

# A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ON GENDER-SENSITIVE MASCULINITY: “A WOMAN IS LIFE, WHAT HAPPENS TO A MAN AFTER LIFE?”

TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYETE DUYARLI BİR ERKEKLİK ÇALIŞMASI: EŞİ VEFAT EDENLERİN SOSYAL HAYATA KATILIMLARI

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## ÖZ

Bu araştırma, sosyal bilimlerde yapılan herhangi bir çalışmanın toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğine duyarlı olması gerektiği inancıyla tasarlanmış bir çalışmadır. Bu duyarlılığın hayatın daha fazla alanına yayılmasının cinsiyet eşitsizliği mücadelesine katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir. 50 yaş ve üstü 21 eşi vefat etmiş erkeklerle derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Bu nitel araştırma Türkiye'nin 3 farklı kentinde (İstanbul-Adana-Elazığ) yapılmıştır. Araştırmada, eşlerinin ölümünden sonra karşılaştıkları sorunlar ve bu sorunlarla başa çıkma stratejileri görüşmecilerle tartışılmıştır. Bütün bunların cinsiyet eşitsizliğini pekiştirdiği ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu çalışmanın toplumsal cinsiyete duyarlı çalışmalara katkısı, erkeklerin günlük yaşamlarında cinsiyet eşitsizliğine dair gizli söylemleri yakalama çabalarında gizlidir. Bu bağlamda çalışma, eşleri vefat eden erkeklerin arkadaş, çocuk veya akraba gibi çeşitli sosyal yaşam alanlarıyla yeniden ilişkilendirilmesine ilişkin nitel veriler içermektedir. Bu verilerin erkeklik ve toplumsal cinsiyet çalışmalarını harmanlayarak tartışılmasını, eril bir şekilde tasarlanan günlük yaşamın feminist bir eleştirisi olarak ele alınmasını sağlar.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *Toplumsal cinsiyet duyarlılığı, erkeklik, eşi vefat eden erkek, feminizm, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliği*

## ABSTRACT

This research is a study designed with the belief that any study in social sciences should be gender sensitive. It is thought that spreading sensitivity to gender equality in more areas of life will contribute to the struggle for gender inequality. In-depth interviews were conducted with 21 widowed men aged 50 and over. This qualitative research was carried out in Turkey's 3 cities (İstanbul-Adana-Elazığ). In the study, the problems faced by their husbands after their deaths and the strategies to cope with these problems were discussed with the participants. It turns out that all this reinforces gender inequality. The contribution of this study to gender-sensitive studies is hidden in men's efforts to capture hidden discourses on gender inequality in their daily lives. In this context, this study contains qualitative data on the re-association of men whose spouses have died with various areas of social life such as friends, children or relatives. Discussing these data by blending masculinity and gender studies enables the data to be treated as a feminist critique of daily life designed in a masculine way.

**Keywords:** *Gender sensitivity, masculinity, widow, feminism, gender equality*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In June 2020, there was a trend hashtag in twitter (in Turkey) was called #erkekyerinibilsin means man should know his territories or place. It was a social media action. Moreover, it was including a discourse of women to be against life styles which based on patriarchal system. Here, in the masculine system, the subject of some sentences that women constantly heard and resisted not to internalize was changed to male. This action was initiated to make gender-based inequality visible. Women, men and trans people supported it via individual Twitter posts, and municipalities or some non-governmental organizations conveyed their institutional support from the same platform.

This research was prepared by three women researchers about a year before the mentioned social media action. Researchers were trying to put an exclamation point to 'women should be more active than current situation in all areas of life' against the patriarchal rhetoric. It was set out with the intention of arguing that sensitivity to gender equality is not a fad, not just a research topic, but a point of view. There are undoubtedly a variety of ways to demonstrate this: sometimes scientific research, sometimes street movements, sometimes social media actions etc... This research tries to show the sensitivity to gender equality by revealing the inequality that men re-product in social life.

Connell (1993) argues that although the consciousness of feminism is widespread, feminism is not adopted by many men. Gender sensitive studies are common in studies that generally describe the inequalities experienced by women through women's narratives or statistics on this issue. Moreover, active work on this issue is carried out not only by academics, but also by various activist structures that embrace feminism. This research started out by questioning whether doing reverse reading would contribute to the field or not. Because it is thought that supporting gender-sensitive studies with field research on different subjects or

institutions will pave the way for discussion of the subject in different fields. It is always important to reinforce the unequal relationships we read from women's stories or related statistics with male narratives. This reveals that gender-based inequalities are normalized, internalized, and thus perceived as if there was no unequal situation at all.

In this article, a field research was conducted with men aged 50 and over whose spouses have passed away. There are 21 participants. This study plans to contribute to gender studies and masculinity literature through a field study with widowed men. It is aimed to look at gender debates from a different perspective by revealing that the system interruption has an absolute relationship with the roles assigned to women.

The questions are:

- What kind of changes occur to men's social life if his spouse dies?
- Do marriages create and/or re-product unequal relationship between women and men?
- Do marriages cause the continuation of the unequal system that existed in pre-marital social life?
- In a marriage system, if wife dies, can men re-shape the social relations with others?

This study aims to show how these questions are handled by men. For this reason, the participants of the study were selected from the men whose wives died. Another criterion used in the selection of the participant is the idea that role sharing can be reinforced over the years. For this reason, the interviewed men were selected over the age of 50, assuming that they could have been married for a long time depending on their age.

## 2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This work takes its strength from feminist theory. With knowing that theoretically there is always

feminism in the background, two concepts are emphasized here: gender and masculinity. This section includes some arguments about gender and results of some field studies about masculinity and fatherhood. Field studies are mostly chosen from Turkey due to enrich the arguments of this research which was conducted in Turkey too.

Gender is the activity of managing established behavior based on normative concepts of attitudes and activities appropriate to one's sex category. Gender activities arise from claims of membership of a gender category and reinforce these claims (West, Zimmerman, 1987: 127). Butler (1999: 11) argues that gender is not for culture as sex, but for nature; gender is also a discursive / cultural tool meaning "gendered nature" or "natural sex". Later studies Butler (2004: 48) adds new ideas to gender and says that if gender is a norm, it is not the same as a model that individuals try to approach. Rather, it is a form of social power that produces the intelligible space of the subjects and a device in which the gender binary is established.

Feminist theory has provided the analytical, theoretical, and historical basis on which masculinity studies are based (Yeager, 2020: 3). Collinson and Hearn (1994: 6) argue that men's gender identities are apparently constructed, compared, and evaluated by themselves and others according to a wide variety of criteria indicating personal success in the workplace. Boratav et al (2017) claim that the patriarchal system oppresses both women and men and it is important for men to reach awareness as individuals. Within the scope of this study, it is thought that masculinity studies that can strengthen gender sensitivity will contribute to the discussion of field data. Masculinity studies are based on the idea of finding a space beyond patriarchy. Masculinity studies, like feminist studies, try to get rid of the limits of patriarchy (Yeager, 2020: 4).

Masculinities are discussed in different dimensions in various studies. Masculinity is nowhere and everywhere at the same time; As

Richard Dyer (1985) points out, it is a bit like air: you breathe all the time, but you are not very aware of it (Yeager, 2020: 3). According to Atılğan (2018, p.169), masculinity is the sum of the practices that include the roles and attitudes expected from the individual due to physical characteristics defined as male. These determine how a man will think, hear, and act. According to Topçu (2018), masculinity is evaluated not only based on anatomical differences from women, but also by separating this difference in the context of social positioning. In this context, Topçu treats the process as an exercise of power. In addition, Gilmore (2005) sees man as a challenge to overcome masculinity, a reward to be won through a struggle. This award differs from the physical nature of the man and the role of the male gender. Masculinity, associated with concepts such as hardness, endurance, physical competence, superiority, and success, is established as a form of power that has hegemony over others.

There are also various field studies on masculinities. For instance, Wetherell and Edley (1999: 5) argue that the exact content of the normative social norms that constitute hegemonic men remains unclear. It is also uncertain whether there is a single hegemonic strategy at any given time, or whether hegemonic strategies will differentiate in different parts of a social formation and create conflicts or tensions for individual males as they move between different hegemonic forms and social practices. Moreover, James and Messerschmidt (2019: 17) say that hegemonic masculinities are so open that people don't really "see" them - because they're everywhere, not anywhere - and this social situation points to a benign hegemony. According to Demetriou (2001: 337), he argues that hegemonic masculinity is not a purely white or heterosexual practice, but a hybrid bloc that combines practices from various masculinities to ensure the reproduction of patriarchy.

According to Cengiz and friends (2004) masculinity is noteworthy in feminist debates. In this

context, Sancar (2016) conducted a field study on various aspects of masculinity in daily life. In her work, Sancar questions male domination in politics and economics and that these issues are in the hands of the male elite. She argues that the hierarchical order that feeds the concept of the family man who makes bread should be changed. In another study, Özbay and Baliç (2004) stated that they did not remove men from the game by declaring them passive, mute, and criminal, but they invited them to establish a new structure bearing responsibility. In this context, they claim that the inner state of the man should be reviewed in line with this responsibility. Another important masculinity study was conducted by Uçan (2016). This study is based on the argument that the struggle for gender equality, which is one of the basic human rights, will be won by the cooperation of all genders. Based on the assumption that men try to dominate women in the simplest terms, he states that rather than approaches and practices aimed at protecting women, studies that encourage women to understand and change men should be carried out. Aygül and Arkonaç (2013) focus on the credibility and transformability of being a man in their studies on masculinity and otherness. Participants in the study drew attention to the fact that others in their living spaces are not men but women. Those who built the idea of being a man were shown like the others - in this case women. Barutçu's (2015) work talks about men's private lives while talking about their daily lives. The basis of his work is Lefebvre (1991, p. 30), who said that the social sphere is a social sphere of production. The study does not evaluate men's comments, but women's views and men's relationship to the home. In the research, 15 women were interviewed about their fathers. The interviews emphasize that these silences of men who prefer silence in the private sphere are masculine behaviors that are subtly different from silence.

Masculinity studies also overlap with 'fatherhood' studies. Zeybekoğlu (2013) sees being a father as one of the most difficult ways to understand being a man

and adds being a father for a man cannot be read like being a mother from birth. This study claims that biological difference causes uncertainty in male paternity. According to Donaldson (1993: 7), children also tend to have more discrete and impersonal relationships with their fathers. The problem is exacerbated by divorced fathers, many of whom have little emotional contact with their children. Glazer and friends (2010) also contribute to masculinity studies with fatherhood studies. According to them, understanding their role in the family was a problem for these parents. They had to understand their role as single parents and to what extent they had to take on the role of the other spouse in the family. They perceive those parental roles are often questioned. Parents criticize their parenting skills. They were unsure of general parenting skills, and particularly of parenting skills. They felt they were relearning the parental role as a single adult. They also saw that as parents they changed over time and processed their grief.

One of the quantitative studies on gender roles was conducted by Özmete and Z. Yanardağ (2016). The article includes a study on measuring and evaluating men's attitudes towards gender roles. In interviews conducted with 780 men aged 18-65 living in Ankara, it was observed that men's attitudes towards gender roles differ depending on variables such as age, marital status, education level and having children.

Bennett has contributed to the studies of masculinity and widowhood with different studies. In Bennett's (2005) article, the focus is on how survival strategies are established. This study focuses on survival strategies rather than gender roles. These strategies are shaped by steadiness. In another study of Bennett (2007: 349) says: "As well as being forced to confront cultural notions of what is 'masculine', widowers find themselves up against conventional ideas (both academic and popular) about what it is to grieve. Western society has constructed a set of expectations for the conduct of

people following the loss of their partners that have become normative. Both men and women are expected, for example, to show emotion (but not too much), they are expected to withdraw (at least for a short while) from society, and they are expected not to repartner too soon following their loss. These expectations are in opposition to two dominant masculine ideals: emotional control and public life. Widowed men, I might argue, are caught between a rock and a hard place. If they show too much emotion they are seen as not masculine enough, but if they do not show enough emotion they are seen as uncaring. If they withdraw from society, they are seen as unable to cope and powerless, and yet if they do not withdraw they are seen as failing to grieve properly". Bennett and friends (2003: 408) "Older widowed men were asked whether they believed men or women coped better. They were also asked about their own experiences. The paper discusses the similarities and differences between the views and experiences of these widowed men within a framework of masculinity. Men believe that women are better equipped to deal with widowhood. They explain this in terms of women's domestic abilities and social skills, and men's inability to talk about their emotions. These views can be understood in terms of masculinity. However, analysis of their experiences suggests that the picture is more complex. Men were found to be as socially engaged as women. Women believed that men received more support than they did; this was confirmed. Unexpectedly, men reported more depressive experiences than women. It is argued that the experiences of widowed men may be understood in a masculinity framework, if one incorporates notions of diversity and social change. On the other hand according to Lee et al. (2001: 60) widowhood appears to have a lasting depressive effect, especially for men, but the long-term effect is relatively small and non-widows adapt fairly well over time.

Similarly, Momtaz et al. (2015: 69) also evaluates the situation of men and women in case of death. This research aims to examine spousal death anxiety

among Malaysian middle-aged and elderly couples. The most important concern of elderly men that could increase marital death anxiety was care problems. For older women, financial security after widowhood was the most important factor leading to husband's death anxiety. Although this study provides data on both men and women, studies of women's social lives after the death of their spouse are more common. Researchers such as Van Den Hoonaard (2001) - women's lifestyles -, Conger (2009) - the relationship between women's marriage and the economy - and Fink De Backer (2010) - women's social status after husband died - studied these situations. women live after their husbands' death. Although these studies are not directly related to this article, they are important in terms of strengthening the discussion points of the article.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

This research is a kind of narrative study. "Narrative research, which has many application forms, uses various analytical processes and is based on different social and human disciplines (Daiute & Lightfoot, 2004; as cited in Creswell, 2013, p. 70). According to Creswell, when narrative is accepted as a method, it starts from the stories individuals tell and experience. This study aims to learn the life stories, daily life practices and experiences of men over 50 years old. There are three important criteria determined for the participants in the study which are male, over 50 years old, and his wife died (widow).

The most important limitation of this study was experienced in reaching the participants. Support was received from key people to overcome the restrictions on reaching the participants. These people are mukhtars, district municipality employees or tradesmen from Istanbul, Adana and Elazig provinces. Purposeful sampling was determined through these key persons and participants were reached. Since the research was based on a qualitative method, the number of people to participate in the study could not be clarified at the

first stage, and it was thought that the study would be satisfied when the data started to repeat each other.

A total of 21 people were interviewed. The minimum and maximum age attained is 51 and 88 years. On the other hand, due to ethical principles<sup>4</sup>, the date of birth, place of birth and professional information of participant 11 were not shared. The data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the participants and audio recordings of the interviews were taken. Due to ethical concerns, the participants were told that their names could not be used in the audio recordings if they wanted to and that they could stop the recording wherever they wanted. In addition, interviews were held in environments where the participants felt comfortable, active and productive. Only one participant wanted to answer questions in his own handwriting rather than recording. The interview was not used as data due to ethical concerns regarding handwriting sharing.

#### 4. RESULTS

In this section, socially defined roles and findings obtained within the scope of social relations defined in the social field are discussed.

Within the topic of house roles described by society, there are four categories. All of these categories are related to the role of a woman. Three of them are housework, improving living conditions, roles assumed by children. The last one comes from past. It is a category includes a beginning "it was" the role of a woman and focuses on the experiences of men becoming responsible for children. Secondly, there is a topic focuses on the social place/space and social relations. Here, there are three categories:

opinions about widowed (women), domination relations, social life relations.

#### *House Roles Described By Society*

The majority of the participants agree on the separation of masculinity and femininity roles. The data obtained in this context were presented under the headings of Woman Role (it was) in line with the categories created according to the narratives of the participants.

#### *The Role of Woman 1: Housework*

The data in this section reveal that the tasks between spouses are actually shared by location and gender is an important determinant. In other words, the purpose of the division of labor is not to share a single job, each job has owners that vary according to gender, and these jobs are divided into indoor and outdoor sections.

The statements of the participants stating that housework is women are as follows:

*"I don't even know how to cook rice because my wife never let me into the kitchen. It was her place."*(I. 1)

*"When you get home, it was warm. You were eating fresh food. Your clothes were washed, clean."*(I.9)

As the two participants below point out, the woman takes the housework under her responsibility and drives the man away from this area. Women are sensitive to the participation of men in the region. The participant is accepted without questioning this situation. In addition, the participant emphasizes the importance of housework attributed to the role of

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<sup>4</sup> Ethics committee approval was received from Biruni University Non-Interventional Clinical Research Ethics Committee Unit.

woman by interpreting the process after his wife's death as apocalyptic.

*"No, she wouldn't want me in the kitchen, I didn't even know what was where?" (I. 2)*

*"Neighbors always said 'help your wife'. They would wash the dishes and stuff. I say God, God! But after I lost my wife, I got it. Until now I haven't washed glasses, I haven't even sliced watermelon, I can't even slice the bread. When you are alone, it is like doomsday, like hell. "(I.6)*

One participant stated that after the death of his wife, he had to do the housework for which women were responsible. He expressed his problems in this regard. He associated the causes of these problems with not being responsible for household throughout his life. He continues to be exempted from doing housework because he was married.

*"There were two sisters and a mother at home since my childhood. As a result, they would do all the work, ironing, cooking. Then I chose such a wife that a loyal woman who never put me in the kitchen. I think I expect everything from women. Everything was always available to me until I was sixty years old. After I was 60, I felt shot when no one prepared anything for me. I was shot. "(I.6)*

In addition, this situation is supported by the following participant's statement that she did not have a mother in his childhood and therefore did not experience any negative situation while doing housework after her husband's death.

*"I prepared myself, since I didn't have a mother in my childhood, I didn't have such a hard time, so I didn't have any difficulties as I raised myself as a child. "(I.9)*

One participant first argued that roles should not be separated by gender. Later, after the death of his wife, he stated that he experienced various difficulties while taking on domestic roles. Although this participant thinks he rejects it, it appears that he

internally believes there are roles separated by gender.

*"I do not divide by gender. This is my view, as I said, I do not discriminate in terms of gender. There is no such thing as a man's duty, a woman's duty or responsibility. Everyone who is human has a duty and responsibility. Whether male or female ... But at home, It was very difficult at home. I did not approach because it was my wife's job. A man's duties are very different. After I lost my wife, I had all the duties. "(I.8)*

Another participant emphasizes that while trying to explain the success of the housework he started to do after the death of his wife, the person who should do housework is a woman. In addition, the participant combines his narrative with the doctrine that the researcher who conducts the interview knows her female identity and knows what she can do at home because of her female identity.

*"I am like a half housewife now. I haven't had a housecleaner at home for ten years, I have cleaned it myself. Like a housewife or half like a housewife. You know better than me what the housewife is doing." (I.12)*

Another issue that draws attention in the narratives about the roles is the narratives of the following participants who prefer to die before the woman instead of the female role:

*"I always say this, let the man die first. As a man, you cannot do your own job. But the woman takes shelter in children and does her job easily.*

*"If the woman is alone, she will take better care of her. I said I don't even know how to cook the egg. Can't even cook an egg? Especially talentless man cannot live alone. "(I. 12)*

*The Role of Women 2: Improving Living Conditions*

Some participants stated that after the death of her husband, there was no positive article in their lives compared to the past. They said they were pleased that his wife intervened in various possibilities to improve life, and it was her duty.

*“When I was with my wife there was something else, she was guiding me, doing something. For example, if I do something wrong she would ruin me. She was helping me by saying I did wrong. These disappeared after my wife died ”(I.5)*

*“If my wife had lived, we could have done everything as before. We did everything together. I have nothing when I'm single. Thank God I have a house, I have a place, I have everything. But after my wife died, I couldn't put anything on it” (I.21)*

*“We had a certain living condition there, and thanks to my wife, whatever I have achieved so far, they all thanked my wife. If it was up to me, I wouldn't buy anything. So if we're going to leave something for the children, it's all thanks to my wife today.” (I.6)*

### *The Role of Women 3: Roles Assumed by Children*

Follow-up participants stated that after wives died, their daughters undertook all the work that their wives were responsible for before died. These statements show how much the division of labor theory of looking at gender is not only between spouses but also between parents and children.

*"Gentlemen who have daughters do not have any difficulties as girls do all kinds of work." (I.6)*

*“I have daughters, I can hold on. My food is made, ironing and cleaning are done. Do you understand me? But if I didn't have a daughter, what am I would do? (I.14)*

*“My children are very good. Every daughter calls me for dinner. They never leave me alone. When I go to my house, it's clean. My iron is done, everything*

*is clean, washed. My children are very good, thank God” (I.19)*

The participant below states that a man should remain silent about his daughter's negative behavior after the death of his wife just because she is doing housework. Here, too, daughters are valued because they are women, gender roles are continuing.

*“It is very difficult to live in need. And you must be respectful of your daughters. Even if it is a small madness you will ignore it” (I.1)*

One participant, who did not mention the daughters, said that his two sons were cooking. As one of the reasons for this situation, the participant stated that his sons were prone to housework because of their profession (chef-restaurant management).

*“For example, my two sons cook better than the best woman. Since they have been doing something in the restaurant for fifteen years, they have no food issues, they do everything no matter what. There is no such problem” (I.3)*

### *(It was) The Role of Women 4: The Experiences of Men Becoming Responsible for Children*

In the statements of the participants in this section, the dominant view is that child care is the responsibility of the woman. In addition, the participants stated that their spouses are a bridge between themselves and their children. Therefore, it is assumed that there is a change in the relationship between the father and the children after the death of the spouse. As Zeybekoğlu (2013) stated in her study, being a father is the hardest part of being a man. The participants gave an example to this situation with the following statements.

*“But now, I got to know my daughters after my wife died.” (I.1)*

*“A lot has changed in my life after my wife's death. I was more comfortable with my wife, more, more cheerful. I lost it all after my wife died. I stayed with*



*two kids. Responsibilities, I had not taken responsibility for the child before. I was outside and my wife did it all, now I have full responsibility, now I'm dealing with them. "(I.21)*

*"Of course, in the early stages it means great sadness, trauma, staying with two children. I was a little confused. But after that, I had to start life somehow because I had to get myself together for the kids. (I.8)*

### ***Social Place/Space and Social Relations***

Findings obtained from the interviews in this section are related to social relations.

#### ***Opinions about Widowed (Women)***

One of the questions asked to the participants how they observed or interpreted the changes that might occur in the woman's life if her husband dies. There are stories here that women have a better chance of continuing their lives. These narratives can be interpreted as a way for the participants to express their difficulties in another way. These participants base their narratives by stating that women can do housework even after the death of their husbands, continue their lives without being isolated from social life, and that women are more comfortable than expressing their feelings.

*"In other words, she continues to do what she knows like cooking, but if men haven't tried them before, of course, he falls into the gap.*

*"It is easier to continue living for women." (I.4)*

*"Well, I don't believe a lady suffers as much as we do. We, men, especially me, I think I was alone in the pursuit of a woman who sliced watermelon and removed the core and brought it to me. "(I.6)*

*"Woman will be more comfortable, her house will be more comfortable, women can stand without men, but men cannot be without women." (I.4)*

*"Widowed women are more fortunate than men. So they go everywhere, live with their daughters, live with their children. She can live with someone else, she can live with his children, but the man is a bit troubled, so living is a little difficult. "(I.19)*

*"Nobody's mouth stops. It's not like married life. When your partner is alive you will receive acceptance. But if you don't have a wife, no. Not for a woman, but for a man. It's okay for a woman, she fits everywhere." (I.18)*

On the other hand, there is also an participant who stated that in the event of her husband's death, women have more difficulty than men. The participant associates this narrative with the ability to survive and says women are less fortunate than men.

*"It is more difficult for women, men can stay on the street but women cannot. The situation is even worse for the woman. If the woman has a child, how will she take care of her? Which one will she be interested in? Will she think of bread money or will she take care of the children? "(I.10)*

The discourse of another participant about women's work is an indicator of women's exposure to power relations limited to the boundaries of the home.

*"I never sent my wife to work. She never worked. She was my housewife, she didn't work. Now my children have children, they did not work, they became the women of their homes. The same as their mother. Our marriage was beautiful. "(I.5)*

### ***Domination Relations***

While examining the relations of the participants with their spouses before they die, it is useful to see the sub-texts of the dominance-based system. Situations such as being traditional and being from Anatolia are blessed.

*"For example, today's ladies are self-righteous, you know. But my wife was a very different woman. She was always positive. She was not destructive, she had always been constructive. If I was born 100 times, I would choose the same woman as wife. "* (I.16)

As seen in the quote below, the woman pretending to have a husband when her husband dies suggests that they are under the pressure of masculine domination:

*"Big cities change, those who come from Anatolia act as if they have a husband" (I. 1)*

One of the participants spoke about the domination relationship and controlling attitude. Stating that the paternalist approach is beneficial for women, the participant was quite convinced that this was not a restriction and that the woman needed it.

*"Just as we have the right to everything, women also have the right to everything and I do not restrict it. But I didn't want him to go to his neighbor or something if I saw awkward things. You won't talk when I say it. I know what I'm talking about. It doesn't hurt me, she was a woman, and I know men can hurt" (I.10)*

Another participant reveals the relationship of dominance with his views on how to communicate with women:

*"If there are people who say that ladies are weak, these people are ignorant. OK? Obviously ignorant people. I think ladies are flowers, they need water, someone who knows how to water a flower blooms the roses. When they water the flowers, and they bloom when they talk sweetly to women. This is what I know" (I. 5)*

#### *Social Life Relations*

The participants who have the following statements stated that their spouses are the ones who regulate social relations and play a key role in the

communication between their children. It covers an area of social relations regulation outside the home. This can be read as an indication that patriarchal bargaining and gender role theory covers only the interior. The participants also stated that the perspective of society is different to a married man and a man whose wife has passed away and that they cannot have the social life they had while living with their spouse after their spouse died.

*"Men are relatively weak in social relationships. Women's social relationships are better than men, i.e. to meet, to find friends, etc. Women are more active, men a little more passive. "* (I. 4)

*"After being single, you cannot participate in some activities because you do not have a spouse, so you are abstaining from socializing. For example meeting with previously married friends... They come to me, but I'm afraid to go because I'm single. This is the simplest example. "* (I. 8)

*"Of course it has changed a lot. I used to go in and out of everybody's house very easily, joking, but after my wife died, these are perceived very differently in Turkish society. So I kept away all of them and I was doomed to loneliness" (I. 18)*

*"Let me tell you, you've come to a very good point. For example, when my wife was alive, I was going to my relatives, my sister. Could my dear sister think of anything else? She always tells me to visit her. But it was like shelter when I didn't have a wife. I feel that way. "* (I. 16)

*"There is a problem with men. Do you know why? Woman fits everywhere, man does not. "* (I. 16)

#### **The Conclusion and The Discussion**

This research tries to question the participation of social life in different dynamics based on masculinity. In this context, three female researchers (there is a related discussion below) reached 21 male participants who were widows and over the age of 50. The most important factor behind the determination

of two criteria was the way of revealing the codes of the gender role established / strengthened by marriage. The narratives of the men interviewed within the scope of the study were evaluated in this way.

Two situations restricted the researchers throughout the study. First, there were difficulties in finding an i participant. While the participants were present, key contacts said that women who lost their husbands were easily accessible. But the men whose wives died were invisible. This also provided data supported in the research on the effects of relationships in social life after death. As a result of the research, the invisibility of widowed men can be associated mainly with women who regulate relationships in social life. In order to support the literature, in this study, the difficulties that women experience in social life after the death of their husbands appear to be weaker than men. It was possible for women to maintain the order they used by obeying the gender codes of this order. It is supported by both these studies and previous various studies that there will be no problem with the changes that may occur provided that the codes remain constant. On the other hand, in this study, there is a strong voice in the comments that men have difficulties in finding a place in the social field, maintaining order and maintaining relations with relatives, children or neighbors as before. It is important to read these comments correctly, because these interpretations are mainly about the lack of survival ability of a man, and the difficulties that a womanless man may experience were evaluated from a patriarchal perspective.

In fact, what is emphasized is not the difficulties that can be experienced in social life in terms of social relations, but a difficulty arising from the lack of women in the areas of work, earning money and living. For this reason, it is said that the participants generally agree that women are related to the roles of establishing, collecting and organizing inside and outside the home, and that men feel social exclusion

when they leave their wives due to death, and this is quite difficult to restore the inclusion.

Another situation restricts the researchers is that the participants are men and the researchers are women. In this case, narratives are added to the role teachings. Some problems with sexuality in particular were expressed through implicit expressions and through them. Given that gender continues to be a cultural taboo, the following question has been an important outcome of this research: "Even if researchers are men, do the same expressions still happen?" Moreover, implicit statements about sexuality are a hierarchy based on the age difference between the researcher and the participant. As a result, it is not known whether this situation causes another communication problem, but it is considered appropriate to leave it open to questioning and discussion.

The relationship between gender and space, the localization of roles both inside and outside the home, and the roles in fulfilling these responsibilities, deaths of women and men. Most of the participants say that housework is done by women before and after marriage. After the death of her husband, these jobs were transferred to other women or girls living together. The most thing was the saying about doing housework alongside a woman. In this case, it is possible to say that the roles have internalized their roles and sustainability and never question the context of gender equality. Another notable result is the effort to maintain gender-based power relations. The participants idealize male domination over what men and women should do. It is stated that the areas where men and women are the best shaped by the relationship of hegemony. This has undoubtedly been the subject of many other studies in feminist literature. In addition to all these, it is thought that the ages of the men interviewed will guide the study. The minimum and maximum age was 51-88 in the age variable defined as over 50 years old. These ages caused the social acceptance learned to be strengthened and the participants had adaptation

problems in the transition to a new life. In the context of this study, as in the narratives of the participants who talked about the difficulty of reconstructing social relations, this difficulty is also mentioned in some other studies in the literature. This research seeks to shed light on the gender sensitivity of studies based on various age groups and generations by taking age as a criterion. Indeed, it is important to emphasize that gender sensitivity is a scientific necessity of any study. Basically, research involves collecting data from individuals who lost someone they lived with. It is aimed to avoid the trauma of the participants as a result of ethical concerns and to consider the possibility of continuing the mourning process. For this reason, questions about the post-death struggle process were tried to be drawn more to social life. Undoubtedly, despite such an ethical concern, there were narratives of being alone and experiencing partial emotional moments during these narratives. In this study, researchers' attitudes towards not going into the depths of trauma contributed. The sections on this subject were not included in the findings during the interviews due to the course of the study and ethical problems. It is important to entrust the evaluation of sad processes to social researchers who specialize in this field in terms of re-participation in social life. In other words, it is also important to determine the relevance of this research through research that involves men in social life or within themselves, and to claim that it would be more meaningful to tackle inequality by increasing studies on men. There is evidence that lonely and single men who came with the death of their spouse made the participants feel left out. Especially in first-degree visits to relatives and friendships with married couples, narratives that are often hesitant are frequently encountered. Stating that social pressures result in self-control, the participants stated that they really feel the gender inequality.

Almost all of the participants have a "father" identity. There are studies in the literature that include the organization of fatherhood roles and re-

learning of fatherhood. Within the scope of this research, there is evidence that the father-child relationship is reshaped with the death of the 'mother'. As a matter of fact, the findings include the narratives of the participants who stated that they started to know their children after death and gained awareness of the difficulty of taking care of children. It should also be noted that the difference of this study from the age, social and cultural structure of the participants (elders) made good progress in breaking the structure with feminist struggles. On this occasion, it is important to emphasize more masculine relationships and the feminist background on the identity of the father. In addition, legal regulations on the subject should be better evaluated.

If marriage ends with the death of a woman, this study, which reveals gender inequality in terms of men, reveals what problems affect men over the age of 50. The work often supports other studies in the literature from a feminist perspective and turns the spotlight on gender sensitivity towards men. It should be kept in mind that in order for normalized role assumptions to be questionable, the number of studies dealing with the subject from any gender domain should be increased.

Gender sensitivity is a methodological perspective rather than a mere issue for feminist studies. In this context, the primary output of this study is the importance of evaluating the study subjects and / or objects from a gender sensitive perspective, regardless of age group or socio-cultural-economic demography. In this context, this study contributes primarily to the feminist literature with the results of gender-based interviews with widowed men over the age of 50 in the context of re-arranging their social lives. The participants presented their narratives about the place of women in their lives, mostly through gender roles. This situation forced men to adopt a new identity rather than a new lifestyle. This is an outcome of the gender inequality created by them and society. While it is mentioned that men shape their social lives on the

axis of women in their lives, the constitutive role of women limits their freedom in other areas. Moreover, this restriction is legitimized by the patriarchal system. This study challenges these legitimations in the context of an emphasis on the subject based on male narratives.

The subject studied is part of multiple disciplines and professionalism based on sampling determined by age, gender and marital status. In this context, it is believed that multidisciplinary studies will improve feminist literature. Therefore, it is hoped that many missing points such as evaluating the grief process, detailing relationships with children, detailing life before marriage, will be useful in this study.

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