look, there is this, look, this man told me this, how true it is, and then he can go and talk about it with someone else three days later. Look, this man told me about this, is there such a thing, is it true or not, he can get information, let me put it like that. (Aki)*

Hence, for those people that participants differentiate themselves from, military service may provide a space for learning, getting out of their perceived 'small' world and get to know the rest of the world. A similar pattern was also observed by Altınay's (2013) research, where one short-term (*bedelli*) military service participant argued that:

> *They see themselves as different from long-termers, people from the village, etc. And they are treated as if they are. We are bad to the extent that we are like them. They are dirty, they do not know how to sit and stand up, some of them do not speak Turkish... Therefore, the beating they receive is justified. 'They have to be beaten because...' ... What I heard and saw made me ashamed of going to school for the first time! (p.218)*

Altınay (2013) also adds that her research revealed that some people highlighted the role of the army and the military in teaching "civilization" to Türkiye's "backward" population. According to one former soldier in his forties from her research participants, the army's civilizing mission was carried out through military service and the gendarmerie in small villages. He added that it was "unfortunate" because he considered it unfortunate that the Turkish countryside was so "backward" and that there were no other civilian or state institutions that could bring civilization to it. Altınay (2013) explains this civilizing mission mainly through teaching of language and literacy. She argues that In Türkiye, as in many other nation-states, the army has historically considered teaching Turkish and literacy to soldiers as an important part of its existence and mission. The young nation-state, which began to reach children through compulsory education, was able to reach the adult male population through compulsory military service. Thus, the idea of 'backwardness' of the rural spaces and role of military service was shared in both Altınay's research and this thesis.

Very related to this point, it is repeatedly argued that military service provides an environment for them to observe Turkish society. Some of such arguments are provided above. There are some additional points that worth mentioning here.

> *I do not know, a child came from a village in Giresun and has always lived in that village and I am a metropolitan child, I was born and raised in Istanbul, and when we talk about something like this, you know, his culture, his evaluation of something, when we talk about something, to see where he is, that is, the way he tells me about the people of that region, you know, to learn about such a place, to see a different culture, you know, what kind of a place the Laz grows up in, what he does, what kind of a mindset the Kurd has, you know, because there are many races, there are many cultures, and such an expression of all of them is something that shows how they live the issue and how low the IQ of the country is at some points. When they are taken at the age of 18, I think that the children are actually children, I mean they cry, they live very hard when they are separated from their mothers and things like that. (Momo)*

> *It also gives you the chance to observe something. In other words, it gives you the possibility of breathing in the same room with all kinds of people from all segments of society. So, if you want to observe, if you are a little curious about what is going on around you and what people are living, it can obviously provide a satisfying experience in that regard. (Legolas)*

In terms of observing the society here, the participants speak from the point of view that “these people are so different from me, so far away from me that I have no chance to get together with them under any other circumstances”. There is a very serious emphasis on difference. In other words, these people are in a mindset that he can never imagine, they have completely different living conditions, and this is usually not from a very positive side because they are located below for them, they are not stupid, they are not civilized, as harshly put through the words you see "how low the IQ of the country is".

French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu explains in his theory of social alchemy how capital becomes legitimate property and reinforces class differences. According to Bourdieu (1986), capital can be examined in three main dimensions: economic capital ("what do you have?"), cultural capital ("what do you know?"), and social capital ("who do you know?"). These dimensions determine individuals' positions within social classes and their social advantages. The transformation process of capital requires time, money, and energy, and during this process, the necessary redistribution for the acceptance of capital within society occurs (Önder Erol & Eskici, 2021). Through the participants' comments, it is possible to perceive the sense of class distinction. This situation, which can be explained by Bourdieu's classification of economic capital, proves that there are gaps between individuals' life experiences and differences. In groups performing military service in multicultural societies like Türkiye, both social and economic capital diversity is at levels where adaptation is challenging. Therefore, individuals do not feel themselves on the same class level as others. The kiwi example provided by the participant below is another concrete expression that could be attributed to this situation:

> *Well, military service has certain positive things because it is a place where people with very different value judgments are together. and there are even people who have never seen a kiwi before, they think it is a grenade. There are people who do not know how to read, so you give them Turkish lessons or whatever. So, it is a place where very different value judgments coexist, and you have to put up with them. I mean, you live together in a certain respect, you live together in a different area after all. So, you get to know everyone's culture, you learn to tolerate them…. Maybe this can be a gain. Maybe you miss your privacy because you donot have a privacy there. It is obvious that you realize the value of things. (Farazi)*

This statement provides an important observation on how experiences during military service highlight socioeconomic differences. Explaining attitudes toward culture and socioeconomic affiliations solely through economic capital can overshadow the complexity of the issue. At this point, the concept of acculturation comes to mind; it refers to the emergence of a new value that is not present in either culture as a result of the convergence of subcultures or two different cultures (Karakuş, 2014). Thus, we can state that military service also entails a similar process of acculturation. Because in this period where a group of men from different classes, who do not know each other, live together, many details will be new to them. This situation implies that military service deepens socioeconomic divisions and necessitates communication with people they would not encounter in their normal lives. Therefore, military service makes socioeconomic differences more pronounced and offers individuals an opportunity to understand different sociologies. Naturally, it will also bring about acculturation. The observations regarding the presence of razor blades, drug use, and nightclub work further corroborate the argument:

> *I mean, the military environment is a place that you will never see in my life, I am not saying this to belittle it, I mean, it is a place where you live with people, where you live together, where you serve together, where you sleep together, where you eat together ... I mean, there are people who have very strange behavior, there are people who use drugs, there are people who, I do not know, have razor blades on their arms, there are people who have worked in a nightclub. I mean, you see people there that you would never meet in your normal life, and you have to develop a dialogue with them somehow, so this environment, the time you spend there for months actually adds a lot to you, I mean, you understand that there is a ton of things that you do not see, that you do not think about, I mean, you understand the different sociologies in Türkiye, I mean, this adds a lot to people, for example, I am very satisfied in this respect. I mean, it has such a plus, of course, those who do not go miss it. (Haunter)*

In addition to distancing oneself from those who are uneducated and who come from rural regions, it can be argued that participants also distance themselves from traditional, and toxic, gender norms. There are two notable points here: first exerting and abusing the power and second restricting one's live due to traditional gender norms. The first point was explained in the subtitle 'Things that Distort Masculinity'. To recall, participants distinguish themselves from those who abuse their power, i.e.

those who inflict violence on those weaker than themselves (this can be women, children, animals) and say that this is unmanly. Secondly, restricting his life under the pressure of traditional masculinity values is also an important point. The allusion to the constrictive and repressive aspect of idealistic pressure draws attention to the difficulties people encounter in striving to live up to society norms and expectations. In this situation, there can be tremendous pressure to conform to a particular ideal or image, which can be harmful to one's mental health. People may feel under pressure to live up to stereotyped ideas of masculinity as a result, even though these ideas may not reflect their own values or experiences. Nevertheless, people may find it difficult to talk about their difficulties or problems in spite of these social norms and expectations because of the stress that comes with attempting to live up to these unattainable standards. Reluctance to share one's feelings or ask for help could result from feeling pressured to uphold a particular façade or image because doing so could be interpreted as a sign of weakness or a failure to meet social standards. One participant comment on this issue as follows:

> *I think not. Well, I mean, you know, when there is such a situation, it restricts people. And you know, I see around me, for example, there is an OHS manager, friend of ours, he puffs up a little bit like this, you know, I have a Russian girlfriend, I have this and that. He has a problem; he does not say anything because it would be against masculinity. I am saying, I mean, everyone is human here. For this reason, I think there is no such thing, that is, everyone can have problems and problems are about human beings, so there is no such thing... (Mirket)*

This unwillingness to speak honestly about private matters might exacerbate depressive, anxious, and isolated feelings. People may be afraid of being judged or rejected for defying social norms, which makes it difficult for them to ask for assistance or support.

CHAPTER 5

PERCEPTIONS OF ISSUES SUCH AS HOMELAND, NATION, PATRIOTIC DUTY, AND NATIONALISM

A crucial component in developing a sense of collective responsibility and strengthening ties of citizenship within a nation is conscription, which entails compulsory military duty for qualified individuals, which is, in Turkish context, any healthy man above 18 years old. As citizens serve in the armed forces to play a role in the nation's defense, conscription fosters a sense of shared sacrifice among them. People who have had comparable difficulties and experiences bond strongly because they have experienced training, serving in the armed forces, and possibly putting their lives in danger for their country. Beyond social, economic, and cultural divides, a sense of sacrifice, duty, and devotion to preserving the nation can strengthen ties amongst citizens and between them and the state. Conscription is argued to be strengthening ties to citizenship by improving people's interactions with the government. Conscripts gain a better knowledge of their responsibilities as active contributors to preserving the security and sovereignty of their country via military duty. As people realize their civic duties in supporting the nation's overall security and welfare, this experience fosters a sense of loyalty and belonging to the country.

Conscription has a substantial gender dimension that affects social dynamics and conceptions of national identity, in addition to strengthening civic relationships, boosting national pride, and instilling a sense of shared sacrifice. Men who undergo military service may view their conscription as an expression of their bravery, manliness, and patriotism, which strengthens their feeling of pride and identity by reinforcing conventional ideas about men's duties in national defense. The historical practice of engaging men primarily for military service serves to perpetuate the notion that men are the nation's principal protectors and defenders, with women

sometimes limited to secondary positions or excluded entirely. This fosters gender stereotypes and unequal power relations, marginalizing women's contributions to the nation's defense. This gendered dimension also means that men benefit from certain privileges because of their participation in public life through conscription. As Enloe (2000) explains:

> Still the Turkish military, like those other NATO forces that are reliant on conscription to fill their ranks (France, Germany, Italy), continues to depend on male-only conscription, thereby preserving a masculinized hold on its conception of militarized national citizenship. A Turkish young man may not look forward to his tour of military service, and his sister may be relieved that she can get on with her schooling or paid civilian work without having to endure military service, but the military tour will have its reward – not only for individual men, but for all those men who reap advantage in political life from the privileging of masculinity.
>
> (p.246)

As a rite of passage or a symbolic act, conscription shows men's dedication to and acceptance within the nation. Serving in the military is frequently regarded as a necessary component of citizenship in many countries where male conscription is in place. Men are seen as having fulfilled their responsibility to the nation and demonstrating their devotion and dedication to its protection and well-being by serving in conscription. Because conscription is linked to the rights and obligations that accompany becoming a citizen of the nation-state, it takes on symbolic significance in this setting.

Additionally, behind the male conscription is the idea that all eligible men have to serve in the military, regardless of the socioeconomic status. However, the introduction of short-term military service adds a layer of complexity to this premise because it enables individuals to pay a certain amount of money to fulfill their military service obligations in a shorter period. This raises questions among the society regarding the fairness, equality and values associated with national identity. Henceforth, this research spared significant time and effort to understand intricacies of patriotic duty, national identity, and masculinity in relation to fulfilling military duties. In order to understand the varied experiences and viewpoints that influence people's attitudes and behaviors regarding military service and citizenship obligations, this research looks at how members of both groups position their own

masculinities, understand the masculinities of other group, and negotiate issues like nationalism and patriotic duty. Gaining a thorough grasp of the complex nature of military service and its effects on people's identities, social norms, and ideas of citizenship requires an understanding of these processes.

For this aim, the participants were asked questions regarding characteristics a soldier should have, the meaning of military service, the comparison between traditional and short-term military service, why they chose that type of military service and why they think the other group preferred the other type of military service, the social effects of the increase in short-term military service, the oath ceremony, and their answers were analyzed in detail. In addition, all emphases throughout the interviews such as homeland, nation and duty were focused on.

5.1. The Relationship Between Patriotism and Military Service

Çetin (2018) argues that there is a shift away from the belief that love for one's country and military duty are synonymous when considering the Türkiye example. This argument is also supported by the findings of this thesis. While the participants do not believe that intense nationalist feelings necessarily mean doing long-term military service, there can be some connections. Especially with respect to national defense, participants mention patriotism and sacrifice as useful values. However, these values do not necessarily exist for every man, and they should not be. This draws attention to voluntariness of the military service. It is often argued that those that really wants to do this, defend the country and fight when needed, should do military service and it should not be compulsory. When asked about the characteristics a soldier should have, two participants of short-term military service mentioned patriotism:

> *Firstly, he must be a nationalist, secondly, he must have a very strong patriotism in his own context, he must be aware, he must be aware of why he is doing what he is doing, and of course discipline. Military service can be like a job, but you have to dedicate yourself accurately, just like being a pilot. Piloting is actually a form of military service, but nowadays, piloting is often presented as a job, and military service should be like that too. (Joker)*

> *I can say reliability and patriotism. Because if on the second day you are going to sell out your mate when you are in a difficult situation, then you should not be around. Apart from that, you can get everything else with power and strength. Everything else is replaceable for both women and men. You can also utilize someone with less strength in other strategic positions. So, I think the most important thing is that he is a reliable person. For example, if you send me to Syria right now, you probably cannot trust me because I do not know what I will do in Syria, maybe I will run away. I think one needs to see what one is doing. If you are defending your land, then there will be a different point of view. For example, if another country had entered Ankara, we would have died there, but now it is different when they are sent for another purpose. (Mirket).*

The comments demonstrate a deeply embedded societal construct that links military duty and patriotism. This phenomenon highlights the complex interaction among gendered expectations, collective identity, and militaristic beliefs. In keeping with traditional discourses that elevate male warriors as the nation's protectors and defenders, patriotism is presented within this framework as a manly virtue. The assumption that men, especially in the context of the military, should show unflinching allegiance and commitment to their country—often at the risk of their own safety or well-being—is reinforced by this gendered construction.

Another participant of short-term military service defines military service as a duty to the nation.

> *Military service is primarily a duty to the nation. To be a member of an official armed institution that protects the country's established rules, being a part of that kind of family… Knowing that your ancestors walked the same paths, it is a debt of gratitude to them... At the same time, it teaches a lot to a person, it is like a "survivor" in a way. Surviving there is also a skill because it is a matter of staying alive. Of course, from my side, I did one month and came back. I did not do it in a very dangerous place, for example, but I was thinking of going as a reserve officer before I went for a short-term military service. I wanted to do 12 months of service. There was a bit of family pressure and so on, you know... Well, I said okay, let's do it [short-term military service] then.*

It is possible to see the ambiguity here, where the participant places a huge significance to military service but chose to do short-term military service. Seeing this, he provides an immediate explanation regarding social pressure on going for

short-term military service, implying that otherwise he would have gone for the longer period to serve the nation proudly. Additionally, Aslan explains that outside influences, such pressure from his family and pragmatic concerns, had a big impact on his choice. This preemptive statement appears to anticipate a possible query regarding why he declined to go for the long-term military service and acts as a preventive answer to such queries. Accepting to go for short-term military service purely based on family's request also diverts the responsibility from himself to others.

Short-term military service respondents were asked why they think those who choose long term military service decide that way. Patriotism emerges here as an important answer. For example:

> *It is out of obligation. Not for something else. Or there is genuine patriotism in the person. He truly wants to serve in the military, take that duty, and it will give him pleasure to do so, he wants to tell people about it throughout his life. He thinks being a soldier is a great thing, like I' am a soldier, I have stood my guard.'There are definitely those who enjoy it. Or there are those who do not want to but are forced into it. İt is because they cannot afford it, there is no other option anyway. Either you really love military service, or you are obliged to go for a long-term. (Karanfil)*

It appears that some participants view long-term military duty as an expression of a deeply held sense of patriotism. They contend that people who go the conventional route do so out of a deep feeling of obligation and patriotism. However, although some people may consider patriotism to be important, it is possible that people go for long-term military service for motives other than pure patriotism, as we will see by the responses of those who have served in the military traditionally.

With regards to the question whether there is any effect of increasing popularity of short-term military service, participants touches upon patriotism in their answer:

> *I do not think so. Maybe the perception of nationalism may regress a little bit, but when you look at it, even someone seeking asylum abroad can get up and shout nationalist slogans here. I mean he shouts; he may be a nationalist, but he can shout nationalist slogans. That is why it is different. You never know, our people are unpredictable in this regard. (Aslan)*

Here, the argument is that society may become less nationalistic if short-term military service becomes more common and accepted. This perspective casts doubt on the widely held belief that a person's motivation for serving in the military is always a strong sense of nationalistic passion or patriotism. Aslan instead suggests a change in which the reasons for enlisting in the military may become less linked to conventional ideas of nationalism and more diverse, especially with the availability of short-term option. Aslan's view regarding the potential regression of nationalism in society as a result of short-term military duty is in line with Mirket's assessment of the detrimental effects of the current administration on people's sense of pride in their country and patriotism, that is given below. Both people make the implication that outside variables, such shifts in society or influence from the government, can have a big impact on people's reasons for joining the military and their feeling of national identity:

> *I think the current government has a negative effect on people's patriotic feelings. This also falls in line with that. So now, for example, if it was not for the current government, I might want to be a soldier. I might want to because I had a lot of military elders, I mean I had relatives, pashas, officers and so on, so I was more likely to want to be a soldier. But I would not want to be in the current Türkiye, so I think that's what most people think. So, there is this idea that why should I go for 6 months with the decision made by someone in Türkiye. I do not know exactly how it affects, but in the end it is true. People do not go and do things with national feelings right now. Although there, we went to the military service as 3,000 people, people are crying and so on, I think if there is a national feeling, it is not as much as it used to be. (Mirket)*

Another participant mentions nationalist feelings accompanied with the advantage of stability it brings to people’s lives:

> *That is how I see it; those who truly want to be soldiers, who have nationalistic ideals, they go and serve in the military. But I do not think they do it with a 100% consciousness of country defense, after all, it is a means of livelihood, you become a civil servant to some extent, you are a state employee, after all. So, there are people who do it out of necessity, because it is the only thing they can do. (Muzi)*

Muzi's expression explores the reasons behind people who genuinely feel obligated to serve their country and defend it by enlisting in the military. He admits that some

choose to go for long-term military service because they have strong nationalistic beliefs and a desire to protect their country. Muzi contends, nonetheless, that not everyone enlists in the military purely for the purpose of defending their country. He makes the argument that for some people, serving in the military is a way to support themselves and find work; it is similar to working as a government servant and earning a consistent salary. He suggests that many people who enlist in the military may do so not only because they have a strong desire to protect their country but also because of their financial situation or lack of work options. This viewpoint emphasizes a practical side of military duty, where people may view it as a means of securing financial security or a feasible career path, rather than being motivated only by patriotic enthusiasm. The statement "because it is the only thing they can do" is also a crucial here, where it is argued that for some who may not have many other options, joining the military can be a sensible or last-resort option. It is argued by short-term participants that economic limitations, social pressures, or a lack of work opportunities could all lead to choosing long-term military service.

It is worth mentioning a critical viewpoint on the patriotic ideals and traditional glorification of military duty by a short-term military service participant here:

> *This state of emancipation actually liberates the perspective on military service from dogmas at some point. I mean, our patriotic national consciousness actually has a place in the cultural structure, it has a historical structure. There is also a structure that has a point of view like "the Turk is always a soldier." But in total, it is really a cultural masturbation. You know, the desire to have this power, this military power... It [short-term military service] breaks this, it really does. I mean, just as the fight against terrorism reinforces this, just as an armed conflict glorifies the military in the eyes of a large part of society, this also breaks this. I do not know about the good and bad interpretation, I think it is a little bit good that this structure is broken, it is an element that will move people forward. The need for so many weapons decreasing, a little bit more rationality... But it is a fact, I think it is a little bit modernizing this structure – it is a little bit of a dogma, it is a force, the military is a force, it is the power of man – it is a little bit modernizing this structure. (Legolas)*

He disputes the idea that being in the military automatically translates into patriotism or a sense of pride in one's country. Legolas contends, however, that seeing military service as a kind of social or cultural responsibility might restrict personal liberties

and uphold antiquated ideas. He argues that progress requires a change in cultural perceptions of military power and its ramifications, and he calls for a more nuanced approach that goes beyond dogmatic notions of militarism.

These responses can be interpreted as the short-term military service participant do not necessarily link long-term military service with the traditional understanding of nationalism and patriotism. And, even the sincerity of those that that do long-term military service on the grounds of patriotic feelings is questioned by them because there are other dynamics such as financial gain (for 12-months of service). It is argued by the short-term military service participants that financial means are the main reason for not opting short-term military service, and patriotism can play a small role. Additionally, some participants point out the role of personal ideological values and proximity of individuals in the decision-making process and economic gains for either short-term or long-term military service.

One striking critical comment about war and militarism was made by the participant as follows:

> *They say that it is the blood on it that makes the flag the flag... I read it somewhere as something and it reflected me like that. It is the flagman who makes the flag the flag, if the soil dies for the soil, it is something to be ashamed. People should not die for land; land is an abstract concept. You know, borders, races and so on, are abstract concepts. I mean, they are not things that exist first, these are abstract things that people make up. I mean, why is a child dying just because someone made up a border, abi, it is ridiculous, because war is never something that happens when 10 100% righteous human, men, and 10 100% criminal and murderous people fight each other and then whoever wins wins. This is not something that happens. I have never heard of a war where civilians never die, abi. I mean, I have never heard of a war where only soldiers die, it is always civilians, always something, someone dies, always something in between, you cannot count it as casualties, the whole life of the people there changes. (Muzi)*

Military institution can significantly affect men's mindset due to variety of techniques such as standardization, trainings, ceremonies, highly disciplined and hierarchical structure. Specifically, marches and slogans play an important role, even before entering the military, from childhood, individuals in Türkiye are exposed to

such discourse. Within military groups, the coordinated motions and rhythms of marching foster a sense of cohesiveness and unity. Marches demonstrate discipline while also signifying the group's strength and resolve when executed in simultaneously. Patriotic songs or phrases that highlight virtues like bravery, loyalty, and sacrifice can be incorporated into the rhythmic chanting or singing during marches, which will strengthen the participants' sense of dedication and pride in their country. Furthermore, it is a show of strength and unity when large crowds of people yell the same inspirational phrases or catchphrases, especially at public events like parades, rallies, or ceremonies. It reinforces the perception of a unified and disciplined military force committed to preserving national ideals and safeguarding the interests of the country by sending a strong message of solidarity and allegiance to bystanders. In addition to energizing and inspiring players and onlookers alike, the coordinated chanting of slogans in such situations fosters a sense of pride and patriotism. Being exposed to these, even for short period of time, can affect people's viewpoints. Many of the participants have empathized that military service is a place where there is no logic, where you cannot question and where you have nothing but obey. Such systematic exposure to patriotic discourses and actions can affect people. The participant explains this process as follows:

> *There is something like this, I mean, after all, what do they say, it is a man's romance, this military service... In my high school years, when I had a bit more of a nationalist personality, you know, when I was in the character of Türkiye, my Türkiye, whatever, then I changed because of the reasons I mentioned. I am less attached to such things, but I do not know what I would do if there was a war right now, but I mean, I am a person who loves his country, I had a more fanatical character then, I mean, when I was a child, I loved it like that. If I was a soldier then, I would walk around like this, saying I am a soldier or something like that, but now it is like this. Yes, they make you feel it by force, because just imagine, you went there with 5,000 people. I went to Amasya, you were 5,000 people. You are 5,000 soldiers, and everyone does the same things, wears the same clothes, wears the same clothes in the same way, wears the same boots in the same way, you get similar commands from similar commanders, and so on, and these people are all patriotic people. You love the homeland too, but you know, the perception in them is that since their profession is military service, they love it more than us, in quotation marks, because they feel that way. That is why, for example, while we are marching, we are made to say words like "I sacrifice my life for the homeland," "Martyrs do not die, the homeland is indivisible," and so on, the love for the country and the military is constantly instilled in you, that is, this is*

done from the moment you enter until the end. Naturally, after a month, when you are constantly exposed to these things, you get used to the environment and similar thoughts. (Muzi)

One participant of short-term military service expresses patriotic feelings and significant role of military in Turkish society with an emphasis on military-nation as follows:

Well, military service is important for military nations like us because the Turkish nation is a military nation. We are not a nation of scientists. We are not a nation of artists. We have always been an army nation since history. We are a nation that does not avoid war, we are a little bit barbaric, I do not know, we are always such a nation that loves such a temper. That's why it is important for us. At least it is important for us to remember some things and understand them well. (Aslan)

A notion or ideology that forges a close bond between a country's identity and its armed forces is known as the "military-nation myth." This myth frequently highlights the belief that the military plays a crucial role in shaping national identity and cultural legacy, in addition to serving as the nation's protector. The military-nation myth basically implies that a country's military might, cultural heritage, and history are strongly associated with its essence, strength, and character. This myth seeks to exalt military service and elevate soldiers as national heroes who represent the ideals, virtues, and sacrifices of their country. It advances the notion that preserving the country's interests, security, and sovereignty requires a strong and ready armed force. The myth has the power to change how people see military service, turning it from a simple military obligation to a deeply embedded cultural element in Turkish society. The myth of the military country has greatly aided in the spread of militarism in Türkiye by weaving military service into the fabric of Turkish society.

Some participants from short-term military service specifically mention that even in the case of war or conflict, they will not be willing to participate as soldiers. One participant strongly argues that military service should be voluntary because expecting a person to potentially risk his life for defending homeland is too much sacrifice. This is an extremely personal decision that should be done voluntarily and after careful consideration of the possible dangers and costs. Concerns about moral

implications of forcing people into situations where they might risk death are at the heart of the case against mandatory military service. This highlights the conflict between our shared responsibility to protect the nation's security and individual liberties, raising concerns about how to strike a balance between both:

> *I think military service is a job. I mean, just like we have a job in our private life, military service is such a job. But what is wrong here is to present military service to people as if it is not a job, as if it is an obligatory duty, because when we do that, people work in the job they love, we all work in the job we do not like because of obligatory conditions, but to a certain extent, not completely, but if you say that people will protect their homeland, that they will put their lives in danger, you expect this from them, you need to turn it into a job in today's world. I would like and expect military service to continue as a short-term military service. I mean, military service is just a job for me, I think it should be professional, I advocate that it should be seen as a job. (Joker)*

> *What is military service for me... I think it is definitely something that needs to be done. But let me tell you, even if it is done for 15 days, it will be enough. Unfortunately, in Türkiye... It is too long, I mean, if people do it for a month, it is something that will be enough. After all, we're not going to war, nothing happens. Okay, maybe there will be a war ahead of us, but... Anyway, you cannot teach me how to hold a gun. I mean, my hand does not hold a gun - it did not hold a gun. As I said, I am not the kind of person who can run to the front and go to war by saying 'Allah!"They do not teach this, they teach simpler things, and this can be taught to us in 15-20 days, which is something that should be reduced in terms of the number of days of military service, but it is something that should be done. (Aki)*

Another key theme with regards to patriotism is the oath ceremony, where conscripts show their commitment to protect the country and preserve the ideals and standards of the Turkish state through a formal ceremony. Following the presentation of military gear and uniforms, the oath is normally declared while standing in formation. The oath ceremony is culturally and symbolically significant because it symbolizes the conscript's entry into the military and the ideals of duty, honor, and patriotism that come with serving the country. When asked about their experiences and feelings regarding the oath ceremony, only one participant from short-term military service pointed out patriotic feelings such as proud.

> *Oath ceremony was incredible. It really gave me goosebumps because you enter team by team and sing the anthem, for example, 'blue beret does not fall*

to the ground," there are things like that, "martyrs do not die, the homeland is indivisible" etc... Each team enters separately, you know, the audience stands up and so on. I liked it a lot. And everyone is in the same rhythm. Maybe 5000 people are rapping at the same time. Of course we received training for this... We did a lot of repetitions and walked a lot. But it was fun for me. I mean, I liked walking, for example, I liked shouting. I do not mind, some people were not walking, some people were walking straight, I obeyed the rules, see, I liked that, I mean, actually singing the anthem, shouting, everyone taking the same step at the same time, and so on. For example, the national anthem was very nice. Even this was rehearsed many times. The oath ceremony was very good, very wonderful. I would like to experience that feeling again. Unfortunately, I do not even have a video. (Karanfil)

Interestingly, when looked at the long-term military service participants' answers, emphasis around patriotism and nationalism seem much less. When asked about why people choose to do long-term military service, only one participant mentions nationalist feelings.

I have heard of people around me who think like me, albeit rarely, among those who go, other than that, I do not know why they go, I mean, I do not know very much. I mean, those who go are probably going for the reasons I mentioned, that is, because their nationalist feelings are strong or, as I said, they do not have the money to give, that is, the money they earn does not cover it, probably for these reasons. (Haunter)

On the other hand, a large group of participants mention clearly that their reasons for deciding for long-term military service is not related to nationalist ideas. It is also expressed by a couple of long-term military service participants that they do not feel such a patriotic feeling, but they witnessed some that felt that way during their service.

I do not think I would go... I mean, I do not think anyone - the majority - would go, I think especially those who are 100% 150% or something like that in nationalism would probably go. There are such people, really, they used to come to us, but this is a good thing, there are such people, but I would not go, if it was not compulsory. (X)

One participant, who defined himself as anti-militarist and contentious objector, mentions he was so tired of state sanctions and shrinking liberties as a reason to go for long-term military service. He mentions that short-term military service, for him,

seemed as providing direct funding for the militarist institution, which he did not want to be a part of. As mentioned in the literature review, the full-citizenship notion also means that through fulfilling the military service obligation, males are required to uphold their status as fully accepted and enfranchised members of society/nation, entitled to the advantages and responsibility that come with citizenship (Kwon, 2010). This implies that not going for conscription may result in a number of consequences, including administrative penalties, limitations on international travel, and job termination (Biricik, 2011). This was also mentioned by the report series of Conscientious Objection Monitoring Bulletin. According to the latest report, covering January - March 2024, the most common violations of rights due to not fulfilling compulsory military service were inability to work in public institutions and restriction of freedom of movement[8]. Although this thesis is not directly related to conscientious objection, I think it is important to mention these methods of intimidation since one of the participants is actually a conscientious objector and he got tired of the restrictions and intimidation policies of the state and joined the military. I also think that these examples exemplify and concretely present how men are put under pressure by state policies and sanctions. Hence, it can be argued here that the finding supports the literature with respect to full citizenship notion and requirements coming with this entitlement. Thus, trying to escape from fulfilling military service means ramification of fundamental civil rights. Sinclair-Webb (2006) explains at this point that the motto of the army, "*Önce vatan*" (meaning: "first the homeland"), perfectly captures the reality that men in Türkiye face. This motto, which reflects the legal and societal demands imposed on people regarding military duty, highlights the importance of national service and allegiance to the country. Therefore, refusing to serve in the military has an impact on one's personal liberties and rights as well as more general ideas of citizenship and national identity.

Similar to the one participant of short-term military service, one long-term military service participant expressed feelings of pride during oath ceremony.

> *I do not know, everyone was very proud, I mean really, I said at that moment, I saw exactly how much society values the soldier. For example, I do not*

[8] https://vicdaniret.org/ocak-mart-2024-vicdani-ret-izleme-bulteni-yayinda/

know the aunty, she said to me, "Well done, my son, lions"or something like that. I do not know the uncle either, for example, the uncle was shouting slogans like that. It was such a situation, it was a very proud thing, I mean, marching in uniform. I was a commander; it was one of the moments when I felt very proud in the same way. It was to feel that love, that is, it was nice that everyone approached you in that way, people you did not know, and so on, it was nice. But the biggest things in those oath ceremonies were the people whose families did not come or something like that... My girlfriend came or something - of course we broke up anyway, the psychology of military service has something like that for me, you know, doing long-term military service - my girlfriend and I broke up afterwards, but... One of my friends said to me, he said "your girlfriend came, etc. no one came for me, I was very upset,"or something like that, and I felt sorry for him there. Some people had no one, so there was such a bitterness in some people. (Farazi)

Therefore, it can be the case that oath ceremony can foster feelings of pride, both in the case of shorter. and longer service. On the other hand, for some oath ceremony may not mean anything or it can even conflict with their personal values. One participant created a strategy for him at that moment:

The oath ceremony, you know, when they make oaths to their country, nation and flag and everyone shouts, and most people feel really honored, even if they go through so much suffering, you know... I felt a little strange there. tables are set up like there, white cloths are stretched over them, then guns are placed on all the tables. then all the people there touch those guns and swear an oath to the state and the flag, that they will defend it, that they will die when the time comes, and so on. I preferred not to touch the gun but to touch the white sheet, I guess it was supposed to be an escape point that I was trying to find in my own romantic way... white is like a symbol of peace for me, of something that is not included there, so the oath ceremony is a bit like this, it is not about a homeland, a nation, a border... (Momo).

Hence, there is no general conclusion that the oath-taking ceremony is a source of pride for long-term military service members. Some of the long-term participants said that they did not feel anything during the oath-taking ceremony, while others said that they felt proud. Some others found this context uncomfortable and strategized in their own way. When we look at the short-term side, similarly, there are those who do not feel anything and those who feel proud. Therefore, it would not be correct to establish a direct relationship between the feeling proud in accomplishing the military service duty and the long-term service. In the same way, for some people who do short-term military service, completing their military service can be a source of pride.

When asked “would you do military service if it was not compulsory?”, a considerable majority stated they would not go. Among the short-term military service participants, majority of them said they would not go, only one person said he would go by stating that:

> *Yes, after experiencing it, I think it is an experience that should be lived because my mother used to say: A man is not a man until he does his military service. The consciousness it imposes on you really contributes to your personal development if you do your military service efficiently. No other course can make you conscious of such a responsibility, let me put it that way. (Aslan)*

Among the long-term military service participants, majority said they would not go because they would not want to be separated from the social life and individual liberties and experience oppression:

> *So yes, if they say that normally we have made it [short-term military service] the free of charge, whoever wants can go for free and whoever wants can do it for 6 months, for example, if there are 2 things and if there is an article with a nice state and homeland emphasis under the 6 months, I think that the point that it will affect will not go beyond 1% or 2%, and I think that everyone will do a shortest term and get out. At the point where there is money, it is already, you know, the price that the state wants from you. But now no one has ever said, I mean, from somewhere I have asked and talked to so far, you know, 'you will go for so many days, are you ok?' I do not think anyone will say no. I mean, whether it is a nationalist person or something like that, everyone desires and wants this civil and free life in some way. So, you always tend to do as little as you can, as an individual, you always tend to go there, and where you are put in a little bit of a homeland-nation pressure, because of the ordeal you go through, there is such an ego... That's all that is left to you anyway... You know, it feels like you can embrace it and do it. (Momo)*

Momo's perspective goes against the popular belief that long-term military service is always desirable, especially for people who have strong patriotic feelings. He makes the argument that, despite popular belief or patriotic sentiment, the benefits of military duty might not be as great as they are frequently made out to be. This viewpoint explores a number of significant issues that support his doubts about the value of regular military duty. He suggests that even with financial obstacles removed, there is still very little actual enlistment in the military. Moreover, Momo's focus on human autonomy and independence raises the possibility that social codes

or nationalistic impulses could not necessarily coincide with individual goals. Regardless of their level of patriotism or national pride, he suggests that many people value a civilian lifestyle marked by freedom of choice and lack of military commitments.

A large number of long-term military service participants mentioned they would go based on variety of reasons such as financial gain, experiencing military setting and atmosphere (which can be taken as an adventure), having good friends and building relationships and not to feel 'social inferiority'. The point about social inferiority worth to be noted here:

> *Maybe it is because I do not want that social loser status like "this one did not do his military service" or something... Maybe because of that. Maybe also, you know, to have such an experience, now you are curious about military service, right? But you do not have the possibility of doing military service, right? I mean, naturally, I had a possibility in Türkiye, so I did it, so let me give an answer like that. (Orman Kanunu)*

Hence, it can be argued that for some fulfilling military service gives social status.

Participants of the research were also asked what they would suggest for in response to the question what advice you would give to someone in your close circle who is going for military service, only one person from long-term military service expressed they would suggest long-term military service but only if they are planning to save some money. Additionally, another long-term military service participant stated that he encourages for long-term military service but mostly suggest short-term military service depending on the character and endurance of the person on question, subtly indicating that the long-term is more challenging. Hence, it is possible to conclude here that even those that go for long-term military service find short-term military service rational and doable to a certain level.

5.1.1. Being Useful to the Nation

Yirmidokuz and Kahraman (2021) argue that short-term military service participants they interviewed emphasized that they do not limit their love of homeland only to the

duration of military service and that they make their love of homeland continuous and practical by taking part in the production network outside of military service. The findings of this thesis also support their argument. The data collected suggests that participants do not equate or create a direct relationship between military service and traditional sense of patriotism or nationalism. It can be argued that love and devotion for the nation is defined with respect to being beneficial to the society and economy, not only by military service, but, even more significantly, through other productive means such as by education, skilled labor and contributing to societal development. Within this framework, an argument for shifting emphasis from compulsory service to fields where people may make the most of their education and experience aligns with a broader conception of patriotism. This viewpoint recognizes that patriotism encompasses a dedication to improving society via a variety of means and goes beyond military service. People can cultivate a sense of patriotism that values contributions to societal well-being and national success in a variety of ways by acknowledging the potential influence of skilled labor across diverse sectors. This viewpoint transcends the conventional limitations of military service as the exclusive measure of patriotic duty and values contributions across various sectors. It also acknowledges that people can express their patriotism through significant and impactful actions that are in line with their strengths, passions, and professional abilities. This argument is especially valid in the case of short-term military service, where individuals make a calculation on costs and time. Hence, going for short-term military service does not automatically imply a lack of devotion or patriotism and through short-term military service individuals can devote their time, talents, and energies toward endeavors that have a noticeable and immediate influence on the advancement of the country and the welfare of society.

Below are some comments regarding this point:

> *Here, I think military service should be optional. I mean, I am working right now, I am earning a gross salary, I am paying 20 thousands of my salary to the state as taxes. I think of this as my contribution to the state, to pay taxes. I could not do that when I went to the military, for example. When I went to the army, I hung out there, I cleaned, I walked and so on, but I do not think I made a contribution to the state by doing short-term military service. (Muzi)*

Muzi's viewpoint is noteworthy because he states that he believes taxes are already paid to the state and that serving in a traditional capacity does not add anything substantial. His contrast of the monetary contributions he makes with the alleged lack of significant influence through long-term military service serves to further support this sentiment.

> *I mean, it really did not add anything to me. And what I added to them was far less than the added value I would have added while practicing my profession, less than the benefit I would have provided to this country, so I can say that. (Legolas)*

On similar lines, this comment also worth noting:

> *I mean, speaking on my own basis, I am a food engineer, I would have contributed much more to the country in those 24 days, that is, if I had not gone to the military. But I completely lost time for 24 days. I made it difficult for my team at my workplace. Maybe with an idea I gave, I would have made a profit of 100000 TL, but I woke up at 5 in the morning and shaved my beard. These events seem ridiculous to me. (Karanfil)*

Again, the participant starts out by stressing the value of time and how military service is a substantial loss of time. This viewpoint emphasizes the alleged inefficiency and the idea that time spent on military training would be better spent in other contexts, perhaps having a more significant influence on society. Karanfil also examines the financial implications of short-term military duty. Although he acknowledges that he paid the required amount, he queries the payment's worth considering the time lost and the effect it had on his professional obligations. This poses more general concerns regarding the trade-offs between time and money costs in light of social contributions and military duty responsibilities.

In answer to the question of why short-term military service is done, one participant explains as follows:

> *It is purely financial. I mean, both because of money, the state needs money, it needs to earn money, and because of the reactions of the public, because a man who is now 30 or 35 years old has still not done his military service. This man should not do his military service, do you understand? I mean,*

> *because now he has a certain life order, he has a family. I do not know, there is a certain monotony, there is a standard. I think this man should go to the army for a minimum period of time because if he is already contributing to the homeland in his own job, he is doing so. This is also a duty. It is not just, you name it, serving the homeland, it is not just taking up arms. (Aslan)*

Aslan emphasizes the need of time management and the need to remove obstacles that come with serving in the military, particularly when it comes to advancing one's profession and making personal plans for the future. From a pragmatic standpoint, he believes that a short-term service would provide a quicker, more convenient option with minimal inconveniences. Also, serving the homeland is not exclusively defined within military service.

In addition to short-term military service participants, this idea is also shared by some of the long-term military service participants. The viewpoint about the inefficiency and time waste related to military service obligations is supported by the remarks made by participants in long-term military service. Short-term military service participants' criticism of the system is consistent with the idea that forcing a high number of people into military duty does not always benefit them or the nation. This point of view highlights the financial and resource expenditures that the state bears in order to support conscripts, such as meals, clothing, and medical treatment, but it also draws attention to the productivity loss that occurs in the workforce during the conscription period.

> *A certain number of conscripts are really of no use to anyone, neither to the conscripts nor to the country. It reduces them as an expense. After all, you give them 3 meals every day, you give them clothes, you take them to the hospital. Plus, there is a loss of labor force in the state, that is, you deprive a person between the ages of 20-25, that is, 1 million people of their labor force. It also satisfies people at work, they say they did their military service or something like that, so everyone keeps hanging out. Let me say that the buyer is satisfied, and the seller is satisfied. (Orman Kanunu)*

Orman Kanunu's opinion particularly discusses the economic effects of conscription, implying that it lessens people's value by turning them into a cost to the government. The discussion of labor depletion and its effects on productivity and job satisfaction in civilian settings highlights the wider socioeconomic ramifications of compulsory military service:

> *Let me put it this way, I always interpret those who go on for short-term in a reasonable way, especially since I am in academia, I interpret them even more reasonably. Maybe a person who is outside can do things differently, of course there are also people I criticize. But he is working hard, doing his doctorate, etc., he is involved in something. That person has already given himself to academia and science, you know, it is a waste of time, he cannot produce productivity for him, so those 6 months would be lost time. He needs to produce something; he needs to do something. So, I find those people very reasonable, I mean I find them reasonable in some things. (Farazi)*

In a similar vein, Farazi's reply emphasizes a more nuanced view of the circumstances, especially in academic and professional settings. Farazi agrees that short-term military service enables people to work on more worthwhile projects, like doing research, which would further their personal growth and enable them to make more valuable contributions to society. This viewpoint bolsters the claim that pressuring people into the armed forces without taking into account their qualifications and possible benefits might lead to time wastage and missed chances for creativity and production. Overall, these remarks from those who served for the military show the difficulties and complexities present in such institutions and echoes worries regarding the effectiveness, worth, and social effects of compulsory military service.

Therefore, it is possible to suggest a transformation in the perception of being useful for the homeland. Traditionally, military service was considered as an expression of patriotism, usefulness and devotion to the nation. The research reveals that this research shows that there is no simplistic one-dimensional relationship between the duration of military service and the patriotism values of individuals. When individuals do short-term military service and instead continue to work, they contribute to the society and the nation by using their intellectual power and skills. And according to them, interrupting this contribution and spending 6 or 12 months in military service reduces the benefit to society in the overall picture.

The gathered data demonstrates the intricacy of gender stereotypes and their practical application. Although some might think that individuals who have served in the military for shorter periods of time are less attached to conventional gender norms than those who have served for longer periods of time. This study, however, shows

that the relationship is more complex than that. There are some individuals among short-term military service that value military service and nationalism more than those in long-term. There are those among long-term service who completely detach themselves from nationalist sentiments. Interestingly, Asheri-Shahaf (2017) talks about concept of ‘conscientious objection to military service’ a, in opposition to the idea that conscientious objection is antagonistic to patriotism. There is a distinction between different types of opposition to the military system. General opposition to military duty is founded on fundamental values such as pacifism or anti-militarism, which apply uniformly regardless of the circumstances. On the other hand, specific resistance focuses on particular components of military service or conscription on context-specific, potentially modifiable grounds. Patriotic conscientious objection is based on a conflict between a person's loyalty to their country and their opposition to specific military actions or policies they believe to be unfair or immoral, as opposed to general conscientious objection, which can originate from philosophical or personal reasons. This reflects the complexity of the image against to the simplistic idea that the more patriotic a person is, the more he wants to spare time for military service.

The research reveals that participants often define nationalism through being beneficial to the country and society. A careful analysis of the interviews leads me to the conclusion that the traditional understanding of nationalism, which puts military service at its core, is not really relevant for the participants. In this context, one can see that the understanding of nationalism is being away from benefiting the nation through directly joining military forces and towards the idea that benefiting the society. Hence, it is possible to talk about the idea of service to the homeland but there is a discourse break here. This discourse break is like ‘service to the society’ rather than ‘service to the homeland’. In the traditional sense of nationalism, military service is at the core of national service but in this transformation, military service is not at the core. More specifically, participants think that doing military service is not only not beneficial for the individual but also for the state because cost of long-term military service on state is quite large. In addition, during the military service, they have to steal from the field where they actually produce and are useful, and they think that this returns to the country's economy as a minus and does not benefit the

country. Hence, the perception of nationalism is not the same as it was when the first modern state, the Republic, was founded. There is still the idea of service to the homeland, but this is not equivalent to military service, one can also serve as a good engineer, a good lawyer, etc. depending on his qualities and training. Therefore, different masculinities, different gender perceptions and perceptions of military service and nationalism are in a triadic relationship of change. Not only masculinities but also perceptions of military service and nationalism are changing, and they are very interrelated. As there is a change in one, there is a change in the others - we can talk about a tripartite transformation.

5.2. Role of Military Service in Masculinity Construction for the Participants

Participants of the research were asked about their views regarding the relationship between masculinity and military service and whether the latter has any role in stages of masculinity. It can be concluded here that although there is an emphasis on military service as a hypermasculine place, this does not necessarily mean that military service is a necessity for achieving full masculinity.

> *These are the issues that do not mean anything to me, well, I mean, the fact that someone's being a man is measured by holding a gun or cutting off a part of his dick or trying to be a man, in general, I think it is nonsense. So, it does not make any sense to me. That is, the fact that one person is going to the military service, one person is not going, the social economic social cultural problems that they live among themselves... You know, social economic cultural problems are not a place that is very much like that in my life. (Momo)*

Some participants argued that military service has no role in masculinity formation.

> *I do not think that way. I mean, I think that all men, and to a lesser extent women, should do military service. I mean, I think this is the way it should be, but if I say that this man is not a man because he does not do military service, then none of my friends that I like are men. and I mean, I know these people personally and I mean, they are all good, sincere guys, my friends that I like. That's why if I say something like that, I contradict myself. I do not think so anyway, but I tell them this, you do not do it because we ca not come to this because we are running away from hardship, that's my opinion, but it has nothing to do with manhood. (Haunter)*

For some, although military service is not something that constitutes masculinity, it has some positive effects with respects to personal development and maturity.

> *I mean, we do not teach anyone humanity there, or we do not make anyone a hardship in military service. He learns friendship there; he learns to be patient. I think military service adds an added value to the formation of character. I think everyone should do it. I am not trying to say that everyone should do it, I am not saying that they should not do short-term military service, I am not saying that they should do it for 6 months. Everyone should go there for at least 10 days, 20 days, whatever it is, I think it adds positive things. (X)*

> *I mean, I do not think (that there is a relationship). Because in my circle of friends, I mean, a very large part of them are people who have not done their military service, that is, people who have done their military service for short-term. I mean, I do not think that they have lost anything from their adulthood because they have not done their military service, or I do not think that they have made an extra contribution to my adulthood because I have done my military service. But of course, there is something like this, I think that going to military service has a great benefit in terms of personal development or human maturation. (Haunter)*

While he does not consider short-term service as a real military service that is done by him, still he does not criticize this group and their masculinity.

> *I would not say it is what makes a man a man. You know, it makes you grow up a little bit. The age you reach is a very important age, is not it, the end of adolescence, I mean. You are just stepping into real life. Military service shows that reality a little bit. You become superior and there are people superior to you. You come across some troubles like this, you overcome some difficulties, some of them you are alone, some of them there is someone who is with you, and so on and so forth. I mean, when I look at the total, it is a small life experience, there is not much difference. (Gri)*

> *It is definitely a place where masculinity is very knee-deep. I mean, even the anthems are like that, lions, tigers, monsters, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah... that's the way we used to motivate the soldiers, I mean, I used to make people sing this anthem on purpose with people who were very motivated at first. For example, there really is something that increases such masculinity in anthems, it is always to gas them like this, there is definitely something that has a connection, I mean. there is already something like 'every Turk is born a soldier', that is, there is something that we have been familiar with since childhood, and it is really different when we wear the uniform... For women, this situation may be marriage, and for men, military service. (Farazi)*

The participant states that the military is a place of high masculinity and mentions the national anthem as one of the experiences that increase masculinity. The last sentence is very important as it states that for men, being a man or being a Turk, which comes from childhood, makes itself felt through things such as the uniform worn and the anthem sung during the military service, while similar feelings can emerge for women through marriage. Here we see that military service also teaches women not to be women and possess feminine features.

It is also important here to mention that all four comments above are from long-term military service participants. The hierarchy in their head regarding the 'real' military service and shorter one seems to be related to longer exposure, accompanied with more memories, good or bad.

Some participants argue that military service had an important role in the past because for many it was the first opportunity to leave their homes, go outside of their small circle, meet with new people and learn many things including trainings in the military and authority. For those times, it can be argued that military had a bigger role in shaping masculinity.

> *Now I think there is a situation like this; let's go back a long time ago, to the 80s, 70s, 60s and even 50s. Those were the years when there was nothing in Türkiye in terms of radio, television, internet, computers, technology. At the same time, there was no education. There are one or two universities, but only one or two. Education was absolutely non-existent. The military has been an institution with its own hierarchy and self-discipline, starting with the decimal system, probably since Metehan. Since the previous generations did not receive any education, they could not learn discipline, they did not learn discipline, they did not learn respect, they did not know tactics, for example, there were those who went to the military and came back as carpenters, I do not know, drivers, etc. We can say that in a place where there was no education at all in the past, military service was somewhat instructive for people and of great importance in transitional periods. However, when we come to the present day, as a newly arrived individual, I can say that I think it will have the slightest positive contribution in any way. (Joker)*

It is important to remember here Altınay's (2013) argument on the goal of civilization in nation-building that compulsory military service allowed the fledgling nation-state, which had started reaching out to children through compulsory schooling, to also reach out to adult males.

As mentioned in the literature review, Karacagil (2017) focuses on the military attitudes of individuals in long-term military service and draws attention to the way that military duty alters the way that masculinity is defined in Turkish society. Men are portrayed as having undergone significant changes in their identities and responsibilities both during and after their time in the military. However, the findings of this thesis suggests that for the target group of this thesis, military service does not constitute a life turning point. Participants does not indicate any significant change with regards to before and after completing the military service. Instead, it is mostly understood as an obligation, something to get rid of. It can be argued here that military service is not taken as a goal, but rather as a means to get out of it quickly and move forward in life. Not completing it is an obstacle to goals. Therefore, completing it does not necessarily mean becoming a man for them, but rather it means that there are no obstacles to goals, that there is nothing restricting them.

5.2.1.Views of Long-term Military Service Participants on Short-term Military Service and Participants

The opinions of participants in long-term military duty with regard to short-term military service explore a number of subtle facets that influence their opinions and attitudes toward people who choose short-term military service alternative. Long-term service members have a widespread belief that people who opt for short-term military service usually have the resources, steady employment, to finance such option and/or have a family to not to leave behind for a long period.

Furthermore, the narratives shared by two participants in long-term service who acknowledged making fun of or mocking people who choose to serve in the short-term military also helped to highlight the social stigma and discrimination associated with short-term military duty. This conduct could result from deeply ingrained conventions or beliefs in the military culture about the perceived masculinity, devotion, or status connected to various service trajectories. Making fun of people for selecting short-term service alternatives might be an indication of wider views in the military community and draw attention to any conflicts or disagreements over preferred services.

Moreover, the perspective articulated by long-term service participants regarding the supposed inferiority associated with choosing to serve in the short-term military, specifically with reference to masculinity, reveals more intricate aspects of the construction and perception of military roles and identities. According to this viewpoint, people who have served in the military historically may maintain that these roles represent higher levels of commitment, toughness, and sacrifice, making them the idealized representation of military masculinity. On the other hand, they might consider people who choose short-term service to be outside of these norms, which could result in conclusions about their level of dedication or suitability for the military.

> *I mean, doing short-term military service is already a thing in Turkish society, I mean, it is always a burden. I mean, you give yourself a deficit somewhere. I mean, you know, in a group of men, there is a conversation about 'you also did a short-term military service, I mean, we get it, you are the most nationalist, but did not you do short-term military service"or something like that. so do not talk about it too much. there is always a deficit. There is a weak point, so that person does not talk much. they do not talk much about military service. they already know it themselves. you know, they cannot stand out too much, if someone has done a long term or something, if they have done real military service, they feel the inferiority of it, those soldiers who do short-term military service, so this is my situation, I think it is like this. (Farazi)*

Overall, long-term military service participants find short-term military service rational decision. The majority of participants in long-term military service exhibit a practical and reasonable attitude toward short-term military service, in spite of these critical viewpoints and possible social dynamics. Their recognition of the financial factors, financial security including continuing employment, and practicality that could influence people choosing short-term service alternative shows a sophisticated comprehension of the various aspects impacting service selections in the military institution. Participants in traditional service frequently understand that those who choose to serve in the short-term military may do so because they have established families, steady employment, or other important responsibilities that they find difficult to leave behind for a prolonged length of time.

They argue that not having personal obligations greatly influences people's decision to go for short-term military service and can rationalize their decision. Thus, if a

person has some kind of obligations or responsibilities relating to marriage, a romantic partner, kids, or steady work, they have relatively lower flexibility in their decision-making because they cannot leave them alone behind. They need to be on the side of their loved ones and have an income because in order to protect them.

Çetin (2018) argues that reactions towards those who chose short-term military service is not necessarily or completely negative. Furthermore, it is argued that there is evidence to suggest that individuals who serve in the military for short-term are not inherently at odds with Turkish culture; rather, they actively seek out opportunities for patriotic duty and take advantage of this privilege to the fullest extent possible. Notably, public perception of this situation has gradually improved. While there can still be skepticism towards short-term service, it is possible to see that long-term military service participants can understand the reasons behind choosing it and can agree and rationalize it.

It is important to note, nevertheless, that not every traditional service user holds this practical viewpoint. Another angle to the conversation is provided by the viewpoint expressed by a participant who supports a greater dedication to long-term military duty experiences rather than paid substitutes. Only one participant argues that his thoughts got stronger after doing military service, arguing that everyone should do long-term military service. This point of view emphasizes a more traditionalist posture within the military community by highlighting the belief in the special worth and significance of long-term military duties in nurturing vital qualities, values, and abilities necessary for effective military service.

Therefore, although some participants might not see short-term military service as having the same level of rigor and intensity as their personal experiences, this distinction does not always indicate that their masculinity is being directly questioned. Instead, it symbolizes an understanding of the variety of military duty and the range of paths people might choose to fulfill their civic responsibilities. Furthermore, the conversations about inferiority complexes associated with short-term military service shed light on broader cultural perspectives regarding the value-adding of adversity and sacrifice. A few participants voice their worries over possible

stigmatization or judgments related to selecting short-term service versus traditional service. These feelings highlight how cultural norms impact people's opinions of themselves and how they internalize expectations about what it means to be a man and serve in the military.

It is possible to conclude here for middle-class men in Türkiye, the role of military duty in shaping their masculinity has diminished, indicating a shift from the traditional norms and ideals linked to military service. A significant point brought up in these interviews is the declining significance of military service as a masculinity-defining characteristic. As an alternative to traditional norms such as bravery and strength, people frequently place a higher value on things like personal fulfillment, professional prospects, and financial security than they do on conventional notions of masculine identity that are exclusively associated with military duty. Financial security, being able to provide first for oneself and for others, seem much more important masculinity norm.

The interviews also show that the importance of personal agency and autonomy in forming one's identity—including a masculine identity—is becoming increasingly acknowledged. The participants convey a desire to define masculinity according to their own criteria, taking into account a variety of experiences, ideals, and goals that go beyond the parameters of conventional military roles. This change can be indicative of a larger cultural movement to redefine masculinity in terms of a more comprehensive and inclusive conception of gender identity. The results point to a break from conventional wisdom, emphasizing individual agency, a variety of male experiences, and a reassessment of the role that military service plays in defining masculine identity.

5.2.2. Views of Short-term Military Service Participants on Long-term Military Service and Participants

Participants' viewpoints on long-term military service indicate complex dynamics shaped by personal experiences and socioeconomic status within the military institution. One noteworthy finding is that traditional service engagement is believed

to be significantly influenced by financial constraints. Short-term military service participants frequently convey sympathy and sadness/pity for long-term military service participants, explaining their military service as a result of financial hardships rather than a conscious decision or preference.

> *Out of necessity or nothing else. Or the man really loves his homeland. He really wants to do that military service and keep that watch. This will give him pleasure and he wants to tell people about it throughout his life. He thinks being a soldier is a great thing, I mean, I am a soldier, I kept my watch. There are definitely people who enjoy this. Or there are also those who do not want to but are forced to. Because they cannot afford it. There is no other option anyway. Either you love military service, or you are obliged to go for a long term. (Karanfil)*

> *Like I said, it is mostly due to financial constraint... I do not know what else… Someone can say something like, 'My friend, I am nationalist, I have this and that belief, so I will do long-term military service, I will not run away like a girl.' I mean, not everyone has to do long term, I do not know, I do not understand this mindset, I mean, why would a person, even if they have the financial means, choose to do long-term service, that's what I do not understand, not that I understood it before, and I probably will not understand it in the future. I mean, you are there for 12 months, okay, there are leaves, sure, but for 12 months, you have to confine yourself to a place. Not just military service, I mean, even confining yourself to home for 12 months affects your social life, many things get affected. So, I think it is highly likely due to financial impossibility. (Aki)*

The findings emphasize how financial factors can have a substantial impact on an individual's military career path, underscoring the interconnectedness of socioeconomic position and military service preferences.

Also, participants in short-term military service also admit the potential impact of nationalist sentiment on the decision of serving in the long-term military. They argue that deeply rooted patriotic sentiments may cause even financially able individuals to prioritize long-term duty. Interestingly, answers of long-term military service participants' answers reveal a different image here, where there is not much emphasis around patriotism and nationalism during interviews in general. When asked about why people choose to do long-term military service, only one participant mentions that he has the patriotic feelings.

Moreover, the study explores how participants' conceptions of long-term military duty are transformed by direct experiences in the military setting. After learning about the realities of military life, a participant's initial respect for long-term military duties like watchkeeping as significant and sacred changes. This shift points to a complex process of disillusionment and reevaluation in which the practical realities of military service cast doubt on idealized notions of long-term military responsibilities. This change in perspective is the result of a closer examination of the complexity that come with serving in the military and the ways that people's views about long-term military have changed over time.

Furthermore, the short-term participants' varying reactions to traditional service preferences—from apathy to surprise and skepticism—reflect a spectrum of viewpoints within the military community. While some participants indicate that they do not understand or are not interested in traditional service options, others critically examine and inquire in an effort to grasp the reasons behind these preferences and how they affect the creation of identities. One participant expressed his inability to comprehend why someone would choose the traditional method. Additionally, two participants said they had not given it any thought.

It is essential here to remember the argument of Gençoğlu Onbaşı (2016) on legitimacy of short-term military service and illegitimacy of conscientious objection. She draws attention to the strong women’s rights movement, LGBTI+ rights movement and growing anti-militarist, anti-war, anti-discrimination and anti-capitalist movement and urge us to think about possibility of thinking about a newly emerging hegemony. Gençoğlu Onbaşı (2016) argues that, seeing the number of people who are reluctant to do military service and the societal impact this may have, *bedelli* system can actually be considered as an intervention for the continuity of the system without disrupting hegemony. While Conscientious objection is a huge taboo and opposed largely throughout the society, *bedelli* provides a method for escaping military service without leaving the manhood. Despite the complexities and challenges associated with short-term military service, individuals often navigate the system without fundamentally contesting their sense of 'masculinity' (Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2016). On similar lines, Yirmidokuz and Kahraman (2019) also argues that

short-term military service system should be seen as a buffer mechanism. Buffer mechanisms are used to reduce the reactionary reactions of the society. When evaluated from this point of view, the short-term military service, which is tried to replace the military service, which has a culturally distinct position in the society, mitigates the reactions that may occur, and the reactions are neutralized by the people who do short-term military service, and rational values are attributed to the short-term military service. By seeking validation and identity fulfillment through military roles and responsibilities, they can conform to societal expectations of masculinity in military contexts.

5.3. Factors Influencing Decisions on the Duration of Military Service

This thesis suggests a four-dimensional typology in understanding the factors influencing decisions on the duration of military service. For short-term military service group, the thesis has found that it is a pragmatic choice, combining the main aspects of time and efficiency calculation and lesser exposure to discipline. Long-term military service, on the other hand, is more diverse, composing of three main reasons. It can provide a space for adventure, it can provide a stabilizing experience, an anchor in uncertainty, in the face of precarious conditions and finally it can be fair and ethical decision. The study also finds that there is a transformation in the idea of being useful to the nation and that being in the army for a long time does not necessarily mean that people are more patriotic.

5.3.1. Short-term Military Service as a Pragmatic Choice

5.3.1.1. Time and Efficiency Calculation

Gençoğlu Onbaşı (2016) argues that the legitimacy of the short-term military service is based on the framework of economic rationality, with an emphasis on self-interest, cost-benefit calculation and profit maximization. The findings of this research support her argument as the short-term military service emphasize these dimensions. It is observed throughout the interviews that people compared their income and expenditure situations in the case of going for 1-month or going for 6- or 12-months. Participants compared the loss of time and salary they would experience in the case

of going for 6- and 12- months with the price of short-term military service and stated that they found the price of short-term military service much more logical.

For many, military service is an obstacle in the career path because recruiters very commonly look for men who fulfilled the military service. Therefore, completing this in the shortest way possible seem beneficial for men. Especially thinking about the current financial situation and unemployment rates in Türkiye, it is rational to get it out of the way. Individuals frequently give top priority to solutions that let them finish their military obligation in a timely manner. As mentioned by Çetin (2018), many people, even those who claim to be nationalist, find the duration of the military service unnecessarily long. This urge to "get rid of it quickly" is motivated by pragmatic concerns about causing the least amount of inconvenience to personal and professional lives. For instance, choosing to take a brief unpaid leave of absence, like one month, allows people to complete their military service requirements without losing their employment or income. This strategy guarantees a stable job upon return from the military and is more financially advantageous than long-term military service. They evaluate solutions according to their profitability, taking into account things like continuing employment security, pay stability, and financial advantages. Choosing unpaid leave or shorter military duty is beneficial since people make more money from these choices than they spend on military duty and can continue to hold a steady job. Decisions that are in line with one's own financial objectives and career stability are influenced by the financial profitability and dependability of the option. This finding supports Yirmidokuz and Kahraman's (2021) argument that basic dynamic of the short-term military service process is a capitalist mindset in which individuals are afraid of keeping their jobs or losing their jobs after military service. Their interviewees also emphasized the pragmatic dimension of choosing short-term military service by making a cost-benefit calculation.

People are driven to short-term military service arrangements because of the financial rewards (not to lose greater pay while staying at work due to shorter service terms). But making this choice also necessitates a careful cost-benefit analysis that weighs these cash advantages against the possibility of losing revenue due to a

protracted leave of absence from work. People have to balance the immediate monetary benefits of military obligation against the stability and income continuity offered by their current employment. For those who have financial responsibilities or who hope to progress their careers and achieve financial security, this examination is especially important. Individuals evaluate their capability to continue working and meeting their work obligations while performing their military service requirements. This evaluation includes figuring out how much time must be set aside for military obligations and how it affects professional productivity. People also need to think about how long-term absences from military duty may affect their job schedules and career development plans. Using efficient time management techniques becomes crucial while juggling the demands of both professional and military obligations. This finding is in line with Yirmidokuz and Kahraman's (2021) analysis, which asserts that the rise of the capitalist model of masculinity—which places a man's profession at the center of his life and evaluates everything else based on it—is among the main causes of the preference for performing short-term military duty. According to their research, the primary factor driving the preference for short-term military duty is the capitalist mentality, specifically the fear that people will not quit their jobs or will not be able to find new ones upon returning. Men may therefore rationally assess the pros and cons of serving in the military, and after weighing the costs and benefits, they conclude that short-term military duty is more sensible. As discussed before, the risk of losing their jobs after being away for 6 or 12-months of military service is among the main deciding factors for the short-term participants.

Job security and its implications for career growth are factors that are taken into account when making decisions about short-term military service. People need to weigh the possible consequences of taking long leaves of absence from work because of military service. This risk assessment entails assessing the effects on skill development, involvement, and continuity in work tasks. In addition, people consider the possible repercussions of lagging behind peers in terms of professional experience and advancement prospects. Thus, the choice to serve in the short-term military becomes a strategic one that weighs the trade-offs between immediate military obligations and long-term professional goals.

While some characteristics associated with traditional masculinity can be being strong and brave, one key characteristic is the financial prosperity and stability. The idea that achieving financial prosperity is a sign of manhood represents a trend away from valuing characteristics such as self-reliance, responsibility, and resource management skills. As a unique type of military service, *bedelli* service represents a special nexus between conventional military norms and modern cultural values. As pointed by Gençoğlu Onbaşı (2016), in short-term service provides a situation where men demonstrate their masculinity with another manly behavior, which is paying. By demonstrating his capacity as a man to acquire, manage, and spend his money in line with the ideas of productivity, profit maximization, and reason, he would "prove" that he is powerful. Hence, here, power is not necessarily about physical strength. Also, the point about financial strength in the answers of short-term military service participants regarding the ideal masculinity concept align with this.

> *And I am very much against this: "you did 24 days of military service; I did 1 year." My friend, I did it for 24 days, but I gave the price for it, I am paying money for it. (Karanfil)*

Hence, it can be argued that in addition to conventional ideas of masculinity, alternative conceptions of manhood that prioritize qualities such as self-sufficiency, professional achievement, and individual autonomy are being increasingly acknowledged, although being able to afford short-term is also a form of affirming masculinity. It is critical to recognize that financial power as a symbol of masculinity does not exist in isolation from other aspects of manhood. Men who choose economic prosperity and financial stability in the context of short-term military service are not necessarily rejecting traditional standards of masculinity completely. Rather, they are broadening the definition of masculinity to encompass aspects like financial autonomy and self-governance. It is nevertheless possible to interpret their choice as a way for them to express their independence and assertiveness, which may signal larger societal shifts with regards to masculinity ideals that emphasize personal fulfilment and choice. This can also be partly attributed to the capitalist ideals where individualization and being self-centered are highly promoted. Capitalist frameworks that place a premium on individual performance, profit maximization, and competitiveness exacerbate this trend toward individualism and

self-centeredness. Additionally, capitalism creates a market where anything can be purchased or sought for, even military service, which is rife with social values. In this context, men who select *bedelli* service, for example, can see it as an indication of their capacity to take charge of their financial destiny and make sensible decisions in line with their own objectives and moral principles. Men who weigh financial security above all else when deciding whether or not to enlist in the long-term military service are negotiating tricky areas where old and new ideas of what it means to be a man collide.

As mentioned before, in the previous section, nationalism and having nationalist feelings do not necessarily transform into long-term military service. Choosing to make short-term military service contributions shows a deliberate investment in chances for skill development, job promotion, and personal and professional development. People understand that their non-military contributions can result in improved knowledge, larger networks, and more prominence in their respective domains. This strategic approach puts people in a position to make significant and long-lasting contributions that serve the interests of their nation, business, or other pertinent entities, in addition to their own. The time spent in the military may appear to be ineffective because it detracts from a man's life, alters economic circumstances, and harms the nation's economy rather than allowing one to engage in more productive, profitable, efficient, and beneficial work that aligns with one's true potential (Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2016).

5.3.1.2. Being Exposed to Discipline for Shorter Time

There is a complementary relationship between military and discipline. In the military, discipline refers to a variety of rules about behavior, organizational structures, and following operational procedures. It functions as a system for establishing compliance, discipline, and operational effectiveness and is embedded in every aspect of military life. Some individuals prefer shorter military service durations, which can be attributed in part to the strict character of military discipline. The strict protocols, hierarchical command structures, and irrational commands that needs to be performed can severely limit a person's autonomy and freedom. The

military's discipline system is intended to shape people into unified teams that can carry out difficult missions under pressure. Discipline is more than just following the regulations; it also includes self-control, moral behavior, and conformity. Some people may find the inflexibility and constraints of military discipline to be oppressive or constrictive, particularly those who are used to more freedom or other moral standards. I find this passage quite striking in explaining the authority men interact in the military service and the state's power over them:

> *I mean, it is a place where men are subjected to a very harsh masculinity and authority. On the one hand, there is really an environment where everyone is silent. I do not know, maybe outside, he can yell at his wife, beat his wife, get angry at his daughter, he can be that young man on the street who speaks loudly like that, but there they pinch his tail like that. And the biggest man is the state, the state actually shows this to all men [through military institution]. (Momo)*

One common feature of a military organization is its bureaucratic structure, which has been explained by academics such as Max Weber and Talcott Parsons. Particularly evident in contemporary armies, where people are frequently recognized more by the serial numbers they carry than by their names, is this bureaucratic aspect. These organizations are characterized by an impersonal approach, with an emphasis on efficiency and strict adherence to rules and procedures (Elkin, 1946). The analogy of soldiers becoming "government issue," similar to mass-produced products like as uniforms and food, emphasizes the institutionalized aspect of military service. This comparison emphasizes how military groups are disciplined, with members expected to follow set procedures and rules (Elkin, 1946).

Short-term military service participants often talk about dehumanization, not being treated as human, as a criticism towards the military institution.

> *If the conditions were better, I might treat military service as a more respectful individual, I might see it as a more respectable profession. But I say, it is a place where we are treated like animals, like robots, we are not human beings in the military. I mean, would anyone want to serve in a place where they are treated like this? There will be those who will say 'What are you saying, traitor,' but as I said, these are my thoughts within the scope of freedom of speech. (Karanfil)*

Richard Sennett (1998), in his book *The Corrosion of Character*, extensively explores how capitalism operates at the micro-level and transforms individuals' characters. Sennett emphasizes the pressure of flexible capitalism on individuals and how interpersonal communication erodes during this process. When we consider military service instead of capitalism, the situation is not different. Because in the sociological literature, it is widely accepted that industrial capitalism also alienates individuals from their work and society, leading to character erosion. A similar situation arises for individuals serving in the military due to the inhumane treatment they encounter, leading to alienation from themselves and society. Character erosion can be applicable for military service because their humane emotions can gradually deteriorate, leading them to disregard the fact that the individuals they encounter are "human.":

> *I mean, be a dog, he says, just say whatever he says. Is such a thing possible? I mean, I had a superior who told me to lick the shit on the floor, and I was supposed to obey him? Then he says it was a joke, he laughs, I mean… This is against human dignity, basically… I wonder who will apologize, who will listen to the apology for the damage they have left in us? Will the apology be enough? But it is as if no one should complain about this, they put us in such a position. Look, there is one abusive idiom, I have heard it from so many people that I get angry, I get angry when I tell it. I hear only one thing from people: "Oh, never mind, there is no case for a fucked ass."I mean, why do I have to digest this? Why do I have to explode this inside me? No, I mean, it is so ingrained in people that it is so ingrained in people that they say this will happen to you anyway, they say this is normal, they normalize it. (Legolas)*

> *So, there's the thing of standardization, ignoring human freedom, the chain of command. You know, authority, general autocracy, rank, dying, killing, bloodshed, thinking that you are doing something for the borders, having the audacity to kill another race as a member of a race, making it compulsory for all citizens to do this in order to protect their own militant structure, the complete violation of human rights... Ignoring gays, women, all that stuff, in general, as an institution, I think it is a pretty rotten disgusting organization. (Momo)*

When we continue to consider Sennett's (1998) concept of capitalism in relation to military service, we can observe an interaction where soldiers exhibit a mentality akin to becoming the property the army and the state. Indeed, the comments of a participant precisely support this meta-concept:

> *You are not a human being there. You become something like a commodity. The joke about army property, but it is not a joke. You really become the property of the army. (Orman Kanunu)*

Elkin (1946) explains the highly disciplined nature of military as requirement to follow all orders from higher ranked officers, even when conscripts have no personal affection or respect for them. Given the rigid line of command and hierarchical structure of the military, this obedience was expected to be immediate and unquestioned. The interviews indicate that whether long- or short-term, military service experiences can have considerable commonalities. The opinion conveyed about military duty as a domain devoid of reason, inquiry, and personal humanity is representative of a widespread belief held by most of the research participants. This viewpoint emphasizes how military systems are hierarchical and authoritarian, prioritizing obedience to instructions and commands over independent thought or autonomy. The illogical character of military logic is strikingly emphasized by the participants. In the military, people are frequently required to obey instructions and directions without question, regardless of their own personal opinions or whether they seem reasonable at the time. The opinion conveyed about military duty as a domain devoid of reason, inquiry, and personal humanity is representative of a widespread belief held by most of the research participants. This viewpoint emphasizes how military systems are hierarchical and authoritarian, prioritizing obedience to instructions and commands over independent thought or autonomy.

In the discussions around military service, there is a common perception that you will leave the reason and logic behind at the military order.

> *Military is the only place where there is no logic. It also teaches not to question. It teaches the chain of command very well. When a task is given, it teaches how to accomplish it somehow. It develops practical intelligence. You make me repeat myself; my time is limited… (Aslan)*

Karacagil (2017) focuses on this discourse about not questioning and opposing. In the sub-readings of the discourse, it is seen that in order to recreate masculinity, it is necessary to leave everything from the past behind and that you will enter here as raw, as a dough to be processed. Moreover, the biggest analysis to be drawn from these discourses is submission to obedience. The main entrance, *Nizamiye kapısı*, is a

place that symbolizes the power of the government, and for men this door is a symbolic metaphor that enables them to perceive it as submission and submission. Men who define themselves as free and independent one step before the door take on the opposite image once they pass through the door. Because now the first step has been taken to become a man. From now on, there is "no private life", "no me", it is always "us". Becoming a soldier means gaining a new identity and being molded to fit this identity. Most of the men had their hair cut according to the uniform "soldier's hairstyle" before they were conscripted into military service (Karacagil, 2017). On similar lines, participants mention lack of private life, restriction of freedoms and standardization as main difficulties of military service, which play an important role for disciplined nature of the military institution.

In the military, people are frequently required to obey instructions and directions without question, regardless of their own personal opinions or whether they seem reasonable at the time. The idea that being in the military reduces or obscures one's humanity highlights the rigid discipline and conformity that are required of those in the ranks. Soldiers are seen as subjects who must obey their superiors' orders without question or protest, rather than as autonomous individuals with agency and critical thinking skills. This view emphasizes how obedience, discipline, and hierarchy are highly valued in military systems, which shapes the general dynamics and culture of military service. In addition, the recognition that soldiers must carry out orders regardless of how ridiculous or nonsensical they may sound, captures the particular difficulties and requirements associated with military operations. Strict regulations and procedures govern how the military operates. People could be required to complete missions or duties in these kinds of settings that, to an observer, seem illogical or counterintuitive. This highlights the inherent conflicts that exist within the military structure between personal judgment and institutional standards. Such a disciplined environment where people are depersonalized and turn into mere serial numbers affect them negatively. In such context, they look for ways to shorten the exposure time as much as possible to reduce the possible harms.

Most of the short-term military service participants opposes the idea that military teaches discipline. They argue this on the grounds that they have already know what

military could teach them. Participants argue that if a person did not learn discipline until then, it is not possible to learn in during the military service. This is even supported by some of the long-term military service participants, such as:

> *People talk about how someone who has not been disciplined until a certain age will become disciplined when they go there. But someone who has not been disciplined until that age never becomes disciplined in the military. so, I honestly have not come across anyone who went there and said, I' changed and became a man". (Özgür)*

Selek (2014) considers the military as an institution that enables a man to mature as a man, where he learns obedience to hegemonic masculinity and how to dominate those weaker than him. She explains that in order to be dominant over the weak, it is necessary to know how to obey in the face of power, to step back, to surrender, to postpone or even forget one's personality, beliefs and thoughts, to act according to the circumstances, in other words, to be smart. Thus, this discipline and obedience during the military service can be seen as a way to learning to dominate. The distinction made by the participants about ideal masculinity in terms of how and in which situation power is to be used comes to mind again at this point.

In short, points such as discipline, meaningless tasks, depersonalization, dehumanization can be quite challenging and corrosive for individuals. We know that narratives of military service circulate a lot among men. During the interviews, participants were asked about the people they talked to before military service, the things they had heard and the advice they had received. Many people, especially those who did short-term military service, mentioned these points. From a social point of view, especially for men who have completed their education and joined the workforce, have some experience, taking orders and being scolded are difficult situations to accept. The anxiety caused by these and the desire to be exposed to this system as little as possible are effective in the decision to do a shorter term. So much so that at this point, the theme of seeing the days spent there as a simulation and closing that book completely after returning is also prominent.

Considering military service in light of Baudrillard's concepts of simulation and simulacra, it can be said that it is a simulation for men. Successfully completing the

process will fulfill one of the requirements of being a man. Military service, which is limited to periods such as 12-months, 6-months, or 1-month, brings along certain rules and a routine life. However, this life is highly disciplined, uniform, and 'classless' where everyone has the same uniforms, same beds, same access to the facilities. Therefore, military service constructs its own rules and necessitates adherence to them. This makes it an unreal process, extremely detached from individuals' actual lives, a surreal experience. The participant's thoughts in the following example also support this argument:

> *I had a hard time at first, yes, but I do not remember why, it felt strange at first, for example, when I was walking in Panora, I looked at myself in the mall and said, I am walking like this, you know, I am walking like a robot, a few people warned me. There was a photo shoot, and everyone posed in such sincere poses, my pose is like this, and a pose of mine when we went to the world power plants is the same way (no facial expression). When I returned, my conversations with my managers were a little different, I mean, I am normally a person who speaks clearly and sometimes formally with people, so people were a little worried about that, a friend said, "You talk to the manager like a commander." For example, he says, "Can you do something, chief?" I say, "Okay, understood." I mean, I speak more precisely and clearly. There were times when I acted as if the other person was a commander rather than a manager, or I perceived it as if that role was continuing because he was already treating me harshly. it was difficult to get out of that role because the subordinate-superior relationship is very tight, so I think it was difficult to get out of there and switch to the role of we are colleagues, or I am your manager (Mirket)*

The feelings of reality and unreality are experienced independently in individuals. Men often express that their military experiences are remembered as if they were "unlived" because they are far removed from their actual lives:

> *I mean, you live there for a month, you really feel like something has changed there, but 2 weeks after you return, you forget, it is as if the military service never happened, but when you remember it, you remember it. (Muzi)*

So much so that they cannot believe how they acquired certain habits over 30 days, or they consider bringing some of these habits into their daily lives, but the two experiences are entirely different. Therefore, the rules of another simulation may not be applicable in constructing real life:

I lived a life there, I shut it down, I left it, I went back to my old life, so there is nothing in common. I wore the same pants for 30 days, how can I keep it going, I mean, I wore the pants that had spilled beans on the second day for 30 days. (Legolas)

The experiences can also be associated with Goffman's (1990) dramaturgical theory. Participants fulfilling their duties during military service were essentially performing their assigned roles. In Goffman's theory, we encounter costumes worn on stage, lines delivered, and character-specific roles. Military service can also be seen as a process that can be approached through dramaturgical theory, in other words, it can be expressed as a stage. The costume worn is the uniform; the phrases and speech patterns used are the sentences determined by the military. The roles of the characters will be shaped according to the soldier's rank. The backstage is the individuals' real life. When the roles to be fulfilled during military service are completed, individuals move backstage. They move away from the role they portrayed on stage and continue to live according to their own characters.

5.3.2. Long-term Military Service as an Adventure

While it is possible to group the answers of short-term military service under time-efficiency calculations, decision-making factors of long-term military service seem much more diversified. Another theme that is observed in the interviews is that men often see military service as a short-term adventure experience in their lives or as entering and exiting a new simulation for a while. The feeling of being detached from comfortable surroundings might enhance one's sense of independence and discovery. Serving in the military may be seen by participants as an opportunity to travel to different places, interact with a variety of people, and broaden their perspectives outside of their typical social networks and surroundings. The allure of joining the military as a way to escape the routine and embrace new experiences is enhanced by this spirit of exploration and adventure.

Nagel (1998) mentions that one of the main reasons that men go to wars is the allure of adventure and enlisting in the war may make them feel like they are starting a major adventure. While the case being the decision regarding the time period here,

adventure seem like a significant attractive factor. Given that the security risks are much lower compared to a war situation, acting adventurous can even be easier for those men.

> *It is a very strange environment. You stop being human. I felt like a zoo. You act on your instincts there. For example, when you are told to squat, you can find yourself scolding your friend for not squatting properly. How ridiculous is that? But in there, it is not ridiculous. You know, I am trying to explain that in general, I am saying that they should imagine that this place is not real life, that it is a temporary, virtual universe and that they should focus on real life and not worry about things. (Orman Kanunu)*

Similarly, another participant defines it as challenge:

> *So, I actually applied for 12 months, you know, when you go to the military office there, they ask if you want to be a reserve officer. Those who already go for 12 months are divided into two groups, the first group, those who do not have a university degree, already have to go for 12 months, the second group is those who have graduated from university and apply for reserve officer. If the lot comes out, you do 12 months as a reserve officer, that is, as a sub-lieutenant, you are promoted to the rank of lieutenant a year before demobilization and you wear a star on the uniform. Then there is also something there, you know, at the military office, they also ask you if you want to be a commando, now there is such an option, I said yes to that too, even the man working at the office there looked up and was a little surprised, but it did not come out in the lottery. Why am I saying this because I like this kind of challenging thing anyway, you know, it is a challenge for me, you know, an environment like military service or, you know, using weapons, I do not know, using weapons, doing sports activities in uniform, different things. (Haunter)*

The challenge, especially the challenge of handling weapons in military service, matches traditional norms of masculinity to a significant extent. Things like overcoming difficulties and fighting may be constructed as evidence of masculinity for the individual.

This is also reflected in some people's answers who saw it as an 'escape' from real life and real-life problems. Individuals who want to escape the chaos of everyday life express that they give up their own routines and experience a new adventure for 30 days away from their lives:

I do not know, maybe I may have seen it as an escape, I do not know, they actually told me that you would have a lot of difficulty, I mean, your age has reached thirty or something. I went, I never had any difficulty, that's a separate issue, I can say that I can escape a little bit, get away, maybe the place may be wrong, but it was the chance I came across at that time, I may have thought so, I even thought a little bit at that time. (Özgür)

My desire to do a long term is a feeling of being a little overwhelmed, that is, to get away, to go away... I started my new job during the pandemic, and I experienced very negative things. When a man's psychology breaks down, he goes to the military anyway. I wanted to escape a lot. I said I would do it for a long time, so I thought I would have a head rest or something... (Farazi)

As previously mentioned, the desire to distance oneself from everyday life is another factor promoting long-term military service participation. Some participants see military duty as a way to escape boring routines and as a chance for journey, personal development, and the atmosphere change. The need for novel experiences, difficulties, and adventures is included in this distancing component, which adds to the idea of the recreational benefits of military duty. Participants view military duty as a unique and different field of activity that provides a break from their regular environment and obligations. They are able to break away from the monotonous activities, recurring patterns, and comfortable settings that characterize civilian life. The prospect of novel encounters, difficulties, and adventures is what makes military service seem appealing. Some participants see military life as an opportunity to engage in activities that are distinct from their regular routines and as a departure from the ordinary. Physical training, military exercises, team building activities, and exposure to various places and cultures are all part of this. Regarding this point, one long-term military service participant states the following, as given above:

You know, at the military office, they also ask you if you want to be a commando, now there is such an option, I said yes to that too, even the man working at the office there looked up and was a little surprised, but it did not come out in the lottery. Why am I saying this because I like this kind of challenging thing anyway, you know, it is a challenge for me, you know, an environment like military service or, you know, using weapons, I do not know, using weapons, doing sports activities in uniform, different things. (Haunter)

There exists a close relationship between adventure and traditional norms of masculinity. The concept of adventure is important in both boyhood and military

culture (Woodward, 1998). Serving in the military frequently gives soldiers a sense of adventure, particularly during deployments, training exercises, and combat scenarios. The thrill of adventure in the military is heightened by the surge of adrenaline, the unpredictable nature of missions, and the bonds of camaraderie formed in trying situations.

Roth (2021) focuses on the decision-making factors for men in the United Kingdom to join the British Armed Forces in the form of voluntary risk-taking or edgework. Roth explores the dynamic environments of modern societies—often referred to as risk societies—where a number of global trends are pervasive, including the COVID-19 pandemic, climate change, refugee problems, and structural racism. Furthermore, the world of work is changing and gig economy, a form of free market employment where businesses frequently use independent contractors for brief tasks and short-term positions, is popular. Although Roth's analysis is focused on professional military forces, it can still give insights in understanding the dynamics. Roth explores the significance of adventure in the context of meaningful work performed while serving in the military, highlighting that the promise of adventure is a major factor in drawing people, especially young men, to the military in today's risk- and unstable-filled society. In this context, adventure is defined as a break from ordinary or usual activities that provides people with excitement, challenge, and a feeling of purpose. In the face of risk societies' uncertainties and difficulties, Roth contends that military service offers a disciplined setting where people can derive meaning and purpose from daring experiences. These experiences could involve participating in training exercises, being deployed to other areas, dealing with novel and unforeseen circumstances, and supporting a greater purpose or cause. Roth also emphasizes how the idea of adventure encompasses friendship, skill development, and personal development in addition to the pursuit of thrills and excitement. People can push themselves to the limit, learn new abilities, and develop close relationships with other service members in the military. These elements support the idea that serving in the military is a meaningful job where one may grow both personally and professionally and that adventure is a catalyst for growth. Thus, it is possible to conclude here that in men's decision-making processes on both

professional army and type of military service (short or long) adventure can play an important role.

5.3.3. Long-term Military Service as a Stabilizing Experience

The money-making component is one of the main factors to be taken into account, where people evaluate the monetary advantages of serving in the military for a year. For those considering long-term military service, money generating over a 12-month period—is a crucial consideration when making a decision. The apparent predictability and security of income offered by the base pay system within the military framework frequently influences the decision to pursue long-term military service. The primary focus of the participants' decision-making process is money generation, with recognition given to the stability and security provided by military service salaries for a full year. This also includes the permanent job prospects provided by military service, which entails the ability to stay in the military and pursue their career goals, including tenure and career advancement. Participants appreciate the military's structured career path, which frequently offers chances for rank growth, promotions, and long-term job security. One of the main draws for those thinking about long-term military service is the possibility of having a position in the military hierarchy, together with the perks of seniority and tenure. This was explained by one participant as:

> *Some come for a long term because they want to stay away from their family or something. Some come for a long term because they want to stay in this job so that they can start with a rank afterwards, and I have seen those who come and try to stay, even though most of them return. (Gri)*

Participants' decision-making process and commitment to military service are influenced by the stability and predictability of their career advancement, which gives them a sense of security and assurance about their future inside the military institution.

> *Now there is doing 6 months of military service and doing it as a private, and there is doing long-term military service and doing it as a commander. You*

get a salary on it, you are like a normal civil servant, you have a house, of course the situation varies from region to region, but in general, you can go home after the end of working hours, after five. You get your salary; you are like a normal employee somewhere. Of course, your responsibilities are heavier, of course, but other than that, because it is more comfortable. Because you can go out after 5 pm, you can actually do whatever you want. (Farazi)

While for some people, adventure can be an attractive factor for the excitement and social interactions it provides, there is also another group that finds the stability the military service provides much more attractive. In the current socio-economic situation, it is a very precarious period for the middle class. We can say that economic concerns, precariousness, fears of dismissal are quite intense. At this period of uncertainty in our country, military service provides predictability and consequently security. Maybe not in the actual masculinity phase, but we can say that belonging in military activities and daily tasks enable feelings of predictability and stability. Therefore, it moves life from an unpredictable point to a more stabilized place. Those who do long-term military service and then make this decision with the aim of continuing as a profession constitute an important example for this group.

Pandemics have the potential to have a major impact on healthcare systems as well as have social, economic, and psychological repercussions on society. Despite not being the world's first outbreak, COVID-19 has created the most "global" pandemic environment because of technological and physical factors. (Eskici, 2023). Especially, the psychological challenges brought about by the pandemic have led to some negative feelings among men in terms of their workforce and self-construction. Consequently, men who wanted to escape their routine lives were inclined towards undertaking long-term military service. The effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have become an important factor in the decision-making process for those who are thinking about participating in the long-term military service. Here, we can see a struggle to transition from reality to the unreal realm.

I mean, in fact, I had the financial means to do short-term military service, I had the money. But you know, it was a little bit of a thing, my desire to do a long term was a feeling of being a little overwhelmed, I mean, to get away, to go away... I started my military service during the pandemic, and I

experienced very negative things. when a man's psychology breaks down, he goes to the military anyway. I wanted to escape a lot because I wanted to do it for a long time, so I thought I would rest my head. Everyone said, is it possible to relax in the military, blah blah blah blah. It was really the most comfortable time of my life, I was in Siirt for a year. I was very comfortable; I was very good. I mean, I really adapted to those conditions very easily, I do not regret it, I would do it again now that I went for a long term, to be honest. (Farazi)

Unprecedented disruptions to employment stability, financial security, and general economic conditions were brought about by the global epidemic. Some people have resorted to military duty as a way to combat these difficulties by avoiding income loss and lessening the financial impact of disruptions caused by COVID-19. Preventing income loss is a major factor pushing people toward long-term military duty amid the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the pandemic's extensive job losses, company closures, and economic uncertainty, a large number of people were at risk of financial instability. People can guarantee financial security and a reliable source of income by serving in the military in times of economic turmoil. A dependable salary and benefits package are provided by military employment, providing a level of financial stability that may be absent in other sectors impacted by Covid-19 upheavals. For those whose regular business or employment activities have been disrupted or stopped as a result of the pandemic, military service presents a feasible alternative. In the midst of the uncertainty brought on by COVID-19, the structure and organization of military duty can provide stability and routine.

5.3.4. Long-term Military Service as a Fair and Ethical Decision

There can also be ethical reasons for choosing for long-term military service. This constitutes not financially funding military and finding short-term military service unjust due to financial aspect. One participant mentioned that he chose not to provide financial support for the military by serving in short-term military duty because he did not want to be associated with the purchase of weapons or the continuation of hostilities:

My thing about going without giving money... I honestly could not handle it, you know, giving cash to an armed unit, I mean, the fact that I was making a

money transfer also seemed very scary to me, I mean. I thought like, instead of buying bullets with this money, let me go there, you know, okay, let them do it to me, let me go through that ordeal, but I should not finance them. I call myself an antimilitarist or something like that, you know, to go for it by coercion, yes, but you know, I mean, it felt like I could not give that money. But after I went, I realized that it could be given. but I did something with such a thought, I mean, I entered the long-term process with a feeling that if I really finance it like that, I would feel very bad conscientiously. (Momo)

People may take this position due to moral concerns and a desire for less violent responses to problems. This viewpoint believes that labor done by people is less valuable than financial contributions and is therefore more beneficial overall. The choice to forgo financial support of the armed forces emphasizes a more general condemnation of militarism and the military-industrial complex. This strategy demonstrates a dedication to diplomacy, nonviolence, and peacefully resolving conflicts. People may think that focusing their energies on non-military projects will produce more equitable and long-lasting results for society, encouraging communication, understanding, and collaboration. This view is highly interesting because it addresses the intricate relationships between labor, capital, and moral issues in the context of military service. there exists a severe ethical problem with respect to militarism. This is reflected in the idea that it is more moral to provide human labor than to pay finance the military. Those who serve in the long-term military donate their labor, abilities, and commitment to the cause of national security without directly funding military operations, and for one participant this way appeared more ethical.

Gençoğlu Onbaşı (2016) argues that those who argue against short-term military service generally emphasize the deepening of socio-economic inequalities: those who have money have the opportunity to do military conscription, those who do not have money are forced to go for a long time. A point supporting this is reflected in the viewpoints of those who believe that the short-term military service system is unfair or who behave in accordance with their conscience. For instance, one participant expresses that:

It seemed a bit unfair to me, you know, it seemed unfair to me, frankly, people going and becoming martyrs like that, people who are the same as me in the

same country... me not doing anything like that... maybe I said I would be sad for the rest of my life, I thought I might have such a void inside me. I really do not have anything to do with nationalism, I mean, I do not feel any attachment, but I do not know, I thought that I might feel a little bit bad if I did the short-term military service. Maybe I thought wrong, maybe I exaggerated too much, but I had such a feeling inside me, so I said I should do it, I mean, what could happen, I said, let me do it and regret it instead of not doing it and regretting it like that. (Orman Kanunu)

This viewpoint includes the idea that the system of short-term military service is unfair. This impression may result from a number of things, such as worries about socioeconomic inequality, the commercialization of military service, or a belief that financial means should not be a factor affecting military participation. This frequently overlaps with worries about the dangers of long-term military service, especially in areas of turmoil. Those who adhere to this viewpoint could believe that serving in the long-term military entails a higher risk of deployment to combat zones and possible exposure to danger, including the possibility of martyrdom.

To sum up, the decision-making elements for long-term military service entail a thorough assessment of the risks, real-world advantages, individual obligations, and ethical issues, depending on the values of individuals. When considering long-term military duty, people evaluate the dangers involved, the ethical dilemmas surrounding armed warfare, and the possibility of deployment to conflict zones. In addition, they evaluate pragmatic factors like monetary benefit, employment security, and prospects for a long-term career in the military hierarchy. Furthermore, as long-term military service may contain conscientious objections and moral considerations related to participation in armed combat, personal convictions and ethical thoughts play a vital role in molding individuals' decisions.

With respect to patriotism and nationalist feelings, the research shows that they are not among the main factors in the decision-making process. The research finds that the participants do not express a relationship between devotion to the nation and long-term short-term military service. Instead, the data provides a more complex image, where some short-term military service participants express feelings of nationalism and some long-term military service participants express, they do not

have any nationalist sentiments. Although, there are some people that view long-term service as an indirect way to support national defense, security, and sovereignty as well as a material manifestation of patriotism, generally it is argued that long-term military service is not the only way to be beneficial to the nation. Instead, participants point out the different ways individual can benefit the homeland and society in line with their training and abilities and not waste time on military service. It is important here to remember the respondents' answer to the question "would you do it if military service were not compulsory", which reflects the importance they attach. A significant majority here say they would not do it. Only 4 people from long-term service said they would go on the grounds of earning money, earning income. None of the participant mentioned they would go on the grounds of nationalist sentiments.

A comparison between shorter- and long-term military duty reveals significant disparities in motivations, ideals, and outcomes. Short-term military service has the benefits of instant financial gains, time savings, and job security. It does, however, bring up moral questions regarding the monetization of military service and the equity of access to military possibilities. On the other hand, long-term military service involves higher dangers, ethical dilemmas, and sacrifices, such as possible deployment to dangerous areas and exposure to harm, but it also offers a sense of duty, honor, and dedication to national security. The decision with regards to shorter- or long-term military service is indeed a very difficult one for men, encompassing variety of factors. In the short-term, *bedelli*, literature, the discussion often centers around the cost-benefit calculation. It is often associated with economic rationality and self-interest; the decision is made based on how profitable and practical or how unfeasible and unprofitable it is (Gençoğlu Onbaşı, 2016; Yirmidokuz & Kahraman, 2021). These studies are very important for the literature, and they are also enlightening for my thesis. However, it should be noted here that there is a very serious and in-depth decision-making process not only among those who do short-term military service, but also among those who do long-term military service. Rather than treating these two groups as homogenous units in a simplistic and surface-level way, it is necessary to take into account the intra-group differences. The current study hopes to develop this dimension by deeply examining the decision-

making processes not only of those who do short-term military service, but also of those who do long-term military service.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

6.1. Summary

Connell and Messerschmidt (2005) disagree with the notion that masculinity is a fixed, natural trait found in people's physical attributes. Rather, they understand masculinity as a dynamic configuration of practice that is shaped and executed within certain social circumstances. According to this viewpoint, masculinity is a collection of behaviors and practices that can be demonstrated and attained in a variety of ways rather than a single, unchanging identity. Within this framework, there exist various types of masculinity, each representing the embodied behaviors of men and women in specific cultural and historical contexts. West and Zimmerman (1987) also underline that gender is a continuous activity of "doing gender" through social interactions rather than a static property. By seeing masculinity via a performative perspective, we can gain more insight into how individuals actively construct and navigate their gender identities within wider cultural frameworks. This point of view encourages more critical analysis of gender norms and a deeper understanding of the spectrum of masculine experiences.

Consequently, as Connell (1995) argued, masculinities are defined not only in connection to femininity but also in reference to other kinds of masculinity, resulting in the development of hierarchical positions within various settings. Therefore, masculinity has a dynamic and context-dependent character. Masculinity is undergoing an important evolution in recent years, giving rise to new masculinities that transcend the constraints imposed by prevailing preconceptions, which mark a break from the strict norms and actions connected to traditional definitions of masculinity. This evolving character of masculinity is reflected through various

attempts to theorize masculinities such as hegemonic, hybrid, complicit, marginalized and toxic masculinities.

In a similar line, this thesis is built on the ides that masculinities are not fixed and are in a state of constant change, transformation and evolution. This is actually one of the reasons for the emergence of various theories that try to explain masculinities, some of which I have emphasized throughout the thesis. Within these various and ever more diversifying concepts, the important thing is to be aware of the limitations of the concepts and to remember that masculinity is a living phenomenon. Thus, I consider masculinities as evolving, as the title suggests, emphasizing changing views, actions, and roles that are connected to men and masculinity across time and having the room for alternative masculinities and diversity.

The transformation and evolution are important because “men are in our lives whether we want them to be or not, that we need men to challenge patriarchy, that we need men to change” (hooks, 2004, p.xvi). The external influences such as awareness-raising initiatives and campaigns, media representations and policies can affect the willingness and ability of men and boys to further change their attitudes with regards to gender equality. This thesis aims to contribute our knowledge on changing and varying masculinities in the Turkish context through a case study of military service. Therefore, one key conclusion of the thesis is that masculinities are not fixed but rather evolving constantly.

Related to the first point, another key conclusion is the diversity and the non-homogeneity within the short-term and long-term groups. This leads us to evaluate the participants with the hybrid masculinity theory. According to the theory of hybrid masculinity, people create their own sense of masculinity by fusing aspects of conventional and non-traditional masculine traits. The research participants' varied motives and perspectives about military duty demonstrated their alignment with the theory of hybrid masculinity. Some participants might, for instance, exemplify stereotypically masculine traits like physical prowess, bravery, and protective roles, which are consistent with the stereotype of a soldier. Conversely, some may place more importance on traits like financial independence, personal autonomy, and

practical decision-making; these traits are indicative of alternative masculinity traits that place a premium on self-reliance and strategic thinking. The participants' multifaceted approach to military service, which balances modern considerations of pragmatism and personal ambitions with traditional ideals of duty and honor, is indicative of their alignment with the theory of hybrid masculinity. The way that people define masculinity in modern culture is changing and dynamic, with people fusing traditional and non-traditional characteristics to create their own identities. This is reflected in the fusion of masculine ideas.

Also, the theory of complicit masculinity helps us see another dimension, which acknowledges men's dual reinforcement and opposition to conventional gender norms, is examined in this study. Study participants display this dichotomy by acting in ways that both adhere to and depart from stereotypical ideas of what it means to be a man. For instance, they might exhibit qualities that go against social standards, including empathy and non-restrictiveness, but they might also prioritize physical strength in line with traditional masculinity. The concept's usefulness in understanding men's gender identity negotiation in contemporary society is highlighted by its complexity, highlighting the need for a nuanced approach to the study of masculinity and gender relations. Therefore, the idea of evolving masculinity focused on this thesis encompasses different but coexisting theories on masculinity. These theories can overlap and although they are very important, they have their own limitations. So, it would be more useful to approach them in terms of their multifaceted coexistence rather than sticking to one. This is the reason I prefer the term evolving masculinities as encompassing variety of masculinities and theories about them.

Compulsory military service, which is a basic requirement of modern citizenship, is a right and duty that the state recognizes to its male citizens by the constitution. The concept of full-citizenship, which is mentioned throughout the thesis, should be recalled at this point. men benefit from the privileges that come with full-citizenship after doing their military service. As Yuval-Davis (1997) points out, the meanings attached to military service as a duty of citizenship can change. Of course, it takes time for this meaning to change. The first indicator that the meaning attributed to

military service can change is the introduction and standardization of short-term military service. A second indicator is the increase in the popularity of short-term military service and the breaking of the prejudiced thoughts of the society. In the first years of short-term military service, opinions were much more tense and rigid towards it. The increase in its prevalence has been instrumental in breaking down prejudices and changing opinions. All these developments play an important role in the transition of military service from being an institution where men learn masculinity. Henceforth, the thesis concludes that men do not see military service as a key-maker of masculinity.

According to the research, nationalism is not viewed in the same way as it was when the Republic, the modern state, was established. There is still the concept of serving one's country, but this is not the same as serving in the military; depending on one's skills and background, one can serve as a competent engineer, lawyer, etc. There is a discourse break here, but we may still discuss the topic of serving the country. Rather from being a "service to the homeland," this discourse break is a "service to society." While military service is still central to national service in the conventional sense of nationalism, it is not in this new version. Therefore, alternative ways of serving to the society different than military service. It is possible to conclude here that in contrast to the traditional relationship between patriotism and military service, military service is not central to perception of patriotism for this research participants.

According to the data gathered, participants do not seem to establish a direct correlation or equivalency between length of military duty and traditional sense of nationalism or patriotism, in which military service is situated at the core. In this contemporary form of being beneficial to the society, loyalty and love for the country are characterized by one's ability to benefit it through other constructive ways like education, skilled work, and progress in society. Within this perspective, a case for reorienting focus away from mandatory service and toward areas where individuals can maximize their education and experience is consistent with a more expansive understanding of patriotism. This point of view acknowledges that patriotism extends beyond military service and includes a commitment to bettering society via a variety of measures.

Consequently, there is a triadic relationship of change between various masculinity norms, gender perceptions, and perceptions of nationalism, military duty, and citizenship. This means that not only are masculinities are changing and evolving, but so are the ideas about nationalism and military duty, and these transformations are intertwined. We can refer to this as a tripartite transformation—when one changes, the others also shift. Within this triple relationship, I am talking about a reciprocal effect. Changes in perceptions of masculinity and nationalism affect transformations in the military system. The reluctance to do military service and the public pressure created by the so-called 'short-term military service lobby' were important in the enactment of the short-term military service. Changes in perceptions of masculinity and nationalism affect each other. In relation to this, people's perspectives on military service, the importance they attach to it and even the pressure they exert on the state evolve.

Regarding this, it is possible to conclude that the importance of military service in Turkish middle-class men is decreasing. As explained throughout the thesis, the participants do not consider military service as a key-maker of masculinity. Although it may have some positive effects for some people on the grounds of observation, meeting new people, personal growth and maturation, for some participants it is completely useless. They do it simply because they are obliged to do it and they see it as a checkmark to move on with their lives, especially in the case short-term military service as it is the quickest way possible. Concerning this, they often disassociate themselves from 'ordinary' men on the basis of social class. These 'ordinary' men are from low socioeconomic position and low levels of education. There is a prevalent argument that individuals who are mostly impoverished or originate from rural and undeveloped regions of Türkiye stand to gain advantages from military service. However, since the participants of this study already have advantages in terms of socioeconomic position and education, the military service may not impart any new knowledge or value to them. Moreover, regarding the time and the skills they have been taught during their military service, this may be particularly relevant/true for those who participate in short-term military service. They do not spend a long period of time in the military and receive a shorter version of the content of the military training. Nevertheless, both shorter and longer military

service may provide a glimpse of a different perspective to Turkish society, because they are obliged to live with other men from very different parts of Türkiye.

While being a newly emerging academic topic, the literature around the short-term military service focused mostly on why people choose it so far. There is not any research on why people choose not to, even when they have the means. Seeing this gap, the purpose of this thesis is to comprehend the factors that affect decisions on how long to serve in the military. Although the results for the shorter term corroborate previous literature, they also reveal new insights into the factors that influence the decision to select long-term service. This thesis points out four primary typologies that can be used to describe the variables influencing a decision's length of military service. The thesis concludes that, for the group of people serving shorter terms in the military, this is a pragmatic choice that combines the key factors of time and efficiency calculation with less exposure to discipline. Regarding the point about short-term military service as pragmatic choice, the findings of the thesis support the arguments of Gençoğlu Odabaşı (2016) and Yirmidokuz and Kahraman (2021). The point about less exposure to discipline and dehumanization dimension explained in this thesis provides an addition to their contribution. Additionally, it is possible to argue here that, in addition to traditional notions of masculinity, alternative conceptions of manhood that place a higher value on traits like independence, professional success, and personal autonomy are becoming widely recognized; nonetheless, being able to afford short-term is also a way to affirm one's masculinity. It is imperative to acknowledge that financial power, as a representation of masculinity, is not a standalone concept from other facets of manhood. In the context of short-term military duty, men who chose economic wealth and financial security do not always fully reject traditional notions of manhood. Instead, they are defining masculinity more broadly to include things like financial independence and autonomy. One may read their decision as a means of expressing their autonomy and assertiveness, which might portend further cultural changes about the ideals of masculinity that place an emphasis on individual fulfillment and choice. This is also partially explained by the capitalism principles that strongly encourage individualism and self-centeredness, which is made stronger by capitalist frameworks that prioritize competitiveness, profit maximization, and individual performance.

On the other hand, the thesis has revealed three primary causes for choosing long-term military duty, making it more varied. It can offer a place for adventure, and in the face of uncertain circumstances, a stabilizing experience, an anchor in the black. Lastly, it can be a just and moral choice. Regarding the adventure dimension, some who serve in the military may view it as a chance to see new locations, meet new people, and extend their horizons beyond their normal social circles and environments. The impression of distancing from cozy surroundings may contribute to a person's experience of self-discovery and independence. This attitude of adventure and exploration adds to the appeal of enlisting in the military as a means of breaking away from the everyday and embracing new experiences. At this point, the relationship between risk-taking, adventurousness and masculinity is also a striking point. When we look at the adventure side, we can see that in the narratives of the individuals, they argue that military service has positive effects on the maturation of the individual and the development of his/her perspective on life. The time spent in military service, the opportunity to spend time with people who are recognized as different from themselves and with whom they would never have come together under other circumstances, the solidarity networks and friendship ties established under high discipline are among the memories that may be told for a lifetime after military service, and they can appear as narratives of how difficult it was as well as how fun it was.

Some men can see military service as a stabilizer. When thought, the military is a place where everything is highly organized and certain. The clothes you wear, the time you sleep and wake up, the time and frequency of your shower, the time you eat, the number of days you have to spend... In a country like Türkiye, where the economic situation is very uncertain, therefore, concerns about work life are also very high. The money earned as a result of inflation is losing value every day. When these conditions are evaluated, for some people, military service actually provides a space that provides stability and provides a respite from such concerns, even if only for a limited time period. Some of the participants also aim to do military service as a profession after fulfilling the compulsory period because the civil service-like life and living conditions it provides are attractive.

Lastly, it can also be a fair and ethical decision as some people finds the short-term service unjust as it is only available for those who have the financial means, and some does not want to contribute financially to army and weaponization in any way. Short-term military service is often criticized on the grounds that it deepens socioeconomic inequalities. It is argued that with the increasing cost of it, it became unaffordable for those on low incomes, and it provides a privilege for more affluent people and violate the principle of equality. Also, conscientious objection is not legally recognized in Türkiye and not failure to perform military service for this reason has serious consequences, up to and including imprisonment. This process, which has psychologically very corrosive sanctions, can ultimately force people to do military service. Therefore, if people do not want to continue this political struggle, they have to decide between short-term or long-term military service. One of my participants explained that he did not want to make a financial contribution to the military and had to opt for the long term because he thought that his own physical labor was cheaper and more feasible. There is a highly compelling ethical decision here. The person made this decision because he found it more harmless to give his physical labor to the military institution for 6-months compared to the financial contribution.

This pragmatic choice dimension revealed in the thesis urge us to recall Rational Choice Theory. According to this theoretical perspective, all human behavior is essentially rational, and people choose their actions after carefully weighing the potential costs and benefits of each option (Scott, 2000). Exchange theory, which looks at how people conduct transactions and exchanges based on logical assessments of worth and utility, is one way that rational choice theory has influenced social interaction research (Scott, 2000). By applying exchange theory and rational choice theory to social phenomena, researchers hope to shed light on the underlying motives and decision-making processes of people and groups in a variety of settings. According to the theory, people participate in exchanges by weighing the costs and advantages and aiming to minimize expenses while maximizing gains. These theories seek to provide a systematic and explanatory framework for comprehending human behavior in social and interpersonal interactions by stressing

rational decision-making and the pursuit of self-interest. According to rational choice theory, people are driven by desires or objectives that represent their "preferences." They operate in accordance with predetermined parameters and the knowledge they possess regarding the circumstances surrounding their actions. In its most basic form, the relationship between restrictions and desires can be understood as the link between a means and an end in simply technical terms. People have to make decisions regarding their objectives and the methods by which they will pursue them, as they are unable to fulfill all of their desires. Therefore, people weigh the pros and cons of several options before deciding on the best one for them. The option that is most likely to satisfy rational people is the one they select (Scott, 2000).

The theory of rational choice can provide insight into personal choices made by individuals in relation to military duty. The decision to choose specific kind of service is influenced by various variables, including societal pressures, professional prospects, economic incentives, and personal motives. From the perspective of rational choice theory, men make decisions about how long to serve in the military based on weighing the benefits and drawbacks of short-term versus long-term service responsibilities. Men may decide to enlist in the military for a shorter period of time if they believe the advantages of doing so outweigh the disadvantages of doing so, according to the rational choice theory. This may be the result of a number of factors, including putting immediate financial stability first, where they evaluate whether the money they give in exchange for the time they lose is efficient or not and avoidance of discipline. It is important note that in this calculation, these factors can overlap and coexist together, affecting the decision-making. In order to make this decision about avoiding discipline, people need to have this financial power. The theory aligns with the academic literature on short-term military service. Çakatay (2019) contends that joining the military at young ages no longer has the same significance as the traditional male coming-of-age experience in Turkish society because of the individualist, economically rational, and utility-maximization way of thinking. For young men from wealthier backgrounds, who see compulsory military service as a dual patriotic obligation and a potential roadblock to their academic and professional goals.

On the other hand, men may choose to serve in the military for a longer period of time if they feel that the long-term advantages—such as pension plans, opportunities for career growth, and steady income—outweigh the disadvantages of a longer commitment. Also, personal values such as fairness and anti-militarism can also affect their decisions. All things considered, men evaluate the benefits and drawbacks of both short- and long-term military service obligations, and they base their judgments on their estimates of the likely consequences. This is where rational choice theory comes into play. Hence, I argue that rational choice theory can explain the decision-making factors of duration of military service. The theory is criticized on the grounds that it ignores the larger context in which choices are formed and fail to sufficiently account for the social networks, social norms, societal pressures and shared values that frequently impact human decision-making. However, it is considered here that all these dimensions including the role of social networks, norms, pressures, and values are also included in the calculation process. Individuals include both their individual values and societal expectations in the calculation and decide on what they think is the most profit maximizing one at that time.

This study is a forward-thinking attempt that explores unexplored ground in the field of masculinity studies. A novel contribution is the examination of the impact of gender and nationalism perceptions on the decision-making process of middle-class men in Turkey on whether to do compulsory military service for a long or short term. By exploring the evolving dynamics of masculinity ideals in the Turkish context, it closes gaps in the literature that currently exist. The results could improve academic debates on gender, enlistment in the military, and social expectations.

One key goal of the study was to investigate and evaluate individuals' diverse interpretations of masculinity who have served in the short- and long-term military services. The study explored the complex relationship between masculinity ideals, nationalism perceptions and military duty, with a special emphasis on class, between participants who choose short-term military service and those who serve in the long-

term military. By an exploration of how people in long- and short-term military service navigate their identities, values, and sense of responsibility within these disparate frameworks, this study aims to navigate these complex narratives. Through the application of a critical lens, it aims to illuminate the challenges of finding a balance between societal expectations of men and personal values related to responsibilities and roles in relation to the women around them and the nation in which they live. This research contributes to our understanding of the ways in which military institutions both reflect and shape broader societal norms and expectations about gender, power and identity. But it also shows that this is a two-way relationship, i.e. changing societal assumptions and values also have a modifying and transformative power over military institution.

The research design used in this study is qualitative, and it especially uses a technique to explore participants' lived experiences and perspectives in extensive detail. Because semi-structured interviews yield rich, contextualized narratives, they were chosen as the major data collection approach. An investigation of how people create and interpret their realities—particularly with regard to masculinity, military service, and patriotic ideals—is made possible by the phenomenological framework. Purposive sampling was used to start the data collection process in order to find individuals and experiences from both short-term and long-term military duty environments. Every participant gave their informed consent, guaranteeing that ethical standards were met throughout the investigation. The interviews were semi-structured, enabling participants to freely express their ideas, feelings, and perceptions. The interview questions were specifically designed to address a wide range of topics, such as ideas on what constitutes an ideal masculinity, thought on gender perceptions, and reasons for choosing type of military service, views on patriotism. To maintain the integrity of the participants' comments and enable comprehensive analysis, the interviews were audio recorded and verbatim transcribed. The research question of this thesis centers around the factors for deciding for short or long-term military service for middle-class men in Türkiye. A question set was prepared to understand their motivations, gender perceptions and ideas about nationalism. The participants were also asked about other type of military service that they did not choose and about what they think about people who choose

the other way. A comparative analysis was made by using a feminist lense to reach these conclusions.

6.2. Contributions of the Research to the Literature

By exploring the dynamics of masculinity within the context of military duty among middle-class males in Türkiye, this research makes a substantial contribution to the body of current literature. By concentrating on this particular group of people, the research illuminates the different ways of gender identity and masculinity negotiations, leaving the economic situation aside, offering a more complex perspective on the construction, negotiation, and performance of masculinity within a similar group of social strata. This highlights the nuances and variances in masculine ideals depending on people's financial advantages and social situations, adding richness to the literature on gender and identity. This research makes a significant contribution by examining the decision-making processes of middle-class people who decide to join in the military for an extended period of time. The study provides insights into how patriotism, pragmatism and individual choice interact with one other by looking at the participants' motivations, values, and feeling of national obligation. This adds to the body of knowledge on military enrollment and patriotic duty by illuminating the ways in which people from affluent backgrounds fulfill and consider their national obligations.

One key contribution of this study is providing a class-based comparative analysis of decision-making factors for the duration of compulsory military service in Türkiye. Though the motivations for choosing short-term military service have started to be studied, decisions for longer-term despite its popularity and practicality despite having the financial means to go for short-term has not been studied. Hence, this study fills this gap and provide a comparative analysis. Beyond understanding the decision-making factors, this study also reveals significant insights on gender and nationalism perceptions. It challenges the assumption that long-term military service participants are more aligned with traditional gender norms, and they are more nationalist. Instead, it emphasizes the diversity among both groups and highlights that there is no simplistic relationship between them. By highlighting variation and

challenging the oversimplified assumption, this thesis significantly adds to the literature on militarism and masculinity by highlighting their distinctions. Furthermore, it contributes to our knowledge that the perceptions of nationalism and benefiting the nation is no longer equated with military service duty. The findings of this study also have consequences for societal norms around military duty, national defense plans, and policymaking. The study reflects how military service is considered by middle class men in Türkiye, in the face of rising popularity of short-term military service. Policymakers should take these views into consideration and can work on alternative ways of 'national duty'.

6.3. Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

The main source of the research's drawback is the difficulty in finding participants for the sample who reflect a specific demographic. The difficulty of recruiting and involving volunteers from the particular demographic the study is targeting is one of the associated problems. Finding and recruiting people who fit the exact requirements for membership—such as being a middle class member and choosing to enlist in the military—was difficult given the strict requirements. Due to this difficulty, there are small number of participants, which could have an impact on the variety and depth of viewpoints that the study gathers.

Moreover, the limited scope of the sample restricts the diversity of perspectives and experiences included in the research. Because of this, the results might not accurately represent the wide range of opinions, convictions, and actions that people in general have toward masculinity, military service, and socioeconomic class. This restriction makes it more difficult for the research findings to be applied outside of the particular setting and target population of the study.

The difficulties in finding these participants could be a reflection of broader societal shifts in perceptions of military duty, where the short-term option is becoming more and more popular, especially among the those who are better off economically. These findings provide insight into the intricate relationships that exist between socioeconomic level, inclinations for military service, and society views of

obligation and duty. They also highlight the necessity of further investigation into these dynamics across a range of demographic groups in order to obtain a more thorough grasp of the reasons and processes involved in making decisions about military service. Higher earners' preference for short-term military service is something that has been noted, and it provides important context for understanding how society views both individual freedom and military duty. The relative ease with which short-term military service participants can be recruited in contrast to those who choose traditional duty is indicative of a larger trend in which financial capability plays a major role in influencing decisions regarding military service. Hence, Future research into the viewpoints of those from lower socioeconomic backgrounds who cannot afford to do the short-term military service would be an interesting direction to go. Although the study concentrated on middle-class males and their decisions about military duty, it can be insightful to learn about the perspectives of people who cannot afford these options in order to have a better grasp of larger social ideas surrounding masculinity and military service.

Due to participants' self-selection when they consent to participate in the study, selection bias may be an additional problem. A biased depiction of the population under investigation may result from participants who choose to participate having distinct traits or experiences that set them apart from those who choose not to. The validity and dependability of the study's conclusions and suggestions may be impacted by this bias.

Future studies must use more inclusive sample techniques that cover a larger range of age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds in order to address these issues. With a more thorough grasp of the subtleties and intricacies surrounding masculinity, military service, and socioeconomic class made possible by this technique, research findings would be more applicable and relevant to a wider range of groups. Additionally, this research calls for a re-evaluation of nationalism perceptions and how the contemporary nationalism is defined and felt by various groups.

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APPRENDICES

A. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS / GÖRÜŞME SORULARI

A. Demografik/kişisel bilgilere yönelik sorular

1. Kaç yaşındasınız?
2. Medeni durumunuz nedir?
3. En son bitirdiğiniz okul nedir?
4. Mesleğiniz nedir?
5. Aylık geliriniz ne kadar?
6. Hanenizde kaç kişi yaşıyor?
7. Hanenizin geçimine en fazla katkıda bulunan ve geçiminden asıl sorumlu olan kişi (hane reisi) kimdir?
8. Kendinize ait bir eviniz ve/veya arabanız var mı? Hangileri? Kaç adet?
9. Çalışma hayatına kaç yaşında başladınız?
10. Çalışma nedeninizi öğrenebilir miyim?
    a. Kendim istedim
    b. Babam istedi
    c. Babamın işyerinde yardım için çalıştım
    d. Maddi durum sebebiyle
11. Askerliğe kaç yaşında gittiniz?
12. Çalışma hayatına askerlikten sonra başladıysa: Askere gitmeden önce iş arama deneyiminiz oldu mu? Nasıl sonuçlandı?
13. Çalışma hayatına askerlikten önce başladıysa: Çalışma hayatınıza başladıktan sonra askerliğe gitmenizin kariyerinize bir etkisi oldu mu? Ya da olmasından endişe ettiniz mi?
14. Kendinizi nasıl tanımlarsınız (cinsiyet kimliği, cinsel yönelim, sınıf-ekonomik durum, kültürel (memleket), din, ulusal (vatandaşlık), etnisite, aile üyesi (anne/baba vs.) …)? Sıralama yapsanız nasıl olurdu?

15. Bir grup aidiyetiniz var mı? Varsa, kimlerle? Veya hangi gruplardan farklı olduğunuzu düşünüyorsunuz? (siyasal, eğitim, din, mezhep, cinsiyet kimliği, yönelim, …)
16. Kendinizi siyasi kimlikler ile tanımlıyor musunuz? Hangileri? (milliyetçi, Atatürkçü, mufazakar, İslamcı, ülkücü, demokrat, sosyal demokrat, sosyalist, ulusalcı, liberal…)
17. 1'den 10'a kadar bir ölçüde 1 sağ, 10 sol ve 5 orta olmak üzere kendinizi hangi noktada konumlandırırsınız?
18. Bu çalışma için gizliliğinizi sağlamak adına kendinize bir kod ad verebilir misiniz?

B) Erkeklik algılarına yönelik sorular

1. Yaşadığınız ev içerisinde yemek, temizlik, varsa çocuk bakımı gibi işleri çoğunlukla kim yapar? (Yalnız yaşıyorsa: bu konuda dışarıdan destek alıyor musunuz?)
2. Yaptığınız ev işleri nelerdir?
3. Sizce kadın ile erkek arasında farklılıklar var mıdır? Varsa bu farkları nasıl tanımlarsınız?
4. Sizce erkeğin mi kadının mı hayatı daha zor? Neden?
5. Beraber olacağınız/olmak isteyeceğiniz kadının özellikleri nelerdir?
6. İdeal erkeklik diye bir şeyin olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Erkek olmanın gereklilikleri var mı?
7. Sizce ailede ve toplumda erkeklerin sorumluluklarına ilişkin toplumsal beklentiler var mıdır? Erkeklerin kadınlardan farklı bazı sorumlulukları var mı? Varsa nelerdir?
8. Türkiye'de yaşayan bir erkek olarak, bahsettiğiniz bu görevleri/sorumlulukları ne kadar yerine getirdiğinizi düşünüyorsunuz?
9. Sizce bir erkek çocuktan yetişkin erkekliğe geçişte önemli/olmazsa olmaz bazı aşamalar var mı?
10. Babanızla ilişkiniz nasıldır? Sizin lafınızı dinliyor, kararlarınızı dikkate alıyor mu? Evetse ne zaman başladı?
11. Bir erkek olarak vazgeçemeyeceğiniz şeyler var mı? Nelerdir?
12. Erkekliğinize ters düşen davranış(lar) var mı? Nelerdir?
13. Hiç silah kullandınız mı? Ne zaman ve hangi durumlarda kullandınız?

14. Çocukluktan yetişkinliğe geçişte yetişkin bir erkek olduğunuzu hangi durumlarda hissettiniz? (burada askerlikten bahsettiyse direkt C'ye geçilecek)

15. Yukarıda askerlikten söz etmediyse, askerliğin bu geçiş sürecinde önemli bir aşama olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Evetse, neden? Hayırsa, neden?

C) Askerlik algılarına yönelik sorular

1. Askerlik sizin için ne ifade ediyor? Bu konuda duygularınız düşünceleriniz var mı?
2. Sizce kimler askerlik yapabilir?
3. Bir askerin sahip olması gerektiğini düşündüğünüz özellikler var mı?
4. Biliyorsunuz askerlik prosedürleri ülkeden ülkeye değişiyor. Örneğin İsrail'de kadınlar da zorunlu askerlik yapıyorlar. Sizce kadınlar da askerlik yapabilir mi? Yapmalı mı? Neden?
5. Önceki soruda buna cevap vermediyse: Sizce kadınların askerlik yapmama sebebi ne?
6. Sizce uzun dönem askerlik neden yapılıyor?
7. Sizce bedelli askerlik neden yapılıyor?
8. Sizce devlet neden bedelli askerliğe ihtiyaç duyuyor?
9. Peki kişi açısından bedelli veya uzun dönem askerliğin ne anlamları var?
10. Sizce askerliği bedelli veya uzun dönem yapmak kişiyi nasıl etkiliyor?
11. Sizce bedelli askerlik yapanların artmasının toplumsal sonuçları var mı?
12. Bedelli yapanlar için: bedelli askerlik yapma sebebinizi açıklar mısınız?
13. Uzun dönem yapanlar için: uzun dönem yapma sebebinizi açıklar mısınız?

D) Askerlik öncesine dair deneyimlere yönelik sorular

1. Askerlik öncesinde askerlik hakkında konuştuğunuz kişiler var mıydı? Kimlerdi ve neler dinlediniz?
2. Askere gitmeden önce neler hissettiniz?
3. Askere gitmeden önce diğer grup (bedelli gittiyse uzun dönem, uzun dönemse gittiyse bedelliyi sorarak) hakkında ne düşünüyordunuz?
4. Asker uğurlaması yaptınız mı? Hatırladığınız kadarıyla size hissettirdikleriyle beraber anlatır mısınız?
5. (Bedelli yapan kişiler için): Ailenizin ve çevrenizin askerliği bedelli yapmanız konusundaki tutumu nasıldı? Bunun için destek aldınız mı? Borç, kredi, para biriktirme gibi…

E) Askerlik sırasındaki deneyimlere yönelik sorular

1. Sanırım askerlik öncesi bir muayene yapılıyormuş. Bundan biraz bahseder misiniz?
2. Bazı kişiler ilk gecesinin zor geçtiğini ifade ediyor. Sizin askerlikte ilk geceniz nasıl geçti? Neler hissettiniz?
3. Askerliğiniz süresince aldığınız eğitimleri hatırladığınız kadarıyla açıklar mısınız? Hangileri sizin için keyifli, hangileri değildi?
4. Eğer yukarıdaki soruda bahsetmediyse: kışla eğitiminin içeriğinden bahsedebilir misiniz?
5. Askerlik sırasında herhangi bir zorluk yaşadınız mı? Evetse, ne gibi?
6. Askerlik sırasında beklemediğiniz şeyler oldu mu? Nelerdir?
7. Sizi en çok etkileyen askerlik anınız nedir?
8. Askerlik süresince temizlik, yemek gibi görevleriniz oldu mu? Evetse bunlardan hangilerine evinize döndüğünüzde devam ettiniz?
9. Size mantıksız gelen görevleriniz oldu mu?
10. Üstleriniz size nasıl davranırdı? Bağırış çağırış olduğunu söyleyenler var. Hiç böyle bir gözleminiz oldu mu?
11. Bedelli askerlik yapanlarla uzun dönem askerlik yapan kişilerin deneyimlerinin ve erkekliklerinin aynı olduğunu düşünüyor musunuz? Bedelli askerlik ile uzun dönem askerliği karşılaştıracak olsanız neler söylersiniz?
12. Askerlik sırasında bedelli ve uzun dönem yapanların ortak aktiviteleri var mı? Varsa ne tür aktivitelere derecedeydi? Bir arada mı ayrı mı tutuldu? Bu size nasıl hissettirdi?
13. (Yaptığının zıttı sorulacak şekilde) Sizce neden bazıları bedelli/normal dönem askerlik yapıyor? Tercih boyutunu da açalım.
14. Yemin töreninizde neler hissetiniz?

F) Askerlik sonrası deneyimlere yönelik sorular

1. Askerlikten döndüğünüzde bir kutlama/tören yapıldı mı (davet, kurban kesme vb. gibi)?
2. Döndüğünüzde gündelik yaşama adapte olmakta zorlandınız mı? (evetse ne kadar sürdü?)

3. Askere gittikten sonra diğer grup (bedelli gittiyse uzun dönem, uzun dönemse gittiyse bedelliyi sorarak) hakkındaki düşünceleriniz değişti mi?
4. Askerlikle beraber huyunuz değişti mi? Örneğin "daha önce şöyleydim … oldum" dediğiniz bir şey oldu mu?
5. Askerliğin size herhangi bir katkısı oldu mu? Evetse nasıl bir katkı? Hayırsa neden?
6. Askerliğinizi tamamladığınızda çevrenizdeki diğer erkeklerle ilişkilerinizde değişiklik oldu mu (örneğin baba, dede, dayı gibi aile büyükleri)?
7. Askerlik sonrasında yaşadığınız zorluklar oldu mu? Nelerdir?
8. Askerlik yapıp yapmama konusunda karar vermek sizin elinizde olsaydı ne yapardınız?
9. Askere ya da askerliğe dair herhangi bir olumsuz düşünceniz ya da eleştiriniz var mı?
10. (Bedelli yapan kişiler için): Bazı erkekler bedelli yaptığını söylemekten çekindiğini ifade edebiliyorlar. Sizin hiç askerliği bedelli yaptığınızı söylemediğiniz durumlar oluyor mu? Evetse, ne tür durumlar?
11. Bazı insanlar bir erkek için askerliğin çok önemli olduğunu düşünüyor. Bu konuda siz ne düşünüyorsunuz?
12. "Bedelli askerlik de askerlik mi" diyenler oluyor. Siz bu konuda ne düşünüyorsunuz?

G) Askerliğe dair aktarımlara dair sorular

1. Yakın çevrenizde askere gidecek biri olsa ona ne tavsiye verirdiniz?
2. Yakın çevrenizde askere gidecek biri olsa bedelli mi uzun dönem mi gitmesini önerirdiniz?

TRANSLATED VERSION

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

A. Questions on demographic/personal information

1. How old are you?
2. What is your marital status?
3. What is your last completed school?
4. What is your occupation?
5. What is your monthly income?
6. How many people live in your household?
7. Who is the person who contributes the most to the livelihood of your household and is primarily responsible for its livelihood (head of household)?
8. Do you own your own house and/or car? Which ones? How many?
9. At what age did you start working?
10. What is your reason for working?
    a. I wanted to work myself
    b. My father wanted
    c. I worked as a helper at my father's workplace
    d. For financial reasons
11. At what age did you go to military service?
12. If he started working life after military service: Did you have any job search experience before you joined the military? How did it turn out?
13. If you started your working life before military service: Did your military service have an impact on your career after you started working? Or did you worry about it?
14. How would you describe yourself (gender identity, sexual orientation, class-economic status, cultural (hometown), religion, national (citizenship), ethnicity, family member (mother/father etc.) ...)? How would you rank them?
15. Do you belong to a group? If so, with whom? Or which groups do you think you are different from (political, education, religion, sect, gender identity, orientation, ...)?
16. Do you identify yourself with political identities? Which ones? (nationalist, Kemalist, conservative, conservative, Islamist, idealist, democrat, social democrat, socialist, nationalist, liberal...)

17. On a scale of 1 to 10, where would you place yourself politically, 1 right, 10 left and 5 center?
18. Can you give yourself a code name to ensure your anonymity for this study?

B) Questions on perceptions of masculinity

1. Who does most of the cooking, cleaning, childcare, if any, in the household where you live? (If living alone: do you get support from outside?)
2. What are the household chores you do?
3. Do you think there are differences between men and women? If so, how would you describe these differences?
4. Do you think life is more difficult for men or women? Why do you think so?
5. What are the characteristics of the woman you would like to be with?
6. Do you think there is such a thing as an ideal man? Are there requirements for being a man?
7. Do you think there are social expectations about men's responsibilities in the family and society? Do men have different responsibilities than women? If yes, what are they?
8. As a man living in Türkiye, to what extent do you think you fulfill these duties/responsibilities?
9. Do you think there are some important/essential stages in the transition from a boy to adult manhood?
10. How is your relationship with your father? Does he listen to you and take your decisions into account? If yes, when did it start?
11. As a man, are there things you cannot give up? What are they?
12. Are there any behavior(s) that are contrary to your masculinity? What are they?
13. Have you ever used a weapon? When and in what situations?
14. In which situations did you feel that you were a grown man in the transition from childhood to adulthood? (if he mentioned military service here, go directly to C)
15. If he did not mention military service above, do you think that military service is an important stage in this transition process? If yes, why? If no, why?

C) Questions on perceptions of military service

1. What does military service mean to you? Do you have feelings and thoughts about it?
2. Who do you think can do military service?
3. Are there any characteristics you think a soldier should have?
4. As you know, military service procedures vary from country to country. For example, in Israel, women also do compulsory military service. Do you think women can do military service? Should they do it? Why do you think so?
5. If they did not answer this in the previous question: What do you think is the reason why women do not do military service?
6. Why do you think long term military service is done?
7. Why do you think military conscription is done?
8. Why do you think the state needs short-term military service?
9. What is the meaning of short- or long-term military service for the individual?
10. How do you think doing military service for short- or long-term affects the individual?
11. Do you think there are social consequences of the increase in the number of people doing short-term military service?
12. For those who do short-term military service: Can you explain your reasons for doing short-term military service?
13. For those who did long-term military service: Could you explain your reasons for doing long-term military service?

D) Questions about experiences before military service

1. Were there people you talked to about military service before your military service? Who were they and what did you listen to?

2. How did you feel before going to the army?
3. What did you think about the other group (asking about the long term if they went for a short-term military service, and about the short-term military service if they went for a long term) before going to the military service?
4. Did you do send-off before going to military service? Can you tell me about it as much as you remember and how it made you feel?

5. (For those who did short-term military service): What was the attitude of your family and environment towards your short-term military service? Did you receive support for this, such as loans, credits, saving money...

E) Questions about experiences during military service

1. I think there is an examination before military service. Can you tell me a little bit about that?
2. Some people say that their first night was difficult. How was your first night of military service? How did you feel?
3. Can you describe the trainings you received during your military service as much as you remember? Which ones were enjoyable for you and which ones were not?
4. If not mentioned in the question above: can you tell us about the content of barracks training?
5. Did you experience any difficulties during your military service? If yes, what kind?
6. Were there things you did not expect during your military service? What were they?
7. What is the memory of your military service that affected you the most?
8. Did you have duties such as cleaning and cooking during your military service? If yes, which of these did you continue to do when you returned home?
9. Have you ever had tasks that seemed unreasonable to you?
10. How did your superiors treat you? Some people say there was yelling and screaming. Have you ever made such an observation?
11. Do you think that the experiences and masculinity of those who do short-term military service and those who do long-term military service are the same? If you were to compare short-term military service and long-term military service, what would you say?
12. Are there any common activities during military service for those who did short-term military service and those who did long term military service? If yes, to what extent? Were they kept together or separately? How did this make you feel?
13. (Asking the opposite of what service done) Why do you think some people do military service for short-term/long-term?
14. How did you feel during your oath ceremony?

F) Questions about experiences after military service

1. Was there a celebration/ceremony when you returned from military service (such as an invitation, sacrifice, etc.)?
2. Did you have difficulty adapting to daily life when you returned (if yes, how long did it take?)?
3. Did your opinion about the other group (asking about the long term if he went for short-term military service, and about the short-term military service if he went for long term) change after military service?
4. Did your habits change with military service? For example, did you say something like "I was like this before..."?
5. Has the military service made any contribution to you? If yes, what kind of contribution? If no, why?
6. Did your relationships with other men around you change when you completed your military service (e.g. family elders such as father, grandfather, uncle)?
7. Have you experienced any difficulties after military service? What are they?
8. If it was up to you to decide whether to do military service or not, what would you do?
9. Do you have any negative thoughts or criticisms about the military or military service?
10. (For those who did short-term military service): Some men may be reluctant to say that they did short-term military service. Have you ever been in a situation where you did not say that you did your military service short-term? If yes, what kind of situations?
11. Some people think that military service is very important for a man. What do you think about this?
12. There are some people who say " short-term military service is not military service". What do you think about this?

G) Questions on narrations about military service

1. If someone in your close circle was going to do military service, what advice would you give them?
2. If someone in your close circle was going to do military service, would you advise him/her to do short-term or long-term military service?

B. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE

UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
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07 NİSAN 2023

Konu: Değerlendirme Sonucu

Gönderen: ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu (İAEK)

İlgi: İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu Başvurusu

Sayın Prof. Dr. F. Umut Beşpınar

Danışmanlığını yürüttüğünüz Buğu Sıla Evren'in **"Türkiye'deki orta-üst sınıf erkeklerin askerlik deneyimlerinin (bedelli ve uzun dönem) farklı erkeklik algıları ve deneyimleri ile ilişkisi"** başlıklı araştırmanız İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek **0211-ODTUİAEK-2023** protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır

Bilgilerinize saygılarımla sunarım.

[redacted]
Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

[redacted]
Prof.Dr. İ.Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

[redacted]
Doç. Dr. Ali Emre Turgut
Üye

[redacted]
Doç.Dr. Şerife SEVİNÇ
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Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Murat Perit ÇAKIR
Üye

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Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Süreyya ÖZCAN KABASAKAL
Üye

Dr. Öğretim Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

C. INFORMED CONSENT FORM

ARAŞTIRMAYA GÖNÜLLÜ KATILIM FORMU

Bu çalışma ODTÜ Toplumsal Cinsiyet ve Kadın Çalışmaları Bölümü öğrencisi Buğu Sıla Evren tarafından yürütülmektedir. Bu form sizi araştırma koşulları hakkında bilgilendirmek için hazırlanmıştır.

Çalışmanın Amacı Nedir?

Bu çalışma Türkiye'deki orta-üst sınıf gelir grubundan erkeklerin askerlik deneyimlerinin (bedelli ve uzun dönem) farklı erkeklik algıları ve deneyimleri ile ilişkisini anlamayı hedeflemektedir.

Bu amaç doğrultusunda çalışma Türkiye'deki orta-üst sınıf gelir grubundan erkeklerin hangi tür askerlik yapacağına karar vermesinde nelerin etkili olduğunu anlamak üzere 'Türkiye'deki orta-üst sınıf erkeklerin farklı erkeklik algıları ve deneyimlerinin askerlik türü kararlarını nasıl etkilemektedir' sorusuna cevap arayacak şekilde dizayn edilmiştir.

Bize Nasıl Yardımcı Olmanızı İsteyeceğiz?

Araştırmaya katılmayı kabul etmeniz durumunda size yöneltilecek açık uçlu ve yarı-yapılandırılmış soruları cevaplandırmanız beklenmektedir. Görüşmelerin 1-1,5 saat sürmesi öngörülmektedir.

Katılımınızla ilgili bilmeniz gerekenler:

Bu çalışmaya katılmak tamamen gönüllülük esasına dayalıdır. Herhangi bir yaptırıma veya cezaya maruz kalmadan çalışmaya katılmayı reddedebilir veya çalışmayı bırakabilirsiniz. Araştırma esnasında cevap vermek istemediğiniz sorular olursa boş bırakabilirsiniz.

Araştırmaya katılanlardan toplanan veriler tamamen gizli tutulacak, veriler ve kimlik bilgileri herhangi bir şekilde eşleştirilmeyecektir. Katılımcıların isimleri bağımsız bir listede toplanacaktır. Ayrıca toplanan verilere sadece araştırmacılar ulaşabilecektir. Bu araştırmanın sonuçları bilimsel ve profesyonel yayınlarda veya eğitim amaçlı kullanılabilir, fakat katılımcıların kimliği gizli tutulacaktır.

Riskler:

Bu çalışma psikolojik veya fiziksel herhangi bir risk içermemektedir.

Araştırmayla ilgili daha fazla bilgi almak isterseniz:

Çalışmayla ilgili soru ve yorumlarınızı araştırmacıya .....@metu.edu.tr adresinden iletebilirsiniz.

Yukarıdaki bilgileri okudum ve bu çalışmaya tamamen gönüllü olarak katılıyorum.

(Formu doldurup imzaladıktan sonra uygulayıcıya geri veriniz).

İsim Soyad	Tarih	İmza
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TRANSLATED VERSION

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION FORM FOR RESEARCH

This study is being conducted by Buğu Sıla Evren, a student at METU Gender and Women's Studies Department. This form has been prepared to inform you about the research conditions.

What is the Purpose of the Study?

This study aims to understand the relationship between the military service experiences (short-term and long-term) of upper-middle-class men in Türkiye and their different perceptions and experiences of masculinity.

In line with this purpose, the study is designed to answer the question 'How different perceptions and experiences of masculinity affect the type of military service decisions of upper-middle class men in Türkiye in order to understand what influences upper-middle class men in Türkiye in deciding which type of military service to do.

How Can You Help Us?

If you agree to participate in the research, you will be expected to answer open-ended and semi-structured questions. Interviews are expected to last 1-1.5 hours.

What You Need to Know About Your Participation:

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You can refuse to participate or leave the study without any sanction or penalty. If there are any questions you do not want to answer during the research, you can leave them blank.

The data collected from the participants will be kept completely confidential and the data and identity information will not be matched in any way. The names of the participants will be collected in an independent list. In addition, only the researchers

will have access to the collected data. The results of this research may be used in scientific and professional publications or for educational purposes, but the identity of the participants will be kept confidential.

Risks:

This study does not pose any physical or psychological risks.

If You Want More Information About the Study:

You can send your questions and comments about the study to the researcher at ..... @metu.edu.tr.

I have read the above information and I am participating in this study entirely voluntarily.

(Please fill out and sign the form and return it to the researcher.)

Name Surname	Date	Signature
	---/----/-----	

D. TURKISH SUMMARY

EVRİLEN ERKEKLİKLER: TÜRKİYE'DE ÜST ORTA SINIF ERKEKLERİN EVRİLEN ASKERLİK DENEYİMLERİ VE ALGILARI

GENEL BAKIŞ

Modern toplumda tek bir cinsiyete adanmış en önemli kurumlardan biri olan ulusal ordular, askerlik hizmetini tüm erkeklerin belirli bir yaşa kadar yerine getirmesi gereken temel bir yükümlülük olarak tanımlamaktadır. Bu sorumluluk sadece kişisel deneyimleri etkilemekle kalmaz, aynı zamanda toplumun toplumsal cinsiyet normlarına ve erkekliğe bakışı üzerinde de önemli bir etkiye sahiptir. Orduda hizmet etmek geleneksel olarak vatanseverlik, disiplin, fiziksel ve zihinsel dayanıklılık, görev, onur ve fedakarlık gibi değerlerle ilişkilendirilmiştir. Ordu, güç, disiplin ve bağlılığa yaptığı vurguyla geleneksel erkeklik fikirlerini derinden örnekleyen bir noktadadır. Geleneksel erkeklik fikirlerini pekiştirir ve çocukluktan yetişkinliğe geçişi işaret ederek bir geçiş töreni görevi görür.

Geçiş törenleri, bir kişinin hayatındaki önemli dönüm noktalarını işaretleyen, bir sosyal veya kültürel mertebeden diğerine ilerlemesini temsil eden törensel ayinlerdir. Bu ritüeller sıklıkla sembolik eylemleri, topluluk katılımını ve yerleşik kültürel normlara ve geleneklere uyumu gerektirir. Toplumlarda topluluk bütünlüğünün sağlanması, sosyalleşme ve kimlik gelişimi ve geçiş işaretlemesi gibi bir dizi önemli rol oynarlar. Diğer törensel ritüellere benzer şekilde, askeri geçiş törenleri de önemli yaşam geçişlerine işaret ettikleri için bazı toplumlar için son derece önemlidir. Bu gelenekler kültürel geleneklere yerleşmiştir ve önemli yaşam olaylarını işaretlemenin ötesinde amaçları vardır. Bunlar kültürel standartları koruyan, değerleri yayan ve grup aidiyeti duygusunu güçlendiren sembolik davranışlardır.

Askerlik bir geçiş töreni olarak, erkeklik çalışmaları çerçevesinde toplumsal cinsiyet kimliğinin oluşumu ve performansına ilişkin zengin bir araştırma alanı sunmaktadır.

Bu ritüeller, askeri kurum içinde erkeklik fikirlerinin sürdürülmesini ve uygulanmasını görmek için bir prizma sunar. Geleneksel erkeklik fikirleri, fiziksel dayanıklılık ve dayanıklılığa vurgu yapmanın yanı sıra cesaret ve fedakârlığa da değer veren ve toplumsal cinsiyetin alternatif ifadelerini marjinalleştiren askerlik dönüm noktası ile desteklenmektedir. Askerlik hizmeti, Türkiye'deki tüm *uygun erkek* vatandaşların yerine getirmesi gereken, devlet tarafından zorunlu kılınmış bir sorumluluktur.

Devletin zorunlu askerlik görevine dahil olması, askerliğe diğer geçiş törenlerine (sünnet, cinsel deneyim gibi) kıyasla benzersiz bir anlam ve karakter kazandırır. Askerlik hizmetini bir yurttaşlık yükümlülüğüne ve ulusa bağlılık gösterisine dönüşmektedir. Askere alınmadan eğitim ve konuşlandırmaya kadar tüm zorunlu askerlik süreci, hükümetin bu doğrudan katılımı ile şekillenmektedir. Kesin kurallar, düzenlemeler ve bunların ihlaline yönelik cezalar içeren kodlanmış bir çerçeve oluşturarak insanların geçiş törenlerini yapmalarına olanak tanır.

Foucault'cu bakış açısı ile ele alındığında, askerlik hizmeti, devletin ulusal savunma ve güvenlik amacıyla bireylerin bedenleri ve davranışları üzerinde kontrol uygulamasını içerdiği için biyoiktidarın bir tezahürü olarak görülebilir. Sünnet gibi kültürel açıdan önemli geçiş törenleri önemli olsa da askerlik hizmeti, devletin insanların hayatlarını düzenlemek ve yönetmek için doğrudan müdahale etmesi nedeniyle benzersizdir. Foucault'ya göre bu müdahale, siyasi örgütlerin seçmenlerinin fiziksel görünüm ve davranışlarını düzenlediği biyoiktidar pratiğini temsil eder. Orduda hizmet etmeye zorlanan kişiler, askeri ortamlarda standart olan eğitim, disiplin prosedürleri ve izleme tekniklerine tabi tutulurlar. Bu düzenleme yetkisi sadece fiziksel eğitimi değil, aynı zamanda vatandaşlığın psikolojik ve entelektüel yönlerini de kapsar ve insanların görev, itaat ve devlete sadakat algılarını etkiler. Bedelli askerlik, insanların daha uzun hizmet sürelerinden muafiyet satın almalarını sağlayarak, askerlik görevlerinin metalaştırılması anlamına gelebilmektedir.

Zorunlu askerlik hizmeti olan ülkelerin sayısı giderek azalırken, birçoğu askere gitmek istemeyenler için alternatif kamu hizmeti seçenekleri sunuyor. Türkiye bugün

bedelli askerliğin uygulandığı tek ülke olarak öne çıkıyor. Türkiye'de bedelli askerlik uygulaması, erkeklik ve askerlik görevine ilişkin yerleşik kabullerde önemli değişiklikler meydana getirmekte ve bunları sorgulamaktadır. Geleneksel askerlik görevi genellikle katı kurallar, düzenlemeler ve uzun süreli bağlılık gerektiren bir görev olarak nitelendirilir. Öte yandan, bedelli askerlik hizmeti daha fazla erişilebilirlik ve esneklik sunarak, maddi imkânı olan bireylerin geleneksel askerlik hizmeti ile aynı düzeyde katılık ve bağlılık olmaksızın askeri yükümlülüklerini yerine getirmelerine olanak tanımaktadır. Bu noktalar, iki askerlik türünü birbirinden ayıran temel bir özelliklerdir.

Bedelli askerlik seçeneğiyle, maddi durumu elverişli olanlar ve bunu isteyenler, geleneksel hizmetin uzun süreli taahhüdüne girmek zorunda kalmadan askerlik görevlerini yerine getirebilmektedir. Bu değişiklik, uzun süreli askerlik hizmetiyle ilişkilendirilen geleneksel erkeklik fikirlerini zayıflamasına ve sivil sorumluluklara yönelik değişen tutumlar olup olmadığını sorgulatmaktadır. Bedelli askerliği tercih etme kararı, vatanseverlik ve görevle ilgili değişen algıları yansıtmaktadır. Bedelli askerlik, ulusal güvenliğe yapılan mali katkıların kişinin ülkesine karşı görevini yerine getirmesinin meşru bir biçimi olarak görüldüğü pratik bir yöntem sunarken, geleneksel hizmet tipik olarak bir cesaret ve fedakarlık sınavı olarak algılanmaktadır. Yurttaşlık görevlerinin yerine getirilmesinde mali yeteneklere ve özerkliğe daha fazla vurgu yapan bu bakış açısı değişikliği, geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri ve erkeklik fikirleriyle çelişki içerisinde olması araştırmayı gerektirmektedir.

Bu çalışma, bedelli askerlik yapabilecek maddi imkânlara sahip olmalarına rağmen geleneksel askerlik hizmetini (6 veya 12 ay) tercih eden bireylerin karar verme faktörlerini araştırmayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma özellikle, askerlik hizmetine ilişkin tercihlerin toplumsal beklentiler, erkeklik idealleri ve stereo tiplerin kesişiminden nasıl etkilendiğini anlamaya çalışmaktadır. Bu çalışmanın ana araştırma konusu, üst-orta sınıf Türk erkeklerinin erkeklik, sosyal statü ve askerlik hizmeti ile olan karmaşık ilişkilerini incelemektedir. Daha spesifik olarak, iki grubun, maddi avantajlara rağmen orduda kalmayı tercih edenler ve etmeyenler, sahip olduğu farklı erkeklik görüşlerini ve fikirlerini anlamaktır. Bu erkeklerin, özellikle ayrıcalıklı

sosyoekonomik konumları ışığında, vatani görev ve ülkeye bağlılık duygularını nasıl algıladıklarını keşfetmek bu araştırmanın merkezinde yer almaktadır.

Askerlik hizmeti hikayesi sadece bir kişinin öyküsü değil; Türkiye'de erkek (ve daha dolaylı da olsa kadın) olmanın ne anlama geldiğini anlamaya çalışan pek çok kişinin deneyimlerinin bir yansıması olarak ele alınmalıdır. Bu tez, erkek dışı kimliklerin istenmediği, ancak bu kurumun etkisinin tüm toplumda hissedildiği bir alana yönelik bir soruşturma sunmaktadır. Bu araştırma bu anlatılar aracılığıyla askerlik hizmeti ile erkeklik inşası arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi aydınlatmayı hedeflemektedir. Geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine tabi olmak ile toplumsal cinsiyetin akışkanlığını kabul etmek arasındaki karmaşık etkileşim bu araştırmada kabul edilmektedir. Kültürel beklentilerin karmaşık ağında gezinmeyi, geleneklere meydan okumaktan doğan merakı tanımayı ve insanların toplumsal cinsiyeti algılama ve ifade etme biçimlerinin çeşitliliğini takdir etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma, hangi tür askerlik hizmetinin yapılacağını seçmenin ardındaki motivasyonlara ışık tutmayı amaçlamakta ve erkeklik inşasında askerlik hizmetinin önemini sorgulamaktadır. Bu tez kapsamında orta üst sınıf kapsamında değişen sosyokültürel ortamda askerliğin rolü ve önemi incelemekte ve bedelli askerlik sisteminin var olan sosyokültürel ortamla ilişkisi anlaşılmaya çalışılmaktadır.

BÖLÜM 1

GİRİŞ

Tarihsel olarak, askerlik erkeklik fikri ve erkeklerin sosyal entergasyonunu büyük ölçüde etkileyen geçiş törenlerinden biri olarak yer almıştır. Diğer geçiş törenlerinden farklı olarak askerlik, devletin zorunlu kıldığı bir görev olarak yer almaktadır. Türk Anayasası'na göre, Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'nin her erkek vatandaşı askerlik yapmakla yükümlüdür. Devletin zorunlu askerlik hizmetine dahil olması, askerliğe diğer geçiş törenlerine (sünnet, cinsel deneyim gibi) kıyasla benzersiz bir anlam ve karakter kazandırır. Askerlik hizmetini bir yurttaşlık yükümlülüğüne ve ulusa bağlılık gösterisine dönüşmektedir.

Zorunlu askerlik hizmeti olan ülkelerin sayısı giderek azalırken, Türkiye bugün bedelli askerliğin uygulandığı tek ülkedir. Türkiye'de bedelli askerlik uygulaması, erkeklik ve askerlik görevine ilişkin yerleşik kabullerde önemli değişiklikler meydana getirmekte ve bunları sorgulamaktadır. Geleneksel askerlik görevi genellikle katı kurallar, düzenlemeler ve uzun süreli bağlılık gerektiren bir görev olarak nitelendirilir. Öte yandan, bedelli askerlik hizmeti daha fazla erişilebilirlik ve esneklik sunarak, maddi imkânı olan bireylerin geleneksel askerlik hizmeti ile aynı düzeyde katılık ve bağlılık olmaksızın askeri yükümlülüklerini yerine getirmelerine olanak tanımaktadır. Bu noktalar, iki askerlik türünü birbirinden ayıran temel bir özelliklerdir.

Bedelli askerlik seçeneğiyle, maddi durumu elverişli olanlar ve bunu isteyenler, geleneksel hizmetin uzun süreli taahhüdüne girmek zorunda kalmadan askerlik görevlerini yerine getirebilmektedir. Bu değişiklik, uzun süreli askerlik hizmetiyle ilişkilendirilen geleneksel erkeklik fikirlerini zayıflamasına ve sivil sorumluluklara yönelik değişen tutumlar olup olmadığını sorgulatmaktadır. Bedelli askerliği tercih etme kararı, vatanseverlik ve görevle ilgili değişen algıları yansıtmaktadır. Bedelli askerlik, ulusal güvenliğe yapılan mali katkıların kişinin ülkesine karşı görevini yerine getirmesinin meşru bir biçimi olarak görüldüğü pratik bir yöntem sunarken, geleneksel hizmet tipik olarak bir cesaret ve fedakarlık sınavı olarak algılanmaktadır. Yurttaşlık görevlerinin yerine getirilmesinde mali yeteneklere ve özerkliğe daha fazla vurgu yapan bu bakış açısı değişikliği, geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri ve erkeklik fikirleriyle çelişki içerisinde olması araştırmayı gerektirmektedir

Günümüzde bazı erkeklerin askerlik hizmetinin toplumsal değerine bakışlarında bir değişim olduğu görülmekte ve bu değişimi gözlemlemek ve anlamak toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri, erkeklik fikri ve kültürel normlar ile ilgili analiz imkanı sunmaktadır.

Buradan hareketle, bu çalışma şu temel soruyu soruları yanıtlamaya çalışmaktadır: “Türkiye’deki erkeklerin askerlik hakkındaki görüşleri, erkekliğe ilişkin fikirleri ve toplumun beklentilerine ilişkin algıları kısa dönem bedelli (güncel durumda 28 gün) ve uzun dönem (6 ya da 12 ay) askerlik arasında seçim yapma kararlarını nasıl etkiliyor?”

Bununla birlikte, erkelik ve sınıf arasındaki kompleks ilişkiyi aydınlatmaya yönelik şu sorular yanıtlanmaya çalışılmaktadır: "İmkanları olmasına rağmen neden bir grup bedelli askerliği düşünmüyor? Askerlik onlar için ne ifade ediyor? Askerlik yapmanın erkeklik anlayışlarında nasıl bir rolü var? İki grubun farklı tercihlerinin ardındaki sosyal faktörler nelerdir? Peki bunları daha kısa süreli ücretli askerlik hizmetini tercih eden diğer gruplardan ayıran özellikler neler?"

Bu çalışma, benzer sosyoekonomik durumlarda olan bir kısmı kısa süreli (bedelli askerlik) bir kısmı ise daha uzun süreli askerlik hizmetini tercih eden iki erkek grubunun askerlik hizmetine yüklediği anlamlardaki farklılığı, erkekliğe dair farklı algıları araştırmaktadır. Çalışmanın amacı, bedelli askerlik yapabilecek maddi imkânlara sahip olmalarına rağmen geleneksel askerlik hizmetini (6 veya 12 ay) tercih eden bireylerin karar verme faktörlerini araştırmaktadır.

Bu tez, erkek dışı kimliklerin istenmediği, ancak bu kurumun etkisinin tüm toplumda hissedildiği bir alana yönelik bir soruşturma sunmaktadır. Bu araştırma bu anlatılar aracılığıyla askerlik hizmeti ile erkeklik inşası arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiyi aydınlatmayı hedeflemesi bakımından önem taşımaktadır.

BÖLÜM 2

LİTERATÜR TARAMASI

Bu tezin ana odağı, Türkiye'deki orta sınıf erkeklerin karmaşık görüş ve deneyimlerini araştıran erkeklik, sınıf kimliği ve zorunlu askerlik hizmetinin incelenmesidir. Erkeklik, sosyoekonomik statü, askerlik hizmeti ve karar alma süreçlerine ilişkin temel fikirler bu araştırmanın merkezinde yer almaktadır. Konuyla ilgili literatürü tespit etmek amacıyla Google Scholar, JSTOR gibi akademik veri tabanları ve arama motorları ile toplumsal cinsiyet, erkeklik ve sosyoloji alanlarındaki akademik dergiler kullanılarak kapsamlı bir literatür taraması yapılmıştır. Araştırma militarizm, erkeklik/erkeklik, hegemonik erkeklik, zorunlu askerlik, kısa dönem askerlik, bedelli askerlik, milliyetçilik, vatanseverlik, vatandaşlık gibi anahtar kelimeler üzerinden yürütülmüştür. Araştırma, erkeklik

çalışmalarının ortaya çıkmaya başladığı 1990'lardan günümüze kadar yayınlanmış yerli ve yabancı literatürle sınırlandırılmıştır. Erkeklik ve askerlik görevi arasındaki ilişkinin, erkeklik çalışmalarının ortaya çıktığı 1990'lardan günümüze kadar uluslararası literatürde sıklıkla feminist teori çerçevesinde geniş bir şekilde incelenmiş olsa da Türkiye bağlamındaki tartışma kademeli olarak gelişmiştir. Türkiye'de erkeklik ve askerlikle ilgili tartışmalar her zaman daha geniş milliyetçilik, vatandaşlık ve toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri temalarıyla iç içe geçmiştir. Ancak son yıllarda, bu konulara daha incelikli bir yaklaşım getirmeye yönelik artan bir ilgi söz konusudur. Bu çerçeve içinde literatür taraması 5 temel başlık altında incelenmiştir: Erkeklik Çalışmaları, Çoklu Erkekliklerin Anlaşılmasına İlişkin Bir Anlayışa Doğru, Askeri Çalışmalarda Feminist Perspektifler, Askeri Araştırmalarda Erkeklik Çalışmaları, Türkiye Bağlamında Erkeklik ve Askeri Literatür.

Erkeklik büyük bir sosyal yapının bileşeni olarak görülmekte ve bu sebeple erkeklik kavramına dair net bir tanım yapmak oldukça zordur. Erkeklik, yaygın olarak erkeklikle ilişkilendirilen özelliklere sahip olan ve olmayanlar kişileri ayıran tanımlayıcı bir faktör olarak işlev görmektedir ve kadınlığın tanımlanması üzerinden tanımlanır; kadınsı olmayan anlamına gelmektedir. Erkeklik ve kadınlık kavramları zamana, mekana, kültüre bağlı olarak değişim gösteren kavramlardır. Diğer bir yandan, erkekliğin farklı kültürlerde ve sosyal gruplarda farklı normlar, değerler ve beklentiler üzerinden farklı şekillerde kavramsallaştırıldığı görülmektedir. Connell (2005) erkeklerin belirli bir sosyal çevre içerisinde erkek kimlikleri üzerinden sergiledikleri davranış ve eylemleri erkeklik olarak tanımlamıştır. Diğer bir tanımlamada, Butler (1990) erkekliği eylemlerin biçimsel bir şekilde tekrarlanması aracılığıyla inşa edilen, yinelenen ve icra edilen bir kimlik olarak tanımlar ve erkekliğin sürekli değişim halinde olduğunu belirtmiştir. Tüm bunlardan yola çıkarak, erkekliğin sosyal karşılaştırmalar ve performanslar üzerinden sürekli olarak üretilen ve yeniden şekillendirilen akışkan ve bağlamsal olarak inşa edilmiş bir kimlik olduğunu söylemek mümkündür.

Feminizmin farklı dalgaları askerlik hizmeti ve kadınların rolü konusunda farklı görüşlere sahip olmuştur. Erken dönem feminist eleştiriler, özellikle de feminizmin birinci ve ikinci dalgalarında, kadınların resmi askeri organizasyonlara ve karar alma

süreçlerine katılımının eksikliğini sıklıkla vurgulamıştır. Bu eleştirilerde kadınların barışı sağlayan ve besleyen kişiler olduğu ve savaş ve barış hakkındaki konuşmalara kadınların bakış açılarının ve deneyimlerinin dahil edilmesi gerektiği savunulmuştur. Buna paralel olarak, çok sayıda çalışma ve Birleşmiş Milletler Kararı, kadınların barış inşası girişimlerine katılımının değerini vurgulamış ve çatışma çözümüne ve savaş sonrası yeniden yapılanmaya daha fazla dahil olmalarını savunmuştur. Bu tür tartışmalar, esas olarak toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin özselleştirilmesi yoluyla kadınların askeri süreçlere katılımını güçlendirmeyi amaçlarken, bu perspektifler, kalıba uymayanları marjinalleştirebilecek katı ve ikili toplumsal cinsiyet normlarını beslemekte ve bu kalıba uymayan insanları marjinalleştirebilmektedir.

Feminizmin birinci ve ikinci dalgalarının aksine, sonraki feminist hareketler kadınların şiddete hem dahil oldukları hem de şiddetten etkilendikleri çeşitli yolları vurgulamıştır. Örneğin, üçüncü dalga feministler toplumsal cinsiyetin cinsel yönelim, ırk ve sınıf gibi çeşitli toplumsal kimliklerle nasıl iç içe geçtiğini vurgulamış ve militarize edilmiş ortamlarda yaşayan özerkleşmiş kadınların deneyimlerine dikkat çekmiştir. Feminist teorisyenler, kadınların doğası gereği barışçıl olduğunu varsaymak yerine, toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı güç dinamiklerinin insanların şiddet, otorite ve militarist yapılarla ilişkilerini nasıl etkilediğini incelemiş, savaşa yönelik tutumlarda içsel toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliklerine ilişkin varsayımlara meydan okumuş ve askeri bağlamlarda toplumsal cinsiyet normlarının ve stereotiplerinin eleştirel bir şekilde incelenmesinin önemini vurgulamıştır.

Mevcut tez kapsamında, feminist literatürün askerliğe ve militarizme dair eleştirileri, maskülinite çalışmalarının ortaya çıkışı ve gelişimi, çeşitli ve çoğul masküliniteler, hegemonik erkeklik, hibrit erkeklik, işbirlikçi erkeklik, kesişimsellik, Türkiye'de erkeklik kurguları ve geçiş aşamaları gibi temalar üzerinden bir literatür analizi sunulmuştur.

Erkeklik çalışmalarının çeşitli ve çoğu zaman tartışmalı ortamında gezinirken, benim konumum, toplumsal cinsiyet kimliğinin sürekli değişen ve sabit olmayan doğasını kabul eden feminist bir bakış açısına dayanıyor. Judith Butler, Cynthia Enloe ve Raewyn Connell gibi akademisyenlerden ilham alarak, erkekliği statik bir özden

ziyade farklı koşullarda sürekli müzakere edilen, sosyal olarak inşa edilmiş bir terim olarak görüyorum. Feminist bir mercek kullanmak, Türkiye'deki orta sınıf erkeklerin askerlik görevi, sosyoekonomik konum ve erkeklik arasında kurdukları karmaşık ilişkileri daha iyi anlamama yardımcı oluyor. Araştırmam, toplumsal sistemlerde yerleşik olan cinsiyetçi güç dinamiklerinin farkında olarak, erkek olmanın ne anlama geldiğine dair geleneksel fikirlere karşı çıkan karmaşık bakış açıları sunmayı amaçlıyor.

BÖLÜM 3

METODOLOJİ

Bu tezin metodolojik çerçevesi feminist metodoloji ve feminist epistemolojiye dayanmaktadır. Bu yöntem, askerlik görevi bağlamında erkeklerin deneyimlerinin ve gündelik yaşamlarının karmaşık yönlerini araştıran çalışma konusunu tam olarak ele almak için gereklidir.

Bu zorlukların kapsamlı bir şekilde kavranabilmesi için en iyi stratejinin nitel araştırma yöntemi olduğu belirlenmiştir. Katılımcıların yaşam deneyimlerinin ve toplumsal cinsiyet dinamiklerine ilişkin bakış açılarının derinlemesine incelenmesi bu metodoloji sayesinde mümkün olmuştur. Açık uçlu, yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme soruları, katılımcılardan derinlemesine anlatımlar ve bakış açıları elde etmek için kullanılmıştır.

Metodolojide, çalışmanın konusuna ilişkin geniş bir yelpazede kapsamlı bakış açıları sunabilecek katılımcıları seçmek için amaçlı örnekleme ve kartopu örnekleme kullanılmıştır. Çalışma, amaçlı örneklemenin kullanılması sayesinde askerlik deneyimi ve üst-orta sınıf geçmişi gibi belirli kriterlere sahip katılımcıları dahil edebilmiştir. Kartopu örneklemesi, ilk görüşmecilerin yönlendirmesiyle yeni katılımcıların belirlenmesini sağlayarak örneklemin çeşitliliğini artırmıştır.

Derinlemesine görüşmelerden elde edilen nitel bilgilerin incelenmesinde kullanılan temel teknik tematik analizdir. Bu yöntemle, katılımcıların anlatılarında örüntüler,

temalar ve kategoriler aranarak erkeklik, askerlik hizmeti ve toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifleri hakkında altta yatan anlamlar ve nüanslar ortaya çıkarılmıştır.

Yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmelerin amacı, katılımcıların erkeklik, askerlik hizmeti ve toplumun beklentilerine ilişkin bakış açıları, deneyimleri ve algıları hakkında daha fazla bilgi edinmekti. Görüşme soruları, askerlik görevine ilişkin anlatılar, hizmet öncesi deneyimler, askerlik hizmeti sırasındaki ve sonrasındaki deneyimler ve erkeklik ve askerlik hizmetine ilişkin görüşler gibi bir dizi ana tema altında kategorize edilmiştir.

Görüşülen kişilerin yaşları 24 ve 34 arasında değişmekte olup, yaşamın çeşitli evrelerinden çeşitli bakış açılarını garanti etmektedir. Ek olarak, önemli bir kriter çalışmanın ücret aralığı da asgari ücretin minimum iki katı fazlası gelir sahibi olmaktı. Bununla birlikte, geleneksel askerlik yapan kişilere ulaşmadaki zorluklar ve Türkiye'nin ekonomik koşulları göz önüne alındığında, daha geniş bir deneyim ve bakış açısı yelpazesi yakalamak için önceden belirlenmiş kriterlerin az farkla altında kalan kişiler de dahil edilmiştir. Bu dahil etme, verilerin zenginliğini ve derinliğini artırmakta ve Türkiye'nin üst-orta sınıf demografisi bağlamında toplumsal cinsiyet algıları, askerlik hizmeti ve erkekliğin kapsamlı bir şekilde incelenmesine yardımcı olmaktadır.

Veriler ortalama bir görüşme bir buçuk iki saat arası sürecek şekilde toplanmıştır. Araştırmacının tercihine ve pratik faktörlere bağlı olarak video görüşmeleri veya yüz yüze görüşmeler yapılmıştır. Görüşme verilerinin kelimesi kelimesine transkripsiyonlarını tematik olarak analiz ederek katılımcılar arasında tekrar eden temaları, örüntüleri ve farklılıkları belirlemek mümkün olmuştur. Bu analiz sırasında MAXQDA yazılımdan faydalanılmıştır.

Tüm araştırma süreci boyunca, bilgilendirilmiş onam alma, anonimlik ve gizliliği koruma ve insan deneklerle araştırma kurallarına uyma dahil olmak üzere etik konulara titizlikle dikkat edildi. Metodolojinin sonuçları, Türkiye'nin üst-orta sınıf demografisi bağlamında erkeklik, sosyal normlar ve askerlik hizmeti arasındaki karmaşık ilişkiye dair önemli iç görüler sunmaktadır.

BÖLÜM 4

TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET VE İDEAL ERKEKLİK ALGILARI- ERKEKLİK NORMLARINDA GEZİNMEK

Bu bölüm, katılımcıların ideal erkekliği nasıl gördükleri, erkekliği bozabilecek herhangi bir şey olup olmadığı ve kadınlarla erkekler arasında herhangi bir fark olup olmadığı gibi sorulara ilişkin erkeklik ve toplumsal cinsiyet algıları hakkında bir resim sunmayı amaçlamaktadır. Burada ideal erkeklik ile hem fiziksel hem de fiziksel olmayan özellikler arasında bağlantılar olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Bedelli askerlik hizmeti katılımcıları genellikle cinsiyetten bağımsız olarak insanlık boyutunu vurgulamakta ve saygılı olmak gibi cevaplar vermektedir. Ancak güç, karizma, koruyabilme gibi geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet rol ve normlarını da cevaplarına dahil etmektedirler. Uzun dönemde ise insanlığa yapılan vurgu oldukça düşüktür ancak cevaplar yine de geleneksel olmayan toplumsal cinsiyet normları ve geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet normları olarak adlandırılabilecek unsurları içermektedir. Erkekliği bozan şeylerle ilgili olarak, iki grup arasındaki ortak cevap güç uygulamak, gücünü kötüye kullanmaktır (daha zayıf olanlar üzerinde). Buna ek olarak, yine bedelli katılımcılar insanlık boyutuna vurgu yaparak sorumluluk almak, koruyucu olmak ve 'bro-code'u bozmamaktan bahsetmektedir. Uzun dönem için verilen cevaplar arasında nazik ve kibar olmamak ve başkalarının arkasından konuşmak da yer almaktadır. Kadınlar ve erkekler arasındaki farklılıklara ilişkin olarak, hormonlar, üreme sistemleri, kas yapıları vb. dahil olmak üzere fizyolojik farklılıklar yaygın bir popüler cevap olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Buna ek olarak, düşünme biçimleri ve bir konuya yaklaşma yolları, duygusallık da dile getirilmiştir.

Özetle, kısa dönem askerlik yapan katılımcılar cevaplarında erkekliğe ve bunun baskısına odaklanmaktan ziyade, cinsiyetten bağımsız olarak nasıl iyi bir insan olunabileceğine vurgu yapıyorlar. Burada, toplumun erkeklere yüklediği sorumluluk ve beklentilerden duyulan bıkkınlık hissedilmektedir. Bedelli ve uzun dönem katılımcıları arasındaki ortak cevaplar gücün kötüye kullanılmasıdır. Her iki grubun da toplumsal beklentilerin çok farkında olduğunu görüyoruz. Bu anlarda kendini

farklı konumlandırmak ve alternatif erkekliklerin mümkün olduğunu savunmak, nezaket ve kibarlık gibi nitelikleri vurgulamak dikkat çekiyor. Ayrıca, uzun dönem askerlik yapan grup için insanlığa yapılan vurgu çok daha az veya gizli. Bunlarla ilgili bir belirsizlik de söz konusudur ki bu da başlangıçta kavramlarla ilgili olası bir kafa karışıklığı veya kopukluğa işaret etmektedir. Yalan, aldatma ve kandırma gibi özelliklere de odaklanılmaktadır.

Toplanan veriler bize toplumsal cinsiyet algılarının karmaşıklığını ve gerçek hayattaki yansımalarını göstermektedir. Başlangıçta benim de yaptığım gibi, kısa dönem askerlik hizmeti katılımcılarının uzun dönem askerlik hizmetine kıyasla geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet algılarından daha kopuk oldukları varsayılabilir. Ancak bu araştırma, ilişkinin bu kadar basit olmadığını ortaya koymaktadır. Öncelikle, toplumsal cinsiyet normları ve ideallerinden hızla kopmak o kadar da kolay değildir, özellikle de bu avantajlı konumdan birçok yönden faydalanıyorsanız. Elbette kısa dönem askerlik yapanlar arasında geleneksel erkeklik normlarını içselleştiren ve destekleyenler olduğu gibi, uzun dönem askerlik yapanlar arasında toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine bazı açılardan daha esnek bakanlar da olabilir. Bu farklılıklar, insan kimliklerinin ve deneyimlerinin zenginliğini ve çeşitliliğini göstermekte, insanların her zaman tek bir gruba girmeyen çeşitli değerlere ve fikirlere sahip olabileceğini ortaya koymaktadır. Farklı bakış açıları ve çeşitli toplumsal cinsiyet anlayışları, kısa ve uzun dönem askerlik hizmeti grupları arasında erkeklik idealleri ve toplumsal cinsiyet algılarının karşılaştırmalı bir analizi ile ortaya konmaktadır. Her iki grup da yerleşik toplumsal cinsiyet normları ve stereotiplerinin varlığını kabul etmekle birlikte, vurgu ve analiz düzeyindeki farklılıklar kişisel deneyimler ile toplumun beklentileri arasında var olan karmaşık ilişkiyi vurgulamaktadır. Yetiştirilme tarzı, kültürel etkiler, bireysel deneyimler ve toplumun beklentileri gibi çok çeşitli koşulların insanların fikir ve davranışlarını etkilediğini kabul etmek kritik önem taşımaktadır. Köklü sosyalleşme veya kültürel normlar nedeniyle, bazı insanlar daha ilerici veya kapsayıcı tutumları teşvik edebilecek faaliyetlere veya ortamlara katılmalarına rağmen geleneksel erkeklik fikirlerine bağlı kalmaya devam edebilir veya tam tersi olabilir.

Katılımcıların toplumsal cinsiyet algıları dikkatli bir şekilde analiz edildiğinde, erkeklerin toplumsal cinsiyet normlarının korunmasına aktif olarak katkıda

bulunurken aynı zamanda farklı derecelerde bu normları sorgulayan veya onlara meydan okuyan şekillerde hareket ettiklerini kabul eden karmaşık erkeklik özellikleri gösterdikleri ortaya çıkmaktadır. Çalışma katılımcıları bu karmaşıklığı, erkek olmanın ne anlama geldiğine dair geleneksel fikirlere bağlı kalmanın ve bunlardan sapmanın bir kombinasyonunu sergileyerek göstermektedir. Bu geleneksel özelliklerin yanı sıra, katılımcılar erkek olmanın ne anlama geldiğine dair geleneksel nosyona aykırı eylemler de sergilemektedir. Örnek olarak, pek çok katılımcı kısıtlamama, empati ve saygı gibi erdemleri vurgulamaktadır; bunlar sıklıkla daha ilerici ve kapsayıcı bir toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri anlayışıyla bağlantılı olan niteliklerdir. Bu, erkeklerin toplumsal cinsiyet kimliklerini müzakere ettikleri karmaşık yolları aydınlatarak, geleneksel geleneklere karşı bir meydan okuma ya da bir tür direnç ortaya koymaktadır. Bu ilişki, erkeklerin hem geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet normlarını zorlaştıran ve bunlarla çelişen hem de bunlardan yararlanan eylemlere katılabileceğini kabul eden işbirlikçi erkeklik kavramı kullanılarak daha iyi anlaşılabilir. Modern kültürde toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerinin ve erkekliğin nüanslarını deşifre etmek bu incelikli anlayışı gerektirmektedir.

Bedelli ve uzun askerlik hizmeti gruplarının kadınların orduda görev almasına yönelik görüşlerine bakıldığında dikkate değer bir örüntü ortaya çıkmaktadır. Uzun dönem askerlik yapan grup, farklı gereklilikler ve sınırlamalar olsa da kadınların askerlik hizmeti potansiyelini kabul etme eğilimindedir. Uzun dönem askerlik hizmeti katılımcılarından biri, kadınların askerlik hizmeti için gerekli fiziksel güce sahip olmayabileceğini özellikle belirtmektedir. Bu görüş, aynı grup içindeki çoğunluktan farklı olsa da fiziksel güce ilişkin tipik bir toplumsal cinsiyet stereotipini temsil etmektedir. Çekinceleri veya tercihleri olsa da uzun dönem askerlik hizmetinin geri kalan üyeleri genellikle kadınların bir tercih meselesi veya ülkeye karşı bir görev olarak askerlik yapabilecekleri konusunda hemfikirdir. Ayrıca bir katılımcı, kadınlara biçilen roller nedeniyle kadınların orduya uyum sağlayamadığını savunmaktadır. Uzun dönem askerlik yapan bir kişinin, cinsiyetten bağımsız olarak evrensel askerlik hizmetini desteklediğini görmek ilginçtir. Bu bakış açısı, tüm Türk vatandaşlarının eşit yurttaşlık sorumluluklarına sahip olduğu fikrini vurgulamakta ve ulusal görev ve vatanseverliğe cinsiyete özgü rollerden daha fazla değer vermektedir. Bedelli askerlik grubu ise daha pratik ve faydacı bir yaklaşım benimsemektedir. Bakış

açılarında bazı farklılıklar olsa da bu grup genel olarak kadınların, özellikle de maddi ihtiyaçlarına veya kişisel tercihlerine uygunsa, askerlik yapabileceklerini kabul etmektedir. Burada mali teşvikler ve gönüllülük gibi pratik faktörler, cinsiyete dayalı sınırlamalardan daha fazla önemsenmektedir.

Katılımcıların, eğitimsiz ve kırsal bölgelerden gelenlerle aralarına mesafe koymanın yanı sıra, geleneksel ve toksik toplumsal cinsiyet normlarıyla da aralarına mesafe koydukları söylenebilir. Burada dikkat çeken iki nokta var: birincisi gücü kullanma ve kötüye kullanma, ikincisi ise geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet normları nedeniyle kişinin hayatını kısıtlamasıdır. Katılımcılar kendilerini güçlerini kötüye kullananlardan, yani kendilerinden daha zayıf olanlara (bu kadınlar, çocuklar, hayvanlar olabilir) şiddet uygulayanlardan ayırmakta ve bunun erkekliğe aykırı olduğunu söylemektedir. İkinci olarak, kişiler geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet normları nedeniyle kişinin yaşamını kısıtlaması noktasına odaklanarak kendini geleneksel erkeklik normlarına çok bağlı kişilerden de farklı tuttuklarını ifade etmektedir.

Erkeklerin geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet normlarını hem desteklediğini hem de bunlara karşı çıktığını kabul eden işbirlikçi erkeklik kavramı bu çalışmada incelenmiştir. Çalışma katılımcıları bu ikilemi, erkek olmanın ne anlama geldiğine dair basmakalıp fikirlere hem uyan hem de bu fikirlerden uzaklaşan şekillerde hareket ederek sergilemektedir. Örneğin, empati ve kısıtlayıcı olmama gibi sosyal standartlara aykırı nitelikler sergileyebilirler, ancak aynı zamanda geleneksel erkekliğe uygun olarak fiziksel güce öncelik verebilirler. Kavramın, günümüz toplumunda erkeklerin toplumsal cinsiyet kimliği müzakerelerini anlamadaki faydası, karmaşıklığı ile vurgulanmakta ve erkeklik ve toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerinin incelenmesinde nüanslı bir yaklaşıma duyulan ihtiyacı ortaya koymaktadır.

Çalışmanın bulguları, erkeklerin çeşitli durumlarda eril kimliklerini nasıl ortaya koyduklarını ve müzakere ettiklerini göstererek Butler'ın bir performans olarak toplumsal cinsiyet teorisini desteklemektedir. Katılımcılar, performanslarında çeşitlilik ve karmaşıklık sergilemenin yanı sıra, güç, disiplin ve otorite gibi yaygın erkeklik fikirlerini yansıtan çeşitli eylem ve ifadelerde bulunmuşlardır. Bu çalışma, erkekliğin sabit bir özden ziyade dinamik ve bağlama bağlı bir performans olduğunu

vurgulamakta, akışkan ve bağlamsal doğasının altını çizmektedir. Erkekliğe performatif bir mercekten bakarak, insanların toplumsal cinsiyet kimliklerini daha geniş toplumsal çerçeveler içinde nasıl aktif olarak yarattıkları ve müzakere ettikleri hakkında daha fazla bilgi edinebiliriz. Bu bakış açısı, toplumsal cinsiyet normlarının daha eleştirel bir şekilde incelenmesini ve eril deneyimler yelpazesinin daha karmaşık bir şekilde anlaşılmasını teşvik eder.

BÖLÜM 5

VATAN, MILLET, VATANI GÖREV VE MİLLİYETÇİLİK GİBİ KONULARA İLİŞKİN ALGILAR

Bir toplumda kolektif sorumluluk duygusunun geliştirilmesinde ve vatandaşlık bağlarının güçlendirilmesinde önemli bir bileşen, Türkiye bağlamında 18 yaşını doldurmuş her sağlıklı erkeği kapsayan nitelikli bireyler için zorunlu askerlik görevini gerektiren zorunlu askerliktir. Vatandaşlar ülke savunmasında rol oynamak üzere silahlı kuvvetlerde görev aldıklarından, zorunlu askerlik aralarında ortak bir fedakarlık duygusunu besler. Benzer zorluklar ve deneyimler yaşamış insanlar, eğitim, silahlı kuvvetlerde hizmet etme ve muhtemelen ülkeleri için hayatlarını tehlikeye atma deneyimlerini yaşadıkları için birbirlerine güçlü bir şekilde bağlanırlar. Sosyal, ekonomik ve kültürel ayrımların ötesinde, fedakarlık, görev ve ulusu korumaya adanmışlık duygusu vatandaşlar arasındaki ve onlarla devlet arasındaki bağları güçlendirebilir. Zorunlu askerlik aynı zamanda insanların hükümetle etkileşimlerini geliştirerek vatandaşlık bağlarını da güçlendirir. Askere alınanlar, askerlik görevi yoluyla ülkelerinin güvenliğini ve egemenliğini korumaya aktif katkıda bulunanlar olarak sorumlulukları hakkında daha iyi bilgi sahibi olurlar. İnsanlar ulusun genel güvenliğini ve refahını destekleme konusundaki vatandaşlık görevlerinin farkına vardıkça, bu deneyim ülkeye bağlılık ve aidiyet duygusunu geliştirir.

Askerliğin erkeklerin hayatında çok önemli ve dönüştürücü olduğu yaygın olarak iddia edilse de bu tezin bulguları, bu tezin hedef grubu için askerlik hizmetinin bir yaşam dönüm noktası teşkil etmediğini göstermektedir. Katılımcılar askerlik öncesi

ve sonrasına ilişkin önemli bir değişim belirtmemektedir. Bunun yerine, çoğunlukla bir zorunluluk, kurtulunması gereken bir şey olarak anlaşılmaktadır. Burada askerliğin bir amaç olarak değil, daha ziyade bir an önce kurtulmak ve hayatta ilerlemek için bir araç olarak görüldüğü söylenebilir. Tamamlamamak hedeflerin önünde bir engeldir. Dolayısıyla askerliği tamamlamak onlar için adam olmak anlamına gelmiyor, aksine hedeflerin önünde engel olmadığı, onları kısıtlayan bir şey kalmadığı anlamına geliyor.

Toplanan veriler, toplumsal cinsiyet kalıp yargılarının karmaşıklığını ve pratikteki uygulamalarını ortaya koymaktadır. Bazıları orduda daha kısa süre görev yapmış bireylerin, daha uzun süre görev yapmış olanlara kıyasla geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet normlarına daha az bağlı olduğunu düşünebilir. Ancak bu çalışma, ilişkinin bundan daha karmaşık olduğunu göstermektedir. Kısa dönem askerlik yapanlar arasında askerliğe ve milliyetçiliğe uzun dönem askerlik yapanlardan daha fazla değer verenler var. Uzun dönem askerlik yapanlar arasında milliyetçi duygulardan tamamen uzak olduğunu söyleyenler de vardır.

Araştırma, katılımcıların milliyetçiliği genellikle ülkeye ve topluma faydalı olmak üzerinden tanımladıklarını ortaya koyuyor. Görüşmeler dikkatlice analiz edildiğinde, merkezinde askerlik hizmetinin yer aldığı geleneksel milliyetçilik anlayışının katılımcılar için pek de geçerli olmadığı sonucuna varılıyor. Bu bağlamda, milliyetçilik anlayışının doğrudan askeri güçlere katılarak ulusa fayda sağlamaktan uzaklaştığı ve topluma fayda sağlama fikrine yöneldiği görülmektedir. Dolayısıyla vatana hizmet fikrinden bahsetmek mümkün ancak burada bir söylem kırılması söz konusu olmaktadır. Bu söylem kırılması 'vatana hizmet'ten ziyade 'topluma hizmet' şeklindedir. Geleneksel milliyetçilik anlayışında askerlik hizmeti milli hizmetin merkezinde yer alırken, bu dönüşümde askerlik hizmeti merkezde yer almıyor. Daha açık bir ifadeyle, katılımcılar askerlik yapmanın sadece birey için değil devlet için de faydalı olmadığını, çünkü uzun dönem askerliğin devlete maliyetinin oldukça büyük olduğunu düşünmektedir. Ayrıca askerlik süresince aslında ürettikleri ve faydalı oldukları alandan çalmak zorunda kaldıklarını, bunun da ülke ekonomisine eksi olarak döndüğünü ve ülkeye fayda sağlamadığını düşünmektedirler. Dolayısıyla

milliyetçilik algısı ilk modern devlet olan Cumhuriyet'in kurulduğu dönemdeki gibi değildir. Vatana hizmet fikri hala mevcuttur ama bu vatana hizmetle eşdeğer değildir.

Bu tez, askerlik hizmeti süresine ilişkin kararları etkileyen faktörleri anlamak için dört boyutlu bir tipoloji önermektedir. Bedelli askerlik grubu için tez, bunun pragmatik bir seçim olduğunu, zaman ve verimlilik hesaplaması ile disipline daha az maruz kalma gibi ana unsurları birleştirdiğini ortaya koymuştur. Öte yandan, uzun dönem askerlik hizmeti daha çeşitlidir ve üç ana nedenden oluşmaktadır. Macera için bir alan sağlayabilir, istikrarsız koşullar karşısında dengeleyici bir deneyim, belirsizlikte bir dayanak noktası sağlayabilir ve son olarak adil ve etik bir karar olabilir. Bedelli ve uzun dönem askerlik arasında bir karşılaştırma yapıldığında motivasyonlar, idealler ve sonuçlar açısından önemli farklılıklar ortaya çıkmaktadır. Kısa dönem askerlik hizmeti anlık maddi kazanç, zaman tasarrufu ve iş güvencesi gibi avantajlara sahiptir. Bununla birlikte, askerlik hizmetinin paraya çevrilmesi ve askeri olanaklara erişimin eşitliği ile ilgili ahlaki soruları gündeme getirmektedir. Öte yandan, uzun dönem askerlik hizmeti daha yüksek tehlikeler, etik ikilemler ve tehlikeli bölgelere gönderilme ve disipline maruz kalma gibi fedakarlıklar içerir, ancak aynı zamanda bir görev, onur ve ulusal güvenliğe adanmışlık duygusu da sunar. Bedelli ya da uzun dönem askerlik hizmeti ile ilgili karar erkekler için gerçekten de çok zor bir karardır ve çeşitli faktörleri kapsamaktadır. Kısa dönem, bedelli, literatüründe tartışma genellikle maliyet-fayda hesaplaması etrafında yoğunlaşmaktadır. Bu genellikle ekonomik rasyonalite ve kişisel çıkar ile ilişkilendirilir; karar ne kadar karlı ve pratik ya da ne kadar uygulanamaz ve karsız olduğuna göre verilir. Bu çalışmalar literatür için çok önemlidir ve benim tezim için de aydınlatıcıdır. Ancak burada belirtmek gerekir ki sadece kısa dönem askerlik yapanlar arasında değil, uzun dönem askerlik yapanlar arasında da çok ciddi ve derinlemesine bir karar verme süreci vardır. Bu iki grubu basit ve yüzeysel bir şekilde homojen birimler olarak ele almak yerine, grup içi farklılıkları da göz önünde bulundurmak gerekmektedir. Bu çalışma, sadece kısa dönem askerlik yapanların değil, uzun dönem askerlik yapanların da karar verme süreçlerini derinlemesine inceleyerek bu boyutu geliştirmeyi ummaktadır.

BÖLÜM 6

SONUÇ

Connell ve Messerschmidt (2005) erkekliğin insanların sadece fiziksel özelliklerinde bulunan sabit, doğal bir özellik olduğu fikrine katılmamaktadır. Bunun yerine, erkekliği belirli sosyal koşullar içinde şekillenen ve yürütülen dinamik bir uygulama konfigürasyonu olarak anlamaktadırlar. Bu bakış açısına göre, erkeklik tek ve değişmez bir kimlikten ziyade, çeşitli şekillerde sergilenebilen ve elde edilebilen bir davranışlar ve uygulamalar bütünüdür. Bu çerçevede, her biri belirli kültürel ve tarihsel bağlamlarda erkeklerin ve kadınların somutlaşmış davranışlarını temsil eden çeşitli erkeklik türleri vardır. West ve Zimmerman (1987) ayrıca toplumsal cinsiyetin statik bir özellikten ziyade sosyal etkileşimler yoluyla sürekli bir "toplumsal cinsiyet yapma" faaliyeti olduğunun altını çizmektedir. Erkekliği performatif bir perspektiften görerek, bireylerin toplumsal cinsiyet kimliklerini daha geniş kültürel çerçeveler içinde nasıl aktif olarak inşa ettikleri ve yönlendirdikleri konusunda daha fazla içgörü kazanabiliriz. Bu bakış açısı, toplumsal cinsiyet normlarının daha eleştirel bir şekilde analiz edilmesini ve eril deneyimler yelpazesinin daha derinlemesine anlaşılmasını teşvik eder.

Bu nedenle, Connell'ın (1995) da belirttiği gibi, erkeklikler yalnızca kadınlıkla bağlantılı olarak değil, aynı zamanda diğer erkeklik türlerine referansla da tanımlanmakta ve çeşitli ortamlarda hiyerarşik konumların gelişmesine neden olmaktadır. Dolayısıyla, erkeklik dinamik ve bağlama bağımlı bir karaktere sahiptir. Erkeklik son yıllarda önemli bir evrim geçirmekte ve geleneksel erkeklik tanımlarıyla bağlantılı katı normlardan ve eylemlerden kopuşu işaret eden, hakim önyargıların dayattığı kısıtlamaları aşan yeni erkekliklere yol açmaktadır. Erkekliğin bu değişen karakteri, hegemonik, hibrit, işbirlikçi, marjinalleştirilmiş ve toksik erkeklikler gibi erkeklikleri teorileştirmeye yönelik çeşitli girişimlerle yansıtılmaktadır.

Benzer bir çizgide, bu tez de erkekliklerin sabit olmadığı ve sürekli bir değişim, dönüşüm ve evrilme halinde olduğu idesi üzerine inşa edilmiştir. Tez boyunca

bazılarına vurgu yaptığım, erkeklikleri açıklamaya çalışan çeşitli kuramların ortaya çıkış nedenlerinden biri de aslında budur. Bu çeşitli ve giderek çeşitlenen kavramlar içinde önemli olan, kavramların sınırlılıklarının farkında olmak ve erkekliğin yaşayan bir olgu olduğunu unutmamaktır. Bu nedenle, erkeklikleri, başlıktan da anlaşılacağı üzere, zaman içinde erkekler ve erkeklikle ilgili değişen görüşleri, eylemleri ve rolleri vurgulayarak ve alternatif erkekliklere ve çeşitliliğe yer açarak evrilen bir olgu olarak görüyorum.

Bir diğer önemli sonuç ise kısa ve uzun dönemli gruplardaki çeşitlilik ve homojen olmama durumudur. Bu da bizi katılımcıları hibrit erkeklik teorisi ile değerlendirmeye yönlendirmektedir. Hibrit erkeklik teorisine göre, insanlar geleneksel ve geleneksel olmayan eril özelliklerin yönlerini birleştirerek kendi erkeklik anlayışlarını yaratırlar. Araştırma katılımcılarının askerlik görevine ilişkin çeşitli motivasyonları ve bakış açıları, hibrit erkeklik teorisiyle uyumlarını ortaya koymuştur. Örneğin bazı katılımcılar, asker stereotipiyle tutarlı olan fiziksel cesaret, yiğitlik ve koruyucu roller gibi stereotipik olarak erkeksi özellikleri örnek gösterebilir. Buna karşılık, bazıları finansal bağımsızlık, kişisel özerklik ve pratik karar verme gibi özelliklere daha fazla önem verebilir; bu özellikler kendine güven ve stratejik düşünmeye prim veren alternatif erkeklik özelliklerinin göstergesidir. Katılımcıların, pragmatizm ve kişisel hırslar gibi modern düşüncelerle geleneksel görev ve onur ideallerini dengeleyen çok yönlü askerlik hizmeti yaklaşımları, hibrit erkeklik teorisiyle uyum içinde olduklarının bir göstergesidir. İnsanların modern kültürde erkekliği tanımlama biçimleri değişken ve dinamiktir; insanlar kendi kimliklerini yaratmak için geleneksel ve geleneksel olmayan özellikleri bir araya getirmektedir. Bu durum eril fikirlerin kaynaşmasına da yansımaktadır.

Ayrıca, işbirlikçi erkeklik teorisi, erkeklerin geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet normlarını ikili olarak pekiştirdiğini ve bunlara karşı çıktığını kabul eden bir başka boyutun da bu çalışmada incelendiğini görmemize yardımcı olmaktadır. Çalışma katılımcıları bu ikilemi, erkek olmanın ne anlama geldiğine dair basmakalıp fikirlere hem uyan hem de bu fikirlerden uzaklaşan şekillerde hareket ederek sergilemektedir. Örneğin, empati ve kısıtlayıcı olmama gibi sosyal standartlara aykırı nitelikler sergileyebilirler, ancak aynı zamanda geleneksel erkekliğe uygun olarak fiziksel güce

öncelik verebilirler. Kavramın günümüz toplumunda erkeklerin toplumsal cinsiyet kimliği müzakerelerini anlamadaki faydası, karmaşıklığı ile vurgulanmakta ve erkeklik ve toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerinin incelenmesinde nüanslı bir yaklaşıma duyulan ihtiyacı ortaya koymaktadır. Bu nedenle, bu tezde odaklanılan evrimleşen erkeklik fikri, erkeklik üzerine farklı ancak bir arada var olan teorileri kapsamaktadır. Bu teoriler birbiriyle örtüşebilir ve çok önemli olmalarına rağmen kendi sınırlılıkları vardır. Dolayısıyla, bu kuramlardan birine bağlı kalmaktansa onlara çok yönlü birliktelikleri açısından yaklaşmak daha faydalı olacaktır. Bu nedenle, çeşitli erkeklikleri ve bunlarla ilgili teorileri kapsayacak şekilde evrilen erkeklikler terimini tercih ediyorum.

Modern vatandaşlığın temel bir gereği olan zorunlu askerlik, devletin anayasa ile erkek vatandaşlarına tanıdığı bir hak ve ödevdir. Tez boyunca bahsedilen tam vatandaşlık kavramı bu noktada hatırlanmalıdır. Erkekler askerliklerini yaptıktan sonra tam vatandaşlığın getirdiği ayrıcalıklardan faydalanırlar. Yuval-Davis'in (1997) işaret ettiği gibi, bir vatandaşlık görevi olarak askerliğe yüklenen anlamlar değişebilmektedir. Elbette bu anlamın değişmesi zaman almaktadır. Askerlik hizmetine yüklenen anlamın değişebileceğinin ilk göstergesi bedelli askerlik hizmetinin getirilmesi ve standartlaştırılmasıdır. İkinci bir gösterge ise bedelli dönem askerliğin popülaritesinin artması ve toplumdaki önyargılı düşüncelerin kırılmasıdır. Bedelli askerliğin ilk yıllarında askerliğe karşı bakış açısı çok daha gergin ve katıydı. Yaygınlığının artması önyargıların kırılmasında ve düşüncelerin değişmesinde etkili olmuştur. Tüm bu gelişmeler askerliğin erkeklerin erkekliği öğrendiği bir kurum olmaktan çıkmasında önemli rol oynamaktadır. Bu nedenle tez, erkeklerin askerliği erkekliğin temel yapıcısı olarak görmediği sonucuna varmaktadır.

Bu araştırmaya göre günümüzde milliyetçiliğe, modern devlet olan Cumhuriyet'in kurulduğu dönemdeki gibi bakılmıyor. Ülkeye hizmet etme kavramı hala var, ancak bu askerlik yapmakla aynı şey değil; kişinin yeteneklerine ve geçmişine bağlı olarak yetkin bir mühendis, avukat vb. olarak hizmet edilebilir. Burada bir söylem kırılması olsa da yine de ülkeye hizmet konusunu tartışabiliriz. Bu söylem kırılması "vatana hizmet" olmaktan ziyade "topluma hizmet "tir. Askerlik hizmeti geleneksel milliyetçilik anlayışında hala ulusal hizmetin merkezinde yer alırken, bu yeni

versiyonda yer almıyor. Dolayısıyla askerlikten farklı olarak topluma hizmet etmenin alternatif yolları ortaya çıkmaktadır. Buradan, vatanseverlik ve askerlik arasındaki geleneksel ilişkinin aksine, bu araştırmanın katılımcıları için askerliğin vatanseverlik algısının merkezinde yer almadığı sonucuna varmak mümkündür.

Toplanan verilere göre, katılımcılar askerlik görev süresi ile askerlik hizmetinin merkezinde yer aldığı geleneksel milliyetçilik veya vatanseverlik duygusu arasında doğrudan bir ilişki veya eşdeğerlik kurmuyor gibi gözükmektedir. Topluma faydalı olmanın bu çağdaş biçiminde, ülkeye duyulan sadakat ve sevgi, kişinin eğitim, vasıflı iş ve toplumda ilerleme gibi diğer yapıcı yollarla ülkeye fayda sağlama becerisi ile karakterize edilmektedir. Bu bakış açısı çerçevesinde, odağı zorunlu hizmetten uzaklaştırarak bireylerin eğitim ve deneyimlerini en üst düzeye çıkarabilecekleri alanlara yöneltmek, daha geniş kapsamlı bir vatanseverlik anlayışıyla tutarlıdır. Bu bakış açısı, vatanseverliğin askerlik hizmetinin ötesine geçtiğini ve çeşitli önlemler yoluyla toplumu iyileştirme taahhüdünü içerdiğini kabul etmektedir.

Sonuç olarak, çeşitli erkeklik normları, toplumsal cinsiyet algıları ve milliyetçilik, askerlik görevi ve vatandaşlık algıları arasında üçlü bir değişim ilişkisi vardır.
Bu, sadece erkekliklerin değil, milliyetçilik ve askerlik görevine ilişkin fikirlerin de değişip geliştiği ve bu dönüşümlerin iç içe geçtiği anlamına gelmektedir. Bunu üçlü bir dönüşüm olarak adlandırabiliriz- biri değiştiğinde diğerleri de değişir. Bu üçlü ilişki içerisinde karşılıklı bir etkiden bahsedilmektedir. Erkeklik ve milliyetçilik algılarındaki değişimler askeri sistemdeki dönüşümleri etkiliyor. Bedelli askerliğin yasalaşmasında askerlik yapma konusundaki isteksizlik ve ‘bedelli askerlik lobisi' olarak adlandırılan grubun yarattığı kamuoyu baskısı önemli olmuştur. Erkeklik ve milliyetçilik algılarındaki değişimler birbirini etkilemektedir. Buna bağlı olarak insanların askerliğe bakış açıları, verdikleri önem ve hatta devlete uyguladıkları baskı da değişmektedir.

Yeni ortaya çıkan bir akademik konu olmakla birlikte, bedelli askerlikle ilgili literatür şimdiye kadar çoğunlukla insanların bunu neden seçtiğine odaklanmıştır.
İnsanların imkânları olsa bile neden askerlik yapmamayı tercih ettiklerine dair herhangi bir araştırma bulunmamaktadır. Bu boşluğu gören bu tezin amacı, ne kadar

süre askerlik yapılacağına ilişkin kararları etkileyen faktörleri anlamaktır. Daha kısa dönem için elde edilen sonuçlar önceki literatürü desteklese de, uzun dönem hizmet seçme kararını etkileyen faktörlere ilişkin yeni içgörüler de ortaya koymaktadır. Bu tez, bir kararın askerlik hizmet süresini etkileyen değişkenleri tanımlamak için kullanılabilecek dört ana tipolojiye işaret etmektedir. Tez, kısa dönem askerlik yapan grup için bunun, zaman ve verimlilik hesaplaması gibi temel faktörleri disipline daha az maruz kalma ile birleştiren pragmatik bir seçim olduğu sonucuna varmaktadır. Pragmatik bir tercih olarak kısa dönem askerlikle ilgili olarak, tezin bulguları Gençoğlu Odabaşı (2016) ve Yirmidokuz ve Kahraman'ın (2021) argümanlarını desteklemektedir. Bu tezde açıklanan disipline daha az maruz kalma ve insandışılaştırma boyutuna ilişkin nokta, onların katkısına bir ek sağlamaktadır.

Ayrıca burada, geleneksel erkeklik kavramlarına ek olarak, bağımsızlık, mesleki başarı ve kişisel özerklik gibi özelliklere daha fazla değer veren alternatif erkeklik kavramlarının yaygın olarak kabul görmeye başladığını iddia etmek mümkündür; bununla birlikte, bedelliyi karşılayabilmek de kişinin erkekliğini onaylamanın bir yoludur. Erkekliğin bir temsili olarak mali gücün, erkekliğin diğer yönlerinden bağımsız bir kavram olmadığını kabul etmek zorunludur. Bedelli askerlik bağlamında, ekonomik zenginlik ve finansal güvenceyi seçen erkekler, geleneksel erkeklik kavramlarını her durumda bütünüyle reddetmiyorlar. Bunun yerine, erkekliği finansal bağımsızlık ve özerklik gibi şeyleri de içerecek şekilde daha geniş tanımlıyorlar. Bu kararı, özerkliklerini ve girişkenliklerini ifade etmenin bir yolu olarak okumak mümkündür; bu da bireysel tatmin ve seçime vurgu yapan erkeklik idealleri hakkında daha fazla kültürel değişimin habercisi olabilir. Bu durum kısmen bireyciliği ve benmerkezciliği güçlü bir şekilde teşvik eden kapitalizm ilkeleriyle de açıklanabilir; bu ilkeler rekabetçiliğe, kâr maksimizasyonuna ve bireysel performansa öncelik veren kapitalist çerçeveler tarafından daha da güçlendirilmiştir.

Öte yandan tez, uzun dönemli askerlik görevinin tercih edilmesinin üç temel nedenini ortaya koymuş ve bunun daha çeşitli olduğunu göstermiştir. Askerlik macera için bir yer sunabilir ve belirsiz koşullar karşısında istikrar sağlayıcı bir deneyim, karalar içinde bir demir atma noktası olabilir. Son olarak, adil ve ahlaki bir seçim olabilir. Macera boyutuyla ilgili olarak, askerlik yapan bazıları bunu yeni

yerler görmek, yeni insanlarla tanışmak ve ufuklarını normal sosyal çevrelerinin ve ortamlarının ötesine genişletmek için bir şans olarak görebilir. Rahat çevreden uzaklaşma izlenimi, kişinin kendini keşfetme ve bağımsızlık deneyimine katkıda bulunabilir. Bu macera ve keşif tutumu, günlük yaşamdan kopmanın ve yeni deneyimleri kucaklamanın bir yolu olarak orduya yazılmanın cazibesini artırmaktadır. Bu noktada risk alma, maceraperestlik ve erkeklik arasındaki ilişki de dikkat çekici bir noktadır. Macera tarafına baktığımızda, bireylerin anlatılarında askerliğin bireyin olgunlaşması ve hayata bakış açısının gelişmesi üzerinde olumlu etkileri olduğunu savunduklarını görebiliyoruz. Askerlikte geçirilen zaman, kendilerinden farklı olduğunu bildikleri ve başka koşullarda asla bir araya gelemeyecekleri insanlarla vakit geçirme fırsatı, yüksek disiplin altında kurulan dayanışma ağları ve arkadaşlık bağları, askerlik sonrasında ömür boyu anlatılabilecek anılar arasında yer alıyor ve ne kadar eğlenceli olduğu kadar ne kadar zor geçtiğine dair anlatılar olarak da karşımıza çıkabiliyor.

Tezde ortaya konan bu pragmatik seçim boyutu bizi Rasyonel Seçim Teorisini hatırlamaya sevk etmektedir. Bu teorik bakış açısına göre, tüm insan davranışları temelde rasyoneldir ve insanlar eylemlerini her bir seçeneğin potansiyel maliyet ve faydalarını dikkatlice tarttıktan sonra seçerler. İnsanların mantıksal değer ve fayda değerlendirmelerine dayalı olarak nasıl işlem ve alışveriş yaptıklarını inceleyen sosyal etkiletişim teorisi, rasyonel seçim teorisinin sosyal etkileşim araştırmalarını etkilemesinin bir yoludur. Araştırmacılar, sosyal etkiletişim teorisini ve rasyonel seçim teorisini sosyal olgulara uygulayarak, çeşitli ortamlardaki insanların ve grupların altında yatan güdülere ve karar verme süreçlerine ışık tutmayı ummaktadır. Araştırmacılar, sosyal etkiletişim teorisini ve rasyonel seçim teorisini sosyal olgulara uygulayarak, çeşitli ortamlardaki insanların ve grupların altında yatan güdülere ve karar verme süreçlerine ışık tutmayı ummaktadır. Teoriye göre, insanlar maliyetleri ve avantajları tartarak ve kazançları en üst düzeye çıkarırken masrafları en aza indirmeyi amaçlayarak değiş tokuşlara katılırlar. Bu teoriler, rasyonel karar verme ve kişisel çıkar arayışını vurgulayarak sosyal ve kişiler arası etkileşimlerde insan davranışını anlamak için sistematik ve açıklayıcı bir çerçeve sağlamayı amaçlamaktadır. Rasyonel seçim teorisine göre, insanlar "tercihlerini" temsil eden arzular veya hedefler tarafından yönlendirilir. Önceden belirlenmiş parametrelere ve

eylemlerini çevreleyen koşullara ilişkin sahip oldukları bilgiye uygun olarak hareket ederler. En temel haliyle, kısıtlamalar ve arzular arasındaki ilişki, basitçe teknik terimlerle bir araç ve bir amaç arasındaki bağlantı olarak anlaşılabilir. İnsanlar, tüm arzularını yerine getiremeyecekleri için, hedefleri ve bu hedeflere ulaşmak için kullanacakları yöntemler konusunda karar vermek zorundadırlar. Bu nedenle, insanlar kendileri için en iyi olana karar vermeden önce çeşitli seçeneklerin artılarını ve eksilerini tartarlar. Rasyonel insanları tatmin etme olasılığı en yüksek olan seçenek, seçtikleri seçenektir.

Rasyonel seçim teorisi, bireylerin askerlik göreviyle ilgili olarak yaptıkları kişisel seçimlere ışık tutabilir. Belirli bir hizmet türünü seçme kararı, toplumsal baskılar, mesleki beklentiler, ekonomik teşvikler ve kişisel güdüler de dahil olmak üzere çeşitli değişkenlerden etkilenir. Rasyonel seçim teorisi perspektifinden bakıldığında, erkekler orduda ne kadar süre hizmet edeceklerine ilişkin kararlarını, bedelli ve uzun dönem askerliğin fayda ve dezavantajlarını tartarak verirler. Rasyonel seçim teorisine göre erkekler, avantajlarının dezavantajlarından daha ağır bastığına inandıkları takdirde daha kısa bir süre için askere gitmeye karar verebilirler. Bu, kaybettikleri zaman karşılığında verdikleri paranın verimli olup olmadığını değerlendirdikleri anlık finansal istikrarı ön planda tutmak ve disiplinden kaçınmak gibi bir dizi faktörün sonucu olabilir. Bu hesaplamada, bu faktörlerin karar verme sürecini etkileyecek şekilde üst üste gelebileceğini ve bir arada bulunabileceğini belirtmek önemlidir. Disiplinden kaçınma konusunda bu kararı verebilmek için insanların bu finansal güce sahip olması gerekmektedir. Teori, bedelli askerlikle ilgili akademik literatürle uyumludur.

Türkiye'deki orta sınıf erkekler için askerlik görevinin erkekliklerini şekillendirmedeki rolünün azaldığı ve askerlikle bağlantılı geleneksel norm ve ideallerden uzaklaşıldığı sonucuna varmak mümkündür. Bu görüşmelerde dile getirilen önemli bir nokta, erkekliği tanımlayan bir özellik olarak askerlik hizmetinin azalan önemidir. Cesaret ve güç gibi geleneksel normlara alternatif olarak, insanlar sıklıkla kişisel tatmin, mesleki beklentiler ve finansal güvenlik gibi şeylere, yalnızca askerlik göreviyle ilişkilendirilen geleneksel eril kimlik kavramlarından daha fazla

değer vermektedir. Finansal güvence, önce kendine ve başkalarına bakabilmek, çok daha önemli bir erkeklik normu gibi görünmektedir.

Görüşmeler ayrıca, eril kimlik de dahil olmak üzere kişinin kimliğini oluşturmasında kişisel eylemlilik ve özerkliğin öneminin giderek daha fazla kabul gördüğünü göstermektedir. Katılımcılar, geleneksel askeri rollerin parametrelerinin ötesine geçen çeşitli deneyimleri, idealleri ve hedefleri dikkate alarak erkekliği kendi kriterlerine göre tanımlama arzusunu dile getirmektedir. Bu değişim, erkekliği daha kapsamlı ve kapsayıcı bir cinsiyet kimliği anlayışı açısından yeniden tanımlamaya yönelik daha geniş bir kültürel hareketin göstergesi olabilir. Sonuçlar, bireysel eylemselliği, çeşitli erkek deneyimlerini ve askerlerin rolünün yeniden değerlendirilmesini vurgulayarak geleneksel anlayıştan bir kopuşa işaret etmektedir.

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