CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY: THE ACCUMULATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF CAPITALS AMONG RUSSIAN MARRIAGE MIGRANTS IN TURKEY

A THESIS SUBMITTED TO
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
OF
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

BY

ALEVTINA LEMSKAIA

IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR
THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF SCIENCE
IN
THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIOLOGY

OCTOBER 2025

Approval of the thesis:

CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY: THE ACCUMULATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF CAPITALS AMONG RUSSIAN MARRIAGE MIGRANTS IN TURKEY

submitted by **ALEVTINA LEMSKAIA** in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of **Master of Science in Sociology, the Graduate School of Social Sciences of Middle East Technical University** by,

Prof. Dr. Sadettin KİRAZCI
Dean
Graduate School of Social Sciences _____

Prof. Dr. Ayşe GÜNDÜZ HOŞGÖR
Head of Department
Department of Sociology _____

Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR AKGÜNER
Supervisor
Department of Sociology _____

Examining Committee Members:

Prof. Dr. Ayşe Idil AYBARS (Head of the Examining Committee)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Sociology _____

Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR AKGÜNER (Supervisor)
Middle East Technical University
Department of Sociology _____

Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ayşe GÖNÜLLÜ ATAKAN
Manisa Celal Bayar University
Department of Sociology _____

I hereby declare that all information in this document has been obtained and presented in accordance with academic rules and ethical conduct. I also declare that, as required by these rules and conduct, I have fully cited and referenced all material and results that are not original to this work.

Name, Last Name: Alevtina LEMSKAIA

Signature:

ABSTRACT

CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY: THE ACCUMULATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF CAPITALS AMONG RUSSIAN MARRIAGE MIGRANTS IN TURKEY

LEMSKAIA, Alevtina

M.S., The Department of Sociology

Supervisor: Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR AKGÜNER

October 2025, 227 pages

This dissertation examines the marriage migration of Russian women to Turkey through the lenses of gender and power. Using feminist theories of patriarchy and Bourdieu's capitals, it explores how women navigate two patriarchal societies and how their economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals transform through migration. Based on qualitative research, it draws on semi-structured interviews with 29 Russian-speaking women who migrated for marriage, complemented by autoethnographic reflections.

The analysis shows that moving from Russia to Turkey places women in a dual patriarchal context where pre-migration skills and resources are often devalued. This compels them to recode or rebuild capital. Despite structural constraints such as economic dependence, legal barriers, social isolation, and gendered expectations,

participants demonstrate considerable agency to negotiate household roles, build social networks, resist control through subtle or open means, and develop new forms of capital. Findings highlight that women are neither passive victims of patriarchy nor fully free actors, but active negotiators shaping their intimate lives. These forms of agency through strategies produce hybrid gender arrangements, ranging from traditional to more egalitarian marriages.

This study contributes to migration and gender research by showing how patriarchal power is both reproduced and contested within transnational marriages and underscores the importance of supporting migrant women's adaptation through credential recognition and rights awareness. It offers a nuanced understanding of marriage migration as a catalyst for personal transformation while revealing persistent gender hierarchies.

Keywords: Feminist migration studies, cross-border marriages, patriarchy, capitals, agency

ÖZ

ATAERKİLLİĞE MEYDAN OKUMAK: TÜRKİYE'DEKİ RUS EVLİLİK GÖÇMENLERİ ARASINDA SERMAYENİN BİRİKİMİ VE DÖNÜŞÜMÜ

LEMSKAİA, Alevtina

Yüksek Lisans, Sosyoloji Bölümü

Tez Yöneticisi: Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut BEŞPINAR AKGÜNER

Ekim 2025, 227 sayfa

Bu tez, Rus kadınlarının Türkiye'ye evlilik yoluyla göçünü toplumsal cinsiyet ve iktidar merceklerinden incelemektedir. Ataerki üzerine feminist kuramlar ile Bourdieu'nün sermaye kavramlarını temel alarak, kadınların iki ataerkil toplum arasında nasıl yol aldıklarını ve ekonomik, kültürel, sosyal ve simgesel sermayelerinin göç sürecinde nasıl dönüştüğünü araştırmaktadır. Çalışma, niteliksel bir araştırma desenine dayanmakta olup, evlilik yoluyla Türkiye'ye göç etmiş 29 Rusça konuşan kadınla yapılan yarı-yapılandırılmış mülakatlara ve araştırmacının otoetnografik yansımalarına dayanmaktadır.

Analiz, Rusya'dan Türkiye'ye göçün kadınları çoğu zaman göç öncesinde biriktirdikleri beceri ve kaynakların değersizleştiği ikili bir ataerkil bağlama yerleştirdiğini göstermektedir. Bu durum, kadınları sermayelerini yeniden kodlamaya veya yeniden inşa etmeye zorlamaktadır. Ekonomik bağımlılık, yasal engeller, toplumsal izolasyon ve toplumsal cinsiyet temelli beklentiler gibi yapısal kısıtlamalara rağmen katılımcılar, ev içi rolleri müzakere etme, sosyal ağlar kurma, denetimi açık

ya da örtük biçimde reddetme ve yeni sermaye türleri geliştirme konusunda dikkate değer bir özneleşme (ajans) sergilemişlerdir. Bulgular, kadınların ne ataerkilliğin pasif mağdurları ne de tamamen özgür özneler olduklarını, aksine mahrem hayatlarını şekillendiren aktif müzakereciler olduklarını ortaya koymaktadır. Bu stratejiler aracılığıyla sergilenen ajans, gelenekselden daha eşitlikçi evliliklere kadar uzanan melez toplumsal cinsiyet düzenlerini ortaya çıkarmaktadır.

Bu çalışma, ataerkil iktidarın ulus ötesi evlilikler içinde hem yeniden üretildiğini hem de sorgulandığını göstererek göç ve toplumsal cinsiyet araştırmalarına katkı sunmaktadır. Ayrıca, göçmen kadınların uyum süreçlerinde diploma ve yeterliliklerin tanınması ile hak farkındalığının önemini vurgulamaktadır. Çalışma, evlilik göçünü kişisel dönüşüm için bir katalizör olarak değerlendirirken aynı zamanda ısrarcı toplumsal cinsiyet hiyerarşilerini görünür kılmakta ve bu olguyu daha incelikli bir şekilde anlamayı mümkün kılmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Feminist göç çalışmaları, uluslararası evlilikler, ataerki, sermaye türleri, eylemlilik

To all migrant women with love and respect

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor, Prof. Dr. Fatma Beşpınar, for her profound engagement with my academic interests and for supporting all my ambitious ideas from the day I arrived at METU as an exchange student until the completion of this thesis. Her inspiring courses were the main reason I decided to come to Turkey, and they profoundly transformed both my academic and personal life. For this, I will always remain deeply grateful.

I am also thankful to my first two academic mentors at Moscow State University. Prof. Dr. Dmitry Anatolyevich Funk was the first to encourage my interest in contemporary Turkey and to unconditionally support my exploration of marriage migration, inspiring me to immerse myself in this topic. I am equally grateful to Prof. Dr. Olga Evgenyevna Kazmina, whose mentorship has been invaluable to my academic and personal growth and whose own career has long served as an inspiring example. It was her constant support and encouragement that made it possible for me to come to Ankara, something I will never forget. I would also like to thank Prof. Dr. Anna Vladimirovna Dybo, Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), who believed in my expertise and gave me the opportunity to deepen my knowledge of the anthropology of contemporary Turkey by inviting me to teach students at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow. Sharing my knowledge and experience with Turkology students was a truly rewarding experience that greatly contributed to my professional development.

I am sincerely grateful to the wonderful participants of this research who openly and thoughtfully shared their stories with me. Their attentiveness and reflections inspired me to listen with admiration to every narrative. Without these long and profound conversations, this research would not have been possible. I also wish to thank more than fifty other women who expressed their willingness to participate but could not be

included due to time limitations. I deeply admire the readiness of Russian women to share their experiences and appreciate the high level of trust they placed in me.

I owe my deepest gratitude to my dearest mother, who, despite battling stage four cancer, has always lovingly and patiently supported my academic pursuits. Without her daily encouragement, surviving in Turkey would have been impossible. I also thank my sister Valeria, whose own experience of living in Turkey and academic expertise often guided me and protected me from mistakes. I am equally grateful to my beloved father and nephews, whose presence in my life has been a constant source of warmth and strength in difficult times.

I am thankful to my dear friends. My friend Asya not only taught me Turkish in just five months but also supported me in all aspects of settling in Turkey. I am equally grateful to her mother, Assoc. Prof. Elena Krainiuchenko; together with Asya and Elena, we held long discussions on the differences between Russian and Turkish linguistic practices, cultural codes, and modes of perception. These exchanges profoundly enriched my understanding and this research. Both Asya and Elena made me feel that I have a family in Turkey. I am grateful to my former colleague and friend Natalia who always welcomed me in her home during my trips to Moscow and was willing to spend countless nights discussing my new academic ideas. I also thank my friends Irina and Nuri, who looked after my cat whenever I traveled, and my friend Sacit, whose example proved to me that genuine friendship between a Turkish man and a Russian woman is possible. I would also like to thank my dear "comrade-in-arms," Damla, with whom I shared all the tears and struggles of writing this thesis.

I am grateful to my Russian students and their parents, whose support made my stay in Turkey possible in the first place. Regular contact with them allowed me to maintain a strong connection with my beloved Moscow and turned my work into a source of joy.

I would also like to thank my Turkish Instagram followers, whose stories and comments provided me with numerous ideas and reflections. Without their constant participation, encouragement, and corrections of my mistakes, I would never have been able to understand Turkish culture and communication so deeply.

Finally, I would like to thank my cat Leksi, who stayed awake with me for countless nights while I was writing this thesis.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PLAGIARISM iii

ABSTRACT iv

ÖZ vi

DEDICATION viii

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS ix

TABLE OF CONTENTS xii

LIST OF TABLES xvii

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS xviii

CHAPTERS

INTRODUCTION 1

1.1. Background of Russian Women's Marriage Migration to Turkey 3

1.1.1. Marriage Migration as a Policy of the Soviet Period 3

1.1.2. Early Migration of Russian Women to Turkey 5

1.1.3. Patterns of Marriage Migration of Russian Women to Turkey 7

1.2. Research Problem 11

1.3. Research Trajectory 13

1.4. Theoretical Framework 15

1.5. Assumptions 16

1.6. Research Structure 18

LITERATURE REVIEW 20

2.1. Gender and Migration 21

2.2. Capitals in Migration Studies 25

2.3. Incorporating Patriarchy into the Study of Cross-Border Marriage Migration 30
2.3.1. The Vulnerability of Migrant Women 31
2.3.2. Beyond Vulnerability: Women's Agency 38
2.3.3. Patriarchy and Gender in the Turkish and Russian Contexts 39
2.3.4. Patriarchy and Gender in the Turkish Context 40
2.3.5. Patriarchy and Gender in the Russian Context 43
2.3.6. Reflections on Patriarchy in the Russian and Turkish Contexts 47
2.4. Female Migration from Russia to Turkey 50
2.5. Potential Contribution of This Study 56
METHODOLOGY 58
3.1. Research Philosophy 58
3.2. Methodological Choice 60
3.2.1. Incorporating Patriarchy into Gendered Migration Studies 61
3.3. Methodological Challenges in Gendered Migration Research 65
3.3.1. Digital Ethnography Versus Qualitative Research 65
3.3.2. What about Transnationalism? 66
3.3.3. In Search of Balance: An Autoethnographic Approach 67
3.4. Research Strategy 68
3.5. Participant Selection and Profile 69
3.5.1. Socio Demographic Profile of Participants 74
3.5.2. Age Composition 74
3.5.3. Duration of Residence in Turkey 75
3.5.4. Geography of Origin 75
3.5.5. Geography of Residence in Turkey 76
3.5.6. Economic Profiles of Participants and Their Husbands 77
3.6. Data Collection Methods 80

3.7. Data Analysis 81
3.8. Reflexivity and Ethics 83
3.9. Limitations 85
TRANSFORMATION OF CAPITALS 87
4.1. Migration Context: Acquaintance, Relocation and Agency 87
4.1.1. Formats of Acquaintance as a Factor in the Migration Trajectory 88
4.1.2. Agency and Initiative: Who Makes the Decision to Migrate and How ... 95
4.2. Transformation of Cultural Capital 97
4.2.1. Actualized Cultural Capital 98
4.2.2. Non-actualized Cultural Capital: Knowledge and Skills that Proved Useless in Turkey 99
4.2.3. New Skills and Knowledge Acquired During Adaptation 102
4.2.4. Language of Communication with the Partner 103
4.2.5. Learning Turkish 104
4.2.6. Solitary Activities: Individual Practices and Forms of Recovery 108
4.2.7. Skills, Qualities, and Hobbies Appreciated by Partners 109
4.3. Transformation of Economic Capital 110
4.3.1. Analysis of Pre-Migration Economic Capital of Participants 112
4.3.2. Transformation of Economic Capital After Migration 113
4.4. Transformation of Symbolic Capital 123
4.4.1. Sources of Respect and a Sense of Value 123
4.4.2. Differences in the Perception of Respect and Recognition between Russia and Turkey 124
4.4.3. Attitudes toward Russian Women in Turkey 126
4.4.4. Experiences of Bias and Stereotypical Attitudes 127
4.4.5. Experiences of Discrimination Based on Nationality or Gender 128
4.4.6. Experiences of Disrespect and Violence in Turkey 130

4.5. Transformation of Social Capital 133
4.5.1. Shortage of Social Interaction 133
4.5.2. Communication with Turks 135
4.5.3. Communication with Russians and Support Systems 136
4.5.4. Limitations of Social Interaction 139
4.6. Concluding Synthesis on Capital Transformations 141
CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY 143
5.1. Patriarchal Expectations and Gender Roles in Cross-border Marriages 143
5.1.1. Control of the Body and Behavior 143
5.1.2. Gendered Organization of Domestic Labor 144
5.1.3. The Husband's Family and Personal Boundaries 145
5.1.4. Variability of Patriarchal Models 147
5.2. Agency and Power Dynamics in Cross-border Marriages 148
5.2.1. Models of Power Distribution and Their Proportions 149
5.2.2. Economic and Legal Control 149
5.2.3. Decision-Making and Control over Everyday Life 150
5.2.4. Tactics of Resistance and the Formation of Agency 151
5.2.5. Agency and Independence as a Dominant Vector 152
5.3. Emotional Experiences, Challenges, and Coping Strategies 154
5.3.1. Personal and Domestic Difficulties and the First Strategies for Overcoming Them 155
5.3.2. Emotional Dynamics in Marriage: Conflicts, Misunderstandings, and Ways of Overcoming Them 157
5.3.3. Criticism and Restrictions: Boundaries and Ways of Responding 160
5.3.4. Support from the Partner 162
5.3.5. The Role of the Russian Family Experience: a Resource and a Form of Resistance 163

5.4. Personal Transformations and Strategies of Adaptation 165
5.4.1. A Sense of Home and Spatial Identity 166
5.4.2. What Feels Missing 168
5.4.3. Personal Qualities and Coping Strategies 169
5.4.4. Personal Changes 170
5.4.5. Victims or Agents? 172
5.5. Challenging Patriarchy: Discussion 174
CONCLUSION 177
REFERENCES 192
APPENDICES
A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE. 210
B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS 211
C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET 216
D. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU 227

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Profiles of Interview Participants 71

Table 2. Economic Profiles of Participants' Husbands 78

Table 3. Pre-Migration Employment of Participants by Professional Field 112

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

METU	Middle East Technical University
RAS	Russian Academy of Sciences
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The topic of Russian women in Turkey has long stirred curiosity, fascination, and controversy, provoking reactions that range from admiration for their beauty, education, and cosmopolitan image to persistent stereotypes and discrimination. Rooted in the social imagination of the turbulent 1990s, these ambivalent perceptions continue to shape how Russian women are viewed and treated in Turkey (Güçlür and Ilkkaracan, 2002; Yükseker, 2004; Zhidkova, 2016; Deniz and Özgür, 2020; 2022). Consequently, the figure of the Russian migrant woman has become a symbolic site where national histories, gendered expectations, and cultural anxieties converge.

One of the key forces shaping these women's lives, both in Russia and in Turkey, is the structure of patriarchy. While patriarchy is a global phenomenon, its local configurations are distinct and historically grounded (Millet, 1969; Hartmann, 1976; Eisenstein, 1979). Russian women enter Turkey having been shaped by a set of patriarchal norms, gendered roles, and expectations that have influenced their upbringing, education, and family relations (Zdravomyslova and Tyomkina, 2015). Following migration, they are situated within quite a different patriarchal order, informed by different cultural scripts of gender and family (Koğacıoğlu, 2005; Engin, Hürman and Harvey, 2020). However, this encounter should not be conceptualized as a simple passage from one discrete and bounded system into another. Patriarchal formations are internally differentiated and dynamic; some of their dimensions, such as the moral regulation of women's sexuality, expectations of women's domestic roles, the naturalization of care work, or the association of femininity with family loyalty may persist across national contexts, even if they are articulated through distinct symbolic repertoires.

Within this continuum, the gendered capitals women possess, understood here as forms of embodied cultural competence, social positioning, and symbolic recognition acquired through gendered socialization, operate with an inherent ambivalence. They function simultaneously as resources and as constraints in their country of origin, shaping opportunities and strategies, while also limiting the range of socially acceptable actions (Erel, 2010). Migration does not erase this ambivalence; rather, it reconfigures it, as these capitals are revalued, contested, or transformed within the specific logics of the Turkish patriarchal field.

It was the interplay between overlapping dimensions of patriarchal norms and the boundaries at which their similarities give way to a sense of unfamiliarity that became the starting point of this study. These sites of both recognition and estrangement provide a lens through which to examine the transformation, loss, or reconversion of various forms of capital, and the role of women's own agency and strategies in navigating these changes. This multidimensional approach allows for an exploration of how women negotiate social hierarchies, reconstruct their lives, and mobilize or rebuild resources in a new socio-cultural context while holding a different citizenship status. By presenting a broad and diverse range of experiences, the study aims to capture the complexity, ambivalence, and richness of the migration process instead of reducing it to a single, one-sided narrative. The study applies Pierre Bourdieu's conceptual framework of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals (Bourdieu, 1986) to trace how migration reshapes these resources and, at the same time, how women's own agency influences these processes (Morokvašić, 2014).

It is within this framework that the present dissertation examines the marriage migration of Russian-speaking women to Turkey. Drawing on semi-structured interviews with 29 participants, complemented by autoethnographic reflections, the study investigates how women navigate overlapping patriarchal contexts and how their economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals are revalued, transformed, or contested through migration. By employing feminist theories of patriarchy alongside Bourdieu's conceptual framework of capitals, the dissertation traces the ways in which women negotiate structural constraints, mobilize agency, and reconstruct their lives in a new socio-cultural setting. This approach provides a nuanced understanding of

marriage migration as a process marked by both limitations and possibilities, highlighting the complex interplay between power, resources, and personal strategies.

This introduction provides an overview of the study's scope and approach, preparing the ground for a detailed analysis in the chapters that follow. In the next section, I will turn to the background of this research, outlining the history of how this topic has been studied, with particular attention to the marriage migration of Russian women to Turkey and the ways in which scholars have approached the phenomenon over time.

1.1. Background of Russian Women's Marriage Migration to Turkey

1.1.1. Marriage Migration as a Policy of the Soviet Period

Usually, the history of the migration of Russian women to Turkey is introduced in the same narrative. It is often stated that, with the collapse of the Soviet Union, many people, both men and women, lost their sources of income, were laid off from their jobs, or earned such low wages that it was impossible to maintain a decent standard of living. Economic hardship pushed people to look for a way out of this situation. When international borders opened in the early 1990s, a significant number of women began to move to Turkey in search of work (Kosmachev, 2008; Deniz and Özgür, 2013; Zhidkova, 2017). Bloch (2017) argues that post-Soviet women became part of a "global trend" of female migration that had already started in the 1970s, but in their case, it was only the collapse of the Soviet Union that made such mobility possible. Although the opening of international borders indeed became a decisive factor, gendered marriage-related mobility across the internal borders of the Soviet republics had already begun before this "global trend," and it is therefore not surprising that many international scholars overlook this earlier dynamic, as the majority of studies on this topic were written in Russian and remain almost inaccessible to the international researchers. Thus, I argue that the trend of female transnational migration and interethnic marriages in the USSR began well before its dissolution.

Studies of interethnic marriages in the USSR, which began to develop in the 1960s, show that marriage-related migration, especially involving ethnic Russians, was part of the broader ideological and cultural project of constructing the "Soviet people" (Lourie, 2018; Drobizheva, 1981; Sabieva, 1979). As Lourie argues, the consequences

of the Great Patriotic War[1] with its massive human losses and the destruction of industrial capacity triggered the Soviet state's policy of the "friendship of peoples," which was enacted in everyday interethnic relations and marital unions. A key role in these processes was played by Russian migrant colonists whose state-constructed Soviet identity made interethnic unions appear less culturally distant. Interethnic marriages flourished particularly in industrial zones and large construction sites where ethnic boundaries were blurred and individuals, especially Russian women, were more open to mobility and integration (Susokolov, 1987; Narynbaev, 1966; Terentyeva, 1974). Thus, marriage migration in the Soviet context functioned not only as a byproduct of mobility but also as a powerful mechanism for cultural assimilation and the transformation of identities within the overarching Soviet scenario.

By 1989, interethnic families constituted 17.5% of all families across the Soviet Union, including not only Slavic groups but also peoples of Central Asia, the Caucasus, and the Baltics. In post-Soviet Russia, the proportion of interethnic marriages declined and fluctuated between 11% and 12% during the period from 1994 to 2018 (Soroko, 2014; Lourie, 2018; Visyagin, 2023). Thus, it is important to recognize that studying migration from a historical perspective, including the migration of Russian women abroad, requires attention to historically embedded foundations of migratory aspirations (Sinke, 2006). These foundations are rooted not only in the ideological politics of the Soviet state but also in the everyday social practices' characteristic of the Soviet period. Marriage-related mobility was one of the most common and socially accepted forms of movement.

Thus, I propose that research on the migration of Russian women abroad can benefit from a closer consideration of the patterns of internal mobility that had already emerged well before the economic transformations triggered by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Recognizing these earlier dynamics makes it possible to view migration not only as an act of escape or a response to necessity but also as the outcome of a complex and historically situated formation of agency within the broader migratory process (Sinke, 2006; Donato et al., 2006; Kim, 2018). This study, therefore, takes

[1] "The Great Patriotic War" is the name used in Russia and some other post-Soviet countries to refer specifically to the part of World War II fought on the Eastern Front between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union from 1941 to 1945.

these pre-existing trends as an important point of departure for rethinking the ways in which Russian women's migration to Turkey should be conceptualized and analyzed. This leads me to suggest that marriage migration represented a familiar and socially legitimate form of mobility for Russian women, one that had been practiced for decades, while the post-Soviet opening of borders only extended the scope of this already established trajectory.

1.1.2. Early Migration of Russian Women to Turkey

Based on the analysis of existing literature, it is possible to reconstruct a chronology of the migration of Russian women to Turkey, reflecting the main stages of their employment and social position. The so-called "second wave" of emigration of women from Russia to Turkey began in the early 1990s (Kosmachev, 2008). The first wave dates back to the years of the Civil War[2], when the so-called White émigrés fled Soviet Russia and Istanbul became the first port of call for these ships. It is symbolic that the collapse of the USSR[3] once again triggered a massive flow of emigrants heading toward the Turkish shores[4].

After 1991, against the backdrop of a severe socio-economic crisis, women from the post-Soviet states began to arrive in Turkey, primarily to Istanbul and the Black Sea coast, facilitated by a simplified visa regime (Içduygu, 2001; Zhidkova, 2017). Although entry procedures were eased, the period of legal stay remained very limited (Güçlür and Ilkkaracan, 2002; Kosmachev, 2008). These were educated, but impoverished women seeking means of subsistence for themselves and their families. During this period, they accepted any work available on the market: shuttle trade,

[2] "The Civil War" is the conflict in the former Russian Empire between the Bolshevik (Red) forces and various anti-Bolshevik (White) armies, as well as nationalist and foreign interventionist groups, fought from 1917 to 1922.

[3] "The collapse of the USSR" denotes the disintegration of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics in 1991, which led to the end of the Soviet state and the emergence of fifteen independent republics.

[4] The collapse of the USSR triggered large-scale migration processes. More than 40 million people suddenly found themselves living outside their ethnic homelands, including approximately 25 million ethnic Russians residing beyond the borders of the Russian Federation. The repatriation of Russians to Russia was neither smooth nor rapid, and across the former Soviet space intense migration flows unfolded, with many also relocating abroad. Although stereotypes in Turkey sometimes suggest that Russian women overwhelmingly chose Turkey as their destination, this is misleading. Beyond the former Soviet republics, the largest Russian communities have been established in the United States, Brazil, Germany, Israel, and Canada, with Turkey ranking only fifteenth among countries hosting ethnic Russians.

service sector jobs, domestic work, as well as sex work (Deniz and Özgür, 2013). It was at this time that Turkish media and public discourse coined the enduring stereotype of the "Natasha," a label that became synonymous with "prostitute" regardless of the woman's actual occupation (Yükseker, 2004; Zhidkova, 2016, 2017).

A particularly important role was played by shuttle trade: women purchased goods in Istanbul's Laleli market and resold them in the countries of the former Soviet Union, taking advantage of customs exemptions for personal imports (Eder, Yakovlev and Çarkoglu, 2003). These trade relations were built upon personal and business connections, which often included not only cooperative, but also friendly and, in some cases, intimate ties (Yükseker, 2004). After the 1998 financial crisis, the scale of shuttle trade declined, gradually giving way to cargo companies, but it provided a significant impetus for the development of other forms of migration.

From the late 1990s onwards, the flow of migrant women began to shift towards employment in the domestic care sector. Particularly visible were women from Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia and Uzbekistan, who worked as nannies and caregivers without legal contracts and were often subjected to exploitation (Akalin, 2007). During this period, persistent patterns of informal labor relations with migrants began to emerge, many of which continue to exist today. The cumbersome bureaucratic process of obtaining work permits frequently leads to arrangements where neither the employer nor the worker formalizes the employment relationship. When a migrant's visa expires and is not renewed, leaving the country entails paying a substantial fine; those who cannot afford it often fall into an irregular status. Researchers note that the precarious and unauthorized status of many women working in private households has frequently resulted in their entry into prostitution or their becoming victims of human trafficking (Çoşkun, 2015).

In the same period, the broader issue of irregular employment and the involvement of some migrant women in the sex industry became particularly acute. For foreign women, prostitution in Turkey has always been illegal, a fact that makes them especially vulnerable and unprotected, while the strong demand for sexual services from women originating from the post-Soviet region persisted (Çoşkun, 2015; Demir and Finckenauer, 2010). This demand further intensified the stigmatization and public condemnation of Russian-speaking women, amplified by Turkish media (Zhidkova,

2016, 2017). The legislative reforms of 2002–2003, aimed at combating human trafficking and sham marriages, somewhat improved the legal position of migrants, but failed to eliminate the structural problems associated with irregular and precarious forms of employment (Içduygu, 2009).

In the 2000s, researchers observed a marked intensification of human trafficking: many women were deceived by promises of legal employment or marriage and were subsequently coerced into labor and prostitution across virtually all regions of Turkey. Although most victims entered the country legally, they soon found themselves trapped in debt bondage and subjected to threats and acts of violence (Demir, 2010).

Thus, the migration of women from the post-Soviet region to Turkey has undergone several distinct stages: beginning with shuttle trade and survival strategies in the 1990s and moving toward more structured, though still precarious, forms of employment in the 2000s, all against the backdrop of enduring stereotypes and a restrictive legal environment. While the collapse of the Soviet Union and the ensuing socio-economic crisis initially acted as a major catalyst for the migration of Russian-speaking women to Turkey, over time the motives for migration have become increasingly diversified. A number of factors have contributed to this diversification: the gradual stabilization of women's socio-economic position in Russia, which led to greater mobility in the form of tourism and business travel; the growth of the tourism sector, including affordable air connections, which generated millions of trips by those seeking affordable seaside vacations and simultaneously created opportunities for at least partially legal employment of Russian-speaking women in Turkey; the rapid development of online technologies, including dating platforms that facilitated cross-border relationships and maintained long-distance romantic ties; as well as the popularity of Turkish television series in Russia and the active blogging of Russian-speaking women married to Turkish men. All these factors have shaped new patterns in the perception of migration opportunities, including marriage migration to Turkey.

1.1.3. Patterns of Marriage Migration of Russian Women to Turkey

Marriage migration of women from Russia to Turkey emerged as a distinct phenomenon in the 1990s and, by the 2000s, had become one of the most visible forms

of female mobility (Deniz and Özgür, 2014). Scholarly attention to cross-border marriages appeared relatively late: only in 2009 did Içduygu highlight this topic, pointing out the lack of research and the gendered asymmetry of such unions, which were predominantly between Turkish men and foreign women. Içduygu (2009) argued that marriage functions as a goal of migration. By contrast, Bloch (2011, 2017), drawing on her ethnographic fieldwork, maintained that intimate relationships and subsequent marriages developed during women's labor migration. According to her findings, women who initially came to Turkey for employment entered into emotional and intimate relationships with Turkish men, and these relationships gradually led to marriage. These connections were not limited to economic calculation; alongside material benefits, they also contained significant emotional and affective components, a view similarly expressed by Deniz and Özgür (2013).

In the unstable conditions of the 1990s, one of the driving factors behind such marriages was women's search for economic support and stability through a Turkish husband. At the same time, emotional considerations, cultural proximity, and the image of Turkey as a place to start life anew also played an important role. From the 2000s onward, with the stabilization of Russian economies, the growth of tourism, and the expansion of internet communication, the motives for these unions became more diverse: couples increasingly met at resorts, through social networks, or via family and friendship ties.

Until 2003, foreign spouses could acquire Turkish citizenship immediately upon marriage. This situation led to instances of sham marriages. However, the law adopted on June 4, 2003, changed the regulations: citizenship could now be obtained only after three years of continuous marriage, a measure aimed at limiting fictitious unions (Içduygu, 2009). As observed by Bloch (2011), this legislative change reflected a state response to public discontent over the growing visibility of women from the former Soviet Union in marriage with Turkish men and the associated "Natasha" stereotype.

Marriage migration became particularly well documented in Antalya, which by the 2010s had turned into a major center of residence for Russian-speaking migrant women. According to Deniz and Özgür (2012, 2013), marriages there frequently arose in the context of tourist trips. Marriage provided women with security, housing, and

reduced the urgency of immediate employment, although opportunities to work and engage in business activities remained an important motive. Russian women in Antalya thus began to work in the tourism sector and related industries, as well as in trade, property sales, and rental services. The rapidly increasing number of tourists from post-Soviet countries created a strong demand for Russian-speaking personnel in these sectors (Gülay and Çağla, 2012).

At present, Russian women in Antalya and Istanbul have established active communities with their own economic and social institutions, including schools, associations, and professional networks (Deniz and Özgür, 2014, 2022). Marriage has become not only a personal choice, but also an important channel of integration into local society. Through marriage and childbearing, these women gain access to cultural resources and develop stable social ties, forming the nucleus of the Russian-speaking community. Their positive experience has provided a model for others, encouraging more Russian women to seek marriage opportunities in Turkey (Deniz and Özgür, 2013).

Thus, Russian migrant women have developed specific strategies of adaptation and integration into the Turkish socio-economic environment. In the early stages, labor migration directed women primarily to large commercial or resort cities, where there was a demand for female labor. As the urgent need to travel to Turkey for work diminished with the gradual recovery after the post-Soviet crisis, new factors began to sustain a stable flow of migration. First, low-cost tourism offered by Turkey created opportunities for affordable holidays, during which friendships and intimate relationships were often formed. Second, already established migrant networks, by providing positive examples, encouraged other women to consider migration to Turkey.

The expansion of the tourism sector and the demand for Russian-speaking personnel contributed to the spread of female labor migration across Turkey's main tourist destinations. While the concentration of Russian speakers in major commercial and economic centers can be linked to labor, marriage, or educational migration, the presence of Russian women in smaller or more remote towns is, based on my observations, primarily a result of marriage migration. Women who marry Turkish men often move to the town or village where their husband works. This is not necessarily the husband's place of birth, since Turkey itself experiences complex

patterns of internal migration (Deniz and Özgür, 2020). According to interviewees, they sometimes had to change residence several times. As a result, thousands of Russian wives are now scattered across Turkey, from Istanbul to Hatay, from Marmaris to Kars.

Remarkably, even under such dispersed circumstances, women have found ways to adapt, following the example of the first migrant women in Antalya by building transnational networks, albeit now primarily virtual. According to interviewees, until about 2016–2018 the main platforms for these connections were Facebook and VK, which still host numerous migrant groups. However, starting around 2019, an increasing number of personal blogs by Russian-speaking women appeared on Instagram, followed later by migrant chat groups on Telegram. These developments created what I could name as a "virtual migration network," which has united women across Turkey and formed one of the largest online communities of Russian wives abroad.

In conclusion, this section on the history of Russian-speaking women's migration to Turkey underlines the necessity of distinguishing Russian women from the broader flow of post-Soviet marriage migrants in Turkey. For example, Uzbek women, whose migration is primarily shaped by neoliberal economic restructuring, persistent poverty, and patriarchal restrictions in Uzbekistan — often pushing single mothers and divorced women to seek security through marriage with Turkish men despite facing domestic violence and heavy workloads (Akcapar and Çakır, 2024) — contrast with Russian migrants, who arrive with comparatively higher educational backgrounds, a rich experience of financial and social independence, wider transnational cultural repertoires, and stronger capacities for adaptation. Looking at other widespread groups of migrants, the experiences of Syrian women, for whom migration to Turkey often represents emancipation from restrictive patriarchal structures by allowing greater mobility and access to education and healthcare (Ulutaş and Kahya Hızarcı, 2024; Çınar, 2025), reveal yet another trajectory. Thus, Russian women constitute a distinctive group of migrants: as this study will demonstrate, they do not frame Turkey primarily as a space of "salvation," but rather as an ambivalent context where they mobilize their cultural and social capital, negotiate gendered expectations, and construct new social networks. This research will provide rich material for

comparative analysis with other migrant groups. However, the study is not without its own complexities, which will be discussed in the following section.

1.2. Research Problem

The topic of international female migration represents a multi-layered and deeply socially significant phenomenon that extends beyond the mere study of migration as a process. Of particular interest is the case of Russian women migrating to Turkey, which serves as a vivid and specific example of the global phenomenon of cross-border migration. This research direction enables an exploration not only of individual trajectories and motivations but also of broader social, cultural, and political contexts.

This study focuses on the case of Russian marriage migrants in Turkey, analyzing both the structural factors that shape their migration context and the subjective experience of adaptation within the host society. I aim to go beyond the boundaries of classical migration theories by incorporating gender and family studies to present their experiences in a more nuanced and comprehensive framework.

Migration is commonly understood as the movement of people from one geographical location to another, either within a single country (internal migration) or across national borders (international migration). This movement can be motivated by a variety of factors, including economic (e.g., job-seeking), educational (e.g., studying abroad), familial (e.g., reunification or marriage), or political (e.g., asylum, forced displacement) (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014).

The typology of migration typically includes the following categories: economic or labor migration, marriage migration (entering into a marriage with a citizen of another country), educational migration (pursuing education abroad), and family migration (reuniting with relatives). Moreover, forms of migration can be categorized by duration and regularity: permanent, temporary, circular (periodic return to the country of origin), and seasonal migration, among others.

Academic research on migration can be based on both quantitative and qualitative methods (Castles, de Haas and Miller, 2014; Creswell and Creswell, 2018). One of the most widespread tools remains statistical analysis, which allows researchers to identify

the scale and dynamics of migration flows. I would like to make a brief note here regarding the vulnerability of migration studies relying solely on statistics. In my undergraduate research, I encountered significant discrepancies between the availability and transparency of Russian and Turkish official migration data. The data sets did not align, and establishing any meaningful correlation proved impossible, aside from a hopeful wish that Russian statistical systems improve.

Given my background in anthropology, I have prioritized qualitative research methods such as participant observation, in-depth interviews, and narrative as well as contextual analysis. These methods allow for the capturing of subtle nuances within individual experiences and cultural transformations.

Against this backdrop, the central research question of this research is formulated as follows: How do Russian marriage migrants navigate patriarchal norms in Russia and Turkey to accumulate, convert, and transform various forms of capital, and how do these processes reflect shifts in power dynamics, personal agency, and the reinforcement or subversion of patriarchal structures within their intimate relationships and communities? This question allows us to move beyond one-dimensional accounts of migration and instead examine the complex interplay of structural constraints and individual strategies that define the life trajectories of Russian women in Turkey. It is central because it captures the intersection of gender, power, and resources—an aspect earlier studies on Russian women in Turkey have not fully explored.

To address this question, the dissertation adopts a qualitative design that combines 29 semi-structured interviews with Russian-speaking marriage migrants and autoethnographic reflections. The analysis is informed by feminist theories of patriarchy and Bourdieu's framework of capitals, tracing how participants negotiate structural barriers, mobilize resources, and reshape their intimate and social lives in the Turkish context.

In what follows, I illustrate how these choices have shaped the development of my methodological path.

1.3. Research Trajectory

My interest in Russian women's migration to Turkey began in 2020, while I was in Russia selecting a topic for my undergraduate thesis in anthropology. The COVID-19 lockdown led me to discover a network of Russian-speaking women's Instagram blogs, which offered intimate narratives of everyday life, cultural encounters, and relationship dynamics. The topic of studying Russian women married to Turkish men faced skepticism in my academic circle, shaped by persistent stereotypes dating back to the 1990s and 2000s. My aim, however, was to give voice to these women and challenge such evaluative images through scholarly analysis.

Between 2020 and 2021, I conducted a 13-month digital ethnographic study (Miller et al., 2016, 2021), observing over 100 Instagram accounts and conducting phone interviews. I found that blogging served both as a personal diary and a support network, helping women cope with migration-induced depression and fostering offline communities, particularly in Antalya, Alanya, and Istanbul. These online interactions facilitated the reconstruction of symbolic, cultural, and social capital, aligning with Miller's conclusion that smartphones can serve as a form of "home" for migrants (Miller et al., 2021).

On February 24, 2022, the day Russia launched its invasion of Ukraine, I relocated to Turkey for an Erasmus+ exchange at the Middle East Technical University (ODTÜ) in Ankara. My aim was to deepen my understanding of Turkish social reality, particularly familial structures, gender roles, and women's position in society, while collecting field data on Russian-speaking migrant women. Realizing that four months would be insufficient, I decided to remain in Turkey. This shift allowed me to approach the research from within the host society, developing a more nuanced understanding of migration through immersion in the language, culture, and everyday life.

By January 2024, having achieved conversational fluency in Turkish, I launched the Instagram blog *Rushakkinda* to collect and analyze Turkish citizens' perceptions of Russian women. Through online engagement, I explored stigmas, stereotypes, and cultural knowledge related to Russian women and the post-Soviet space. Immersion in the Turkish context shifted my academic focus toward patriarchy, an underexplored

and often taboo subject in Russian discourse, where the term is commonly associated with the Orthodox Church[5] and where feminist perspectives face ideological resistance, including political attempts to label feminism as "extremist."[6]

This engagement with patriarchy and intersectionality led to an epistemological shift: I became aware of entrenched hierarchies structuring everyday and academic life and observed destructive power dynamics in relationships between Russian-speaking women and Turkish men, including inequality, neglect, and abuse. To maintain analytical distance and avoid bias, I deliberately postponed writing my master's thesis, a pause that ultimately strengthened the balance and objectivity of my analysis.

Much contemporary scholarship on female marriage migration emphasizes the vulnerability of migrant women and the human rights violations they may face (Moret et al., 2019; Pellander, 2015; Tyldum, 2013). While this focus is vital, there is a risk of reducing their experiences to a single narrative of suffering (Pellander, 2015), oversimplifying complex, ambivalent, and dynamic realities. A balanced research perspective must acknowledge both positive and negative dimensions, moving beyond stereotypes toward an honest portrayal of women's diverse strategies of adaptation, resistance, and self-realization.

Having lived in Turkey for three and a half years, my own trajectory moved from academic enthusiasm through exhaustion and anger, to an acceptance of the complexity of what I observed. I became not only an observer but also a participant in the migration process, experiencing hospitality and support alongside discrimination and harassment, including being mistaken for a sex worker and physically assaulted in public spaces. Public reactions varied with my self-identification: as someone who was born and raised in Kyrgyzstan, I was seen more warmly; as a Russian, I often heard political remarks such as "I love Putin."

---

[5] In the Orthodox Christian tradition, "patriarchate" (патриархат) denotes the highest ecclesiastical institution headed by a patriarch, such as the Moscow or Constantinople Patriarchates. It is important to note that in Russian the same word "патриархат" is used both for this church structure and for the sociological concept of "patriarchy," which may lead to potential ambiguities.

[6] RIA Novosti, The State Duma will consider a bill to recognize feminism as an extremist ideology, April 4, 2023. https://ria.ru/20230404/proekt-1863016013.html.

These encounters, though initially destabilizing, became transformative. I applied my research insights to develop survival and protection strategies: seeking legal counsel, cultivating a trusted social network, and leveraging forms of capital, my METU student status, quite popular Instagram blog, where I could freely share my academic and personal observations about Turkey and Russia, residence in central Ankara, and broad social ties to navigate threats effectively. This experience reaffirmed that studying female migration requires constant reflexivity and recognition of blurred boundaries between personal and academic. Autoethnography, in this sense, becomes a means to capture structural patterns while remaining attuned to lived pain, revealing both dependency and resilience, vulnerability and agency.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

As a result of years of observation, fieldwork, and deep reflection, I have concluded that the most productive theoretical foundation for analyzing the migration experiences of Russian-speaking women in Turkey is Pierre Bourdieu's theory of forms of capital (1986). Applying the categories of social, cultural, economic, and symbolic capital makes it possible to systematize and capture the transformations these women undergo in the process of marriage migration: what they possessed in their country of origin, what was lost, and which forms of capital were either acquired or reconfigured in the host society.

One of the central tasks of this study is to reflect on the patriarchal systems and patterns of cultural interaction in Russia and Turkey. Although both societies retain elements of patriarchal structure (Millet, 1969; Hartmann, 1976; Eisenstein, 1979), the manifestations and historical foundations of these models differ significantly. In Russian society, patriarchy is silenced, often associated with the Orthodox tradition, resulting in its partial sacralization and resistance to open critique. In Turkey, patriarchy is more deeply embedded in the social fabric and has been historically shaped by Islamic, rural, and militaristic traditions. Nevertheless, expressions of patriarchy in Turkey also range across a spectrum, from soft paternalism to rigid hierarchies within traditional families. Nevertheless, despite the seemingly distinct foundations on which patriarchal forms in Russia and Turkey rest, there exist shared, mutually intelligible categories that intersect and layer upon one another. It is within

these zones of overlap, I would argue, that the social and cultural conditions enabling Russian–Turkish marriages are formed.

I propose to examine these patriarchal systems not only through their normative frameworks but through the everyday practices of interaction within transnational marriages. Such an approach will illuminate how patriarchal logics from different cultural contexts interact, overlap, and sometimes clash in shaping understandings of authority, gender roles, and family structure in the migration setting.

1.5. Assumptions

1. Migration in a patriarchal context necessitates capital transformation
Russian-speaking women who migrate to Turkey for marital reasons face the challenge of adapting the forms of capital they accumulated in Russia (economic, cultural, social, and symbolic). These forms of capital may not be recognized or may be devalued within the Turkish patriarchal context. Migration thus requires not only adaptation but also transformation and recoding of capital in a new sociocultural environment (Bourdieu, 1986).

2. Forms of capital are context-dependent and power-sensitive
Migration from one patriarchal society to another entails a redistribution of power in intimate relationships, where economic dependence, language barriers, and stigmatization increase women's vulnerability. Certain forms of capital (such as the symbolic status of being a "Russian wife") may either exacerbate social vulnerability or enhance symbolic recognition, while others (like language skills or support networks) facilitate integration.

3. Women's experiences encompass both trauma and agency
Although most migration research emphasizes the suffering of female migrants, this study is based on the assumption that women's experiences are multifaceted: including negative aspects (discrimination, dependency, violence) and positive ones (support, social fulfillment, emotional growth). Women not only adapt, but actively develop survival and empowerment strategies, requiring a theoretical framework that accounts for agency within structural inequalities.

4. Personal and social space as a site of resistance and adaptation

In the context of cross-border migration, the personal and social spheres are not mere backdrops, but active arenas of resistance and adaptation. For Russian-speaking women who migrated to Turkey through marriage, domains such as education, employment, hobbies, friendships, and family constitute forms of economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital imported from the country of origin.

It is within these spaces, blogs, kitchens, friendship circles, and online groups, that identity transformation takes place. The ability to retain or reconstruct oneself within a foreign patriarchal context becomes a marker of resilience and agency. These spaces do not simply preserve capital, but serve as sites where it is reorganized, defended, and redefined.

Thus, the everyday life of a female migrant is far more than a private sphere: it is a political space in which battles for recognition, stability, and the right to be oneself are actively waged. The present analysis of preliminary assumptions is grounded in theoretical insight, ethnographic fieldwork, and sustained reflexive engagement. Drawing on Bourdieu's framework of capital transformation and feminist approaches to patriarchy, this research offers a nuanced perspective on the migration experiences of Russian women in Turkey.

Rather than reproducing victim-centered narratives, this study conceptualizes women's experiences as multidimensional, marked by both structural constraints and active agency. Through the lens of capital, economic, social, cultural, and symbolic, it becomes possible to trace not only what is lost or devalued in the host society, but also what is renegotiated, transformed, and rebuilt.

The assumptions outlined here serve as a conceptual groundwork for further empirical investigation and have broader implications for gender studies, migration theory, and family theory. Ultimately, this study positions everyday life as a political space where migrant women continuously engage in the struggle for recognition, resilience, and the right to assert their identities and desires within a transnational and patriarchal context.

1.6. Research Structure

The structure of this research has been designed to reflect the research logic, gradually moving from broader conceptual frameworks to the detailed analysis of empirical data and the final synthesis of findings. After the introductory chapter, which outlines the research aims, objectives, essential background, theoretical foundations and methodological choices, the subsequent chapters are organized in a way that provides both the necessary context and a systematic progression of argumentation.

The second chapter presents an extensive review of the relevant literature. It discusses how the study of migration has evolved over time, paying particular attention to the incorporation of gender into migration research and the later development of feminist and intersectional perspectives. This part of the dissertation also critically examines the ways in which Bourdieu's theory of capital has been adapted to migration studies and identifies the conceptual gaps that shaped the analytical approach of this research. Special focus is given to the patriarchal contexts of Russia and Turkey as they form the structural background against which the empirical analysis is developed.

The third chapter is devoted to methodology. It explains the qualitative design of the research and the rationale behind it, describes the fieldwork process, sampling strategies and the use of semi-structured interviews, and reflects on the challenges that arise when studying intimate and gendered aspects of migration. Considerable attention is also given to the researcher's positionality and to the ethical considerations that were essential for the integrity of the study.

This thesis organizes its core empirical findings into two distinct chapters: the fourth chapter is centered on the transformation of capitals, and the fifth focuses on the negotiation of patriarchy, reflecting the dual focus of the research. The fourth chapter examines how women's economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals are accumulated, lost, or reconfigured through the process of marriage migration. The fifth chapter then explores how these same women navigate and challenge patriarchal structures in their everyday lives in Turkey. Separating the analysis in this way provides clarity: it allows the study to first detail the material and social resource changes the participants experience, and subsequently to delve into the gender power

dynamics shaping their marriages and households. This structure follows the logic of the research questions and theoretical framework, addressing the “capitals” and “patriarchy” dimensions in turn.

The final chapter brings the study to a close by synthesizing its findings, discussing the broader implications for migration and gender studies, and outlining the contributions this dissertation makes to the academic field. It also acknowledges the limitations of the study and identifies directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review aims to map out the key academic debates and conceptual frameworks that inform the study of gendered migration, with a particular focus on marriage migration from Russia to Turkey. The chapter is organized thematically and historically, reflecting the interdisciplinary nature of the field and the multiple theoretical perspectives necessary to understand the lived experiences of migrant women.

The review begins with an overview of how gender has been conceptualized in migration studies. It traces the field's development from early stages where gender was largely neglected or treated as secondary, through the emergence of feminist critiques, and toward more recent interdisciplinary approaches that challenge binary assumptions and emphasize intersectionality. The second section explores how the concept of capital, particularly through the lens of Pierre Bourdieu, has been applied in research on migration, family, and gender. It highlights how different forms of capital including economic, cultural, social, and symbolic are accumulated, converted, and negotiated in transnational and intimate contexts. The third section focuses on the integration of patriarchy into the study of cross border marriage migration. It critically examines dominant discourses of vulnerability, highlights the agentic strategies of migrant women, and contextualizes patriarchal structures in both Turkish and Russian societies. This comparative lens allows for a deeper understanding of how gendered power operates across cultural and national boundaries. Finally, the review turns to existing research on female migration from Russia to Turkey. This section identifies key findings, highlights existing gaps, and sets the stage for the empirical investigation that follows in the thesis.

Together, these sections provide the conceptual and historical foundation for the study and justify the analytical framework through which the experiences of Russian migrant women in Turkey will be explored.

2.1. Gender and Migration

Migration studies, emerging from sociology, anthropology, history, political science and other disciplines, long relied on theoretical models that were not only fragmented, but also implicitly shaped by the male experience (Aydiner, 2020). Until the last decades of the twentieth century, migration was conceptualized primarily as a gender-neutral process, while in fact the very foundations of this field were built on male-centered assumptions (Brettell, 2017). Classical migration theories, including neoclassical economic models and migration network approaches, treated men as the primary actors of mobility and built their explanations on the assumption that the experience of a male migrant was universal (van Hear, 2010; Aydiner, 2020). In these approaches women were usually mentioned only in relation to family migration, most often as accompanying wives or part of the household rather than as independent migrants (Mahler and Pessar, 2001). Even in the 1960s and early 1970s, the term migrants and their families in research referred mainly to male migrants with wives and children, and women's own migration remained almost invisible (Boyd and Grieco, 2003).

This gender blindness was one of the most persistent biases of early migration studies. As Curran and Saguy (2001) underline, the traditional social sciences developed their concepts on the basis of male, Western, middle-class experiences and overlooked social dynamics specific to women. These blind spots meant that a large range of practices initiated by women, such as chain migration through kinship, domestic work migration and transnational care responsibilities, remained outside the research agenda.

From the 1970s onwards, feminist critique began to fundamentally reshape migration research. Early interventions (Morokvašić, 1984; Anthias, 1983; Gabaccia, 1994) demonstrated that women are active participants in international mobility and challenged the representation of men as the default migrant. Feminist discourse did not

merely add women to migration research, but questioned the epistemological foundations of the field, showing that migration processes are structured by gender relations at every stage: from the decision to leave, through mobility, to settlement and belonging (Donato et al., 2006; Mahler and Pessar, 2001; Morokvašić, 2014).

At the heart of this shift was the understanding of gender as a process rather than a fixed attribute. Gender is a system of social and cultural norms that define masculinity and femininity, set expectations, and vary across contexts (Connell, 1998; Deniz & Özgür, 2013). It intersects with class, race, ethnicity and age (Anthias and Yuval-Davis, 1993; Crenshaw, 1995), making migration not simply a demographic or economic movement but a social process embedded in relations of power. This conceptualization changed the focus of research and showed that cultural norms about the roles of men and women influence decisions about migration, the opportunities and risks that accompany these decisions, and the way migration trajectories develop over time.

The introduction of gender has therefore repositioned migration research as a field that studies not just movements of people but transformations of social relations. This conceptual shift forms the basis for subsequent debates about the interaction of structure and agency, the diversification of female migration, and the implications of gender for all stages of migration trajectories.

Once gender was introduced as an analytical category, it became clear that it shapes migration both as a structural force and as lived practice. Research since the 1990s has shown that gender norms influence who is able to migrate, when mobility becomes possible, the forms that migration takes and the opportunities and constraints migrants encounter (Curran and Saguy, 2001; Brettell, 2008). These effects vary depending on age, class, education, ethnicity and the broader cultural expectations that societies place on men and women (Buijs, 1993; Moore, 1988).

The diversification of female migration is particularly visible in post-Soviet contexts, where women were disproportionately affected by the economic collapse after 1991 and entered transnational mobility to sustain their families (Agathangelou, 2003; Tavcer, 2006). In Turkey, for example, field studies show that the majority of

newcomers in sectors such as tourism, domestic work and informal trade are women, and that female migrants constitute the great majority in cros-border marriages with Turkish citizens (Deniz and Özgür, 2010; 2013).

By looking at migration through gender, scholars have also highlighted how family and kinship systems act as a structural framework. Decisions about migration, resource allocation and the distribution of risk are made within gendered expectations of obligation and care. These expectations shape who leaves, who stays behind and who is responsible for remittances. Women are often perceived as more reliable in supporting families through remittances, which explains why in some regions female mobility has been encouraged even in the face of restrictive norms (Abadan-Unat, 1977; Morokvašić, 1987). At the same time, local norms may stigmatize the migration of women, especially single women, framing their mobility as a transgression of cultural roles (Green, 2012; Oishi, 2005).

In destination contexts, labour markets are strongly gendered. Domestic work, care provision and the service sector remain the main areas of employment for many migrant women, giving rise to what has been conceptualized as "global care chains," in which the reproductive work of wealthier households in the global North is sustained by women from poorer regions (Ehrenreich and Hochschild, 2002; Parreñas, 2001). This process has created new forms of stratification among women, as the outsourcing of care from middle-class women to migrant workers redistributes opportunities and vulnerabilities (Lutz, 2008).

Another important area of research concerns migration, family and citizenship. Studies of transnational families highlight how migration transforms household roles and the meaning of belonging. The growth of transnational "living-apart-together" arrangements reflects the attempt to maintain family life across borders (Bryceson and Vuorella, 2002; Hondagneu-Sotelo and Avila, 1997). At the institutional level, policies that regulate family reunification and spousal migration are also gendered: discourses of vulnerability and integration often frame migrant women as potential victims, while migrant men who join their families face suspicion of opportunistic motives (Block, 2014). In this context, scholars have developed the concept of "citizenship from below," which examines how migrants, particularly women, actively construct

belonging and political participation in spite of restrictive state frameworks (Erel, 2009; Shinozaki, 2015; Parreñas, 2011).

Together, these studies demonstrate that migration is not only shaped by gender as a structural factor but also serves as a context in which gendered practices are renegotiated. Female migrants actively navigate existing norms, either reproducing them or transforming them, while institutions and policies impose different sets of opportunities and constraints on their strategies.

Recent research in migration studies highlights that gender is not a separate dimension, but a fundamental principle through which migration itself is organized and experienced. Following the conceptual interventions of Mahler and Pessar (2001) and Morokvašić (2014), gender is now examined in close connection with other axes of power - class, ethnicity, race, age and legal status, so that the analysis of migration trajectories reflects the complexity of social positions.

One of the most influential contributions has been the development of the concept of gendered geographies of power (Mahler and Pessar, 2001), which encourages scholars to analyze migration simultaneously at several interrelated scales: the body, the household, the community, state institutions, and transnational spaces. This perspective makes it possible to see how structural factors such as labour markets and legal regimes intersect with individual strategies and how these relations shape opportunities, constraints and power relations in the lives of migrants.

An important direction within this approach focuses on agency. Migration studies have moved away from representing migrant women only as victims of patriarchal constraints. Instead, research has demonstrated that women can use migration strategically to negotiate traditional norms and transform their social positions, even when they rely on the same norms to gain recognition and resources (Morokvašić, 2007; Cvajner, 2011). This dual process, in which existing hierarchies are both reproduced and challenged, has become a central theme in the literature on marriage migration, domestic labour and transnational family life.

Another significant development has been the inclusion of emotions and affect in the study of migration. While economic and structural factors remain crucial, scholars

argue that decisions to migrate, choices about return and everyday transnational practices are also shaped by emotions such as obligation, love, fear or shame. These affective dimensions, which can drive or limit mobility, have long remained in the background of migration research, but are increasingly recognized as key to understanding both motivations and consequences (Svasek, 2010).

The interdisciplinary nature of gender and migration research has also strengthened transnational perspectives. The analysis now often extends beyond the nation-state to include networks, institutions and practices that connect migrants' lives across multiple locations. This perspective has informed studies of citizenship from below (Erel, 2009; Shinozaki, 2015) and of transnational families and care, showing how migrants actively create forms of belonging that exist alongside or in tension with state regulations.

These contemporary approaches show that the study of migration through the lens of gender no longer aims simply to correct previous gaps but has become a way of redefining the core questions of the field. Migration is examined as a process in which mobility and immobility, structural forces and individual strategies, material conditions and emotional factors all interact, producing complex and often contradictory outcomes for those who move and for those who remain behind.

In sum, the incorporation of gender into migration studies has shifted the field from a focus on abstract flows and economic logics to an understanding of migration as a social process embedded in power relations. This perspective highlights how structural conditions and individual strategies intersect, how family and institutional contexts shape mobility, and how migration, in turn, transforms gender relations. Contemporary scholarship now treats gender not as an additional variable, but as an essential analytic lens through which to study migration, revealing the complexity of migrants' experiences and the need for approaches that integrate structure, agency and emotions.

2.2. Capitals in Migration Studies

Analyzing the experiences of migrant women, especially in the context of international marriage migration, requires theoretical approaches capable of revealing the complex processes of resource mobilization, adaptation, and social navigation in new

sociocultural environments. One of the most productive analytical tools in this context has been the concept of forms of capital developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1986), which includes economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capitals. To justify its application in the present study, the following literature review focuses on the use of this concept in migration research.

The concept of *capital*, developed by Pierre Bourdieu, has become widespread in the social sciences due to its ability to explain mechanisms of access to resources through participation in stable social networks. Bourdieu defined social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition" (Bourdieu 1980, 1986). In this formulation, social capital is instrumental: it provides individuals with the opportunity to benefit from their membership in a group. Its value lies not only in direct access to resources, but also in its potential to be converted into other forms of capital — economic, cultural, and symbolic (Bourdieu, 1979, 1980).

Since the late 1990s, the idea of capital has been increasingly used in migration studies. This approach helps overcome the limitations of binary schemes and allows for a focus on everyday strategies, practices, and structural constraints that migrants face. Portes (1998) noted that social capital gained the status of a universal solution to a variety of social problems by the end of the twentieth century. However, such broad and diverse use led to a dilution of its conceptual precision. Nevertheless, he emphasizes the value of the Bourdieusian perspective, especially at the individual level: social ties become sources of access to resources, behavioral regulation, and familial support. Specifically, Portes, drawing on the syntheses by Baker (1990), Schiff (1992), and Burt (1992), defines social capital as the ability to derive benefits from membership in social networks or other forms of social interaction. Of particular practical importance, in his view, is the use of non-familial networks as sources of social advantage, a function that most closely aligns with Bourdieusian logic.

At the same time, Portes also observed that social ties may reinforce particularistic preferences and restrict access to resources for "outsiders." Moreover, mere participation in social networks is not a guarantee of positive outcomes: the dynamics

of non-material forms of capital (cultural, symbolic, social) are difficult to quantify and often require the investment of other resources, such as economic, temporal, or educational.

In the context of family studies, social capital takes on particular importance. Research by Parcel and Menaghan (1994a) and Hao (1994) has shown that parental support and high expectations for children serve as crucial sources of cultural and social capital. Hagan et al. (1996) found that frequent relocations disrupt the stability of social networks, thereby reducing access to external sources of support. However, this deficit may be partially offset by the strengthening of intra-family capital, a phenomenon noted in the work of Gold (1995) and Rumbaut (1977). Gold (1995) emphasizes that during immigration, the weakening of community ties is often compensated by an increase in family solidarity. However, such compensation is not always positive: Rumbaut (1977) demonstrated that high family cohesion may negatively correlate with children's academic achievement. Rumbaut concludes that family bonds may provide support, but they can also create obstacles, illustrating the ambiguity and dual nature of social capital.

Levitt was one of the pioneers in introducing the concept of social capital in a transnational context. In her work (Levitt, 1998), she proposed the notion of social remittances, referring to the cross-border transmission of norms, values, behavioral models, and practices between sending and receiving countries. Levitt views social capital as a result of these exchanges, manifesting in trust, mutual obligations, and status within the community. Furthermore, this resource can be mobilized transnationally, for instance, to access social services, political representation, or influence local decision-making in the receiving country. Her approach resonates with the Bourdieusian logic of capital transformation and directly aligns with the analytical framework of the present study.

Bauder (2008) suggested conceptualizing citizenship as a form of capital in the spirit of Bourdieu. Analyzing labor migration in Canada and Germany, Bauder demonstrates that citizenship functions not only as a legal status, but also as a resource that structures access to opportunities and benefits. He distinguishes between formal citizenship (legal status) and informal citizenship (social recognition and cultural belonging),

emphasizing that both aspects play a key role in the mechanisms of migrant inclusion and exclusion. In his view, citizenship is closely tied to other forms of capital, economic, social, and cultural, and can be interchangeable with them. However, as Bauder highlights, such capital transformations are often difficult for migrants due to limited access to recognized forms of belonging. In this context, citizenship becomes a strategic resource that contributes to the reproduction of social inequality in host societies.

An additional perspective on the connection between capital and migration networks is offered by the work of Ryan and co-authors (Ryan, 2007; Ryan et al., 2008), which combines Bourdieu's theory of capital (1986) with concepts of social networks and transnationalism. Analyzing the experiences of Polish migrants in the UK, the authors emphasize that social capital is not a universally available resource, but requires effort, time, and cultural inputs such as language skills and qualifications. In contrast to the interpretations of Putnam (2000) and Coleman (1990), here social capital is viewed as structurally constrained and unevenly distributed, closely linked to migration policy and the individual's cultural capital. Thus, transnational and local social ties function both as mechanisms of resource access and as structures that reproduce social inequality.

An intriguing contribution is presented by Erel, who proposes that migrants' cultural capital should not be seen as a fixed resource in a "rucksack approach" carried from the country of origin, but rather as something that is dynamically created and validated in the course of migration (Erel, 2010). Within the framework of Bourdieu's theory, the author introduces the concept of migration-specific forms of cultural capital. These forms emerge at the intersection of gender, class, ethnicity, and social origin, and help to explain the reproduction of social differentiation within migrant communities.

Kim's (2018) contribution lies in her development of a Bourdieusian theory of international migration through the introduction of the concept of migration-facilitating capital and the extension of migration strategy analysis using notions such as habitus, illusio, symbolic violence, and field. She suggests that migrants should be seen as strategic actors whose desires and actions are shaped not only rationally, but also through historically conditioned categories of perception and moral judgment.

Special attention is given to the moral and status implications of different migration routes and capital forms, as well as the intersection of national and transnational fields of struggle for recognition and legitimacy.

In recent years, scholars have increasingly sought to integrate not only Bourdieu's concept of capital, but also his other key concepts, habitus, field, and social space, into a unified analytical framework for studying transnational spaces and mobility (Joy, Game and Toshniwal, 2020; Skaptadóttir, 2019). A prominent example is Reed-Danahay's (2022) work, where the author reinterprets the concept of social space as a structuring foundation for analyzing both movement and rootedness. It is emphasized that social space is not merely a metaphor, but a real system of relationships between positions, habitus, and forms of capital, manifesting in geography, status, and emotional involvement. This approach is particularly valuable for migration and gender studies because it enables the analysis of not only physical movement, but also symbolic inclusion or exclusion within social and spatial hierarchies.

Overall, the historiographic development of Bourdieu's capital theory in migration and family research demonstrates a clear progression. Initially, researchers focused on the concept of social capital (Baker, 1990; Schiff, 1992; Burt, 1992; Portes, 1998; Parcel and Menaghan, 1994; Hao, 1994; Gold, 1995; Rumbaut, 1997). Later, the analytical discourse incorporated a transnational perspective (Levitt, 1998; Skaptadóttir, 2019), which enabled the examination of migration networks and capital forms across borders.

Gradually, cultural capital and its migration-specific forms came to the forefront, particularly in relation to gender (Erel, 2010), along with the emergence of special types of capital developed in analogy with Bourdieu's classification, such as civic capital (Bauder, 2008) and migration-facilitating capital (Kim, 2018).

In the next stage, the Bourdieusian framework expanded through the integration of other core concepts — habitus, field, symbolic violence, and social space. Contemporary research (Reed-Danahay, 2022; Joy, Game and Toshniwal, 2020; Skaptadóttir, 2019) aims to build comprehensive theoretical models capable of addressing not only resource distribution, but also the moral, spatial, and status

dimensions of transnational mobility. This evolution reflects the growing analytical power of Bourdieu's theory in explaining contemporary migration processes.

It can be concluded that at this stage, the incorporation of Bourdieu's capital theory into gendered migration research remains in development and requires greater scholarly attention.

2.3. Incorporating Patriarchy into the Study of Cross-Border Marriage Migration

This part of literature review focuses on research related to patriarchy, structural inequality, and power dynamics in the context of marriage migration. It explores how gendered hierarchies and patriarchal structures are embedded in both state policies and intimate relationships. Although not all researchers working on marriage migration explicitly employ concepts from feminist theory, many of them articulate ideas that are closely aligned with gender studies. I aim to draw parallels between studies that focus directly on patriarchy and those within the migration literature that implicitly reflect similar concerns.

We will also examine protectionist migration policies enacted under the banner of cultural preservation. While this phenomenon could be interpreted through the lens of Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital and its protection, in this review we will instead focus on how these dynamics are articulated in the terms and categories employed by the researchers themselves, rather than imposing external theoretical frameworks.

Particular attention will be paid to literature examining the private sphere, especially discussions on domestic vulnerabilities and control, to explore how marriage as a social institution becomes a site where patriarchal logics are enacted and reproduced. This will allow us to investigate the relationship between patriarchal state structures and the lived experiences of migrant women within the family.

In the final part of this section, I will reflect on how the study of agency within marriage migration can offer a corrective to the structural hierarchies that are sometimes unconsciously reinforced by academic research itself.

2.3.1. The Vulnerability of Migrant Women

Building on the preceding discussion, I propose that future analysis of the literature should pay close attention to the various forms of vulnerability experienced by female marriage migrants across different domains. Such an approach, informed by a feminist standpoint, allows us to view migration not as a neutral or bureaucratic process, but as one that is deeply embedded in gendered power relations and structural inequalities. These vulnerabilities are multifaceted, encompassing not only legal and financial insecurity, but also emotional, social, and symbolic dimensions. Together, they reflect how patriarchal norms are reproduced through institutional frameworks and everyday experiences.

Moreover, academic and policy discourses that reproduce categories such as 'sham', 'forced', or 'mixed' marriages without sufficient reflexivity risk reinforcing state-informed exclusions and normalizing hierarchical frameworks (Moret et al., 2019).

Taken together, these reflections underscore the need for analytical sensitivity not only to the structures that produce vulnerability, but also to the academic narratives that may inadvertently reinforce them. For instance, initial academic work on post-Soviet migrants to Turkey largely conformed to broader trends in migration studies, often reproducing negative narratives and public stereotypes (Zhidkova, 2016). Early empirical studies focused on women engaged in shuttle trade and sex work in Istanbul's Laleli district (Güçlür & Ilkkaracan, 2002; Eder et al., 2003; Yükseker, 2004), as well as on domestic workers (Kaşka, 2006; Akalın, 2007) and women who entered marriages with Turkish men (Bloch, 2011, 2017). These women were frequently represented as victims of geopolitical upheaval (Çoşkun, 2015), exploitative employers (Akalın, 2007), or trafficking networks (Demir & Finkenhauer, 2010; Demir, 2010).

That is why a reflexive approach to literature on marriage migration should aim to question both the lived conditions of migrant women and the conceptual tools used to describe them, thereby contributing to more balanced and critical interpretations of transnational intimacy.

As a starting point for this analysis, I suggest closely examining how the concept of patriarchy has been employed within feminist research. This framework offers valuable insights into why the image of the "vulnerable migrant woman" remains prominent in migration scholarship (Wray, 2011; Pellander, 2015). The notion of patriarchy, which fundamentally refers to the systematic subordination of women by men, has evolved through various theoretical contributions (Hartmann, 1976; Beechey, 1979; Hartsock, 1983; Walby, 1989) and has also faced substantial criticism (Acker, 1989; Kandiyoti, 1988; Pollert, 1996; Gottfried, 1998), particularly concerning the challenges of operationalizing it in empirical research. Despite these critiques, many scholars have acknowledged its political relevance and utility within feminist theory.

Bryson (1999) points out that patriarchy constitutes a key structural dimension of modern societies. Building on this, Benstead (2021) emphasizes its complexity, viewing patriarchy as a multi-dimensional system influenced by distinct causal mechanisms. He stresses that women's positions are shaped through both public and private forms of patriarchy and reflect ongoing social and political negotiations. This approach enables scholars to better account for changing gender roles and patterns of power.

Applying this conceptual lens to studies of marriage migration can help illuminate the underlying mechanisms through which female migrants encounter gender-related challenges and vulnerabilities. Further, I review selected scholarship on transnational marriage migration to assess whether and in what ways this process constrains women's agency due to patriarchal dynamics within the family, broader society, and the state.

I would like to begin with a particularly illustrative example that shows how some scholars attempt to diagnose structural problems in marriage migration, but do not always fully trace their ideological roots. This is evident in Nock's (1995) examination of the forms of commitment and dependency that exist within marriage. In his analysis, Nock identifies several areas where dependencies may arise, such as income, educational attainment, occupational prestige, household labor, duration of the marriage, and the presence of children. Most notably, he emphasizes the powerful

influence of what he terms the "imagined commitment" of the spouse. This concept is especially revealing, as although Nock does not elaborate on the origins of these imagined commitments, one may interpret them as indicative of how patriarchal norms function within the private sphere (Beechey, 1979; Walby, 1989; Benstead, 2021). His work exemplifies a broader pattern in migration literature where structural issues are acknowledged, yet their gendered and ideological foundations remain insufficiently interrogated.

When marriage occurs across borders, it shifts from being a private arrangement to an issue deeply embedded in the public sphere. As Moret and colleagues (2019) argue, migrants are not perceived as part of the imagined national community. Furthermore, cross-border marriages are often viewed as a threat to the normative conception of the "ideal family," a social institution tasked with producing legitimate members of society and the nation-state. In response, states construct legal categories to legitimize mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, implemented through laws, policies, and everyday bureaucratic practices. From the moment a migrant crosses a border, they are subjected to the politics of belonging, which define whether and how they can be incorporated into the national order. In this context, the state becomes a major source of structural constraint, as migrants find themselves dependent on legal and administrative systems that they cannot meaningfully influence.

This framework becomes clearer when considered through a feminist perspective on the state. While each national context has its own regulatory specifics, feminist scholars emphasize that the state universally functions as a patriarchal structure (Connell, 1990). According to Kandiyoti (2019), the state is deeply invested in gender ideologies that regulate private life. Bureaucracy, the institutional vehicle of the state, operates through hierarchical and gendered logics that historically served to legitimize male dominance and authority over women (Connell, 1990).

Pellander (2015) provides an illustrative case study of how these dynamics manifest in Finland, introducing the concept of "moral gatekeeping" as a framework for understanding how bureaucrats mediate the state's politics of belonging. This gatekeeping process is structured around three key dimensions: culture, gender, and temporality. These criteria inform the judgments made by civil servants about the

legitimacy of both the marriage and the migrant involved. Particularly noteworthy is Pellander's observation that bureaucrats are central in reproducing discourses of the "vulnerable migrant woman," a figure often framed as lacking in agency. In this way, bureaucrats function as intermediaries of the state's gender ideologies, translating abstract principles into concrete administrative decisions.

However, this raises the crucial question of whether marriage migrants retain any space for agency under such systemic constraints. Williams (2010) explores this by arguing that state policies and legislation which deny, shape, or intervene in migrant families exemplify symbolic violence. This form of violence, he suggests, stems from the desire of dominant actors, whether male or state institutions, to maintain control over marginalized subjects, particularly women and migrants. Importantly, Williams stresses the necessity of incorporating migrant agency into scholarly discussions, defining agency as the capacity "to resist and to act autonomously."

Although some researchers have sought to explain agency through cultural frameworks, Williams critiques this tendency. He argues that focusing primarily on cultural practices, such as those emphasized in Pellander's work on gatekeeping, risks overlooking the deeper patriarchal structures that underlie the regulation of migration. Thus, he calls for a return to theoretical models grounded in the concept of patriarchy.

This debate illustrates the ongoing tension between culturalist and structural approaches to understanding the constraints faced by marriage migrants. While culture is frequently invoked, it remains loosely defined in many migration studies. Walby (1989), for instance, includes religion, media, and education as elements of the cultural institutions that support patriarchal systems. Yet, how this framework translates into the context of transnational migration remains underexplored. Pellander links culture to ethnocentric practices of bureaucrats and to the traditions and rituals of migrants, offering a more grounded interpretation. However, her focus covers only certain cultural dimensions.

Given this gap, further exploration is needed. If the analysis involves complex categories such as gendered and cultural logics, it seems more consistent to adopt an intersectional framework rather than rely solely on the concept of patriarchy.

Intersectional approach (Patil, 2013; McCall, 2005) may offer a more nuanced lens for capturing how overlapping systems of power shape the lived experiences of marriage migrants. In the following analysis, I will note whether and how the authors engage with cultural factors, in order to reflect critically on the explanatory potential of such perspectives.

Mira (2020) provides a compelling example of how intersectional analysis can illuminate the interplay between gender, intimacy, race, religion, and state regulation in the context of migration. Focusing on the narratives of professionals who work closely with migrant women, she identifies how discrimination emerges at the intersection of gender, class, and racial hierarchies. According to Mira, state policy not only marginalizes migrant women, but also actively denies their agency and reinforces gendered vulnerability. She argues that uncovering and amplifying these narratives may serve as a pathway for restoring migrant women's agency.

On the other hand, Belanger and Flynn (2018) offer a different perspective by highlighting how some women strategically choose transnational marriage as a means to overcome structural limitations in their countries of origin. For these women, such marriages may represent an opportunity for social and economic mobility, an escape from local gender-based constraints, or even a second chance at marriage unavailable to them at home. Timmerman (2009) presents a similar view in his study of Turkish-Belgian marriages, where women from conservative regions in Turkey pursue transnational unions as a form of emancipation. This behavior is interpreted as an "emancipatory strategy" situated within a broader "culture of migration," where social institutions, collective perceptions, and cultural norms shape the decision to migrate. Timmerman's approach to operationalizing culture in relation to gender dynamics aligns closely with the principles of intersectionality.

Regardless of the perspective, it is clear that state regulation of marriage migration influences multiple aspects of women's lives. Bretell (2017) notes that powerlessness in the public sphere often generates a compensatory struggle for control in the domestic domain. This dynamic becomes particularly visible during the legal regularization process, where women's undocumented status makes them more vulnerable to verbal and physical abuse. Barriers such as limited language proficiency,

social isolation, lack of employment, and shared children further entrench this vulnerability. Puri et al. (2011) add that women may also fear engaging with legal authorities due to cultural norms or threats from local spouses, including threats of deportation or separation from their children.

Abraham (2000) emphasizes how the state's failure to address the social isolation of migrant women contributes to domestic abuse. Institutions such as courts, police, healthcare services, and educational bodies often lack cultural and gender sensitivity. According to Abraham, factors such as isolation from family, unfamiliar environments, limited mobility, language barriers, financial dependence, and lack of support networks all combine to produce emotional, social, and economic dependency. Abraham also highlights the role of cultural expectations and the fear of cultural stigma as reasons why many women remain in abusive relationships.

Merali (2008) further elaborates on these issues in the context of the United States, where marriage migrants are often legally required to be sponsored by their husbands for a period of three years. This sponsorship arrangement can result in total male control over family finances and reinforce women's social isolation. Merali applies a combined theoretical framework incorporating cross-cultural models of gender-based violence, feminist psychology, and international human rights. She argues that sponsorship policies heighten the vulnerability of migrant women and limit their ability to recognize and respond to violations of their rights.

In extreme cases, dependence and abuse in transnational marriages can escalate into forms of domestic and sexual servitude. Tyldum (2013) identifies this form of exploitation as a type of human trafficking. She argues that factors such as poverty, gender inequality, and lack of opportunity create conditions under which migrant women can be subjected to coercion and abuse for the benefit of their citizen spouses. Tyldum defines human trafficking in marriage through the presence of mobility, coercion, and exploitation, distinguishing it from domestic violence as the most extreme form of forced dependency.

Across the reviewed literature, several recurring forms of structural vulnerability can be identified: legal and bureaucratic dependence, economic insecurity, emotional

subordination, social isolation, and in the most severe cases, exploitative servitude. These domains are often entangled and mutually reinforcing. For instance, legal dependence on a sponsoring spouse may also produce emotional and economic subjugation. While some scholars categorize these dependencies separately, in practice they are deeply interconnected.

The sources of these vulnerabilities are also interlinked. State institutions, legal frameworks, administrative actors, and citizen spouses are frequently cited as agents of control. Mechanisms of regulation are both visible and implicit, ranging from codified immigration laws to subtler forms such as "moral gatekeeping" (Pellander, 2015) and "imagined commitments" (Nock, 1995). This duality creates a paradox at the heart of marriage migration: while the migrant woman actively chooses a foreign partner as a strategic response to constraints (Bélanger and Flynn, 2018; Timmerman, 2009), the very actors she depends on—both the state and her spouse—may also become her primary sources of risk and subjugation (Williams, 2010; Kandiyoti, 1988, 2019; Pellander, 2015; Mira, 2020).

This contradiction reaffirms the relevance of a feminist perspective. As previously discussed, the state operates as a grand patriarch, reinforcing its ideologies through laws and regulations (Connell, 1990). While cultural explanations for bureaucratic exclusion have some merit, they fall short of capturing the gendered foundations of these practices (Williams, 2010). Though an intersectional framework offers a promising analytical lens, few existing studies fully integrate cultural and patriarchal explanations (Abraham, 2000; Timmerman, 2009; Pellander, 2015). Therefore, further research should aim to clarify how cultural and patriarchal systems jointly contribute to the oppression of marriage migrant women. This may require revisiting anthropological approaches to define culture more rigorously and understanding how it functions alongside patriarchal logic. Better conceptualization of these intertwined dynamics could enrich future theoretical developments in the field of transnational marriage migration.

2.3.2. Beyond Vulnerability: Women's Agency

The analysis of marriage migration cannot be limited to narratives of vulnerability. Although many studies have documented cases in which structural inequalities expose women to dependence and abuse (Moret et al., 2019; Pellander, 2015; Tyldum, 2013), these situations do not constitute the dominant pattern. A growing body of research emphasizes that women are not passive participants, but often pursue cross-border marriages as deliberate strategies to achieve mobility, economic improvement, personal autonomy, and, in some cases, to escape restrictive gender regimes in their societies of origin (Bélanger and Flynn, 2018; Timmerman, 2009; Morokvašić, 1984, 2007; Cvajner, 2011). These accounts of agency do not ignore structural constraints, but they highlight how women negotiate these constraints, combining pragmatic considerations with emotional motivations such as love, intimacy, and the desire for a better future (Gunnarsson, 2017).

This perspective also extends to interactions with state institutions. Scholars have shown that the ability to navigate bureaucratic frameworks, understand legal protections, and mobilize rights can allow marriage migrants to resist forms of state control (Merali, 2008; Erel, 2009; Shinozaki, 2015). Within such contexts, agency is not only about individual resistance, but also about the capacity to develop new forms of citizenship "from below," as migrants create strategies of belonging and participation that exist alongside or in tension with restrictive state structures.

Within families, power relations are similarly complex. While some research documents the control and coercion exercised by citizen husbands (Brettell, 2017; Puri et al., 2011; Merali, 2008; Tyldum, 2013), other studies point to strategies that women develop to counteract isolation. Social networks, both offline and through digital platforms, often become critical resources for resilience and support (Deniz and Özgür, 2022; 2024). There is also evidence that even in the most remote and patriarchal rural contexts, online communication tools can provide migrants, not only marriage migrants, with opportunities to build communities, exchange information and mitigate isolation (Miller et al., 2016; 2021). These practices illustrate how social capital is mobilized not only for survival, but also for the transformation of everyday life.

Seen through this lens, marriage migration involves a constant negotiation between structural constraints and personal strategies. The capacity to cultivate networks, mobilize resources, and act within or against institutional boundaries demonstrates that migrant women actively shape their trajectories. Studies on domestic work migration (Parreñas, 2001, 2011) and on transnational marriages in different contexts (Morokvašić, 1987, 2007; Cvajner, 2011) show that women often use gendered expectations as both a shield and a resource, sometimes reproducing norms, but also reshaping them to their advantage.

Placing marriage migration in a feminist analytical framework allows for a more comprehensive understanding of these dynamics. While intersectionality has been central in identifying how class, ethnicity, and gender inequalities intersect, recent scholarship demonstrates that an explicit focus on patriarchy as a structure of power remains essential (Beechey, 1979; Kandiyoti, 1988, 2019; Walby, 1989; Connell, 1990; Bryson, 1999; Benstead, 2021). This approach underscores that migration both exposes women to gendered vulnerabilities and provides opportunities to renegotiate gender relations. Future research will benefit from exploring this duality, paying closer attention to the forms of agency, resistance, and adaptation through which migrant women navigate complex transnational realities.

2.3.3. Patriarchy and Gender in the Turkish and Russian Contexts

The concept of patriarchy has served as a foundational framework in feminist theory and gender studies, yet its empirical expressions differ considerably across national and cultural contexts. In both Turkey and Russia, scholarship has shown how patriarchy is not a static inheritance, but rather a dynamic system that adapts to political regimes, economic models, and cultural ideologies. A growing body of literature across disciplines has examined how state policies, religious norms, and family structures shape gendered subjectivities and the distribution of power within society. However, while the Turkish and Russian experiences reveal structural similarities, such as the reinforcement of traditional gender roles through conservative populism or religious revival, they also reflect divergent trajectories of feminist contestation, institutional development, and discursive framing of gender.

This section provides a comparative historiographical overview of how patriarchy has been conceptualized and studied in Turkish and Russian scholarship. It seeks to identify key analytical trends, terminological innovations, and the ways in which researchers have engaged with, or resisted, feminist and postcolonial critiques. Particular attention is paid to the intersections of gender with nationalism, neoliberalism, religion, and state control. This review forms the foundation for understanding the complexities of intimate relationships and family life in cross-cultural settings and lays the groundwork for the subsequent analysis of transnational experiences of Russian women in Turkey.

2.3.4. Patriarchy and Gender in the Turkish Context

Marriage in Turkey functions as one of the most powerful institutions through which gender hierarchies are maintained and reproduced, and this dynamic has direct implications for women who enter the country as foreign spouses. Contemporary scholarship highlights that marriage is not only a private contract, but also a key instrument of governance: surveys indicate that the ideal family promoted in public discourse centers on three children, a vision reinforced by anti-abortion measures, government incentives designed to encourage marriage and childbearing, and policy interventions aimed at reducing divorce rates (Engin, Hürman and Harvey, 2020). These initiatives illustrate the expanding reach of the state into family life, where women's bodies and reproductive roles are positioned as resources for demographic and moral projects. For marriage migrants, this intensification of family-centered policy strengthens the centrality of marriage as the primary site where state authority and kinship structures converge, shaping their legal status, everyday lives and opportunities for participation in Turkish society.

These dynamics unfold against the backdrop of significant institutional transformations in Turkey over the past two decades, which have altered the framework of gender relations without dismantling patriarchal norms. In family law, a landmark moment was the 2002 revision of the Civil Code, which formally enshrined spousal equality and abolished the husband's legal dominance in marriage (Baltaeva, 2015). In practice, however, core procedures continue to reinforce women's dependence on their husbands: for foreign women, divorce is possible either by mutual

consent, if the marriage has lasted more than one year and both spouses appear in court together with a written settlement agreement, or through lengthy contested proceedings on grounds such as adultery, violence, abandonment, or irreconcilable differences. For foreign spouses, this process is further complicated by the requirement to provide notarized and apostilled translations of foreign documents, as well as the risk of losing a family residence permit if the marriage ends within three years, except in cases of domestic violence[7].

Migration law has also undergone substantial changes. The family residence permit for foreign spouses of Turkish citizens is issued for a maximum of three years and is tied to the sponsor's status; access to work permits is often linked to long-term residence and, in practice, to the husband's approval[8]. These mechanisms mean that a foreign wife often lacks the ability to manage her legal position autonomously. Following the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022, Turkey experienced a sharp influx of Russians, including women migrating for family and political reasons[9]. By 2023–2024, migration policy began to shift: refusals to renew residence permits became more frequent, the number of Russian residents dropped by nearly one-third, and legal precarity increased, further amplifying reliance on marriage as a pathway to legal stability[10].

In the sphere of protection from violence, a key turning point came when Turkey withdrew from the Istanbul Convention, an international treaty on preventing and combating violence against women, announced in March 2021 and effective from 1 July 2021. This step, widely condemned by Amnesty International and other rights organizations, was perceived as a major setback for women's rights[11]. Research has

---

[7] Otto Hukuk. (2025). *Divorce in Turkey: Process, tips, and consequences*. https://ottohukuk.com/publications/divorce-in-turkey-process-tips-and-consequences/

[8] Directorate General of Migration Management. (2024). *Residence permit types*. https://en.goc.gov.tr/residence-permit-types

[9] ZOiS. (2024). *Turkey – A new hub for migration from Russia*. https://www.zois-berlin.de/en/publications/zois-spotlight/turkey-a-new-hub-for-migration-from-russia

[10] Karakas, B. (2024, May 21). *Another Russian exodus: Many who fled to Turkey move on again*. Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/world/another-russian-exodus-many-who-fled-turkey-move-again-2024-05-21/

[11] Amnesty International. (2021). *Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention rallies the fight for women's rights across the world*. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/07/turkeys-withdrawal-from-the-istanbul-convention-rallies-the-fight-for-womens-rights-across-the-world-2/

recorded an increase in femicides and "suspicious female deaths" in subsequent years (Kurtuluş et al., 2024), exacerbating risks for all women, including migrants, particularly those whose legal protection and access to support services are mediated by their husbands and his family.

A key concept that helps to explain these dynamics is Deniz Kandiyoti's idea of "bargaining with patriarchy" (1988). In Turkey, where extended patrilineal and patrilocal kinship systems remain influential, women's place in the family is negotiated in exchange for protection and material support. For marriage migrants, this bargain takes on an additional dimension: their legal status, access to resources and legitimacy in the community often depend on the husband and his family. The bargain becomes both a protective mechanism and a constraint, locking foreign wives into a relationship of dependence that is shaped as much by state rules as by family hierarchies. Later Kandiyoti (2016, 2019) describes a new phase that she calls the "politics of masculinist restoration," in which authoritarian and conservative agendas strengthen the domestic role of women and normalize gendered control. These developments have heightened the structural vulnerability of all women in Turkey, while adding extra layers of risk for foreign spouses, whose rights and security are mediated through a single household.

The state itself plays a central role in defining the contours of these relationships. Koğacıoğlu (2005) shows that Turkey's legal reforms—often celebrated as progressive—are accompanied by mechanisms of "state patriarchy," where women's rights exist in law, but remain conditional in practice. Uğur-Çınar (2017) further argues that under AKP governance, neoliberal and conservative policies merge, casting women primarily in familial roles and promoting the ideal of modest, morally disciplined wives. These policies position the family as a protective anchor, but in practice they reinforce the authority of fathers, husbands and senior male relatives. In this environment, marriage migration takes place within a framework where the husband becomes a key mediator between the state and the foreign wife, controlling her access to residence, work and social services.

Religious and cultural norms add another layer of expectation. Atalay (2019) notes that the rhetoric of modesty and moral worth continues to define who is considered a

"good" or "deserving" wife, shaping not only the behaviour of Turkish women, but also the integration of foreign spouses. For many marriage migrants, these moral codes can translate into pressure to conform to local gender expectations more strictly than native-born women, especially in extended family settings or rural communities.

These structural dynamics do not produce a single uniform experience. Ozyegin (2018), for example, documents shift in the aspirations of some younger Turkish men, whose ideals include more individualistic and less authoritarian models of masculinity. Such changes suggest that within the patriarchal framework there are variations and points of negotiation that may affect the everyday life of foreign spouses. At the same time, the persistence of a dominant, family-centered model of gender relations means that most marriages, especially in rural or conservative contexts, continue to reproduce strong expectations of deference and dependency.

In sum, research on patriarchy and marriage migration in Turkey highlights that the institution of marriage functions as a crucial arena where the authority of the family and the authority of the state converge. These overlapping structures shape the opportunities and limitations that foreign wives encounter in their daily lives, from their legal status to their position in the household. The patriarchal logic that underpins marriage in Turkey thus becomes not only a social context, but an active mechanism of regulation for women entering the country through cross-border unions.

2.3.5. Patriarchy and Gender in the Russian Context

Gender studies in Russia began to develop in the aftermath of the Soviet Union's collapse. Prior to that, feminism had largely been marginalized or treated as a subject of critique within the social sciences. In the early 1990s, two intellectual currents emerged. The first, known as "feminology," concentrated on the lived experiences of women while deliberately distancing itself from Western feminist frameworks, which were often viewed as ill-suited to the Russian cultural and historical context. The second introduced the terminology of "gender" and "gender studies" into the academic conversation. Over time, these two strands converged and contributed to the creation of university-level courses dedicated to gender.

By the early 2000s, numerous foundational feminist texts were translated into Russian. However, these translations frequently lost their critical and ontological depth, leading to conceptual ambiguity and limited acceptance among the broader public (Zdravomyslova and Tyomkina, 2015). This was partly due to the underdeveloped disciplinary vocabulary in Russian academic discourse. At present, gender studies in Russia tend to be situated within the domains of critical and public sociology, as well as socio-cultural anthropology and certain strands of historical research.

In discussions of patriarchy, key figures such as Zdravomyslova and Tyomkina (2015) draw on Therborn's classification (Therborn, 2004), which characterizes Russia as a post-patriarchal society. According to this view, women formally enjoy political rights, legal autonomy, and economic independence. They can vote, make decisions independently, and exercise agency in both familial and public domains. Nonetheless, structural inequalities continue to exist, especially in the symbolic and economic spheres, calling into question the completeness of this post-patriarchal categorization.

A number of sociologists in the 1990s identified a resurgence of patriarchal and neotraditionalist discourses (Posadskaya, 1996; Voronina, 1988, 1993; Mezentseva, 1992; Rimashevskaya, 2006). The political and economic upheavals of the post-Soviet transition created fertile ground for narratives emphasizing women's "natural roles" as homemakers, mothers, and keepers of the hearth. The housewife ideal also became a symbol of prestige, an aspiration that, paradoxically, only a few could afford. These patriarchal ideals contributed to gender-based exclusion in the labor market, restricted women's access to the public sphere, and reinforced their confinement to domestic roles.

In the 2010s, religious institutions and conservative communities increasingly shaped public debate around gender roles, with their influence gradually extending into state-level discourse. This trend only intensified over the years, as Orthodox religious communities, having recovered from the waves of sectarianism and esoteric trends that had swept through Russia in the 1990s and 2000s (Kazmina, 2009), began engaging in more active public work. While nominally promoting the role of the husband as head of the household, their focus on working primarily with women resulted in the reinforcement of traditionalist and patriarchal norms tied to women's historical roles

in the family. The author recalls how during this period, public discourse began to revive jokes and commentary about a 'return to Domostroy'[12], a reference to the 16th-century Russian household manual that codified a rigid patriarchal order, prescribing obedience of wives to husbands, religious piety, and strict domestic discipline as the moral foundation of family life.

Divorce and abortion have been subjected to sharp criticism from the Church[13], and feminism itself has been discussed at the legislative level with the aim of potentially banning it as a harmful ideology in 2023[14]. It is important to note that, historically, the Church has lacked direct instruments of governance over the state in Russia. However, its soft power lies in its ability to shape popular consciousness, exercised primarily through everyday discourse and the traditional respect that Russian society accords to Orthodoxy and should be underestimated.

The contemporary Russian context is often described as one of gender neotraditionalism, underpinned by religious morality and nostalgic imaginaries. As noted by Zdravomyslova and Tyomkina (2015), while formal gender equality exists, it is constrained by the dominant belief in women's "special mission," which confines their public engagement. Within the framework of neoliberal traditionalism, the prevailing female ideal merges the roles of businesswoman and homemaker. Moreover, women are assigned a civic role in national reproduction and in safeguarding moral and family values. Added to this are romanticized visions of Western-style domesticity, tied to Soviet-era ideals of masculinity.

A central analytical tool used in Russian gender studies is the concept of the "gender contract" (Zdravomyslova and Tyomkina, 2015). Scholars have outlined several types of such contracts: the "working mother" contract model, which combines paid labor with domestic and caregiving responsibilities supported by informal networks; the "career woman" model, in which professional advancement coexists with continued

[12] Ekaterina Smirnaya, "In the State Duma, proposals were made to return 'Domostroi' to schools and universities," *Lenta.ru*, June 8, 2023. https://lenta.ru/news/2023/06/08/domostroi/.

[13] RIA Novosti, Russian Orthodox Church hopes for the adoption of an abortion law in 2025, January 27, 2025. https://ria.ru/20250127/aborty-1995769323.html

[14] RIA Novosti, The State Duma will consider a bill to recognize feminism as an extremist ideology, April 4, 2023. https://ria.ru/20230404/proekt-1863016013.html.

domestic obligations; and the “housewife” contract, where caregiving and emotional labor define female identity.

Market dynamics have also given rise to commodified gender roles, represented by the “sponsorship contract” and the “glamorous woman” contract. In these models, women’s sexuality and appearance are exchanged for male financial support, with men positioned as dominant agents. A situation that, while seemingly mirrored in Turkey, is not entirely analogous. In the Russian context, women who are financially supported by their husbands often face both social envy and moral judgment. Though similar ambivalences exist in Turkish society, one glance at employment statistics in both countries reveals that male economic provision is closer to the norm in Turkey, whereas in Russia it remains more of an exception, and, at times, even reverses, with women supporting their male partners. Meanwhile, although many activists do not actively challenge this structure, there is a growing trend, especially on social media, where young women, and even some men, publicly advocate for a lifestyle based on male financial support. This may be interpreted as a reaction to the unrealistic expectations placed on the 'ideal Russian wife': a woman who works full-time, maintains the household, raises children, looks flawless, and manages everything on her own, only to be met with transactional or dismissive attitudes from men. It is not without reason that many women are beginning to question these expectations, as the societal demands placed on Russian women in family life are undeniably excessive.

To sum up, the Russian case reveals a highly ambivalent and multilayered terrain. On the one hand, there are signs of formal gender equality, rising female autonomy, and alternative models of womanhood; on the other hand, enduring patriarchal contracts and the romanticization of traditional roles continue to exert pressure. This coexistence creates a specific ambiguity: Russian women often appear open to new experiences, including transnational ones, while simultaneously lacking stable normative and value-based orientation, being neither clearly aligned with patriarchal conservatism nor fully integrated into feminist imaginaries.

Within such a fragmented normative landscape, where public discourse lacks clear ideological direction and societal expectations remain contradictory, the task of analyzing women’s cultural capital in the form of values becomes especially

challenging. This complexity is central to the broader investigation of family and gender dynamics in post-Soviet Russia.

2.3.6. Reflections on Patriarchy in the Russian and Turkish Contexts

A comparison of Russian and Turkish approaches to patriarchy and gender reveals not only different historical trajectories but also shared patterns. In both societies, patriarchal structures are reinforced by state institutions, religious ideologies, and conservative public attitudes. In Turkey and Russia, there is a clear trend toward the moralization of women's roles, their linkage with national and demographic projects, and the consolidation of the family as the central institution through which gender hierarchies are reproduced.

Differences are evident in institutional and cultural dynamics. In Turkey, patriarchy rests on a more enduring legacy of the traditional family order, strengthened by religious conservatism and neopatrimonial governance practices, with marriage serving as the main site where state authority and family power intersect. In Russia, women's experience was largely shaped during the Soviet period, when they were granted broad formal political, educational, and professional freedoms. Yet, they remained dependent within the private sphere, where patriarchal expectations of their roles as mothers and keepers of the household persisted. These Soviet discourses created a sense of broad emancipation in which more than one generation was raised. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, a process of tightening restrictions began, accompanied by the rise of religious conservatism and neotraditionalist discourses. As a result, women found themselves facing a contradiction between the freedoms granted to them and the inability to realize them in the sphere of family relations.

In Turkey, the gradual development of the feminist movement and the institutionalization of gender studies (Öztürkmen, 2013; Gazioğlu, 2022) led to more visible progress in advancing agency and equality. In Russia, by contrast, there is a sharp contrast between the Soviet experience of granted freedoms and the subsequent tightening of traditionalist and religious constraints (Zdravomyslova and Tyomkina, 2015). Although processes in both countries appear similar, the amplitude of change

in Russia is significantly greater, since the freedoms given to women in the twentieth century were not paralleled in Turkey on such a large institutional scale.

In contemporary Russia, expectations placed on women in family life have increased considerably: they are held almost entirely responsible for the climate within the household. This is confirmed not only by academic observations but also by cultural practices: the widespread popularity of courses, coaching trainings, and psychological (including esoteric or pseudoscientific) programs teaching women how to "properly" meet, win over, and keep a man. The popularity of such content on media platforms reflects deep structural contradictions in the sphere of family relations.

From a research perspective, two opposing discourses can be identified. According to the first[15], men in the post-Soviet space are unable to properly value women and provide the respect they deserve according to their education, professional success, and appearance; thus, women should seek partners abroad. The second discourse[16] claims the opposite: "there are enough men in Russia," but women have "lost their femininity" and must develop specific tactics and strategies for successful communication with Russian men. Both discourses point to a persistent trend: public debates about women's supposed "weaknesses" in communication with men, criticism of their appearance, and their responses to male behavior, including tolerance of toxic or violent treatment. Despite the ambitious nature of such courses, they reflect a systemic problem in the formation of family relations and are already being institutionalized: in 2025, elective school courses on "family studies"[17] will be introduced, reinforcing these discourses within education.

Similar tendencies can be observed in Turkey. A market of content aimed at women is also developing there. Authors such as Esra Ezmeci[18] and Adil Yildirim[19] offer books

---

[15] Zoya Dolgova, founder and author of the relationship project *Amore*. See: https://amoreamicizia.ru/olk.

[16] Denis Baiguzhin, founder of the women's education project *Alpha School*. See: https://alfaschool.online/

[17] *The State Duma proposed introducing mandatory family studies in schools and presented a textbook.* RBC, March 28, 2025. Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/society/28/03/2025/67e6778c9a794780b796ca1e

[18] Esra Ezmeci, psychologist and author, founder of the relationship counseling project. See: https://esraezmeci.com.tr/hakkimizda

[19] Adil Yıldırım, relationship coach and author. See: https://www.adilyildirim.com/

and programs: the former focuses on communication tactics to attract men's attention, while the latter promotes a more "feminine" approach, including attention to appearance, scents, energies, and psychological states. These practices reflect a shared concern with the crisis of family relations, particularly among the 20–40 generation seeking partners. In both Russia and Turkey, responsibility for successful relationships is largely placed on women.

Nevertheless, men cannot be said to remain entirely passive. The author's experience of running a blog on Instagram[20] revealed that many Turkish men express deep concern about their difficulties in relationships with Russian women. They often seek advice and ask for explanations of the behavior of their former or current wives or partners. This indicates a desire among men to better understand women and recognize cultural differences but also highlights the lack of effective tools to address these issues.

Overall, a crisis of family relations exists in both countries, though it is expressed differently. In Russia, it is addressed mainly through private initiatives—courses, coaching, and individual practices—where women take on primary responsibility. In Turkey, the situation has not yet reached the same level of intensity, though similar trends are evident. In Russian–Turkish marriages, there is a clear tendency toward conservative family principles based on traditional gender roles, which creates a sense of harmony. However, further interview analysis will clarify the extent to which this process is ambivalent and what contradictions it contains.

Thus, in both contexts, women occupy an ambivalent position, forced to balance between striving for agency and structural constraints. At the same time, in Turkey there exists a strong and institutionalized feminist movement, while in Russia feminist discourse remains marginalized. This suggests that both countries are undergoing a crisis of patriarchal systems, though in different forms: in Turkey—through gradual resistance and the rise of feminist movements, in Russia—through the contrast between the historical experience of granted freedoms and their subsequent restriction.

[20] Rushakkinda, educational project on Russian history and culture (Instagram). See: https://www.instagram.com/rushakkinda/

2.4. Female Migration from Russia to Turkey

The existing body of literature on female migration from Russia to Turkey is predominantly composed of social studies conducted by Turkish scholars. Contributions from Russian researchers remain scarce, and most focus primarily on economic aspects (Ionsev et al., 2006). A notable gap in these works is the general lack of engagement with the Turkish academic discourse on the subject, with the exception of Zhidkova, whose doctoral research was conducted in Ankara and reflects a greater familiarity with Turkish research and sources (Zhidkova, 2016).

For the purposes of this study, the review includes not only literature directly addressing marriage migration of Russian women to Turkey but also broader research on female migration. This includes a wider field of research on migration from the post-Soviet space more generally, as many scholars have demonstrated rather blurred understandings of ethnic and political boundaries, which will be discussed further in this chapter. This broader scope allows for a more nuanced understanding of the complex discursive, economic, political, and emotional contexts in which Russian women have navigated life in Turkey over the past three decades. Moreover, these other types of migration are crucial for contextualizing how initial motivations for movement, such as economic necessity, could transform into long-term settlement or marriage migration. In an indeterminate number of cases, women arrived for one reason but stayed for another. While this transformation can be analyzed conceptually, the actual scale of such shifts is nearly impossible to capture statistically, especially in the long term and only becomes visible through direct engagement with respondents.

Research interest in the topic has undergone a gradual transformation. While early studies published in the 2000s predominantly focused on informal labor and trafficking, later research, particularly from the 2010s onward, began to investigate marriage migration, integration, and the role of tourism. The evolution of scholarship reflects shifting discourses and methodological approaches, with more recent studies incorporating both qualitative and quantitative data and exploring a wider variety of migrant experiences.

Academic literature on Russian female migration to Turkey began to develop in the aftermath of the early 1990s, primarily driven by circular migration patterns such as shuttle trade and informal labor. Istanbul's Laleli district quickly emerged as a central hub for early migrants, mostly women, engaged in small-scale trading and sex work (Güçlür and Ilkkaracan, 2002; Eder, Yakovlev, and Çarkoglu, 2003; Yükseker, 2004). Some of these women remained in Istanbul due to available job opportunities (Gülay and Çağla, 2012), particularly in sectors such as domestic labor (Kaşka, 2006; Akalın, 2007), while others entered into marriages with Turkish men (Bloch, 2011, 2017).

The Black Sea region, including cities such as Trabzon, Ordu, and Rize, also served as an entry point for labor migration. Research indicates that this route was particularly associated with informal work and human trafficking, including sex work (Yükseker, 2004). Early studies frequently adopted a negative framing of this migration wave (Zhidkova, 2016), with research focusing heavily on the adverse experiences of migrant women, depicting them as victims of collapsing political regimes (Çoşkun, 2015), unreliable employers (Akalın, 2007), or trafficking networks (Demir and Finkenhauer, 2010; Demir, 2010).

Demir is the author of a number of studies on prostitution and human trafficking in Turkey. Two of his articles, in particular, are based on the analysis of police reports concerning deported sex workers who had become victims of trafficking (Demir and Finkenhauer, 2010; Demir, 2010). This emphasis shaped the dominant research agenda at the time and contributed to the academic victimization of migrants by reinforcing a one-dimensional portrayal of vulnerability (Moret et al., 2019; Pellander, 2015), which in turn informed broader public and academic narratives that depicted migrant women as inherently passive and at risk. Only in later scholarship did more nuanced perspectives emerge to challenge these simplified assumptions.

The southern coast of Turkey, particularly the city of Antalya, gained prominence much later, as a migration destination for Russian women, primarily in the 2010s. The rise of tourism in this region created a strong demand for workers fluent in Russian and English, a need often fulfilled by migrants from the post-Soviet space. Antalya has since become one of the most well-documented regions for studying both labor and marriage migration of Russian women (Özgür and Deniz, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2020;

Hasta et al., 2014). The growing body of literature on Antalya played a crucial role in addressing the earlier imbalance in research perspectives, shifting academic focus away from predominantly victim-centered narratives and toward a more differentiated understanding of migrant women's trajectories and agency.

Meanwhile, it is important to note a notable feature of early Turkish studies: their broad geographic and ethnic framing. These studies often grouped together post-Soviet and Eastern European countries, such as Poland, Romania, and Bulgaria, under a single analytical umbrella (Güçlür and Ilkkaracan, 2002; Akalın, 2007; Kosmachev, 2008). This tendency not only blurred important historical and political distinctions between regions but also limited the specificity and depth of insights into the unique migration experiences of women from different backgrounds. In doing so, it contributed to generalizations that obscured the heterogeneity of post-Soviet migration patterns and further reinforced oversimplified categories within migration scholarship.

Another distinctive feature of the literature from this period is the limited access to reliable statistical information, which significantly constrained the scope and depth of empirical analysis. There was a notable lack of statistical data on migrant populations in Turkey at least until 2006 (Kaşka, 2006), and even the available data were often contradictory and therefore difficult to interpret with confidence. The absence of official state statistics significantly constrained analytical efforts. As a result, researchers mostly relied on qualitative methods such as interviews. Even when researchers did manage to locate quantitative data, they often still had to turn to unconventional yet revealing sources in their efforts to reconstruct the broader picture. For instance, studies focusing on deported sex workers drew both qualitative and quantitative information from police reports (Demir and Finkenhauer, 2010; Demir, 2010).

Labor migration also received scholarly attention during this period. One study of particular importance is Yükseker’s work on the suitcase trade in Istanbul (Yükseker, 2004). Russian researchers such as Yakovlev, Golikova, and Kapralova (2006), as well as collaborative studies with Turkish academics (Eder, Yakovlev, and Çarkoglu, 2003), provide important insights into the socioeconomic landscape of the 1990s–2000s.

Research on domestic labor migration, particularly among women from Moldova, was conducted by Kaşka (2006) and Akalın (2007). While Kaşka offers valuable statistics on FSU migration between 1995 and 2005, his case study focuses exclusively on Moldovan migrants. Akalın explores the dynamics between Turkish employers and female migrants.

An exception to Turkish-authored literature is the volume *Russian Compatriots in Turkey* (2008), supported by the Russian government. It presents a basic history of Russian economic migration to Turkey and addresses themes such as identity and diaspora formation (Kosmachev, 2008).

Beginning in 2011, scholarly interest expanded to include marriage migration, tourism-related mobility, and attempts at quantitative analysis based on both statistical data and survey instruments. In most cases informants were selected using snowball sampling techniques. While useful in accessing hidden populations, this method raised questions about the representativeness of the findings and encouraged greater methodological self-reflection. Notably, this period saw more explicit efforts to differentiate sending countries within the post-Soviet space and to identify distinct waves of female migration. Another important development was the increased participation of international scholars in the field. Almost simultaneously, two monographs were published, by Bloch and Koshulko, each offering distinct perspectives on post-Soviet women in Turkey. Around the same time, Deniz and Özgür (2012, 2013, 2014) began publishing a series of studies focusing on Russian women residing in Antalya.

Building on this international turn in scholarship, a particularly significant contribution came from Bloch, an anthropologist and professor at the University of British Columbia specializing in migration, gender studies, and the legacy of state socialism. Based on over a decade of fieldwork conducted in Turkey, Bloch was among the first scholars to move beyond the narrow focus on labor migration and to explore the emotional and intimate lives of migrant women. Her publications (Bloch, 2011; 2017) introduced a gendered perspective on mobility in the context of economic restructuring and opened up the study of marriage migration to scholarly analysis. Her most important contribution lies in reframing Russian migrant women not as passive victims

of structural forces, as had often been the case in earlier research, but as active agents navigating complex transnational realities. Nonetheless, her reliance on the concept of postsocialism remains open to critique.

In contrast to Bloch's, researcher Koshulko (2016) offers a more conventional and arguably problematic account of female migration from the post-Soviet space. While the study is ambitious in scope, it suffers from several methodological shortcomings. The author treats ethnic, linguistic, and religious affiliations as fixed categories aligned with national borders, neglecting the internal diversity and complexity of identities within individual post-Soviet countries. The analysis also includes a number of unsubstantiated claims and assumptions, and the economic calculations presented raise concerns regarding their empirical foundation. Overall, Koshulko's work tends to reproduce stereotypical narratives about post-Soviet women in Turkey, offering limited insight into the lived experiences and agency of migrants.

Deniz and Özgür have co-authored a comprehensive body of research published between 2012 and 2020, focusing on Russian migrant women residing in Antalya. Their studies provide detailed socio-demographic and cultural profiles of these women, examining how gender shapes both their migration experiences and their impact on local social dynamics (Deniz and Özgür, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2020, 2021, 2022, 2024). Notably, they were among the first to analyze the role of tourism in shaping patterns of marriage migration, identifying its influence on the motivations and trajectories of female migrants. Their work also outlines key stages of the marriage migration process and highlights the intersection of tourism, intimacy, and mobility. Additionally, Deniz and Özgür conducted comparative analyses of integration strategies among Russian and Azerbaijani migrant women, offering insight into the differentiated outcomes of similar migration flows. In one of their last articles, they focused on the spatialization and institutionalization of social networks of Russian women in Turkey (Deniz and Özgür, 2022)

Zhidkova's doctoral dissertation (2016), based on a rich corpus of media materials, offers an in-depth analysis of how migrant sex workers from former Soviet countries were represented in Turkish media between 1992 and 2014. Her work explores not only the media portrayals themselves but also situates them within the broader

sociopolitical and cultural context, shedding light on the intersection of migration, gender, and moral panic in public discourse. In addition to her dissertation, Zhidkova has published two follow-up articles in Russian that examine issues of sexual exploitation and broader patterns of female migration from the former USSR to Turkey (Zhidkova, 2017; 2018).

As for Russian scholarship on marriage migration, Sivoplyasova was among the first to address the phenomenon of international marriages between Russian women and Turkish men (Sivoplyasova, 2018; 2019). However, her analysis of the Turkish context contains a number of factual inaccuracies, including claims about citizenship policies and divorce rates that are not supported by empirical data.

Other studies have addressed more specific aspects of female migration. Key thematic areas include the feminization of migration and the conditions faced by undocumented labor migrants, (Gülay and Çağla, 2012), sex work policies (Çoşkun, 2015), cultural integration (De Bel-Air, 2016), and language adaptation (Antonova-Ünlü et al., 2015).

In sum, the academic field addressing female migration from Russia to Turkey, particularly in the context of marriage, has significantly expanded over the past two decades. The literature has moved from narrow, victim-centered analyses of informal labor and trafficking toward more complex and diversified approaches that consider gender, agency, transnational mobility, and the emotional and structural dynamics of migration. This historiographical overview highlights both the contributions and the limitations of existing research.

While valuable insights have been produced, particularly through ethnographic and gender-sensitive perspectives, many studies remain fragmented, rely heavily on small-scale sampling, and do not fully account for the lived experiences and agentic strategies of migrant women. Moreover, Russian perspectives are often underrepresented. However, I share the view expressed by Williams (2010) that focusing solely on cultural practices is not sufficient to fully understand the complex realities of female migration. A theoretical framework grounded in the concept of patriarchy is essential for advancing migration studies in this field. The next section of this chapter will therefore turn to gender-focused scholarship on migration and

marriage migration. This review has shown how academic approaches to the marriage migration of Russian-speaking women to Turkey have shifted from simplified portrayals of vulnerability to more nuanced analyses that emphasize agency, emotion, and capital transformation. While feminist and ethnographic studies have deepened our understanding, gaps remain in representing Russian voices and broader historical contexts.

By combining the frameworks of patriarchy and Bourdieu's theory of capital, this study provides tools to explore how women navigate gendered constraints and reconfigure social, cultural, and symbolic capital in transnational settings.

2.5. Potential Contribution of This Study

This study seeks to address several gaps in the existing literature on gender and marriage migration. While concepts such as "gender" and "intersectionality" have become central analytical tools in migration research, the notion of "patriarchy" has remained largely absent. Scholars often avoid this concept because of its perceived complexity, its strong normative connotations and the difficulty of operationalizing it in empirical research. By contrast, this study places patriarchy at the center of the analysis, showing how it operates simultaneously as a structure, a set of practices and a set of expectations in both the Russian and Turkish contexts, and how it shapes the lives of women who migrate through marriage.

To make this concept analytically workable, the study integrates Bourdieu's framework of capital, going beyond the conventional focus on economic, social and cultural capital to explicitly include symbolic capital. Rather than privileging one dimension, the analysis demonstrates how all four forms of capital interact and are reconfigured in the context of marriage migration, and how these processes reveal the different mechanisms through which patriarchy is sustained or challenged.

Furthermore, this research builds on recent calls to move beyond one-dimensional portrayals of migrant women as vulnerable. It foregrounds women's agency, their strategies of negotiation, and the emotional dimensions of their migratory experience. By doing so, the study emphasizes that marriage migration cannot be understood solely

through the lens of structural constraints; it must also account for the ways in which women navigate, resist and adapt to these constraints in their everyday lives.

The methodological and theoretical combination adopted here, bringing together patriarchy as a core concept, Bourdieu's theory of capital, and attention to agency and emotion, offers a broader, multi-layered perspective on the lived realities of Russian-speaking marriage migrants in Turkey. This approach enables an analysis that does not reproduce dominant narratives of victimhood or negative stereotypes about migrant women. Instead, it illuminates the interplay between the legacies of patriarchal systems in Russia, the gender regime in Turkey, and the adaptive practices of women negotiating these structures within intimate relationships, family networks and broader social contexts.

Although this project does not claim to exhaust all dimensions of such a complex phenomenon, it demonstrates the value of an integrated, multi-perspectival approach. It is intended as both an empirical contribution and a methodological example of how combining different conceptual frameworks can generate a more nuanced understanding of marriage migration, one that acknowledges difficulties and constraints, but also highlights resilience, strategies and forms of agency that shape migrant women's lives.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Philosophy

This research is deeply rooted in both personal experience and long-term ethnographic observation. I was born in Kyrgyzstan and grew up in a relatively egalitarian environment in terms of ethnicity, religion, and gender. The principles of gender, status, and ethnic equality that permeated the world around me, from kindergarten to three schools of very different social levels in Bishkek that I attended, were so foundational to my worldview that they became inseparable from my sense of self. These early experiences embedded in me a deeply internalized belief in equality. Around 2004, however, I began to observe growing ethnic hierarchies, driven in part by internal tensions within Kyrgyzstan. Already at that stage, I began to question how internal political events could so visibly reshape the ideological tone of school curricula and everyday social interactions. As a result, my family decided to move to Russia, as my parents envisioned my future unfolding within a Russian cultural environment, which to my surprise turned out to be not only unfamiliar, but also entirely incomprehensible to me. After moving to Russia in 2006, I was confronted with how migrants from Central Asia are perceived and treated in Russian society, and I was struck by the scale of discrimination. Having been accepted as an insider in Kyrgyzstan, I suddenly felt like an outsider in a society where I shared a language with others but thought and felt in ways that no longer aligned. These experiences formed the foundation of my sensitivity to injustice and led me to interrogate how systems of power operate at the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and migration.

Over the years, my academic interests gradually shifted from an initial focus on history to contemporary Turkey. This trajectory eventually brought me to explore the

connections between Turkey and Russia, a relationship I came to understand most vividly through the lens of gendered migration and cross-border intimacy. As part of my undergraduate thesis, I began closely following the online narratives of Russian-speaking women in Turkey and have witnessed a clear gap between academic literature and the actual experiences and representations of these women. What struck me as especially troubling was the realization that the pejorative stereotype of "Natasha," still prevalent in Russian discourse, is not only reproduced in everyday conversations, but also echoed in academic literature (Güçlür and Ilkkaracan, 2002; Yükseker, 2004; Zhidkova, 2016; Deniz and Özgür, 2020). For me, it remains an open question why academic research needs to reproduce expressions such as *"The Secret Russian Army in Turkey"* or associate Antalya with *"Little Moscow,"* as cited by Deniz and Özgür (2021, 2022). Such formulations inevitably reproduce discourses of bias and predispose the reader to a particular perception of migrants. Therefore, it is essential to move away from these kinds of associations in academic discourse and to approach the situation from a strictly analytical and scholarly perspective, free from prejudice. Even more concerning is that this reproduction occurs just as frequently, if not more so, in the country of origin whenever the topic arises, revealing deep-rooted cultural biases that continue to shape how these women are perceived and represented (Koshulko, 2016; Sivoplyasova, 2018, 2019). Moreover, I was genuinely disturbed by the carelessness of many Russian-speaking researchers, politicians, scholars, and authors in the way they write and speak about Russian-speaking migrant women and contemporary Turkey and its people (Starodubtsev, 2017; Sivoplyasova, 2018, 2019; Satanovsky and Starodubtsev, 2023).

I believe that my own experience as a migrant has made me particularly sensitive to how people construct value judgments around migration. Additionally, the analytical skills I acquired at Moscow State University enabled me to recognize, even before living in Turkey, that much of the literature on this subject is pretentious and largely based on assumptions. I realized that the problem of bias was so severe that it outweighed my comfortable academic career in Moscow and invitations to work at three different universities. I came to Turkey to see things with my own eyes and immersed myself in the migrant experience not only to write this research, but also to advocate for greater empathy toward migrants. My efforts have not gone unnoticed,

the Higher School of Economics in Moscow invited me to teach a year-long course on the anthropology of contemporary Turkey, which I successfully delivered to senior undergraduate students specializing in Turkey and Turkic studies. I also began running an educational blog in Turkish on Instagram, where I answer questions about Russia and Russian people. Fortunately, I receive messages from my followers saying that I have changed their perception of ordinary Russians, and I consider this the most meaningful outcome of my academic work.

This research is a response to injustice, misunderstanding, and lack of knowledge in how Russians and Turks perceive each other, an attempt to build bridges through the most intimate form of human connection — marriage.

3.2. Methodological Choice

The study investigates how Russian women who migrate to Turkey through intimate relationships with Turkish men navigate patriarchal norms in both countries and how this navigation shapes their ability to accumulate, convert, and transform various forms of capital — economic, cultural, social, and symbolic. My research question is: How do Russian marriage migrants navigate patriarchal norms in Russia and Turkey to accumulate, convert, and transform various forms of capital, and how do these processes reflect shifts in power dynamics, personal agency, and the reinforcement or subversion of patriarchal structures within their intimate relationships?

To better understand the interview data, field observations, and to synthesize my ethnographic insights, I combine a range of theoretical approaches drawn from gender studies, migration studies, sociology, anthropology, and history. This theoretical plurality allows me to engage with the complexity of my research problem from multiple perspectives and to construct a more nuanced analytical lens. At its core, the framework is grounded in a feminist approach. A key component of this is the incorporation and operationalization of the concept of patriarchy in the context of migration. I differentiate between the patriarchal contexts of Russia and Turkey by employing analytical categories such as power dynamics, agency, and vulnerability. To enrich this perspective, I draw on anthropological and historical ideas to explore how everyday discourses shape experiences of cross-border intimacy.

I use Bourdieu's theory of capital as a central analytical tool for examining the accumulation, loss, and transformation of resources and status in new sociocultural settings. While each of these theoretical perspectives is well-established on its own, there is a lack of integrative models combining them. The purpose of this study is to provide a deeper understanding of the lived realities of Russian marriage migrants, focusing on how patriarchal expectations and societal norms influence their agency, strategies, and long-term integration. By analyzing their experiences through the lens of Bourdieu's framework of capital, the research aims to uncover the mechanisms of adaptation and transformation that remain underexplored in existing literature.

3.2.1. Incorporating Patriarchy into Gendered Migration Studies

a. The Problem of Contextualizing and Operationalizing Patriarchy

A crucial yet insufficiently developed aspect of research on patriarchy concerns its dynamics: the ways in which patriarchal relations are produced, transformed, and reproduced across time and space. Rather than being a fixed structure, patriarchy operates as an adaptive social formation that shifts in response to historical conjunctures and local contexts. This dynamic nature makes it particularly challenging to employ the concept analytically, as there is still no coherent framework for capturing its changing forms without collapsing them into static categories.

Critical and postcolonial feminist scholarship (Mohanty, 1984, 2003; Acker, 1989; Kandiyoti, 1988; Pollert, 1996; Gottfried, 1998) has long drawn attention to the limits of treating patriarchy as a universal explanatory tool. These authors stress the necessity of situating patriarchal relations within specific configurations of power, including the effects of globalization, historical legacies, and locally embedded forms of gendered oppression. From this perspective, both temporal dynamics and geographical specificity are indispensable for any attempt to operationalize patriarchy in empirical research.

While intersectionality has enriched the field by foregrounding the simultaneity of multiple axes of domination, it does not in itself offer a methodology for tracing the internal transformations of patriarchal systems. Intersectional analysis maps the interplay of structures, but remains less attuned to the rhythms, ruptures, and

continuities that sustain patriarchy as a historically mutable form of social organization.

Consequently, a methodological challenge emerges: how can research practices make visible the temporal dimension of patriarchal arrangements, alongside their spatial configurations? Whereas migration studies have for decades engaged with spatial categories: territory, border, mobility, transnationalism, the temporalities of power have remained in the background. Attending temporality opens up the possibility of analyzing not only how patriarchal structures are reproduced, but also how they adapt, reconfigure, and persist under changing conditions. It is within this analytical move that this study seeks to situate its engagement with patriarchy.

b. Migration as a Tool for Analyzing Patriarchal Dynamics

When we speak about the history of migration, the academic discourse on migration, or the development of migration policies, we are always dealing with processes of change over time. One of the less conventional yet promising approaches to analyzing the spatial and temporal dynamics of patriarchy lies in migration research. It is possible that this particular lens can help us understand more deeply how patriarchal structures evolve. This is a distinctly anthropological logic, shifting the perspective toward an external gaze.

In this context, the analytical focus inevitably shifts from a macro-level systemic analysis to the level of individual agency, as is the case in this research. This approach does not fully resolve the difficulty of dynamically analyzing the reproduction of patriarchies, but it allows us to raise important questions about the resilience, permeability, and plasticity of patriarchal structures, particularly in interactions where one form of patriarchy encounters another.

Migration case studies thus become micro-laboratories where different patriarchal regimes intersect and intertwine. This enables the analysis of:

- the migrant’s exit from a familiar patriarchal model
- their adaptation to a new model encountered in the host country

- the strategies used to navigate power structures
- and most importantly, a questioning of the resilience and influence of patriarchy as a system

c. Individual Problem or Patriarchal Structure?

Research on migration consistently shows that the experience shared by nearly all migrants, regardless of destination or background, is a long and often painful process of adaptation. Psychological studies describe this stage in terms of cultural shock and a psychological crisis, accompanied by disorientation, anxiety, and even depression (Bhugra and Becker, 2005; Akhtar, 1999; Berry, 1997; Ryan et al., 2008). These accounts emphasize the vulnerability caused by separation from a familiar environment and the strain of entering a new cultural and social space.

However, while these insights are valuable, I find that this explanatory model of "cultural shock" remains insufficient for understanding the experiences of Russian-speaking marriage migrants in Turkey. It tends to reduce a complex social process to an individual psychological state and to treat culture as the primary cause of the crisis. Both psychology and the social sciences struggle with the concept of culture: it is difficult to define, to operationalize, and to make dynamic. As Clifford Geertz famously put it, "Culture is the fabric of meaning in terms of which human beings interpret their experience and guide their action," and "man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun" (Geertz, 1973). These "webs" are analytically rich, but at the same time so broad and abstract that they risk explaining everything and nothing (Keesing, 1974; Abu-Lughod, 1991; Kuper, 1999).

From the perspective of my research, this means that the difficulties and crises that women describe cannot be seen as an inevitable psychological phase of migration or a universal cultural shock. What my interviews reveal is that these crises are generated above all by the structural conditions in which adaptation takes place. Migration is not a rupture with patriarchy, but a transition from one patriarchal system to a different one. In the Turkish case, the institutional and everyday arrangements of patriarchy become a key factor that shapes the migrant experience, producing patterns of conflict

with the husband's family, isolation, blocked self-realization, and postnatal vulnerability.

This approach allows us to reframe what appears as an "individual problem" into a structural process: the patriarchal order encountered in Turkey becomes the field in which these psychological and emotional challenges unfold. Rather than reading these experiences as isolated psychological events, they need to be situated in relation to power, inequality, and capital. Drawing on Bourdieu's framework, this study views the adaptation period as a moment when the capitals and resources women bring from one patriarchal system are confronted with a new one, triggering a crisis of positions and strategies.

Thus, instead of focusing on "shock" as a cultural or psychological phenomenon, this research focuses on the systemic nature of adaptation and the ways in which structural inequalities shape the common experiences of migrant women. The interviews in this study explore how these women perceive this transition, the strategies they develop to endure it, and how these strategies can be read as responses not to culture in the abstract, but to specific patriarchal relations.

Building on the conceptual discussion above, this study applies a patriarchal perspective to investigate Russian-speaking marriage migrants in Turkey, focusing on how this lens informed data collection and analysis. The framework combines feminist scholarship on patriarchy and gendered power structures (Kandiyoti, 1988; Walby, 1990; Connell, 2002) with migration research concerned with social positioning, networks, and the transformation of resources and capitals (Bourdieu, 1986; Ryan et al., 2008; Erel, 2010).

This approach makes it possible to trace how women's economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capitals are revalued, devalued, or reconstructed during adaptation to a new patriarchal environment. It also holds together two analytical dimensions: structural inequalities, the systemic constraints and hierarchies embedded in patriarchal regimes, and agency, the strategies of adaptation, negotiation, and resistance that women employ in response (Mahler and Pessar, 2001; Kofman, 2004; Wray, 2011; Pellander, 2015).

By situating individual narratives within these intersecting structures of domination, the analysis avoids reducing women's experiences to victimhood while also resisting the temptation to detach them from broader systems of power. Migration thus appears not as a rupture from patriarchy, but as an ongoing process of navigating and reshaping its different configurations.

3.3. Methodological Challenges in Gendered Migration Research

3.3.1. Digital Ethnography Versus Qualitative Research

My earlier research experience was shaped by an extended engagement with digital ethnography during the post-COVID-19 period, when Instagram trends created favorable conditions for observation. Blogs were less commercialized, algorithms did not penalize long story sequences, and many women documented their daily lives in detail, material that became the basis for my undergraduate thesis. I deepened this expertise through courses[21] inspired by Daniel Miller's work on digital ethnography, a university elective, and professional training in social media production, including Maria Galanter's course[22]. In parallel, I launched my own Instagram blog[23], which became both a platform for engaging with Turkish audiences and a tool for testing hypotheses about stereotypes and perceptions of Russian women through posts, comments, and direct interactions.

However, shifts in platform algorithms and the growing commercialization of content have reduced the spontaneity and openness that once made Instagram a rich ethnographic source. For this study, I therefore treated digital ethnography primarily as contextual groundwork, supplementing but not replacing field-based methods. My sample included only a few small-scale bloggers, alongside participants identified offline, in order to focus on *lived experience* rather than curated self-presentation. Ultimately, participant observation, immersion, and in-depth interviews provided the

[21] *An Anthropology of Smartphones: Communication, Ageing and Health.* FutureLearn. Retrieved from https://www.futurelearn.com/courses/an-anthropology-of-smartphones

[22] Vysshaya Shkola Masshtab: Course on Launches and Producing. Retrieved from https://marigalanter.ru/m67

[23] Rushakkinda, educational project on Russian history and culture (Instagram). See: https://www.instagram.com/rushakkinda/

most reliable means of capturing the divergence between online representation and everyday realities.

3.3.2. What about Transnationalism?

In migration studies, the framework of transnationalism has been fundamental for understanding how migrants sustain ties across borders and build social fields that link the country of origin and the country of settlement. Classic studies (Glick Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton, 1992; Faist, 2000; Levitt, 2001; Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004; Vertovec, 2009) have shown how transnational spaces emerge through networks, remittances, and cultural practices. In Turkey, this approach has been applied in numerous studies of Russian-speaking women, particularly in work focusing on specific urban clusters such as Antalya and Istanbul (Deniz and Özgür, 2013, 2022).

However, the empirical material in this study reveals a rather different picture. The Russian-speaking women I interviewed are dispersed across the entire country, and, as a rule, they do not form cohesive or stable migrant networks. For this reason, I deliberately chose not to make transnationalism the primary analytical lens. Instead of concentrating on a single city or a local community, I aimed to construct as broad a geography as possible to examine how women adapt in diverse conditions and how they navigate different local variations of patriarchal regimes.

This research does touch upon certain aspects usually examined through a transnational lens: the memories of family life and gender norms in the country of origin, and the occasional search for support outside Turkey. Yet it does not focus on the operation of transnational networks themselves, such as remittances, intensive communication, or active participation in diaspora communities. My analytical interest lies in how patriarchal structures organize the everyday experiences of migrant women within Turkey, particularly in contexts where these women live largely outside dense migrant networks.

Recent critiques of transnational approaches (Anthias, 2012; Kivisto, 2001) argue that while transnationalism has been extremely productive in highlighting cross-border connections, it tends to underplay the structural and intersectional dimensions of

inequality and power. My research aligns with these critiques. For my purposes, transnationalism remains secondary: it is a useful lens for studying communities bound by strong ties across borders, but it is less suited for investigating the structural conditions and the variability of patriarchal regimes shaping women's lives in different regions. Consequently, I have chosen to move away from transnationalism as the central framework and focus instead on the deep structure of transition from one patriarchal system to another and on the power relations that define these women's experiences.

3.3.3. In Search of Balance: An Autoethnographic Approach

Overall, in addition to theoretical difficulties in approaching the study of marriage migration in Turkey, I also faced a number of empirical challenges related to understanding the social environment in which Russian-speaking women build their intimate relationships. When I first came to Turkey, my knowledge of Turkish society and of the types of men with whom Russian women interact was limited to earlier interviews from my bachelor's research, scattered accounts from books, media, and acquaintances. It was only after several years of living in Turkey and interacting with men from a wide range of social and professional backgrounds that I began to grasp the complexity and diversity of these encounters.

Personal experience of communication with men in different settings, not within a single community, but across various spheres of urban life, allowed me to see more clearly the structural and everyday factors that shape gender relations. Through these encounters I was able to observe patterns of expectations, values, and gendered interactions that often remain invisible in interview material alone. This experience also helped me to better understand the social pressures, stereotypes, and contradictory attitudes that many Russian-speaking women describe when speaking about their marriages and relationships with Turkish partners.

These observations do not replace systematic research, nor do they imply that direct interaction with men from the host society is a prerequisite for studying marriage migration. Rather, this process broadened my perspective and allowed me to approach the fieldwork with greater sensitivity and balance. It confirmed that there is no single

model of how Turkish men view Russian-speaking women, experiences and attitudes vary widely depending on social background, personal history, and family context. Importantly, this empirical immersion also enabled me to gradually set aside my own preconceptions and to see both the constraints imposed by patriarchal norms and the spaces where women negotiate their positions.

In addition to informal observations, I gained further contextual understanding through long-term conversations with Turkish women, both married and unmarried, as well as by engaging with Turkish popular discourse on family and gender relations, including relationship advice literature and social commentary. However, the most systematic knowledge came from the academic training I received at the Middle East Technical University, which provided a conceptual foundation for analyzing family and gender relations in Turkey beyond everyday impressions.

3.4. Research Strategy

Methodologically, this study adopts a qualitative approach informed by feminist epistemology and interpretivist inquiry. I conduct in-depth semi-structured interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, complemented by narrative analysis. These methods enable a rich and flexible exploration of how patriarchal structures are internalized and resisted in everyday life. My own position as a Russian-speaking migrant woman living in Turkey over the past three years, engaging with both Russian migrant communities and Turkish men online and offline, gives me a unique insider-outsider perspective. This positionality enriches my analysis and provides essential context for interpreting the data.

I chose in-depth interviews because this method best suits the aims of the research: to explore in detail the complex, multi-layered, and sensitive experiences of women in cross-border intimate relationships, particularly within the framework of migration and patriarchy. It allows for the emergence of personal narratives that may not surface in more structured or quantitative methods, and offers space for nuance, contradiction, and emotional depth. Interview participants represent a diversity of ages, backgrounds, and lengths of residence in Turkey. This variation allows for a broad understanding of

how capital is accumulated, lost, or redefined in response to patriarchal and migration-related pressures.

Although I previously worked with quantitative data on marriage migration, I deliberately rejected a statistical focus in this study. My aim is not to confirm whether most Russian women migrate for marriage or work. I could calculate such figures, but I refuse to participate in discourses that seek to legitimize or delegitimize migration through numbers. Instead, I focus on how women make sense of their own experiences, how they interpret their positions, navigate inequality, and respond to shifting regimes of value.

This research is positioned at the intersection of feminist theory, sociology, anthropology, and migration studies. It avoids overly politicized language not because the personal is not political, but because everyday life itself is the terrain of political struggle. Ultimately, I aim to create a language capable of capturing the structural, emotional, and symbolic complexity of transnational intimate relationships. This research brings together empirical research and theoretical reflection to show how capital, patriarchal contexts, and agency interact in the lives of Russian women navigating gendered power relations in Turkey.

3.5. Participant Selection and Profile

Building on the qualitative, feminist and interpretivist approach outlined above, this section focuses on the participants and selection process. The study is based on semi-structured interviews with Russian-speaking women who were born, raised or lived in the Russian Federation and who migrated to Turkey through marriage with Turkish men.

No additional criteria such as age, place of living or length of residence in Turkey were applied. The only requirements for inclusion were the country of origin and a migration trajectory connected to marriage with a Turkish man. Below I describe how participants were recruited and how the final sample was formed.

All interviews for this study were conducted only after the project had received approval from the ethics committee of Middle East Technical University and the

interview questions had been formally reviewed and authorized. Recruitment was carried out through several channels. First, I prepared an official invitation text, which included information about the aim of the research, eligibility criteria, and my contact details, and noted that, upon request, I could provide documentation confirming the approval of the ethics committee. I asked friends and acquaintances to forward this invitation. At the same time, I posted an announcement on my personal Instagram blog and in a closed Telegram group "Bloggers in Turkey," where I have been a member for many years and whose members I had previously interviewed during my bachelor's research.

The most active response began after several of the first interviewees shared information about my research in their social media groups and chats. A particularly significant wave of responses followed after one of the participants posted on her Instagram page a video we recorded together after her interview, in which I invited women to take part. As a result, around 80 women contacted me expressing interest in participating. In parallel, three other women also published information about the project in their blogs and group chats. Among those who reached out were some who did not meet the inclusion criteria: five women from Belarus and three women living outside Turkey with their Turkish husbands. These interviews were not conducted, except in two cases where participants had not initially disclosed that they were living abroad (one was living between two countries and the other in the Netherlands), although both had prior experience of living in Turkey.

I also attempted to distribute invitations in open Russian-speaking groups on Telegram and Facebook. However, most of these posts were either not approved by moderators or were deleted, and after contacting the support team of the largest Telegram network of Russian-speaking groups in Turkey, I was permanently blocked from more than twenty such groups. As a result, the main source of recruitment became a non-linear snowball method, reinforced by announcements circulated through social media.

Interviews were scheduled strictly in the order in which responses were received, without any additional selection. Initially, I arranged 43 interviews and was in negotiation with seven additional women, assuming that some might withdraw. These concerns turned out to be unnecessary, as no one withdrew. Due to time constraints, I

later set a cut-off date after which no new interviews were scheduled, with the exception of one participant whose interview was postponed until after the conclusion of her divorce proceedings. As a result, the final sample proved to be highly diverse, both in terms of the regions of origin of the women in Russia and the regions of residence across Turkey. It covered the full spectrum of marriage trajectories: from women who had recently married and were in the early stages of adaptation, to those in the process of divorce. Two participants were already in the process of divorce at the time of the interviews, and one of them completed her court proceedings while we remained in contact.

Throughout the recruitment process, participants demonstrated a high level of trust and interest. Only two women, at the negotiation stage prior to the interviews, requested documentation confirming the ethical approval of the study. Thus, although recruitment followed a first-come, first-served principle, the resulting sample turned out to be exceptionally diverse in both social characteristics and geographical distribution. The socio-demographic characteristics of the participants are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Profiles of Interview Participants

No	Pseudonym	Age	Place of Birth	Education level	Employment in Russia	Employment in Turkey	Residence in Turkey, years[24]	Partner's origin
1	Alina (divorced)	52	Moscow	Higher Education[25] (Teaching English)	At Russian branch of US company	Not employed	Çeşme, 10	İzmir
2	Vera	28	Moscow	Vocational Education (Banking), Higher Education (Economics)	Financial sector	Ongoing	Manavgat, 2.5	Manavgat
3	Galina	48	Donbass	BA (Economics and Construction Management), Specialist (Industrial Enterprise	Director of an insurance company	Formally employed in family business, HR Manager at husband's factory,	Bursa, 12	Bursa

[24] The number of years spent in Turkey has been rounded to the nearest whole number in cases where respondents used approximate terms such as "about" or "around" when referring to their length of stay.

[25] In the Russian education system, *Higher Education* may refer to a Bachelor's degree, a Specialist degree (a five-year program roughly equivalent to a combined Bachelor's and Master's), or a Master's degree, depending on the year of graduation. During the interviews, I did not specifically ask respondents to clarify the exact type of degree. Therefore, the term *Higher Education* is used in a generalized sense, acknowledging that different respondents may have had different levels of post-secondary education due to institutional variations.

No	Pseudonym	Age	Place of Birth	Education level	Employment in Russia	Employment in Turkey	Residence in Turkey, years[24]	Partner's origin
				Management), MA (Public Administration)		currently not employed		
4	Diana	39	Bryansk Region (born), Moscow Region (lived)	Higher Education (Law) Higher Education (Tourism)	Investigator, legal management roles	Not employed	Adana, 3	Adana
5	Valeria	46	Sverdlovsk Region	Higher Education (Economics)	Entrepreneur (sewing production)	Sewing business	İzmir, 1.5	İzmir (born in Germany)
6	Zhanna	28	Essentuki	Higher Education (Organization Management, with honors)	Freelance academic writing and Turkish tutor	Not employed	Kars / Ankara, 6	Samsun
7	Zinaida	48	Moscow	Postgraduate Education (Russian as a Foreign Language)	HR Manager	Sworn Translator and Russian Tutor	Hatay, 9	İskenderun
8	Inna	27	Yekaterinburg	BA (International Relations), MA (International Cooperation, Italy)	English tutor	Not employed	İstanbul, 2	Karacabey
9	Karina	38	Bishkek[26] (born), Kaliningrad (lived)	Higher Education (International Relations)	English Translator, teacher, and private tutor	Tourism sector	İzmir, 3	İzmir
10	Kristina	31	Perm	BA and MA (Merchandising and Customs Expertise)	HR, events and advertising, SMM	Tourism sector (before marriage), currently not employed	Bursa / Antalya (living between two countries), 2	Yozgat
11	Lada	33	Moscow	BA (Organization Management), MA (Public and Municipal Administration, ongoing, online)	Trade sector, sales assistant	Not employed	İstanbul, 3	İstanbul
12	Larisa	35	Birobidzhan (born), Khabarovsk (lived)	Higher Education (Food Technology Engineering)	Tourist Base Administrator	Entertaining hostess at various pavyons (before marriage), currently not employed	Anamur, 4	Akifiye
13	Margarita	36	Ivanovo (born), Saint Petersburg (lived)	Higher Education (Economics and Management) Higher Education (Information Security Engineering)	Engineer; Retail Business Owner	Bag manufacturing business, currently not employed	İstanbul, 3	Malatya (raised in İstanbul)
14	Marina	33	Moscow Region / Nizhniy Novgorod	Specialist (Linguistics), Postgraduate (Linguistics, Incomplete)	Corporate Partnerships, Banking Sector	Florist	İstanbul, 2	İstanbul

[26] Some participants were born outside of Russia; these birthplaces are marked in the table with the label *(born)* in parentheses. Russian cities where participants lived are marked with *(lived)*. In cases where respondents specifically mentioned living in Russian cities different from their birthplace, this has also been indicated accordingly in the table.

No	Pseudonym	Age	Place of Birth	Education level	Employment in Russia	Employment in Turkey	Residence in Turkey, years[24]	Partner's origin
15	Miroslava	34	Yekaterinburg	Higher Education (Law)	Legal sector	Not employed	Eskişehir, 3.5	Eskişehir
16	Nadezhda	30	Saransk	Higher Education (Economics)	Accountant (Railcar Manufacturing)	Not employed	Hatay / Bodrum / Didim, 4	Hatay
17	Daria	24	Kazan	Incomplete Higher Education (Translation, English Teaching)	Technical Support Operatoбr Entertainment sector	Not employed	Manavgat, 4	Gebze
18	Olesya	28	Barnaul	Higher Education (Law)	Call Center Consultant	Not employed	Marmaris, 3	Bayburt (raised in İstanbul)
19	Polina	22	Kazakhstan (born), Omsk (lived)	Vocational College (Sales Manager); Higher Educationt (Speech Therapy / Special Ed., distance, ongoing)	Sales Manager	Not employed	Samsun, less than 1	Samsun
20	Raisa	30	Smolensk	Higher Education (Philologist, Teacher of Russian Language and Literature)	Seasonal work in tourism sector (Turkey, Thailand)	Seasonal work in the tourism sector (before marriage), currently not employed	Antalya, 7	Gaziantep
21	Svetlana	35	Syktyvkar	Higher Education (Linguist, Teacher)	Not employed	Turkish tutor	Antalya, 11	Belek
22	Sofia	50	Leningrad Region	Higher Education (Russian Language and Literature)	HR Director (Retail Chain)	Ongoing	İstanbul, 4	Kütahya
23	Taisiya	32	Lithuania (born), Saint-Petersburg (lived)	Vocational College (Teaching Foreign Languages), BA (Linguistics)	English Teacher and Tutor	English tutor	Alanya, 3	Kahramanmaraş
24	Tamara	34	Germany (born), Orel (lived)	Specialist Degree (Pharmacy), Internship (Pharmaceutical Management)	Government Drug Supply Manager, Pharmacist	Not employed	İstanbul, 6.5	Tokat
25	Tatyana	25	Perm Krai	Higher Education (Advertising and Public Relations)	PR, Media Publications; Marketplace Clothing Retail	Not employed	İstanbul, 2.5	İstanbul
26	Ulyana	45	Moscow	Medical College (Paramedic), Higher Education (Pedagogical Psychology), Higher Education (Psychotherapy)	Business Trainer (Sports Industry)	Not employed	Ankara, 3.5	Antalya
27	Evelina	27	Kazan	BA (Physics and Mathematics)	Systems Analyst (IT)	Not employed	Eskişehir, less than 1 year	Mersin
28	Elvira	26	Altai Krai	Vocational Education (Food Technology), Higher Education (Psychology)	Part-time jobs	Psychologist	Antalya / Netherlands, 2.5	Mersin
29	Yana (divorced)	32	Tomsk (born), Moscow (lived)	Higher Education (Producer, Stage Director of Show Programs)	Freelance Artist-Designer	Freelance Artist-Designer	Side, 5	Manavgat

3.5.1. Socio Demographic Profile of Participants

The study includes 29 women who are currently in or have previously been in relationships with Turkish men and who live either in Turkey or abroad. The sample encompasses a wide range of age groups, regions of origin, and durations of residence in the country, which makes it empirically representative and suitable for analyzing the dynamics of capital transformation within patriarchal structures.

An unexpected circumstance was that, despite my clearly defined selection criteria and the conditions of participation discussed personally in advance, during the very first interview Alina stated that she had been divorced from a Turkish man since 2024. Considering her long experience of living in Turkey for 10 years, I decided that her case would be useful for understanding the circumstances under which a marriage fails. Another participant, Galina, is currently in the process of divorce. A third one, Yana, who was a victim of psychological and physical abuse, was interviewed just after the final divorce court hearing. Yana won the case, is now divorced and lives in her hometown in Russia. In addition, two more participants, Kristina and Elvira, currently live outside Turkey. Kristina divides her life between Austria and Turkey, while Elvira, after three years of living in Turkey, moved with her husband to the Netherlands. A special case is Margarita, who lived with her husband in Russia for a long time, moved to Turkey three years ago, and after some time her husband returned to Russia to work. In total, 26 out of 29 women strictly meet the sampling criteria except for Alina, who is divorced, and Kristina and Elvira, who currently live abroad. Nevertheless, I decided to interview these women as well and I believe this was a successful decision, as it reveals the diversity of marriage migration trajectories and situations and adds a level of representativeness that corresponds to the goals of this research.

3.5.2. Age Composition

The ages of the participants range from 22 to 52 years, with an average of 34.3 years. A significant proportion of the participants are between 28 and 38 years old. This indicates a predominance of women who are in an active stage of their life and

professional paths, during which key strategies for capital accumulation, family building and motherhood are formed.

3.5.3. Duration of Residence in Turkey

The period of residence in Turkey among the participants ranges from 0.8 to 12 years, with an average of 4.3 years. This indicates that most of the women are in an active phase of adaptation and integration, which involves not only legalizing their status, but also participating in the everyday life of Turkish society including learning the language and engaging in socialization with the partner's family. The presence of both migrants who have recently moved and those who have lived in the country for a long time makes it possible to trace different phases of migratory adaptation, capital transformation and changes in gender roles.

3.5.4. Geography of Origin

The sample includes women originating from 25 different regions and cities of the Russian Federation, ranging from the westernmost point of Russia (Kaliningrad) to the Far East (Khabarovsk). This geographical diversity covers both large urban centers such as Moscow, Saint Petersburg, Yekaterinburg, Nizhny Novgorod and Kazan, medium sized cities such as Birobidzhan, Smolensk, Saransk, Syktyvkar and Tomsk, as well as smaller localities that are indicated by their regions of residence (Altai Krai, Leningrad Region, Moscow Region and Perm Krai).

This distribution highlights that transnational marriage migration is not an elite or exclusively metropolitan phenomenon, but rather a socially and geographically decentralized process. Some participants were born outside the Russian Federation (Germany, Lithuania, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan). However, they spent most or a significant part of their lives in Russia, except for the participant from Kyrgyzstan. She spent most of her life within a close Russian community in Bishkek, lived for three years in Kaliningrad prior to migrating to Turkey and holds Russian citizenship. Another participant from Donbas chose to identify herself as a participant of Russian origin despite the fact that during her residence in the territory of Donbas it was part of Ukraine. At present Donbas is under the administration of the Russian Federation, and therefore I considered it ethically acceptable to include interviews with these

women in the results of this study following the logic of the shared experience of women from the post-Soviet space (Bloch, 2017).

Providing a regional description of the participants inevitably requires acknowledging the ethnic and religious heterogeneity of Russia. Although ethnic and religious factors were not a criterion for this research and the questionnaire did not include any questions on ethnic identity, some participants themselves expressed a desire to specify that they identify ethnically in a particular way including Tatar, half Russian half Tatar, half Russian half Uzbek, and half Russian half Komi. Four women noted that they were Muslim before meeting their Turkish husbands. They explained that the ethnic and or religious factor played a role in the choice of a partner, in migration strategies and in building relationships with the partner and or his family (Jawad and Elmalı Karakaya, 2020).

The list of regions and cities of birth and residence of the participants prior to migration to Turkey (Russian Federation) includes: Altai Krai, Barnaul, Birobidzhan, Bryansk Region, Donbas, Yekaterinburg, Essentuki, Ivanovo, Kazan, Kaliningrad, Leningrad Region, Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod, Omsk, Oryol, Perm Krai, Perm, Moscow Region, Saint Petersburg, Saransk, Sverdlovsk Region, Smolensk, Syktyvkar, Tomsk and Khabarovsk.

It should be noted that many participants of this study had lived outside their birthplaces before migrating to Turkey. Many had studied and worked in larger urban centers of Russia or had extensive experience of traveling abroad.

3.5.5. Geography of Residence in Turkey

The participants currently live or have previously lived in no fewer than 20 different localities across Turkey. These include 1) tourist and resort regions such as Antalya, Alanya, Side, Manavgat, Marmaris, Bodrum and Çeşme, 2) metropolitan and urban centers such as Istanbul, Ankara, Izmir, Bursa and Eskişehir, and 3) regional and less globalized cities such as Adana, Gaziantep, Samsun, Mersin, Tokat and Hatay. This distribution demonstrates that the trajectories of marriage migration extend far beyond large cities such as Antalya and Istanbul (Deniz and Özgür, 2021, 2022),

encompassing both the Aegean and Mediterranean coasts as well as the interior of Anatolia.

The list of cities of residence in Turkey includes Adana, Alanya, Anamur, Ankara, Antalya, Bursa, Izmir, Kars, Manavgat, Marmaris, Samsun, Side, Istanbul, Hatay, Bodrum, Didim, Çeşme and Eskişehir.

Taken together, the overall profile of the sample confirms that transnational relationships between Russian women and Turkish men are shaped by the intersection of multiple axes of difference including age, territory and social background (Yeung and Mu, 2020). These differences constitute significant variables for the subsequent analysis of adaptation strategies, capital transformation and navigation within the Turkish patriarchal system.

In general, the collected data allow us to state that the study participants represent a socially heterogeneous yet empirically representative group that illustrates diverse forms and stages of integration into the Turkish sociocultural landscape. These variations are analytically important for the further examination of capital, agency and patriarchal expectations and will be addressed in the following sections of this work.

3.5.6. Economic Profiles of Participants and Their Husbands

A notable pattern in the sample is that many participants who had multiple educational qualifications and stable employment in Russia are no longer employed after resettling in Turkey (see Table 1). This shift is not merely a matter of individual choice but reflects broader structural aspects of the migration context. Although some sought to apply their education and skills, the majority became housewives or moved into informal or grey-sector work. The reasons behind this employment drop will be examined in detail in the following analysis chapters.

In addition, for a more representative picture, it was necessary to take into account the profiles of the participants' husbands; therefore, additional data concerning their economic status were collected (see Table 2). During the survey, two respondents ignored the questions about income, and one explicitly refused to answer.

Table 2. Economic Profiles of Participants' Husbands

Respondent #	Husband's profession	Approximate husband income range	Owns house/apartment	Owns car/other property	Family's standards of living	Financial security
1	Owner of an electronics store	Between 4 and 5 minimum wages (₺88,400–₺110,500)	No	Yes	High	Secure
2	Works in tourism and water sports	Between 7 and 8 minimum wages (₺158,000–₺182,000, annualized, seasonal work)	Yes	Yes (savings, gold, future land inheritance)	Middle	Secure
3	Works in the automotive sector	Between 4 and 5 minimum wages (₺88,400–₺110,500)	Yes	Yes	High	Unstable
4	Civil servant	Between 3 and 4 minimum wages (₺66,300–₺88,400)	Yes	Yes	Middle	Secure
5	Regional manager in the forestry sector (timber sales)	Between 3 and 4 minimum wages (₺66,300–₺88,400)	No	Yes (share in mother's apartment)	Low	Facing economic difficulties
6	Turkish language teacher for foreigners (private lessons)	Between 2.5 and 3 minimum wages (₺55,250–₺66,300)	Yes	Yes	Middle	Facing difficulties due to currency fluctuations (income in rubles)
7	Aircraft technician (Turkish Airlines)	Between 3 and 4 minimum wages (₺66,300–₺88,400)	No	No	Middle	Unstable
8	English teacher in a public secondary school	Between 2 and 3 minimum wages (₺50,000–₺60,000)	No	Yes (car)	Middle	Secure (for husband) / Unstable (for wife)
9	Furniture business	More than 5 minimum wages (over ₺110,500)	Yes	Yes	Middle	Stable
10	Airline representative	Between 3 and 4 minimum wages (₺66,300–₺88,400)	Yes	Yes (walnut orchards)	Low	Unstable (this year struggling financially; previously stable)
11	Nightclub (Pavyon)	More than 5 minimum wages (over ₺110,500)	Yes	Yes (moped)	High	Stable
12	Business consultant	Between 2 and 3 minimum wages (₺50,000–₺60,000)	No	Yes (jointly owned car, small share in mortgaged apartment)	Low	Unstable
13	Bar manager / Bartender	Around 2 minimum wages (₺44,200)	No	No	Middle	Facing some difficulties
14	Hotel sector	Between 3 and 4 minimum wages (₺66,300–₺88,400)	No	Yes	Middle	Unstable
15	Fitness trainer	Between 3 and 4 minimum wages (₺66,300–₺88,400)	No	No	Middle	Unstable
16	Military (astsubay)	More than 4 minimum wages (₺88,400+)	Yes (one rented out, one under construction)	Yes (jointly owned car)	Middle–High	Secure

Respondent #	Husband's profession	Approximate husband income range	Owns house/apartment	Owns car/other property	Family's standards of living	Financial security
17	Grocery store; also breeds rare geese and ducks	Around 3 minimum wages (₺66,300)	Yes	Yes (land inheritance)	Middle	Secure
18	Entrepreneur, founder of car rental app	Around 4 minimum wages (₺85,000, company income reinvested)	No	Yes (cars worth ₺6M, frozen bank deposit ₺150,000)	Middle	Stable
19	Teacher in a public school	Between 3 and 4 minimum wages (₺66,300–₺88,400)	Yes	Yes	Middle	Stable
20	Electrician (previously construction and hydraulic mechanic)	Around 2 minimum wages (₺44,200)	Yes (house in village)	No	Middle	Unstable
21	IT sector	Prefer not to answer	No	Yes	Middle	Secure
22	Business owner (automobile trade, investments, rental; IT company developing apps)	More than 5 minimum wages (₺110,500+, varies monthly, no upper limit)	Yes (apartment and land)	Yes (around 10 cars)	High	Stable
23	Engineer, now retired	Doesn't know	No	Yes (car)	Low–Middle	Unstable
24	Sales sector, shop assistant in a shopping mall (currently unemployed after downsizing)	Between 3 and 4 minimum wages (₺66,300–₺88,400)	No	No	Middle	Stable
25	Shipbuilding engineer (yacht designer)	More than 5 minimum wages (over ₺110,500)	No	No	Middle	Facing economic difficulties
26	Tourism, hotel transfer organization	Doesn't know	No	No	Low–Middle	Unstable

The analysis of the collected data reveals significant variation in the income levels and occupational profiles of the respondents' husbands, ranging from civil servants, teachers, and military personnel to entrepreneurs, business owners, and employees in the service and tourism sectors. The most common income category was 3–4 minimum wages (₺66,300–₺88,400), which broadly corresponds to a middle standard of living. Some respondents reported incomes exceeding 5 minimum wages (over ₺110,500), suggesting a higher standard, while others indicated earnings of around 2 minimum wages (₺44,200), or were unable to provide a clear estimate. With regard to property ownership and other assets, only a portion of families reported owning housing or significant assets: in some cases, husbands held shares of parental property, in others previously owned housing was transferred to former spouses, and in a few cases property was rented out. When evaluating their living standards, most women

described their families as “middle,” yet, as the table shows, this definition is shaped by subjective perceptions, since both husbands’ incomes and their asset holdings vary considerably. In terms of financial security, the responses were also diverse: while some families reported feeling financially secure, others pointed to economic difficulties, primarily linked to the economic crisis in Turkey or to outstanding debt obligations.

3.6. Data Collection Methods

Primary data was collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews consisting of 65 questions that were grouped into thematic blocks and arranged in a deliberate sequence. The structure of the interview guide was designed to create a gradual progression: the conversation began with introductory questions aimed at building rapport and establishing a safe atmosphere, moved to more general questions on migration experiences and different forms of capital, and only later turned to sensitive issues such as gender roles, power dynamics, and emotional experience. This sequence allowed participants to open up progressively and to share very personal experiences with a high degree of trust.

The interviews covered the following thematic areas: (1) personal background and migration context; (2) transformation of capital (economic, social, cultural, and symbolic); (3) patriarchal expectations and gender roles; (4) agency and power dynamics in relationships; (5) trauma, emotional experiences, and support systems; and (6) personal changes and adaptation strategies. The flow of questions enabled a balance between comparability across interviews and openness to participants’ individual narratives, while also leaving space for participants to bring up issues that they found most relevant.

Although in retrospect I recognized that some questions could have been developed further, particularly those related to ethnicity and family migration histories, the structure of the guide worked very well in practice. I chose not to include a separate part on ethnic identity because, for the purposes of this research, “Russian women” refers to women who hold or once held Russian citizenship, regardless of their ethnicity. Nevertheless, discussions with participants revealed that ethnicity

sometimes played a significant role in their experiences, which points to an important direction for future research. Similarly, the initial idea of linking narratives to intergenerational or historical trauma could not be fully addressed within the chosen format; this will require a separate study.

Overall, the interview questions proved to be an effective tool for eliciting rich, nuanced data. The logical order of questions facilitated a natural conversation rather than a rigid questionnaire. Even when certain questions revisited similar topics at different stages of the interview, participants consistently brought in new insights rather than repeating themselves. This recursive design ultimately strengthened the depth and quality of the narratives collected.

All interviews were conducted online using Telegram, WhatsApp, or Zoom, depending on participants' preferences and technical accessibility. Except for three sessions held as audio calls, all interviews were conducted in a video format. Prior to each interview, participants were informed about the anonymous nature of the study and that the sessions would be recorded. They were assured that the audio recordings would be transcribed verbatim into text for analysis and that the audio files would be permanently deleted upon the completion of the study. Participants were also explicitly told that they could decline to answer any question that caused discomfort. In practice, however, none of the participants exercised this option, and all chose to respond to the full set of questions. All interviews were conducted in Russian.

In total, 29 interviews were conducted, resulting in 44 hours and 19 minutes of recorded material. The average length of an interview was 1 hour and 32 minutes. The intentionally informal and conversational setting of these online sessions encouraged participants to speak freely about personal and, at times, sensitive or traumatic topics.

3.7. Data Analysis

The analytical process consisted of several sequential stages. First, all interviews were transcribed verbatim. After transcription, I created an individual table for each participant, in which I entered her answers to all interview questions. These tables served as a preliminary structuring tool and allowed me to work closely with each interview in detail.

In the next stage, I organized and coded all responses across participants according to the ten specific thematic based on the interview guide. This formed the basis for the thematic analysis. For each thematic block I compiled answers from all 29 interviews, combining synthesized descriptions with representative quotations that best illustrated key patterns and significant nuances.

Based on these thematic datasets, I carried out a comparative and contextual analysis that made it possible to identify recurring themes, variations, and contradictions. This stage enabled me to see both common trends and distinctive individual trajectories in terms of background, migration experience, and strategies of adaptation.

After completing the thematic structuring, I integrated a narrative approach in order to examine how participants constructed their life stories and made meaning of their experiences. This stage focused on the temporal dimension of their narratives, analyzing how they interpreted the past and positioned themselves in the present. The narrative perspective highlighted the relationship between structural constraints and individual agency and paid attention not only to what was said, but also to the sequence of events, tone, and turning points in the participants' accounts.

Through these combined strategies, including thematic coding, cross-case comparison, contextual interpretation, and narrative analysis, the data were transformed into a coherent analytic base. These steps created the foundation for the analytical chapters that follow, allowing me to move from empirical material to theory while keeping close attention to the voices of the participants. Building on this analytic foundation, the decision to split the findings into two chapters—one on capitals and one on patriarchy—was driven by the nature of the data and the study's theoretical blend. During data analysis, the interview material naturally clustered into two broad thematic sets: one revolving around how women's various forms of capital changed after migration, and another focused on how women dealt with gender expectations and power inequalities in their new families. To do justice to both facets, the thesis presents them in separate chapters, ensuring each theme receives in-depth attention. This thematic separation aligns with the dual conceptual framework, combining Bourdieu's theory of capitals and feminist theory of patriarchy, and prevents one aspect from overshadowing the other.

3.8. Reflexivity and Ethics

Throughout the research process, I maintained a strong commitment to reflexivity. My dual position as a Russian-speaking migrant woman living in Turkey provided both access and sensitivity but also required constant attention to balancing empathy with analytical distance. This insider–outsider position influenced the degree of trust and openness shown by participants and shaped the way narratives were co-constructed during the interviews. To monitor this influence, I kept a reflexive field journal documenting methodological decisions, moments of tension, and my own emotional responses, and regularly discussed these reflections with colleagues, which helped to reduce potential bias and broaden interpretive perspectives.

At the same time, my own long-term migration experience inevitably affected how I approached the field. Although I was not a marriage migrant but an education-related one, being a single woman living in Turkey for more than three years gave me a vantage point to observe marriage migration from within. The numerous discourses I studied strongly influenced me as a person, making it at times difficult to separate myself as a researcher from myself as a woman interacting with Turkish society. I often evaluated people through the prism of my academic knowledge, which occasionally complicated my personal life more than my scholarly perspective. Furthermore, I deliberately avoided overly deep integration into the Russian-speaking diaspora. While I maintained conversations with fellow Russian migrants, I gradually realized the extent to which clichés and stereotypes circulating within the community could shape my perception of Turkish society. As a result, I carefully curated my social environment, balancing Russian- and Turkish-speaking contacts to preserve my own mental well-being. This selectivity, in turn, shaped my research: I became more critical of Russian migrants' narratives and more attentive to Turkish perspectives, which allowed me to perceive the pluralism of local opinions and avoid reproducing oversimplified categories.

This personal experience directly informed my methodological choices. My own struggles with everyday adaptation, communication barriers, and exposure to issues such as infidelity, domestic tensions, or even violence resonated with many women's accounts, enabling me to approach interviews with empathy and understanding.

Speaking the same native language, while also sharing migration-related hardships, helped me build rapport and encourage participants to open up on sensitive issues, something that would have been extremely difficult through an interpreter. Yet this closeness also required conscious effort to maintain analytical distance. Having lived through the full spectrum of adaptation, from frustration and anger to acceptance and balance, I was able, by the time of data collection, to draw on my personal journey as a resource rather than a hindrance. The ethical responsibility I felt towards both Russian migrants and Turkish society ultimately outweighed personal emotions, guiding me to treat participants' narratives with respect while maintaining critical engagement.

Ethical considerations were central to the project. The study was reviewed and approved by the Ethics Committee of Middle East Technical University. All participants were informed about the aims of the research, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to refuse to answer any question or to withdraw at any point. Anonymity and confidentiality were strictly maintained through the use of pseudonyms and secure storage of data. Audio recordings were transcribed verbatim and permanently deleted after transcription. Interviews sometimes touched upon sensitive or traumatic experiences; in these cases, care was taken to ensure that participants felt in control of the conversation, and the possibility of taking breaks or skipping questions was always emphasized. Although no participant chose to omit any question, this assurance contributed to a sense of safety.

Additional measures were taken to ensure the privacy of participants beyond standard anonymization procedures. At the request of one participant who sought an especially high level of confidentiality, her city of residence to the similar one was changed in the dataset. In the participant profile table, I deliberately omitted some details about routes of migration and did not include workplaces or some specific occupations that, although mentioned during interviews, could be potentially identifying. These decisions were made to ensure that the data could not be traced back to specific individuals and to safeguard their privacy.

3.9. Limitations

As with any qualitative study, there are several limitations that must be acknowledged. The findings presented here are based on 29 in-depth interviews and are therefore not intended to be statistically generalizable to all Russian-speaking women in Turkey. Nevertheless, for an initial study that extends beyond the better-documented contexts of Antalya and Istanbul, this sample provides a rich and diverse body of material. The multi-stage snowball sampling, which relied not only on my personal networks, but primarily on the networks of my contacts and on participants themselves, proved to be unexpectedly effective for accessing a wide range of experiences. At the same time, a larger number of participants would have allowed for even more extensive coverage.

Some geographical and social groups remain underrepresented. The eastern regions of Turkey are almost absent in this dataset, which makes it impossible to draw conclusions about the experiences of Russian-speaking women living in that part of the country. It is also noteworthy that, despite my earlier ethnographic work in Konya, none of the participants in this study came from Konya. While the dataset covers many cities and provinces, these gaps indicate that certain regional dynamics require further investigation.

The study focuses exclusively on women who currently reside in Turkey. It does not include the experiences of women who married Turkish men but live in Russia or in other countries. During the recruitment process, I received a large number of responses from Belarusian women as well as some from Kazakhstan; their stories would be a valuable point of comparison and could be the subject of future studies.

Another important limitation is that the study design did not initially include detailed questions on ethnicity and religion. These issues emerged spontaneously during the interviews, and several participants emphasized that their ethnic or religious background had shaped their choice of partner and their experience of adaptation. In this sample, there were women who identified as Muslim prior to migration, but no participants who converted to Islam during their marriage. Including such cases in future studies would broaden the understanding of the intersection between religion, gender, and migration.

At the outset, I also intended to engage with the concept of trauma and the idea of migration as a potentially traumatic experience. Although I still consider this an important perspective and remain convinced that migration often involves significant emotional and psychological challenges, the scope of this study did not allow for a thorough operationalization of trauma theory. Similarly, questions related to historical trauma and the continuities between migration during the Soviet era and post-Soviet marriage migration could not be adequately explored because these ideas came to me after the research design had already been submitted to the ethics committee. These themes, as well as the influence of family background and early socialization on the strategies women use in their marriages, remain promising directions for future research.

CHAPTER 4

TRANSFORMATION OF CAPITALS

4.1. Migration Context: Acquaintance, Relocation and Agency

As demonstrated by the interviews conducted as part of the empirical section of this research, the marriage migration of women to Turkey constitutes an exceptionally complex, multilayered and diverse phenomenon. Behind the seemingly straightforward motive of relocating for a man lies a wide range of reasons, decisions and circumstances that shape the trajectories and forms of female mobility. Personal biographies, cultural frameworks, social expectations, gender norms and global conditions intersect to form unique paths of transnational movement.

Initial conditions, motivations, modes of decision making as well as the economic, social, cultural and symbolic capital of the participants vary significantly. This allows us to trace both carefully planned relocations and spontaneous moves, driven either by a desire to exit a previous life or by efforts to integrate into the scenario of a new society. The contexts of migration motives that will be examined below broaden our understanding of why women undertake such moves. The findings of this study indicate that these trajectories are nonlinear and result not only from a combination of circumstances, initiatives and compromises between partners, but also from external factors that influence the decisions being made. This perspective highlights marriage migration as a complex and multi-causal process.

Many women demonstrate a high degree of agency regardless of whether their relocation was motivated by a relationship with a partner or driven by personal considerations. Others follow the initiative of the partner or respond to external circumstances. In the following section, the main motives and logics of migration will

be presented and analyzed based on the interviews, considering both individual decisions and the structural conditions under which these decisions were made.

4.1.1. Formats of Acquaintance as a Factor in the Migration Trajectory

In order to understand the motivations and specific features of marriage migration, it is crucial to consider where and under what circumstances women meet their future partners. This study analyzed 29 cases of Russian and Russian-speaking women who relocated to Turkey. The formats of acquaintance are presented below, grouped according to the number of respondents in each category from the most to the least common.

1. Online acquaintance through websites, applications and thematic platforms.

a) Dating websites. The most common form of online acquaintance was through dating websites where the participants initiated contact using specialized platforms. This group includes Valeria (46 years old), Polina (22 years old), Raisa (30 years old), Sofia (50 years old), Taisiya (32 years old) and Ulyana (45 years old).

b) Language learning applications. Some respondents such as Zhanna (28 years old) and Olesya (28 years old) met their partners through online language learning applications.

c) Online dating clubs. Diana (39 years old) established contact through an online dating club organized by a blogger.

d) Online games. Lada (33 years old) met her future partner in the online game Lineage 2.

e) Chat programs. Svetlana (35 years old) met her partner while communicating via a chat program ICQ.

2. Acquaintance in a tourist context.

The second most common category of acquaintance involves encounters in a tourist context. Such meetings occurred on beaches, in hotels, on city streets, while standing

in line for ice cream and in bars and cafes. The environment of leisure travel provides an informal social setting that facilitates spontaneous connections and interaction.

Examples include Vera (28 years old) who met her partner on the beach in Manavgat, and Alina (52 years old) who met during a stay in a hotel in Istanbul. Miroslava (34 years old) described a meeting that occurred during a vacation in Kemer, while Galina (48 years old) recalled that the first conversation started when her future partner offered to take her photo in Kemer. Nadezhda (30 years old) met while waiting in line for ice cream in Bodrum, and Elvira (26 years old) through couchsurfing during a trip across Turkey. Other instances include Tatyana (25 years old) who met on a street in Istanbul when the man helped her call a taxi, Marina (33 years old) who met in a bar where he worked as a bartender, and Evelina (27 years old) who initiated contact herself in a cafe in Eskişehir.

3. Acquaintance through professional or volunteer activities.

The third group consists of participants who met their future partners through professional contexts or volunteering. These encounters reflect a type of social connection that originates in formal activities such as work or professional exchanges but later extends into personal relationships.

For example, Inna (27 years old) met during a volunteer project in Eskişehir, while Larisa (35 years old) described an acquaintance that developed in a pavyon where her future husband was her boss. Zinaida (48 years old) met through one of the regular business trips to Turkey. Similarly, Tatyana (32 years old) reported meeting her future husband during a business trip to Antalya. Another case concerns Daria (24 years old) who was working as a guide accompanying guests to a club where her future husband was employed as a security guard.

4. Acquaintance through friends and relatives.

Another significant pattern of acquaintance involves social connections facilitated by friends or relatives. In these cases, the initiative to introduce the future partners came from a third party within the pre-existing network of relationships.

Examples include Margarita (36 years old) who met through friends in Russia, Kristina (31 years old) who was introduced when her friends, with her consent, passed on her contact details, Tamara (34 years old) who met due to her aunt's initiative during a family gathering, and Karina (38 years old) who met through friends in Bishkek.

Thus, the most common format of acquaintance among the participants was online communication, which reflects the growing role of digital platforms in initiating intercultural and transnational connections. The participants used both Russian dating websites and international platforms such as Tinder, particularly in cases where the acquaintance occurred outside the territory of the Russian Federation[27]. An unusual, but illustrative case is the meeting that took place in the online game Lineage 2 during adolescence. Acquaintances in a tourist context represent the second most common category. They demonstrate how casual and everyday interactions on a beach, in a hotel, while waiting in line for ice cream, in a café or in a public street may evolve into long term and transformative life trajectories. The third most frequent category consists of acquaintances that developed through professional or volunteer activities. Some of the participants already had work-related connections to Turkey or visited the country through business or volunteering programs, and it was within these contexts that relationships were established. Finally, the least common form of acquaintance involves introductions through friends or relatives. Two of these took place in Russia, one in Turkey, and one in Kyrgyzstan. These cases highlight the importance of social capital and local networks as mediators in the formation of intercultural connections, even if they occur less often than digital or casual encounters.

Although many of these meetings took place in local contexts on the territory of Turkey where the women were physically present (in situations of tourism, work or volunteering), the initiative to establish contact most often came from the men. The majority of the participants emphasized that it was the men who first showed interest, initiated contact and took further steps to continue communication. This is particularly characteristic of chance encounters and online acquaintance: *"He wrote three times. On the third attempt I finally replied"* (Nadezhda).

[27] Tinder has been forbidden in Russia since 2022.

Several participants stressed that at the time of the first contact they were not interested in meeting Turkish men. *"I thought there were no normal ones among Turks,"* Zhanna recalled an ordinary, superficial image of Turks circulating in everyday Russian discourse, one that I had also encountered in my own experience. *"My father would have killed me if he had been alive,"* said Karina, whose family, living in Kyrgyzstan, communicated exclusively within the Russian community, and whose father disapproved of any contact with other nationalities. Galina shared that, in the travel agency, she had been warned not to meet "frivolous" Turkish men in Antalya: *"We met in Kemer. He came up to help with a photo. I noticed that he had a hotel bracelet, so I thought he was not Turkish and that it was safe to talk."* Similarly, Polina, recalling her online acquaintance with her red-haired husband from the Black Sea region, said: *"I did not think he was in Turkey. Oh, such a handsome young man. I have to reply."*

Furthermore, many interviewees noted that at the time of meeting they did not consider the man as a potential partner for a serious relationship. Valeria shared: *"I was not thinking about marriage at all. After my divorce I was just having fun."* Miroslava, who met her partner while traveling, said: *"I told him that no, we will never see each other again. And in the end, he became my husband."* Svetlana recalled: *"It did not even cross my mind that oh, this is my future husband."*

The examples above indicate a certain degree of caution that many participants displayed toward Turkish men as potential long-term partners. This caution was often not directly linked to their personal experience of interaction but was formed against the background of present-day everyday discourses circulating among Russian speakers, both online and offline. These discourses consist of subtle, yet pervasive forms of stigmatization expressed in comments, memes, half ironic remarks and emotionally charged narratives disseminated through social media, blogs and interpersonal discussions.

Several participants who maintain public online accounts explicitly mentioned that they encountered disapproving or skeptical reactions from their Russian speaking followers when they spoke about their relationships with Turkish men. According to them, these comments were often accompanied by accusations and harassment, which reflects the persistence of gendered and national biases transmitted in public discourse.

Such forms of informal pressure are familiar to most Russian speaking women living in Turkey and openly discussing their relationships. Even in the absence of direct academic references, the phenomenon is widely acknowledged within the Russian speaking community.

Consequently, even in situations where relationships began with mutual interest and attraction, women could experience doubt and an inner sense of resistance that was shaped not by personal experience, but by a collective field of expectations, norms and warnings. This field is rarely articulated explicitly but has a considerable impact on the perception of a man's reliability and the potential stability of a future relationship.

At the same time, there were also participants who deliberately sought partners in Turkey. Ulyana admitted: *"When our [Russian] guys would say 'You are cool but marry you?! I will find myself a twenty-year-old' I realized that I needed a foreigner. I deliberately started looking for a Turk. I registered on a website that is specifically for men looking for Russian wives."* Evelina showed initiative when she met a man in a café where she was with friends: *"I hit the table and said, 'Learn, kids…' I walked up and asked, 'And why were you looking at me like that?'"* Although Evelina genuinely wanted to stay in Turkey, she explained that her decision to approach him was also influenced by her first impression: the man looked presentable and behaved accordingly. She noticed that he was well dressed and seated in the non-smoking section—details she found appealing. For her, these were criteria she consciously valued in a potential partner.

Already at the stage of initial acquaintance, it becomes clear how different forms of accumulated capital contribute to women's agency in initiating and developing relationships. In this sample, the most common format of establishing a connection was online acquaintance. Viewed through Bourdieu's framework, the resources mobilized in this context can be understood as forms of cultural and social capital. Cultural capital is reflected in the confident use of technology, intercultural awareness, and adaptability to mediated interaction. Social capital emerges in the ability to build trust and transform casual exchanges into ongoing communication, which for many respondents eventually led to in-person meetings and relocation.

It is important to emphasize that participation in online dating is not a neutral or "natural" behavior, as it might appear today. On the contrary, it is an active choice that requires navigating a multilingual and multinational environment and managing interactions in a way that fosters connection. Online correspondence is a specific mode of communication that relies on openness, conversational initiative, and the ability to balance authenticity with the conscious effort to maintain the relationship—an ability that should not be taken for granted. The fact that 11 out of 29 women relied on online formats demonstrates their high level of social and technological inclusion.

Interestingly, contrary to the common opinion about the rapid rise in online dating during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chisom, 2021), in this study five out of these eleven women established contact with their partners long before 2020 — six, seven, ten, twelve and even seventeen years prior to the pandemic. This points to a deeper trend of global digitalization and the spread of transnational platforms already since the mid-2000s (Ortega and Hergovich, 2017). As Madianou and Miller (2012) note, online communication was originally perceived as a way to maintain connections with close ones at a distance. In the material presented here, however, it emerges as a point of origin for new and potentially migratory trajectories, in which digital interaction becomes the foundation of future family life.

Online acquaintance not only reflects the transformation of forms of romantic communication but also serves as an indicator of the degree of capitalized agency of women: their capacity to mobilize resources, to build a strategy of interaction and to initiate transnational connections.

It is evident that different formats of acquaintance are closely linked to the forms of capital that women mobilize long before migration (Erel, 2010). This is particularly visible in the tourist context, where meeting a partner becomes possible due to the combination of economic and cultural capital. Economic capital manifests itself in the ability to organize and finance an independent trip abroad, including holidays at seaside resorts or in large cities. Cultural capital in this context is expressed in an interest in the host country, a desire to explore Turkish culture and a readiness for bodily and emotional practices associated with self-care and discovery of new environments. Women arriving in Istanbul or on the coast often emphasized that their

trip was not just for entertainment, but also for broadening their horizons, learning about history, architecture and the everyday life of another country.

In professional and volunteer contexts, the role of capital becomes even more evident. Economic capital here is expressed not only in the material capacity to travel, but also in institutional belonging women gained access to international programs or already had experience of working in a transnational environment. Cultural capital is reflected in the presence of professional competencies that are in demand outside the country of origin, as well as in the ability to adapt to other professional standards and ethical codes. Furthermore, a high level of social capital allowed these women to engage in intercultural communication, to speak English or Turkish with confidence, to build horizontal ties in new institutional fields and to present themselves securely in a new social reality (Reed-Danahay, 2022).

Finally, acquaintance through friends and relatives underscores the importance of social networks as a separate resource. Although such cases appear less frequently in this sample, they highlight the crucial role of intermediaries and communities in shaping life trajectories. The passing of contacts, recommendations and initiatives from third parties all demonstrate that social capital, embodied in human relationships, can become a key factor in initiating romantic relationships that lead to migration.

Thus, formats of acquaintance are inseparable from the forms of capital that women possess. They illustrate not a passive entry into relationships, but an active strategic position built on resources, prior experience and a willingness to engage in intercultural interaction (Levitt, 1998).

However, from the moment a connection is established, the distribution of initiative begins to shift. When it comes to the decision to migrate, a more complex dynamic emerges. Therefore, the moment of acquaintance and the subsequent development of events illustrate a shift in the balance of initiative and underline the need to consider both sides in the analysis of migration trajectories. These dynamics shape not only the way relationships begin, but also the framework within which strategies of adaptation and power distribution unfold throughout the migration process.

4.1.2. Agency and Initiative: Who Makes the Decision to Migrate and How

The decision to migrate is one of the key moments in which the distribution of initiative and agency between partners becomes most visible. The analysis of interviews revealed that although the initiative to establish contact most often came from men, the picture is far more complex when it comes to decisions about relocation. In this context, multiple scenarios emerge where the initiative may come from women, from men, or result from a mutual decision and compromise.

Among the participants there were women who consciously made the decision to relocate based on their own circumstances, goals and assessment of future prospects. For example, Diana emphasizes that she made the decision herself: *"I could not live between two countries, I wanted a normal relationship. And I decided that I would come."* Ulyana, who from the very beginning intended to marry a foreigner, also adopted an active position, describing her decision as impulsive, but determined: *"I just lost my temper, packed all my things and came."* Vera explained that her decision to migrate was not dependent on the man: *"Even before I met him, I was preparing to relocate. I just wanted to leave Russia. Turkey was chosen in advance. I was ready for it."* Zhanna highlights the combination of her own determination and difficulties in communication with her family: *"My parents were against it, and I can say I ran away. It was very spontaneous. Well, not entirely spontaneous, but let us say, fast. Of course, my husband also wanted me to move, but he was still a student back then, so he was a bit scared, worried, but I was pushing him. My mother was against it, but she came with me… she wanted to see everything with her own eyes."*

In other cases, the initiative belonged to the man who suggested that the woman should relocate. For instance, Polina says: *"He himself suggested that I come with him. At that time, I was in an uncertain situation — so I went."* Raisa emphasizes: *"He immediately said: I want a family, I am serious. If you want this — come."* Diana recalls: *"He insisted that I move to Turkey because there are more opportunities for him here."*

However, the most common model turned out to be joint decision making, in which partners discussed possible scenarios and made decisions as a result of dialogue, often considering professional, family and financial circumstances. Lada explains: *"We*

discussed what to do. He wanted to move to Russia, but I did not want that. He understood that it would be hard for me. In the end, I moved." Svetlana describes the situation as a natural result of the development of their relationship: *"Relocation was not something that someone proposed. It was just taken for granted."* Marina also presents the process as a joint decision: *"I was the one who raised the question of moving… and he said let us live together."* Zinaida emphasizes that the decision was made with full awareness of her circumstances: *"He himself hesitated for a long time because I am not an easy person and I already had two children."*

Alongside the partners' own initiatives, in some cases external circumstances became the decisive factor for relocation. Relationships and the fear of war proved to be interconnected, increasing the motivation to migrate. As Galina recounted: *"I moved in 2014 because the war started. At first, I thought it was temporary. But I stayed [in Turkey]."* Another example of external influences is the case of Taisiya, for whom marriage became a consequence of migration-related bureaucratic restrictions *"If it had not been for all these problems with documents at that time… we would not even have gotten married."* For Yana, pregnancy became a reason for relocation and marriage: *"He said: 'A child is happiness, you must be with me, I will not let you go.'"*

An analysis of the external circumstances that influenced the migration of participants shows how structural factors, such as armed conflicts, bureaucratic restrictions and pregnancy, can exacerbate women's vulnerability within patriarchal contexts. In these situations, migration becomes not merely a result of romantic relationships, but a strategy to escape a position in which women find themselves without adequate institutional or social support (Pellander, 2015). Such cases indicate that relocation can serve as an adaptive response to crisis conditions shaped by structural inequalities, where support from a man is perceived as a possible solution. This highlights the need to analyze marriage migration not only through the prism of intimate decisions, but also in a broader perspective of social and structural vulnerability (Moret et al., 2019; Connell, 1990).

Thus, the agency of participants is manifested not only in the initiation of acquaintance or the formation of intentions, but also in the decisive role in making life changing

decisions regarding moving. Migration emerges as the result of a complex interplay of desires, conditions, compromises and plans on both sides.

4.2. Transformation of Cultural Capital

This section explores the transformation of different forms of capital—cultural, economic, symbolic, and social—in the migration experience of Russian-speaking women in Turkey. Drawing on Bourdieu's framework (Bourdieu, 1986), capitals are approached here not as fixed possessions, but as relational resources whose value is reshaped within new social fields. Migration changes the conditions under which these resources are recognized, mobilized, and exchanged, leading to processes of adaptation, revaluation, or loss. The analysis begins with cultural capital, as it forms the value base of social position and directly or indirectly influences other forms of capital.

Cultural capital, in the Bourdieusian sense, encompasses resources related to education, knowledge, and the ability to navigate cultural contexts. In the setting of transnational marriage migration, this capital undergoes a process of reconstruction: skills that were valued in the country of origin may lose their significance, while new knowledge and habits become essential for adaptation (Erel, 2010). The present analysis demonstrates which forms of cultural capital of Russian women in Turkey proved to be applicable, which ones did not, and how they were reinterpreted and reconstituted.

Education level of participants

The educational background of the participants demonstrates a high level of cultural capital. In total, nine participants had two or more higher education degrees, which underlines an exceptionally high level of accumulated cultural capital, and five of them also held vocational college qualifications, secondary specialized education that is not considered higher education in Russia but provides the right to work in a specific profession. Only one participant had not completed higher education, while another had graduated from a college (which is not considered a higher education institution in Russia) and is currently pursuing a university degree through distance learning. The most common fields in which the women have their education are pedagogy and

languages, economics and management, law, health-related disciplines, humanities and arts, and technical or applied sciences (see Table 1).

Nevertheless, in the context of migration, educational and cultural resources are often subject to transformation and partial or full devaluation, when women are unable to fully realize their professional potential. However, this does not mean that they are deprived of the opportunity to apply their knowledge and skills, in contrast, many of them successfully make use of their so-called soft skills as well as competencies acquired through education, training, hobbies, and life experience in new areas of life. Accordingly, the following section will examine which aspects of cultural capital women identified as useful, which ones they were unable to apply in the migration context, and what they had to learn anew.

4.2.1. Actualized Cultural Capital

Most respondents emphasized that certain abilities developed in Russia proved useful after migration. Organizational skills, everyday practical knowledge, experience of independent living, stress tolerance, foreign language proficiency, communicative flexibility, and adaptability were particularly often mentioned. As Marina put it: *"If it were not for English, I would not have been able to move at all."*

Education also played a significant role. Zhanna explained that her background in management helps her actively support her husband's online business: *"Thanks to my education, I can manage the Instagram page the way we do."* For Miroslava, legal training enabled her to assist her husband in legal matters, while Diana's familiarity with documentation allowed her to independently handle bureaucratic procedures: *"I go to hospitals, the municipality, the tax office on my own. Everyone is surprised: how did you manage to go alone and get everything done by yourself?"*

Life experience and personal talents were equally important. For example, Inna believes that her skills in organizing events for foreigners at the university have helped her adapt, and Larisa's ability to do quick mental calculations protects her from being cheated at currency exchange offices.

One particularly striking case is Yana's. Despite facing psychological and physical abuse at home, she found the strength to develop her artistic talent into a source of income. While her husband discouraged her, *"What are you doing with your paintings? Stay at home!"* Yana was able to accept design commissions, pay for her own therapy, collect new documents for herself and her child, and develop strategies to ensure her personal safety.

Overall, organizational abilities, self-reliance, language skills, soft skills, and personal talents proved to be the most transferable forms of cultural capital and were actively mobilized in the new environment.

4.2.2. Non-actualized Cultural Capital: Knowledge and Skills that Proved Useless in Turkey

1. Bureaucratic and institutional obstacles

The most important unactualized form of cultural capital reported by participants is the possibility of working in Turkey. A residence permit obtained through marriage does not grant work authorization, and most women simply state, *"I do not have the right to work."* Conversations rarely even broach the option of trying to obtain a work permit; women generally do not mention it, even hypothetically. In practice, work permits are possible but require an employer to initiate the process for a specific position, which makes the opportunity feel inaccessible. Institutional constraints can also apply within Russian-affiliated structures in Turkey: Inna, for example, has the qualifications for work in the Russian diplomatic service, but cannot apply because she is married to a foreigner.

A further barrier is the non-transferability of qualifications. Fields such as law, diplomacy, economics, and management as well as other bureaucratic or international specializations operate under institutional logics and training paths that differ from those in Russia, complicating direct entry. None of the participants mentioned diploma recognition procedures; rather, they framed the issue as being unable to apply their profession under local market and institutional conditions.

Market structure further constrains self-employment. Valeria attempted to build a business and found that sales principles and marketing tools effective in Russia "simply do not work" in Turkey, with little receptivity to infographics, funnels, or optimization. Some sectors popular and profitable in Russia lack demand locally: Daria's beaded handbags, which commanded high prices in Russia, generated no income after migration.

2. Restrictions from family

In other cases, limits arise within the household. Galina, who holds three degrees, graduated from a music school, and was once a professional athlete, worked for years formally on a relative's farm and later on her husband's farm, where her duties were narrowly defined. When she confronted her husband about infidelity, he simply dismissed her, curtailing even this limited form of employment. Women who were pregnant or had small children were also typically outside the workforce; in this sample, all such participants were not employed at the time of interview.

3. Restrictions of the immediate environment

Local conditions often impede the exercise of skills, hobbies, and routines. Even in large cities, interests cannot always be pursued. Sofia, for instance, would like to attend a gym but avoids nearby facilities because they operate in a mixed-gender format she finds unsuitable. Evelina wanted to take Zumba classes but could not find an instructor or studio that met her expectations. Service availability and quality, especially beauty services, often become a problem for Russian women. This is more acute in smaller towns: Larisa, who lives in a small city, flew to Sochi to have her hair colored because she could not find a salon locally that provided the level of service she wanted. A lack of cultural infrastructure can also diminish everyday fulfillment. As Zinaida put it: *"I am a theater lover… the Moscow Art Theatre, musicals, the Bolshoi Theatre—there is, of course, none of this here."*

4. Loss of value in Russian-language competence

Participants frequently reported that their mastery of Russian, an eloquent, literary mode of speech cultivated through intensive schooling, had little outlet. The inability

to use expressive, nuanced Russian in daily communication, particularly with spouses who do not speak it, was experienced as a substantive constraint. Marina notes: *"My main professional skill is to speak beautifully and extensively in Russian, which is absolutely useless here."* Ulyana adds: *"It upsets me that he [my husband] cannot appreciate my vocabulary or my grammar."*

5. Unactualized religious capital

Interestingly, none of the participants in this study mentioned being unable to practice Christianity in Turkey due to restrictions such as limited access to churches or other factors. By contrast, Olesya complained that she could not practice her faith as a Muslim in the same way she did in Russia, because the Islamic practices she followed there differ substantially from those common in Turkey. According to her, local religiosity is heavily supplemented with traditions and superstitions. Living in Marmaris, she is constantly confronted with such symbols, such as the *nazar* (evil eye), which she finds irritating. She dislikes it when her family or neighbors try to impose beliefs on her that, in her view, have no basis in Islam.

At the same time, Olesya's experience is not one of complete non-actualization. While she expresses dissatisfaction that her Islamic beliefs differ from local religious norms, she occasionally draws on religious discourse as a strategic tool in family conflicts. In one such case, faced with provocative behavior from her husband's relative, she threatened to initiate a sharia-based dispute to remind her husband of his duties as a believer and protector: *"We will go to knowledgeable people, and they will explain to you what you are doing, that you are a husband who does not even show jealousy for his wife."*

This example complicates the classification of her religious capital: although she feels unable to practice her faith as she did in Russia, she has transformed this capital into a resource for negotiation and agency within her marital and family relationships. Nevertheless, her overall narrative conveys a sense of dissatisfaction stemming from the gap between her own Islamic beliefs and the forms of religiosity she encounters in Turkey.

Thus, cultural capital that is normative and valued in Russia, professional expertise, applied skills, refined linguistic competence, and sustained engagement in cultural or educational activities, often remains unactualized in Turkey, particularly outside major urban centers. The core impediment is employment: work authorization is *possible but* seldom articulated as an option; many qualifications do not align with local market and institutional logics; and family dynamics, environmental constraints, and the devaluation of Russian-language competence further reduce opportunities to apply and develop women's skills.

4.2.3. New Skills and Knowledge Acquired During Adaptation

Almost all participants reported that adaptation required them to master a range of new skills and practices, which eventually became part of their daily routine. As Alina put it: *"I had to learn to walk again—as if I had to learn everything from scratch: how to cook, how to live."*

Although some women managed to reach agreements with their partners about sharing responsibilities or incorporated elements of their own national cuisine into daily meals, most stated that they had to learn to cook Turkish dishes specifically for their husbands. For some, this became a real challenge. Tatiana, for example, had been a vegetarian for eight years and found it difficult to accommodate her husband's preferences: *"When I came here, I had to cook meat. And I have not eaten meat at all for eight years already."* Over time, she found a solution by introducing him to salads and sometimes sending him to his mother's house when he wanted meat.

When it came to household management, most women did not need to acquire entirely new cleaning skills, but some noted the difficulty of maintaining large apartments, which in Turkey are often significantly more spacious than those in Russia. For some, this was manageable thanks to domestic helpers or modern appliances purchased by their husbands, but for most it became a considerable burden. Even more challenging was the issue of appliance repairs and dealing with service providers. In Russia, such tasks are often handled by men or resolved quickly with a service call, whereas in Turkey the process tends to take more time, requires patience, and, in some cases, service technicians prefer not to deal with a woman if she is alone at home. This can

be particularly problematic when the husband is away. In such cases, women either wait for assistance or, like Margarita, handle the problem themselves: *"Just recently I repaired the vacuum cleaner. In Russia I never had to do such things."*

Many participants also spoke about having to learn new forms of verbal and non-verbal communication, adapting to local norms to ensure they were understood and did not come across as impolite. These adjustments affected both everyday interactions and behavior in public or family settings, but this topic will be discussed in more detail in the section on social capital.

Many participants repeatedly used the word *"zen"*, which in Russian is often employed as a colloquial substitute for the word "calmness." Women described this state as the most important skill they had to acquire in order to adapt successfully to life in Turkey. As Polina put it, *"tremendous calmness"*, a phrase that illustrates the level of stress women experience, particularly during the initial stages of adaptation. This calmness, in turn, fosters patience and equips them to handle unfamiliar situations by cultivating a specific internal state. For some, developing this resilience was a process of self-training; for others, it involved working with a psychologist.

In sum, cultural adaptation encompassed a wide spectrum of changes, from cooking and household management to emotional self-regulation and new patterns of behavior. These skills became a new form of capital that women either transformed from existing resources or created from scratch, enabling them to be recognized in the local environment and to secure both emotional and practical comfort.

4.2.4. Language of Communication with the Partner

The linguistic situation in participants' families proved to be diverse. Some couples communicate primarily in Russian, others in Turkish or English, while some use mixed models that combine two or three languages. Valeria describes the situation in her household with humor: *"There is a third person in our family—Google Translate."* Sometimes, even when women speak fluent Turkish in broader society, they choose to communicate with their partners in Russian or English. As Karina, who speaks Turkish at work and with her neighbours, puts it: *"He speaks Turkish, I speak Russian. That's how we talk."*

Some participants experience a kind of emotional rejection of the Turkish language. Valeria, for instance, experiences a sense of resistance to Turkish, finding it illogical and difficult: *"Their sentences are constructed backwards."* This perception reflects the contrast between Turkish syntax and morphology and the structure of Russian grammar.

Language choice can also shift depending on the emotional context. Diana, who usually speaks with her husband in English and Turkish, switches to Russian during arguments. This illustrates how, in moments of strong emotion, expressing feelings in a foreign language can be difficult. Moreover, using Russian in quarrels allows her to express herself without violating local cultural norms, in the Turkish context, obscene language from a woman may be seen as socially unacceptable. Swearing in Russian thus becomes both a tool for emotional release and a way to avoid cultural condemnation.

Overall, participants reported no major communication problems with their partners, regardless of the language model they used. Any of these arrangements allowed for effective interaction, though a few women expressed regret that their partners could not fully appreciate the richness and nuance of their Russian speech. The following section examines participants' experiences in learning Turkish and the specific challenges they encountered in that process.

4.2.5. Learning Turkish

Most women in the study learned Turkish through various pathways: some studied on their own, others took private lessons, and some attended group courses. There were also cases where women acquired the language mainly through direct communication with Turkish speakers. Kristina, for example, described how she learned Turkish by actively socializing in the apartment complex where she lived, visiting neighbors and talking with them daily: "I learned the language by talking to neighbors, on the balcony."

Women who have lived in Turkey for only a short time, usually less than three or four years, often have not yet reached a confident level of competence in Turkish. Some are still uncertain whether they need to study the language in depth or express doubts

about their own learning abilities. In contrast, those who have lived in Turkey for many years consistently emphasize that learning the language is essential for successful adaptation. As Galina explained, “Language is essential! Anyone who wants to adapt must learn it within a year,” and Zinaida noted, “Language is a tool, and you need to use it every day.” Further, I will present vivid examples of how women approached learning Turkish and the challenges they faced in the process.

Half-jokingly, linguist and professional Turkologist Valeria Lemskaya[28] once remarked in a personal communication that it might be easier to learn Turkish from almost any native language other than Russian, thus highlighting the extent to which Turkish syntax and morphology differ from Russian. These structural differences create not only a linguistic, but also a cognitive challenge: learning the language often requires restructuring one’s thinking, adapting to new sentence construction, and mastering unfamiliar expressive means.

A striking example that illustrates the advantage of prior knowledge of a structurally similar language is the case of Svetlana. With a background in linguistics and bilingualism, her native language, Komi, is an agglutinative language whose grammatical structure resembles Turkish. Finding herself in a village during her first years in Turkey, she used her knowledge of grammar and her native language as a decoding tool, independently identifying patterns and parallels, which enabled her to start speaking Turkish. Over time, Svetlana not only achieved full fluency, but she also began teaching Turkish to others, a practice she has continued successfully for many years. Her case clearly shows that having a command of another language structurally close to Turkish can significantly ease the process of learning it. Accordingly, women who already had knowledge of a Turkic language, such as Evelina, who spoke Tatar, or Karina, who had lived in Kyrgyzstan where Kyrgyz was spoken and had experience communicating in a Turkic-language environment, acquired Turkish very quickly and with little difficulty, further supporting this hypothesis.

However, for some women, learning Turkish proved to be a serious challenge. Lada admitted: *“I understood that without Turkish you can’t manage here, but learning it*

[28] Deputy Director of the Institute of Foreign Languages and International Cooperation at Tomsk State Pedagogical University https://tspu.ru/fia/kaf-ppv/persons/6060-lemskaya-valeriya-mikhajlovna.html

was very hard." Sometimes, even with intensive study, women do not achieve the results they expect. Ulyana, for example, took private Turkish lessons for three years, but remained at an A2 level, far from the proficiency she aimed for. Holding two university degrees, she demonstrates that general educational attainment does not necessarily guarantee ease in language acquisition. While the ability to learn languages is not the focus of this study, it is reasonable to assume that individual aptitude plays a role[29], alongside the structural distance between Turkish and Russian, which belong to entirely different language families.

In some cases, the challenge is compounded by the learner's professional background. Taisia, herself a language teacher, found it particularly difficult to choose an instructor she considered suitable: *"I changed four or five tutors… I am very picky."* Such selectivity is understandable, and in my own case, being a teacher myself, when I began learning Turkish, I also approached the choice of instructor with great care, which ultimately allowed me to master the language in less than a year. Taisia's account therefore reflects not only her personal learning style, but also the high standards that professional educators may apply when navigating their own language acquisition process.

The obstacles to language acquisition are not limited to the technical process of mastering vocabulary and grammar. For many participants, the difference in communication style between Turkey and Russia also played a significant role. In Turkey, brief exchanges with strangers, in the street, at a pharmacy, in a shop, or with casual passersby, are socially expected and common, whereas in Russia such interactions are less frequent. Evelina described this dynamic succinctly: *"Small talk is my least favorite thing, but here it is necessary. I am learning."* She explained that she prefers the deeper conversations she associates with Russian social norms, where entering into a conversation often implies openness to longer-term contact. In the Russian context, people who do not wish to establish such contact may avoid initiating or responding to small talk altogether. If a conversation does begin, it is not unusual

[29] Research on individual language-learning aptitude shows that success largely depends on stable cognitive characteristics, such as phonemic coding, grammatical sensitivity, associative memory, and the ability to identify linguistic patterns, as well as on neurobiological factors, including the morphology of the auditory cortex and the development of speech–motor networks (Carroll and Sapon, 1959; Skehan, 1998; Li, 2016; Wong and Ettlinger, 2011; Reiterer, Hu, Sumathi, and Singh, 2013).

for it to progress toward exchanging contact information, an act that typically carries an expectation of follow-up. In Turkey, by contrast, short conversations do not imply any obligation to continue interaction. Even if phone numbers are exchanged, there is no social expectation that contact will be maintained. For some Russian women, this difference in norms creates a sense of dissonance. While many understand that these interactions are simply part of local communicative etiquette, others perceive them as lacking sincerity. As Raisa summarized, it can feel like "a kind of acting game," based on "fake smiles and courtesy." As a result, the challenge lies not only in learning the Turkish language, but also in using it in a way that facilitates social integration within a system of communication norms that may feel unfamiliar or even artificial.

Vera's case demonstrates how, in some instances, a refusal to learn a language may serve as a form of psychological self-defense, deliberately limiting unwanted communication. After a serious conflict with her husband's family, she decided to stop studying Turkish: *"I was taking lessons in Turkish with a tutor. For four months. And then there was a severe conflict with my husband's parents, and I stopped. I did not want to understand them. It was my form of protection—to pretend that I do not know the language."* This example shows that situational factors in the social environment can undermine women's motivation to continue language learning, particularly when avoiding contact with the surrounding community becomes an intentional strategy.

Thus, the participants' experiences with learning Turkish differ significantly. While some see it as an absolutely essential factor of successful socialization and adaptation, for others the process of learning is stressful and challenging. Not only the Turkish language, but also the very mode of everyday communication in Turkey becomes a factor to which women must adapt, and many of them are not enthusiastic about the idea of conforming to the communicative norms of the host society. Furthermore, refusal to learn Turkish may become a form of resistance to psychological pressure or simply an acknowledgment that the language proves too difficult for them to master. In this way, the Turkish language functions not only as a tool, but also as a symbol of inclusion or distance in relation to Turkish society.

4.2.6. Solitary Activities: Individual Practices and Forms of Recovery

The vast majority of interview participants enjoy spending time alone, especially if they are no longer in the initial phase of acute adaptation stress or culture shock. Women find solace in activities such as painting, reading, walking, and blogging. Although blogging was not a primary focus of this study, in my previous bachelor's research I specifically examined its influence on adaptation. That study showed that blogging can serve as one of the most powerful tools for appropriating the surrounding space through visual imagery and the articulation of personal meanings embedded in everyday circumstances. For women who actively run Instagram blogs, particularly those that use visual content, blogging facilitates adaptation by helping them highlight the positive aspects of their experience, expand their social networks, and realize creative or professional potential. In this study, only a few participants maintained a blog on a regular basis, and I was interested in speaking with them precisely to confirm that blogging also functions as a meaningful hobby in their adaptation process. At the same time, it is noteworthy that many women mentioned painting, especially paint-by-numbers, as a particularly effective way of coping with stress. This simple, routine activity appears to work as a coping strategy that allows them to regain a sense of calm and emotional stability during adaptation.

A particular group of women emphasized that they cannot afford time alone, and all of them are young mothers. At this stage of motherhood, they can only dream of having free time at their disposal, which makes the absence of personal space especially challenging. In one extreme case of control from her husband and his family, Yana described how she found comfort in being allowed to go to the store alone. There, with money she had secretly earned, she would buy chocolate for herself, an act that, as she explains, helped her cope with stress. For her, these brief, solitary moments were the only opportunities to pause and breathe. Across the sample, such individual practices, whether solitary hobbies or fleeting personal rituals, play an important role in preserving women's sense of self, supporting their emotional recovery, and serving as informal ways of performing their cultural capital.

4.2.7. Skills, Qualities, and Hobbies Appreciated by Partners

The question of what Turkish men value most in their Russian partners offers insight into which qualities are seen as assets in marriage. In everyday discourse, it is often claimed that Russian women are chosen for their exceptional beauty. Yet, the interviews reveal a different reality: none of the participants' partners mentioned physical beauty as a defining factor. Instead, in the everyday practice of family life, what comes to the forefront is the way partners communicate and the manner in which they build their relationship. This shift from appearance to interaction highlights the importance of emotional and intellectual compatibility in sustaining long-term partnerships.

Among the personal characteristics of Russian women, Turkish partners most often emphasize intellectual and emotional qualities. Karina notes: *"He says I am smart."* Zhanna adds: *"He says I am smart and not materialistic."* Nadezhda shares: *"He considers me strong, brave, and he is proud of my straightforwardness."* Elvira's husband particularly values her kindness, depth of communication, and dislike of *"empty conversations."* Household skills, hobbies, and professional achievements are generally not what partners mention as a source of pride, although Tamara receives recognition from her mother-in-law for her cooking skills.

Unfortunately, praise and admiration from partners may have a certain limit, particularly when a marriage, after many years of cohabitation, is on the verge of breaking down. For example, Galina, now heading toward divorce, recalls the very beginning of her relationship: *"At that time my husband almost idolized my cultural level, because I had three diplomas... I graduated from a music school, I am a cellist, I play the piano, I was an athlete, a professional swimmer, and when we met I was working as a director of an insurance company, already in my sixth year as a department head, while he was just working in his grandfather's company in the IT department, helping the accountants with small payments and changing cartridges."* Over time, her husband achieved significant professional success, but, as his economic capital grew, Galina's cultural and economic capital was devalued. At this crisis stage of the relationship, Galina regrets having not taken timely steps to convert her capital earlier.

Symbolic recognition from a partner and his family becomes an important form of validation of cultural capital in the context of transnational migration, especially when public recognition in the wider society is inaccessible. Overall, there is a noticeable trend: a greater number of compliments and expressions of admiration during the early stages of a relationship, and a gradual decrease in such expressions over time.

In the context of migration, the cultural capital of Russian-speaking women in Turkey undergoes a complex process of revaluation, partial loss, and transformation. While certain elements, such as organizational abilities, language skills, and personal talents, are successfully mobilized and adapted to new circumstances, others, including professional qualifications, refined Russian linguistic competence, and specific cultural habits, often remain unactualized due to institutional, market, and household constraints. At the same time, women develop entirely new skills, ranging from Turkish cooking and household management to emotional self-regulation and intercultural communication, which become valuable resources in the host society. Importantly, symbolic recognition from partners and their families frequently replaces broader public acknowledgment, reinforcing the private sphere as a key arena where cultural capital is validated.

Cultural capital, as demonstrated in these experiences, serves as the foundational layer for the accumulation or conversion into other forms of capital, particularly economic capital. Educational attainment, professional expertise, and transferable skills create the potential for economic integration, yet their realization depends on the interplay between structural opportunities, market conditions, and personal agency. The following section examines how this base of cultural resources interacts with and shapes the trajectories of women's economic capital in the Turkish context.

4.3. Transformation of Economic Capital

Economic capital is one of the central factors that determines not only a woman's level of material well-being, but also the degree of her involvement in decision making processes and her ability to influence her own life trajectory in the context of marriage migration (Merali, 2008). After migration, this resource undergoes significant

transformations. This section focuses on identifying the patterns of transformation of women's economic capital following their relocation to Turkey.

Some participants demonstrate stable trajectories of preserving their economic capital. This is made possible through the continuation of professional activity and adaptation to new labor market conditions. In other cases, economic dependency persists; however, it is the result of mutual agreements and is not accompanied by control or suppression. Women in such arrangements receive stable financial support, maintain access to resources and participate in their distribution. There are also hybrid models in which, despite the absence of personal income, women retain control over the allocation of family resources. Nevertheless, a number of interviews illustrate cases of pseudo autonomy, where a woman has access to resources, but is forced to comply with rigid consumption restrictions.

Particular attention should be paid to cases where migration is accompanied by a sharp loss of previous economic standing. Women who held managerial positions or owned successful businesses find themselves in conditions of legal and institutional isolation, compelled to close their projects, lose access to banking services or work informally. The most vulnerable forms of dependency appear in interviews that contain elements of economic abuse. Women lose access to money, are unable to manage their own income or face financial sanctions imposed by their partners.

Therefore, the transformation of economic capital among marriage migrants cannot be reduced to a simple dichotomy of dependence and independence. Ranging from stable autonomy to extreme forms of vulnerability, these trajectories reflect complex, multilayered and context specific forms of agency. Women develop strategies for the accumulation, redistribution and management of resources by relying on both individual and structural opportunities. Under conditions of patriarchal expectations and institutional barriers, economic subjectivity acquires a nonlinear, hybrid and situational character, which calls for a departure from binary categories and a careful analysis of the empirical data presented below.

4.3.1. Analysis of Pre-Migration Economic Capital of Participants

The interviews revealed that most women demonstrated solid financial independence prior to migration, which was expressed in the form of a stable income, ownership of property, savings, as well as a high level of education. The examples presented below illustrate the diversity of economic trajectories and have been grouped according to professional fields (see Table 3).

Table 3. Pre-Migration Employment of Participants by Professional Field

Sector	Name	Employment in Russia
Finance & Insurance	Vera	Financial sector
	Galina	Director of an insurance company
	Marina	Corporate Partnerships, Banking Sector
	Nadezhda	Accountant (Railcar Manufacturing)
Legal & Government / Public Health	Diana	Investigator, legal management roles
	Miroslava	Legal sector
	Tamara	Government Drug Supply Manager, Pharmacist
HR, Training & Consulting	Zinaida	HR Manager
	Sofia	HR Director (Retail Chain)
	Ulyana	Business Trainer (Sports Industry)
Education & Language Services	Inna	English tutor
	Taisiya	English Teacher and Tutor
	Karina	English Translator, teacher, and private tutor
	Zhanna	Freelance academic writing and Turkish tutor
Marketing, PR & Communications	Kristina	HR, events and advertising, SMM
	Tatyana	PR, Media Publications; Marketplace Clothing Retail
Sales & Retail (Commerce)	Lada	Trade sector, sales assistant
	Polina	Sales Manager
	Margarita	Retail Business Owner
IT & Customer/Tech Support	Evelina	Systems Analyst (IT)
	Daria	Technical Support Operator (Entertainment)
	Olesya	Call Center Consultant
Tourism & Hospitality	Larisa	Tourist Base Administrator
	Raisa	Seasonal work in tourism (Turkey/Thailand)
Manufacturing	Valeria	Entrepreneur (sewing production / manufacturing)
Creative & Design	Yana	Freelance Artist-Designer
Corporate / International Business	Alina	At Russian branch of US company
Other (Part-time)	Elvira	Part-time jobs

The analysis shows that almost all participants had solid professional backgrounds before migration, and only one woman did not have professional employment. Most worked in skilled and institutionalized fields such as finance, law, human resources and education, which typically provide regular income, career progression and professional networks. Others pursued entrepreneurial activities, private business ownership or freelance work, which indicates self-generated income and business acumen. Several respondents also reported the ability to accumulate savings and to make significant purchases and investments, including property and cars, which further evidences the presence of pre-migration economic capital.

These findings challenge portrayals of women migrants as primarily motivated by material dependence or the search for provision (Deniz and Özgür, 2013). On the contrary, many had already established careers, managed their own businesses or developed specialized expertise, and approached migration from a position of agency rather than dependency.

Therefore, the economic capital of the participants should not be viewed as a pre-migration deficit category, but as a resource that undergoes transformation in the context of patriarchal migration. This capital does not disappear, it may lose direct convertibility in the host labor market, or acquire new forms by being reconfigured into cultural, social or symbolic capital within new cultural and institutional structures.

4.3.2. Transformation of Economic Capital After Migration

The analysis of post migration experiences of the participants shows that the initially accumulated economic capital underwent a complex and multi layered transformation. Its trajectory depends on legal status, employment opportunities, intra family arrangements, language proficiency and local gender norms. Despite having stable professional positions prior to migration, only a few participants were able to fully maintain or reproduce their economic autonomy after relocation.

1. **Preservation of Economic Autonomy**

A small group of participants retained the possibility of earning an income after relocation by continuing to work in their previous professional fields. This was

possible mainly in occupations that were transnationally flexible and could be carried out remotely, without reliance on Turkish labor legislation or formal local employment.

Vera continued her work for a Russian financial company, performing the same tasks as before migration, albeit with no opportunities for career advancement. Sofia kept her position as an HR director in the same company. Taisiya maintained her work as a private tutor with students in Europe and Russia, ensuring a stable personal income. Karina combined freelance translation with employment in the tourism sector, making her financially independent from her partner.

In most of these cases, women's income was supplemented by household arrangements in which their partners covered housing costs and utility bills, as well as other everyday expenses. As Sofia described: *"In our household my money is my money, his money is our money."* Karina's case stands out as the only one in which a woman retained full financial separation from her partner: *"I spend my own money, and he spends his."*

These cases show that preserving economic autonomy after migration is possible mainly in finance, private teaching, translation and other remote or flexible sectors. However, even for women able to continue working, such arrangements often come with limitations in career growth, lack of institutional protection and restricted access to social security in Turkey.

2. Women Who Started Employment in Turkey

Some participants managed to adapt to the conditions of the host society and establish new forms of professional activity, although this often required significant changes in their employment model and was accompanied by lower earnings than before migration. The range of strategies included formal and informal employment, private practice and attempts to rebuild previous businesses.

Several women found positions within the local or expatriate labour market. Elvira, after several months without work, became an assistant teacher in a Russian-language kindergarten and later opened a private psychology practice. Together with her partner

she keeps a joint budget, recording income and expenses in a spreadsheet. Svetlana began working as a private Turkish tutor, with earnings that cover her personal needs, while her husband provides financial support on a flexible basis when necessary.

Others transitioned to new roles that differed from their pre-migration careers. Marina, who had previously held a high-level banking position with a salary sufficient for complete financial independence, spent her first year in Turkey without employment, living on savings and her husband's support. She later took informal work as a florist, with an unstable income, and is currently supporting her husband during a period of his financial difficulty. Zinaida, who had worked in human resources and the diplomatic sector, now earns as a sworn translator and online teacher of Russian, but her income does not cover all personal expenses: *"Before I relocated and before I got married, I earned much more than I do now."*

Some women attempted to restore their pre-migration businesses. Valeria is trying to revive her sewing enterprise but faces obstacles: *"I have been an entrepreneur for 15 years… I thought I would be able to manage it remotely, but there are external factors that you cannot control. If I had known that things would turn out this way I would never have moved to Turkey. Now I am studying Turkish legislation…"*

Overall, the possibility of building or restoring economic capital in Turkey was significantly constrained by structural and bureaucratic barriers. Many participants emphasized that they could not work at all due to complex administrative procedures, employer reluctance to engage with these processes, and limited information on legal employment pathways. As a result, women's economic activity was most often concentrated in "grey" spheres, involving informal or semi-formal work, while formal employment remained rare.

Such cases of entrepreneurial activity do exist beyond this study. During my fieldwork for a migration studies class at ODTÜ, I observed such local businesses in Alanya, particularly shops and beauty salons. Similar examples can also be found in Antalya and Istanbul. In addition, there are women engaged in online-related businesses that are not tied to their physical location but are primarily concentrated in Antalya, Alanya, Istanbul and Ankara. These businesses often target Russian-speaking audiences and

operate within Russian legal frameworks rather than under Turkish regulations. While such strategies have allowed women to work transnationally, recent tightening of requirements for social media–based entrepreneurship in both Russia and Turkey may significantly limit these income opportunities in the future. Nevertheless, no such entrepreneurs were represented in the current sample, making this a point for further research.

3. Transition to Financial Provision

For a considerable number of participants, migration involved leaving previous employment and shifting to a model in which financial needs were covered entirely or primarily by a partner. This transition was shaped not only by household agreements but also by structural barriers, particularly legal restrictions on foreign women's access to the labour market. The lack of citizenship, separate and complex work permit procedures, and employer reluctance to engage in bureaucratic processes significantly reduced opportunities for formal employment. The cases below illustrate the variety of scenarios and outcomes of financial provision.

a. Financial provision constrained by bureaucratic barriers

For a considerable number of participants, migration involved leaving previous employment and shifting to a model in which financial needs were covered entirely or primarily by a partner. This transition was shaped not only by household agreements, but also by structural barriers, particularly legal restrictions on foreign women's access to the labour market. The lack of citizenship, separate and complex work permit procedures, and employer reluctance to engage in bureaucratic processes significantly reduced opportunities for formal employment.

Several women described how these constraints led to full financial provision. Evelina, for example, made repeated attempts to find work but was unsuccessful: *"I do not work, I have a residence permit based on marriage, but a work permit is separate — very few people want to deal with that."* She is now fully supported by her partner, who gave her a bank card for unrestricted use. Ulyana, a former business coach in Moscow, does not work officially in Turkey because of bureaucratic restrictions, taking only occasional private clients, and from the outset was given a bank card with

unlimited access to her husband's funds. Olesya, holding a family residence permit without work authorisation, also does not work and has her expenses fully covered by her husband; she plans to enrol in a Turkish university as a long-term strategy.

Others managed to enter the labour market but could not sustain continuous employment due to systemic obstacles. Darya found work as a manicurist within six months of migration, yet employers refused to apply for a work permit. At the time of the interview, she was on maternity leave and fully supported by her partner. Nadezhda, unable to continue in accounting because of the need for a local qualification, worked seasonally in hotels in Bodrum before stopping due to pregnancy. Miroslava, who initially continued her legal work online, lost this source of income after one year because of restrictions on Russian bank card transactions, becoming entirely reliant on her husband, an example of how geopolitical and technical barriers can abruptly end a migrant woman's economic autonomy.

These cases indicate that bureaucratic barriers significantly limit women's opportunities to access the Turkish labour market and make existing income sources more vulnerable. While this shift often entails a move from strong pre-migration economic capital to full financial provision by a partner, the women in this group generally do not frame such arrangements as problematic. For some, this model is accepted as a pragmatic and stable household strategy, even though it does not provide a clear pathway to regaining independent economic autonomy

b. Accepted model of financial provision

For some participants, migration was accompanied by a conscious transition to full financial support from a partner, accepted as a stable and satisfactory arrangement. In these cases, the shift was not framed as a loss or a problem but as a mutually agreed household strategy, often allowing women to focus on other spheres of life while their partners assumed responsibility for all essential expenses.

Several women described a complete withdrawal from the labour market without any expressed desire to re-enter it. Diana, for instance, left a successful and well-paid career in Moscow state institutions and now states simply: *"I do not work. My husband provides for me completely. I do not need money."* Similarly, Kristina, who briefly

worked in the Turkish tourism sector, was fully provided for by her husband at the time of the interview while living between two countries.

Other cases combined temporary or discontinued employment with full provision. Larisa initially worked in pavyons in "consumption" roles, deliberately avoiding unreliable employers in favour of formal contracts. Her last employer became her husband, and she now receives a fixed daily allowance, indexed to inflation, in addition to having all major living costs covered. Polina, 14 weeks pregnant at the time of the interview, was looking for online earning opportunities, but her husband currently covers all expenses and provides her with unrestricted use of a bank card.

In some situations, women retained forms of financial agency despite full provision. Margarita, for example, uses her husband's credit card freely, yet notes: *"I manage the budget; my husband has problems with financial literacy."* Her experience illustrates a shift from complete independence to formal provision, with continued influence over financial decision-making.

These examples suggest that, for this group, the transition to financial provision reflects an accepted and strategically managed household model rather than an unwanted dependency. While it entails a reconfiguration of pre-migration economic capital, the arrangement is viewed positively, providing security and stability. At the same time, it shows that financial autonomy can take different forms, including decision-making power and budgetary control, even in the absence of personal income.

c. Financial Provision with Elements of Control

Several participants described financial provision arrangements that, while covering all essential expenses, included implicit or explicit limits on spending. Such limits could take the form of a fixed monthly transfer, a "wife's salary," or the use of a bank card with an unspoken spending threshold. These arrangements varied from household to household, from regular salary-like payments to flexible or irregular transfers, from debit cards with fixed amounts to credit cards paid off by the partner, yet they shared an underlying feature of conditional access to funds.

Raisa, for instance, stopped working after marriage due to pregnancy and childcare, and is fully supported by her husband. She has a card for everyday purchases but notes: *"I know that on average I spend 40 thousand. If I spend more, he will say 'no, no.'"* Olesya and Zinaida also mentioned informal spending caps, where the amount available is shaped by their partner's income, current household expenses and other contextual factors.

Such spending limits, whether formalized or understood implicitly, are influenced by a combination of factors largely outside the woman's control: the partner's earnings, inflation, seasonal fluctuations in household income, major family expenditures, and the partner's approach to financial management. Even in cases where access to a card is described as "unrestricted," the absence of a guaranteed fixed amount creates a degree of uncertainty.

These examples show that financial provision, even when generous and covering all needs, can involve structural boundaries that define the scope of women's decision-making over resources. The diversity of arrangements in the sample, from monthly fixed sums to variable transfers, highlights the importance of examining not only the presence of financial support, but also the terms under which it is made available.

d. Financial dependency and forms of vulnerability

The women in this group illustrate how financial dependence in the migration context can take multiple and often restrictive forms. Here, vulnerability is not simply the absence of personal income, but the result of a combination of structural barriers, relationship power imbalances and, in many cases, deliberate economic control exercised by a partner. These situations emerge at the intersection of household arrangements, cultural expectations and personal agency, creating complex dynamics of provision and restriction.

A particularly noteworthy case is Alina, who after relocation completely left a successful career by mutual agreement with her husband: *"Why get married if you are going to work?"* Her husband gave her money *"for household needs,"* but at the same time restricted her financial autonomy: expenses were monitored, and access to the family budget was non-transparent. As the participant explains, *"He took out loans*

behind my back… because of that I did not take Turkish citizenship." Her decision to refuse citizenship, despite living in Turkey for ten years, can be interpreted as a strategic move: it functioned not only as a form of self-protection, but also as a way to avoid liability for her husband's debts. Yet the extent of this strategizing remains open to question, since it is unclear whether the decision was based on professional advice or on general reasoning. This reflects a broader pattern from the interviews: many women reported making significant choices on the basis of common-sense judgments rather than consulting experts, with only a few participants highlighting how their legal training helped them to navigate bureaucratic procedures (Bretell, 2017; Puri et al., 2011).

Before migration, Galina had a high level of financial independence: three university degrees, a position as director of an insurance company, and ownership of two apartments, one of which she rented out. After relocation, however, her economic capital became severely constrained. At first, as she recalls, *"I did not have any money in my hands at all."* During the period of her husband's financial stability, she could enjoy a high standard of living and travel, but for about a year, as the couple approached divorce, her access to resources was blocked: *"He is suffocating me… right before the divorce he closed my credit card and took away my car. I am just telling you - it is very hard. I cried for two days, lay there, and then prayed."*Thıs case clearly illustrates that when women do not accumulate economic capital, specifically savings, during marriage, they often lack a financial safety net in the case of divorce. Unlike in some cultural contexts where institutions such as mahr or bride price provide women with at least a form of guaranteed resource, Russian marriage traditions have not cultivated this practice. While in pre-Soviet times dowries (pridanoe) and bride price (kalym) were common, these were transactions between families rather than resources directly controlled by women. The Soviet system, by eliminating such customs and promoting an ideology of egalitarian marriage, further eroded the expectation that women should secure independent savings. As a result, many Russian women enter and leave marriages without the habit, or even the cultural imagination, of building personal financial savings.

Before relocation, Yana had an art education and financial independence. After migration, her husband was unemployed, and the finances were controlled by his family. Only after a year did Yana begin to earn an income by conducting art workshops. At the same time, she experienced manipulative behavior from her husband that limited her professional opportunities. Over time Yana partially restored her financial autonomy by creating design work on commission. This income became a tool that allowed her to accumulate savings, leave the marriage and file for divorce. The case of Yana is particularly illustrative, as she was able, despite conditions of psychological and physical abuse, to gather the strength to build economic capital, find income, and rely on this resource as the most tangible means of leaving a toxic relationship. This example highlights why many researchers (Abraham, 2000; Merali, 2008) emphasize the risks faced by women who enter marriage without employment or independent income, as financial dependence may increase vulnerability to domestic violence. While such outcomes do not occur in every case, these instances underscore the importance of women's awareness of potential risks and the necessity of maintaining access to resources that can safeguard their autonomy and security.

Overall, these cases indicate that financial provision is frequently associated with a reduction of decision-making power and heightened vulnerability, yet it does not eliminate strategic action. Women adapt by using legal choices such as refusing citizenship to avoid exposure to a partner's debts, by postponing career re entry until conditions improve, and by deploying micro strategies to rebuild savings and exit controlling relationships. Dependency, in this material, is less about willingness to work and more about the interaction of structural barriers, partner behaviour and women's efforts to protect and eventually restore their autonomy.

e. Transformation into Other Forms of Capital

Some participants who were deprived of the opportunity to reproduce their previous economic capital directly, transformed it into other types of resources — cultural and social capital.

Tatyana had worked in the field of public relations and simultaneously managed an online clothing business prior to migration. She fully supported herself and led an

independent life. After migration, Tatyana no longer has formal employment; she runs a blog and assists her husband with his two companies (in the fields of automotive services and artificial intelligence) by handling design tasks, social media and website management. Despite full financial provision from her husband and access to a bank card, Tatyana experiences a sense of unfulfillment and struggles with the absence of her own career. Her case demonstrates how economic capital may be transformed into invisible labor and expressed in the form of cultural and social capital. Although she has lost formal status, she maintains active participation in professional activities.

Tamara has a university degree in medicine and is trained as a pharmacist. Before migration she worked in a state institution as well as in a pharmacy in Moscow. In Turkey she is not formally employed. Her educational background became particularly significant in her maternal strategy: having a child with developmental differences, Tamara was able to recognize the signs at an early stage and initiate timely rehabilitation measures in Turkey. Thus, her economic capital has been transformed into cultural and social capital, providing critical resources in a key family situation.

Before relocation, Inna worked as an English teacher in a private language school, and her income was sufficient for an independent life. In Turkey she uses her education and extensive international experience to run a blog on how to combine career and family life in Turkey and also aspires to work for the United Nations.

Zhanna is a young mother raising two small children while also helping her husband with his online educational project. She develops study guides for learning Turkish and uses her background in management to contribute to the project through social media. Full financial responsibility in the family lies with her husband: *"I hope life will not force me to work."* Zhanna has transformed her economic capital into cultural and social capital, engaging in invisible work, but doing so with enjoyment.

In these cases, economic capital does not disappear but is transformed into cultural or social capital. These women find alternative ways to realize their skills and maintain agency through blogging, participation in family business and maternal strategies. These forms allow them to preserve a sense of agency and regain a feeling of significance in the new social reality.

Despite the fact that the economic capital accumulated prior to migration in most cases underwent significant transformation, particularly in terms of professional self-realization and the loss of an independent income, it cannot be described as disappearing completely or leading to a deterioration in the participants' overall economic position. Women often view financial provision by a partner as an acceptable or even desirable arrangement.

Many emphasize that they retain freedom in managing resources, are relieved from paying major household expenses, and can direct available funds toward future self-realization such as education, employment or entrepreneurship. In this sense, the partner's income frequently substitutes the woman's lost earnings and serves as a stable source for both essential and personal needs. Some cases, however, reveal economic control or spending restrictions. Even in such situations, women employ strategies of adaptation, distancing or compensation through legal decisions, savings or investments in other forms of capital. Overall, financial provision in the migration context is not inherently equivalent to economic vulnerability. Participants show adaptability, make use of the partner's resources as part of shared household capital, and often report an improved standard of living and reduced burden compared to providing solely for themselves.

4.4. Transformation of Symbolic Capital

Symbolic capital, in Pierre Bourdieu's theory, is the sum of recognition, respect, and legitimacy, forming an integral part of social position and playing a key role in women's adaptation to new living conditions. This study examines how symbolic capital is gained or lost, identifying the mechanisms through which women encounter recognition or, conversely, its absence. The section focuses on the Turkish social environment in which symbolic capital is formed and transformed, with occasional parallels to women's experiences in Russia, and considers how manifestations of respect, bias, and discrimination shape women's standing in the host society.

4.4.1. Sources of Respect and a Sense of Value

In this study, women's symbolic capital is primarily generated in the intimate sphere, within couples and immediate kin networks, through everyday practices of

recognition. Empirically, such recognition is expressed in respect for personal boundaries and private space, attention to women's opinions (seeking advice, acknowledging contributions), and practical support.

A recurrent mechanism is that recognition is performed through actions rather than declarations. As Diana puts it: *"For me, actions are what matter. You can say whatever you want, but if nothing is done, I will not believe it."* Polina gives a concrete example of care work redistributed in times of need: *"Even when I have a migraine, he cooks, cleans, and tells me: 'Sleep, lie down, rest.'"* These accounts indicate that the felt value of the self is anchored in routine, materially verifiable gestures.

Another salient mechanism is public affirmation within the husband's family, where a partner actively positions the woman as worthy of respect. Miroslava recalls how her husband defended her in front of his relatives: *"He says: you may love her or not, but respect is not up for discussion."* In this way, private loyalty is converted into recognized status in the wider kin environment. For some, this consolidation of standing translates into a qualitatively new sense of marital belonging. As Ulyana notes, only in Turkey did she feel "married" in the full sense, *protected, cared for, and respected*.

Taken together, these narratives show that, in the Turkish context, symbolic capital is most often accumulated at the micro level and validated by specific, repeated practices such as care, protection, and emotional involvement, rather than by verbal assurances or formal titles. While women's status may be more vulnerable in public or institutional arenas, the family and close relationships function as the primary site where recognition is produced, stabilized, and converted into a durable sense of value.

4.4.2. Differences in the Perception of Respect and Recognition between Russia and Turkey

Most participants emphasize that migration changes the mechanisms through which respect and recognition are obtained. In the Russian context, esteem is commonly tied to personal achievement, professional status, and public visibility. In the Turkish context, recognition more often depends on a woman's embeddedness in the family system and her conformity to expectations associated with the role of a wife.

Several narratives illustrate this contrast vividly. Inna observes a shift from publicly validated contribution to domestically defined value: *"In Russia, you are valued for your contribution, in Turkey, for being a good wife."* Margarita similarly notes that, in Russia, respect is frequently conditional on social or economic standing: *"In Russia, you need to be somebody for people to treat you with respect, even your own relatives."* Kristina offers a metaphor that resonated with many participants: *"In Russia, recognition is a race. In Turkey, it is tea with a friend by the sea."* This "race" in Russia means constant pressure to succeed and meet multiple high expectations simultaneously, like, by the age of 25, you have to "have five children, three businesses, be married, maintain an ideal appearance, and invest time in beauty salons and gyms"[30]. This image is actively promoted in Russian social media by successful lifestyle bloggers and creates a constant sense of inadequacy among women, reinforcing the belief that they are never productive or accomplished enough. For many migrants, encountering the Turkish approach became a moment of shock and even stress, the realization that one can live without chasing, or, without that what they call in Russia, *"uspešnyj uspekh"* ("successful success"), and simply enjoy life.

Valeria's story illustrates how migration can disrupt established channels of symbolic capital. *"In Russia I was Valeria Alexandrovna, I had a business. Here I am nobody."* In Russia, the use of a patronymic is a verbal marker of professional respect and acknowledged social position. In Turkey, she feels unable to fully realize herself in business and, as a result, perceives a lack of respect. Here it is important to note that in Russian conversational practice strangers are traditionally addressed formally, using the respectful pronoun *vy* — which in English has no direct equivalent (You) but in Turkish corresponds to *siz* — and, where appropriate, full name or name-patronymic. In Turkey, strangers often use *sen* (you), which in Russian norms can be perceived as overly familiar. It is therefore unsurprising that migrants may experience a sense of

[30] This phrase does not derive from a specific textual source, yet it recurs persistently in women's conversations, particularly among those who have passed a certain age threshold and experience a sense of crisis. Over the past decade I have repeatedly observed how this discourse is reproduced: first in my own experience, then among friends who were five to eight years younger, and now among those who are about ten years younger. The phrase circulates almost like a "bad joke," constantly invoked and widely shared among women, reflecting the normalization of these age-related anxieties in everyday talk.

discomfort or dissonance when addressed in this more informal way, as it can feel less respectful than what they are accustomed to.

Daria's case highlights differences in behavioral expectations. During a visit with friends, one of her husband's acquaintances provoked her into a political discussion. Daria responded directly, which created tension in the conversation. Her husband then asked her to remain silent to prevent further escalation. This reaction was puzzling for her: *"In Russia you are respected for being able to stand up for your opinion."* For Daria, this episode revealed a fundamental difference: while in Russia symbolic standing may rest on defending one's position through open argument, in Turkey value is often attached to maintaining harmony and avoiding confrontation.

At the same time, some participants reported experiencing greater respect in Turkey than in Russia. They associated this with the absence of a competitive "race" for success, a slower pace of life, greater attentiveness within the immediate environment, and sustained support from husbands and their families. Migration thus reconfigures dominant modes of recognition: esteem tends to shift from institutional and career-oriented forms toward domestic and family-centered ones. As a result, women's symbolic capital becomes increasingly defined by integration into close social circles and by the ability to meet locally salient expectations, which requires reworking familiar modes of self-realization and communication.

4.4.3. Attitudes toward Russian Women in Turkey

Many women note that Turkish society in general displays a polite interest toward them, but the spectrum of how this interest is experienced is very wide: from a sense of complete devaluation and distance to feelings of deep respect, ease, and even enjoyment of social contact. Such interest, according to them, is often explained by the specifics of "Slavic appearance," which makes women more noticeable and, to some extent, sets them apart from the local environment.

The data show that the attitude of the husband and that of his family and social circle toward a woman do not always coincide. Positive treatment from the husband does not guarantee similar respect from his relatives and friends. Conversely, conflicts or a breakdown of trust within the couple almost inevitably lead to the withdrawal of

support from the husband's family and to the severing of social connections with the Turkish environment.

In addition, the material collected demonstrates that the overwhelming majority of women do not encounter systematic disrespect or discrimination on a regular basis. Such episodes are generally isolated, but they are extremely painful and emotionally significant for women because they are rooted in deep cultural and social dynamics, which will be discussed later.

The experience of interaction with Turkish society among respondents is heterogeneous and strongly depends on the specific social circle and on the quality of the relationship within the couple. For women, the key mediator remains the husband: his position can either strengthen or, on the contrary, undermine their symbolic capital in the eyes of his family and social network. The interest shown by the wider society is often superficial and may become a source of both easy inclusion and latent vulnerability.

4.4.4. Experiences of Bias and Stereotypical Attitudes

Almost all respondents reported facing bias, most commonly in the form of ethnic and gender stereotypes. Diana described how, during a hospital visit, she filled out a medical form stating that she neither smoked nor consumed alcohol; the doctor refused to believe the information and remarked: *"You are Russian, which means you drink and smoke."* For Diana, it was a profound surprise that an educated professional could hold such ethnic prejudices. This episode shows how, even in institutional settings where neutrality and trust should prevail, bias can undermine a woman's credibility and position her as an outsider who must justify her honesty.

Many women also noted that their husbands comment on their emotional expressions, particularly on whether and how they smile. Most participants reported that their partners, in one way or another, offered remarks or recommendations about smiling, sometimes encouraging them to smile more because it is *"pleasant for men"*, and sometimes warning them to avoid smiling at strangers. In Taisia's case, her husband explicitly advised her not to smile at unfamiliar men in tourist cities, explaining: *"They think if you smile at them, you already want to sleep with them."* Even Svetlana shared:

"They say I don't look Russian. I smile too much." These examples point to a persistent stereotype of *"cold Russians"* in Turkish society, a discourse that I observe on an everyday basis in my personal Instagram blog.

Another layer of bias revealed in the interviews concerns the lack of emotional empathy from partners and their social circles, particularly in critical situations. For example, Raisa, who smiled frequently during my interview, nonetheless repeatedly hears from her in-laws: *"You look dissatisfied, which means you do not love us."* She hears these comments in the context of repeated infidelity by her husband, with his family taking his side and not supporting her. Such remarks attempt to control her emotions and demand that she appears content with her role, regardless of the circumstances, which approaches the threshold of psychological abuse.

Stereotypes and prejudice in Turkish society manifest themselves both in formal institutions and in everyday interactions, shaping the emotional climate of marital relationships. They not only undermine trust in women but also create a constant background of control over their behavior, expressions of emotion, and appearance. Ethnic clichés thus become a structural factor influencing symbolic capital in both public and intimate spheres.

4.4.5. Experiences of Discrimination Based on Nationality or Gender

Accounts of discrimination shared by participants often centered on interactions with official institutions, where women faced overt bias, bureaucratic arbitrariness, and a noticeable dependence of their treatment on the presence of their husband.

Evelina's case illustrates how institutional practices can intertwine nationality and gender in discriminatory ways. When she attempted to open a bank account, the employee responded: *"Are you from Russia? We do not open accounts for Russian women, just as we do not for Afghans or Syrians."* Evelina expressed indignation that Russia, in her view a large and politically significant country, was placed on the same level as Afghanistan and Syria in this context. She perceived this as a direct act of discrimination not only against her personally, but also against her as a representative of her country. This episode left her deeply dissatisfied with the bank's policy toward Russians in general and herself in particular.

The most prominent setting where women reported experiencing discrimination was the migration office. The majority of respondents indicated that visits to this institution were marked by rudeness, neglect, and unequal treatment. Nadezhda described a situation where a Syrian woman in line before her was granted a three-year residence permit, whereas she, as a Russian citizen, received only one year. When she directly asked the employee why this happened, she was told openly and without hesitation: *"You are Russian, and your marriage might be fake."* She expressed confusion and frustration at why she was suspected of marrying a Turkish man for unclear privileges, while a Syrian woman was not subjected to such suspicion. In her view, this reflected not merely individual disrespect but a systemic form of discrimination, embedded in what she perceived as a gatekeeping policy (Pellander, 2015) that favored Syrian applicants over Russian ones.

Tatiana also recalled a particularly disempowering encounter. At the migration office, the staff member asked her whether she spoke Turkish. When she answered *"No,"* the employee nonetheless continued to speak only in Turkish. Tatiana reported feeling lost, unable to understand or participate in the process, and questioned the rationale of asking about language proficiency if no accommodation was to follow. She further described being led to have her fingerprints taken, noting that the process was unexpectedly painful. This experience made her feel as though she was being treated as an undeserving individual with no legitimate right to be there. Such situations raise broader questions among many participants about the absence of foreign-language services in migration offices and the disregard for effective communication with non-Turkish speakers.

Many women emphasized that visiting the migration office accompanied by their husband transformed the interaction entirely. Staff members tended to be more polite, procedures proceeded more smoothly, and, in most cases, the husband handled communication directly. Marina's account reflects a view shared by numerous respondents: *"At the migration office they are rude, but if I am with my husband, everything is perfect."* This reliance on male accompaniment reinforces gendered hierarchies and signals that a woman's institutional legitimacy is mediated through her marital status and male partner's presence.

Experiences of discrimination were not limited to state institutions. Zinaida recounted a consistent pattern of disrespect in her workplace, at banks, in hospitals, and on public transport. She was once accused of *"trying to assert her rights"* in Turkish, accompanied by reminders that she was *"not a Turkish woman."* She also reported being insulted with the term *"gâvur,"* a derogatory label for non-Muslims.

Although direct verbal hostility from neighbors or strangers was less frequent, when it occurred it left a lasting emotional impact. Sofia remembered a neighbor shouting at her: *"Russian dog, go back to your country."* Tatiana shared that she had heard comments such as *"Ah, you all come to Antalya just for men."* She found the remark both misplaced and illogical, as she lives in Istanbul and did not initiate the relationship with her husband. This pattern of stereotyping resonates with observations from my own experience as a blogger, where, despite publicly living in Ankara, I have also received similar comments from Turkish people suggesting that all Russian women move to Antalya for romantic purposes. Such statements appear to carry an accusatory tone, as if local men in certain cities are seen as a kind of *"trophy,"* regardless of individual circumstances.

Overall, these accounts demonstrate that, in the Turkish context, the symbolic capital of a foreign woman is especially vulnerable to institutionalized inequality. Her legitimacy, rights, and social value are frequently contingent upon male accompaniment or her willingness to tolerate formalized discrimination. Institutional barriers and bias undermine symbolic capital accumulated in personal and professional domains, as competence and achievements are overshadowed by dependency on a male figure. This persistent vulnerability contributes to a diminished sense of social legitimacy and deepens inequalities between local and foreign women.

4.4.6. Experiences of Disrespect and Violence in Turkey

In the Turkish context, migrant women encounter a spectrum of disrespect that spans both institutional and everyday settings, eroding their sense of legitimacy and symbolic capital. In state institutions, this often manifests through bureaucratic procedures marked by neglect, demonstrative rudeness, and physical or verbal aggression. In

everyday interactions, it appears as verbal attacks, invasions of personal boundaries, and subtle, culturally embedded practices that normalize the devaluation of women.

Some cases reveal direct, physical forms of disrespect. Margarita, for instance, was pushed while standing in a queue, while Inna experienced physical harassment on a bus, when a man grabbed her despite the presence of her husband. Such incidents, although seemingly isolated, create a persistent sense of vulnerability and diminish women's trust in public safety.

Other forms of disrespect are more culturally mediated, arising from mismatched communication codes and differing social norms. Alina captures her sense of cultural otherness in the striking comparison: *"For us, 2×2 equals 4, for them—it equals 5. They have no logic. I felt like a little animal."* Her account shows how the loss of symbolic capital often begins with the recognition of being "different." Only after divorcing her husband and returning to Russia did she feel her value restored. Vera's experiences further illustrate how cultural codes can normalize boundary violations. She recalls: *"A woman said to my husband: 'Why is your wife so şişko [fat]?' And they are not even ashamed—they do not understand that this is unacceptable."* For her, the comment, made publicly in front of her husband, reflected a cultural environment in which a woman's body is a legitimate subject for open evaluation.

Religious or cultural markers can also attract additional disrespect. Zhanna, who is a veiled woman, notes that she is sometimes perceived as "narrow-minded," yet when she mentioned her education in a state institution, *"their attitude changed immediately."* In public spaces, however, she faced hostility: children poured water on her while shouting, *"Go back to Russia,"* and a man insulted her at an intersection. These examples show how visible identity markers can intensify vulnerability to public disrespect.

Disrespect can also extend to children. Tamara described severe ethnic bullying of her daughter at school, which was halted only after the administration intervened. Beyond explicit hostility, subtler forms emerge in social relations, particularly in cases where women feel exploited by their husband's relatives or friends, asked for assistance but

left unsupported in times of personal need. Such imbalances gradually erode trust toward the Turkish social circle.

The case of Yana is particularly striking. In Turkey, she felt neither respect nor recognition. Her husband's family constantly expressed toxic expectations, made comparisons with Turkish women, and voiced accusations: *"If you are Russian, it means you are a bad mother."* From her husband, she faced insults, devaluation, and prohibitions on expressing her own opinion. *"My mother-in-law used to say: 'A Turkish woman would silently endure everything, but you complain all the time,'"* she recounts, describing her husband's repeated infidelities. This case demonstrates how migration can destroy a woman's symbolic capital in conditions of toxic control and pressure. At the same time, Yana's experience shows that leaving such a context and breaking away from a violent environment makes it possible, gradually, to regain lost status and a sense of personal value.

Open disrespect manifests itself both in institutional and in everyday environments. It ranges from physical and verbal abuse to intrusions into personal space and subtle forms of pressure from those around them. These practices undermine the symbolic capital of women, creating a sense of vulnerability and dependence on the social norms and expectations of the host society. At the same time, the experience of some respondents shows that a conscious withdrawal from toxic contexts allows them, step by step, to restore their respect and legitimacy.

The analysis has shown that the symbolic capital of women in the context of marriage migration undergoes a profound transformation. Moving from the Russian to the Turkish social environment leads to the loss of previous forms of recognition and respect based on professional achievements, social status, and individual competences, and to a reorientation toward new sources of capital, family roles and recognition within close local communities. Women note that after migration, their status and social visibility become more dependent on the husband and his social circle: many experience devaluation, a decline in public recognition, and symbolic "invisibility."

At the same time, significant shifts occur in the structure of symbolic capital. Its core becomes not formal reputation and achievements, but recognition within the family

and the micro-community, which requires women to adapt to patriarchal norms, to master relationship-building, and to accept the rules of the host society. This transition is accompanied by a loss of previous confidence, but it can be compensated for by emotional support and integration into local networks.

Despite the risk of losing earlier forms of symbolic capital, the experience of respondents demonstrates that in a migration context its new configuration is possible. Whereas the Russian context is associated with competition and high demands, the Turkish environment provides the possibility of gaining recognition through the role of a wife, participation in family relationships, and the development of stable networks of trust. Thus, marriage migration not only dismantles previous mechanisms of symbolic capital but also initiates the process of its transformation into new forms, where the primary source becomes the intimate, family, and local sphere.

4.5. Transformation of Social Capital

In the context of migration, social capital is understood as the totality of connections, resources, and forms of trust that provide support, access to information, and opportunities for adaptation in the host society (Ryan, 2007; Ryan et al., 2008). For Russian-speaking women who moved to Turkey through marriage migration, this capital often became a crucial resource for survival, integration, and resilience in a new cultural environment. The following analysis explores how this social capital is reshaped in the migration process, focusing on the ways women interact with Turkish and Russian-speaking circles, the ease or difficulty of forming friendships, the kinds of support they rely on, the role of family and friends in their lives, how they spend time with social contacts, and the constraints that limit their social engagement.

4.5.1. Shortage of Social Interaction

A marked shortage of social interaction was reported by the majority of participants, particularly in the first months after relocation. The loss of a familiar linguistic environment, friends, colleagues, family, coupled with the rupture of established connections created an acute deficit of everyday communication. Almost all women mentioned this challenge, although the reasons and circumstances varied.

In some cases, the city of residence itself shaped this experience. For example, moving to medium-sized, non-touristic cities with no visible Russian-speaking community often reinforced the feeling of isolation. Galina, who settled in Bursa, recalls: *"For a whole year I thought I was the only Russian-speaking person in Bursa…"* At the time of her arrival, she did not realize that other Russian speakers had already been living there for years, and only later was she able to find acquaintances and friends. This shows that even in less popular destinations among Russian migrants, it is possible to find a community, but not without time and effort.

Sometimes, even active attempts to build connections did not bring the desired result. Vera, for instance, was going through a particularly stressful period due to tensions in her husband's family. Wanting to find companionship, she tried joining local Russian-speaking activities but found them alien to her interests: *"The first year was hell. The hardest one. There was a feeling of complete isolation. I went to all kinds of meditation sessions where you sing for 40 minutes. It is not my thing at all. But I went, just to belong somewhere."* Her account points to a mismatch between the available social spaces and personal preferences: while some women in migration turn to spiritual or esoteric practices such as meditation, tarot, or astrology, for Vera these were neither appealing nor helpful in her adaptation process.

For others, the shortage of communication was felt most acutely as a lack of expression in their native language. Diana explained: *"The first year and a half, that was the biggest problem… We do not speak enough. These thousands of words that a woman needs to say, we do not say them."* Her words illustrate how relying primarily on a partner and speaking a foreign language in daily life can leave emotional and expressive needs unmet. Similarly, Tatyana's experience highlights the limits of spousal communication for socialization: *"I was going crazy because my husband had friends, and I was home alone."* Even when marital relations were good, the husband's separate social life could leave a woman feeling isolated, especially during the fragile early stages of adaptation. For some, this shortage persisted for years. Margarita, who had been living in Turkey for three years at the time of the interview, stated plainly: *"Yes, I still experience [this shortage of interaction]."*

However, not all women reported such difficulties. For participants like Karina, Polina, Miroslava, Zinaida, Svetlana, and Lada, social integration was relatively smooth. Factors such as migrating with family or children, good knowledge of Turkish, active professional involvement, and strong communication skills helped them establish contacts quickly, whether with Turkish neighbors, colleagues, or fellow Russian speakers. In these cases, social capital began to form early, mitigating the sense of isolation common in the migration experience.

4.5.2. Communication with Turks

For most Russian-speaking marriage migrants, the main entry point into Turkish social circles is through their husbands' networks. These are most often his friends or relatives, and it is primarily through these connections that women begin to form ties with Turkish society. However, particularly in the early stages, these relationships can be challenging. As Marina explains, *"Contact with my husband's friends is not always easy because of the language barrier."*

The obstacles, however, are not limited to language. Cultural and value differences, contrasting communication styles, and unfamiliar social norms also play a role. As discussed in the section on cultural capital, differences in conversational codes between Russian and Turkish societies influence how women interpret interactions and how they themselves are perceived. For example, in Turkey it may be socially acceptable among women to discuss others in their absence. While this is not unique to Turkey, for some migrants it becomes a more sensitive and emotionally charged experience, shaping their perception of local relationships. Valeria captures this sentiment: *"They smile but talk behind your back. Everything inside me screams, I do not believe them."* This mistrust is echoed by others who feel that Turkish sociability can sometimes lack the depth they are used to. Evelina observes, *"They seem talkative, but it feels like they do not hear you. There is no depth,"* and Tatyana adds, *"All of their conversations are about cooking, cleaning, shopping, and that is all."*

Such differences in conversational topics and styles can reinforce the belief that close cross-cultural female friendship is unattainable. As Nadezhda puts it, *"I do not believe in Russian-Turkish female friendship. They are fake."* These impressions can also be

linked to the prominence of broad, surface-level connections in Turkey, which function as an important form of social capital but may seem unfamiliar to women from a more fragmented Russian social landscape.

When trust is damaged, the effects can be lasting. In Raisa's case, her personal circumstances, a husband who lies and cheats, and his friends who conceal this from her, led to a generalized mistrust: *"I know that you cannot trust anyone. No one."* Here, a negative personal experience has shaped her perception of Turkish society as a whole. Vera summarizes the complexity of these interactions by saying, *"We just speak different languages, and not only linguistically."* This points not only to the challenge of speaking Turkish, but also to navigating unspoken cultural codes, expectations, and preferred modes of conversation.

At the same time, there are examples of successful integration into Turkish networks. Kristina, for instance, quickly built friendly relations with her neighbors: *"Turkish women would come to my balcony to drink tea with me."* Svetlana emphasizes that isolation is not inevitable: *"You can remain socially isolated in Turkey only if you choose to."* Zinaida describes her interactions with Turkish friends as *"a great source of inspiration and learning."* Similarly, Inna has a close Turkish female friend, and Karina and Miroslava also report positive experiences, demonstrating that for women with strong language skills, cultural curiosity, and a willingness to engage, communication with Turks can become a source of enjoyment and mutual enrichment.

4.5.3. Communication with Russians and Support Systems

Communication with Russian speakers often functions as a primary support resource for migrant women and filling gaps in everyday care and information exchange (Hagan et al., 1996). Women actively create and sustain these spaces: some start chat groups themselves, as in Vera's case, while others use them to navigate motherhood and daily challenges, as Daria did. Within these circles, mutual aid can be explicit and material. Zinaida describes her community as follows, *"If a husband beats you or there is no money, then we help each other with whatever we can."* Collective initiatives can also become a way to belong and be seen, as Elvira recalls, *"We organized community clean-ups all over Antalya, television crews even came."*

At the same time, this resource is experienced ambivalently. Some women distance themselves from local Russian-speaking milieus because of perceived esotericism or superficiality. Valeria notes, *"Breathing with the womb, that is definitely not for me."* Others point to internal hierarchies, where longevity of residence shapes inclusion and exclusion. Nadezhda observes, *"Those who have lived here for a long time do not accept newcomers."* Ulyana rejects what she calls *"gossip"* and *"idle female talk,"* choosing not to engage with Russian women in Turkey at all. Everyday micro-encounters also illustrate boundary work within the diaspora: Tamara recounts hearing an unfamiliar Russian mother whisper to her child in a public place, *"Hush hush, they are speaking Russian, let us walk past."* As Portes (1998) argues, diaspora networks provide social capital yet are stratified by status and belonging, and newcomers can be perceived as outsiders even within co-ethnic spaces.

Network stability is further complicated by repeated or multi-stage internal migrations within Turkey. Women who had invested in friendships in one city sometimes moved again, leaving these ties behind, as in the cases of Larisa, Taisiya, Zhanna, and Nadezhda. Mobility thus interrupts nascent support systems and requires rebuilding them from scratch, often under time pressure and with limited channels.

Most participants report that communicating with Russians feels easier overall. They cite trust, a common language, shared interests and problems, and similar life trajectories. Larisa remarks that contact with Turkish women is harder, adding that *"with them the conversations are always only about money."* Still, experiences are not binary. Svetlana suggests that initial contact may be easier with Turks, yet deeper friendships tend to form with Russians, while Tamara concurs, *"It is easier with Russians. It is easy to get acquainted with both groups, but to form a real friendship, that is more with ours."* Some women de-emphasize ethnicity altogether. Olesya chooses friends by the principle of *"a good person,"* and Zhanna notes a religious-cultural nuance, *"It is easier for me with Russian Muslims, with Turkish women our mentalities are too different."* For others, the problem is not access but depth, as Evelina puts it, *"There are people, but there is not enough meaningful interaction."* Taken together, these accounts indicate that ethnicity is only one variable

among many, with age, religion, occupation, the presence of children, and the husband's social environment all shaping tie formation and durability.

Once these connections are in place, they frequently take the form of everyday leisure activities. These are usually informal and collective, such as walks, going to the beach, drinking tea at home or in cafés, attending workshops, picnics, or playing games. Karina humorously described her Turkish circle of acquaintances: *"We sit on a bench with the grandmothers, cracking sunflower seeds and drinking tea."* Daria explained how motherhood shaped her leisure, *"I found some girls with children and now we go for walks together. With a child it is easier to get out of the house."* Such activities are especially common among women with children, where shared routines and childcare create additional opportunities for bonding.

Transnational ties to Russia remain a parallel pillar of support. Most respondents maintain close communication with relatives and friends, with mothers especially prominent as sources of emotional and, at times, material assistance. Over time, some women experience a weakening of these channels as everyday routines re-center in Turkey, yet for many, these ties continue to buffer stress and provide guidance during crises.

When difficulties arise, almost all participants turn first to their husbands, or, in conflictual marriages, explicitly underline that they cannot. Mothers are usually the next point of contact, followed by female friends, neighbors, and Russian communities. Some seek professional help from Russian-speaking psychologists. Stable women's networks, such as those cultivated by Vera or Yana, often become reliable conduits for information, childcare swaps, and crisis response. The absence of such autonomous support is experienced as acute vulnerability. As Margarita and Nadezhda put it, *"If there is a conflict with the husband, there is no one to turn to."* This pattern underscores the importance of building support beyond spousal ties and highlights how co-ethnic networks can both enable and constrain access to care, information, and belonging.

4.5.4. Limitations of Social Interaction

A separate category consists of cases where isolation is not so much structural as imposed by external circumstances. For example, women on maternity leave experience a particular sense of social restriction. At the same time, there are restrictions imposed by husbands: for instance, Raisa heard from her husband: *"I do not like your friend, do not communicate with her."* Such an example of restricted access to social ties not only weakens social capital but also reproduces a patriarchal model of dependency.

A characteristic example is Alina: after migration she found herself in isolation. Her husband limited her contacts, controlled her movements, and the husband's relatives were unfriendly toward her. *"I was like Hürrem Sultan, only without the servants,"* she recalls ironically.

Yana, after migration, found herself in complete isolation: pregnancy, lockdown, living in someone else's house, and a lack of communication. At first, she did not notice the control exercised by her husband and his family, since during the coronavirus pandemic everyone was forcibly restricted in their social interactions. However, over time she realized that she had entered a situation of hyper-control, as well as psychological and physical violence on the part of her husband and his family. Gradually, Yana began to search for connections in online groups. The strongest support came from women who had experienced violence in the Facebook group *'We are against violence. Turkey'*—its members provided Yana with important instructions and contacts that enabled her to escape from her husband. At present, both Alina and Yana are divorced from their spouses and have made the decision to pursue education in psychology.

These cases illustrate how a husband's close circle may not only fail to become a resource of social support but may also represent a risk factor for psychological and physical violence under conditions of social isolation.

For the majority of respondents, migration was accompanied by a sharp reduction of their social ties, especially during the first months after relocation. The main causes of this were the language barrier, cultural gap, isolation within the family space, and

dependence on the partner's network. Against this background, women demonstrate a high degree of agency by reconstructing social capital through horizontal ties: digital platforms, women's communities, and cultural initiatives.

Alongside efforts to expand their networks, some participants prefer a strategy of selective communication, distancing themselves from diaspora circles. This indicates not a deficit of socialization, but a re-evaluation of forms of trust and the quality of social ties. In such cases, resilience is achieved not through the number of contacts, but through their depth and reliability.

Integration into Turkish society in most cases remains limited and fragmented. Contacts with the local environment are episodic or pragmatic, most often confined to the husband's friends or family circle. Nevertheless, some respondents demonstrate successful inclusion in local women's networks, which can be considered a form of sustainable adaptation.

Transnational ties with family and friends in Russia continue to play an important role, particularly in emotional and informational support (Levitt, 1998). However, in the context of migration, such ties become less regular and do not always compensate for the lack of a local network. In situations where neither previous nor new networks provide stable support, women find themselves in a vulnerable position, especially during family conflicts or crises.

Thus, the transformation of migrants' social capital in Turkey is a multilevel process that involves elements of loss, reconstruction, and adaptation. It depends on the initial volume of capital, personal resources, the degree of inclusion in partner and external networks, as well as the availability of formal and informal support. Resilience is possible both through the expansion of social ties and through their deliberate narrowing, provided there are trustworthy and stable contacts.

Social capital in the migrant context is largely formed on the basis of women's solidarity, digital infrastructure, and transnational ties. Its structure is heterogeneous: in some cases, it is flexible and supportive, while in others it is fragmented and vulnerable. For this reason, the creation and maintenance of social capital is not only

a condition for successful adaptation, but also a protective factor that affects the psychological and physical well-being of migrant women.

4.6. Concluding Synthesis on Capital Transformations

The analysis shows that cultural, economic, symbolic, and social capital function as relational resources whose value depends on the field in which they are mobilized. Migration redefines recognition and convertibility: assets valued in Russia can lose significance in Turkey, while new skills and forms of validation emerge. As section 4.1 indicated, migration trajectories are multi-causal and non-linear, producing equally diverse capital transformations.

Cultural capital travels unevenly. Transferable skills, organization, adaptability, foreign languages, remain useful, enabling everyday navigation and sometimes income generation. By contrast, formal qualifications in context-bound fields and refined Russian rhetorical competence often devalue due to legal barriers, market differences, or domestic restrictions. Adaptation requires acquiring new repertoires, from Turkish language and domestic skills to emotional self-regulation. Recognition of these resources shifts from public to private spheres, where validation comes mainly from partners or close kin. Cultural capital thus becomes the base for, or barrier to, economic reproduction, depending on work authorization, market fit, and household arrangements.

Economic capital follows four main trajectories: continuity through remote work; re-entry into local labor (often at lower pay/status); full provision as a mutually accepted strategy; and provision with control, which can create vulnerability. When direct earning stalls, economic resources are often converted into cultural or social capital, through invisible labor in family businesses, blogging, or caregiving, allowing women to retain agency in other registers. These trajectories are hybrid, with women moving between them over time according to legal status, family stage, and personal goals.

Symbolic capital shifts from public/professional recognition to intimate, family-based validation through care, respect for boundaries, and advocacy within kin networks. While this can provide stability, it is contingent on partner and family attitudes, and vulnerable to institutional disrespect, gendered mediation, and stereotyping.

Supportive relationships can protect or rebuild symbolic standing; toxic contexts can erode it, prompting some women to exit in order to restore dignity.

Social capital is initially depleted, leaving women dependent on husbands' networks. Over time, they reconstruct ties across two overlapping fields: Turkish networks, often broad but shallow, and Russian-speaking support systems, rich in mutual aid but sometimes marked by hierarchies or value mismatches. Mobility within Turkey can disrupt ties, leading many to prioritize selective, trust-based connections and to maintain transnational links as buffers during crises.

Overall, legal regimes and gender norms reshape the convertibility of capitals. Cultural resources enable economic integration only when structural conditions allow; stalled economic capital is redirected into cultural/social forms; symbolic recognition relocates to the intimate sphere; and social networks act as buffers, enabling adaptation or facilitating exit. These intertwined dynamics both reflect and subtly reshape patriarchal expectations, linking directly to the themes of the next chapter.

CHAPTER 5

CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY

5.1. Patriarchal Expectations and Gender Roles in Cross-border Marriages

The analysis of the interviews demonstrates that the experiences of Russian-speaking women in Turkish marriages are shaped by a persistent patriarchal field that structures not only the public sphere but also a wide range of everyday practices within family relations (Beechey, 1979; Walby, 1989; Bretell, 2017; Benstead, 2021). Patriarchal expectations manifest in the obligation for women to conform to a gendered role model: they are expected to be modest, emotionally gentle, responsible for domestic and reproductive work, and to show unconditional respect and deference to the hierarchy within the husband's family. At the same time, these expectations do not function as a homogeneous system. They vary in intensity and form – ranging from rigid, regulatory control to more flexible models that allow negotiation and revision.

Patriarchal norms in the cases studied are enacted in several interconnected domains: the disciplining of the body and behavior, the gendered distribution of domestic work and care, the woman's inclusion in the husband's extended family system, and the regulation of her personal autonomy. In all of these spheres, one can trace the reproduction of traditional gender hierarchies, but also individual strategies of contestation and transformation. The following subsections examine each domain in turn.

5.1.1. Control of the Body and Behavior

One of the key mechanisms supporting a patriarchal structure is the control over women's physical presence and visibility. Practices related to clothing, posture, gestures, and the regulation of public conduct become arenas where boundaries of

acceptability are enforced. A characteristic pattern in many accounts is a distinction between the requirements imposed on "one's own" women and on "outsiders." Alina, for example, compares herself to a Turkish-born sister-in-law when visiting her husband's relatives and notes that as a foreign woman she faced stricter rules there: *"His sister-in-law walks around in shorts — and for me, it has to be baggy trousers. Why?"* This illustrates an ethnically inflected selectivity of patriarchal norms: freedoms available to "insiders" are denied to those perceived as external figures to be controlled.

Control over appearance and conduct often extends to emotional expressiveness. In Margarita's account, there is a clear demand that a woman's display of feelings conform to traditional gendered expectations: *"As a woman, you should cry, not swear."* In this framework, a woman expressing anger is seen as violating the prescribed script, whereas tears are legitimized as the "proper" feminine reaction.

These mechanisms of control vary in severity. In more authoritarian models, restrictions are explicitly formulated. *"I am not allowed to dress openly or wear much makeup,"* Zinaida reports. In more hybrid arrangements, the pressure takes the form of suggestions or subtle hints. Sofia, for instance, describes: *"He cannot tell me, 'You will not wear this,' but he says: better not."* Thus, even where direct commands give way to gentler persuasion, control remains a significant factor shaping how women present themselves in public space.

5.1.2. Gendered Organization of Domestic Labor

A second dimension of patriarchal expectations appears in the construction of domestic labor and caregiving as a woman's "natural" duty. Across many interviews, there is a recurring logic that maintaining the home and preparing meals are unquestioned parts of the female role. The habitual merging of everyday domestic work with female identity is vividly expressed in Zinaida's words: *"Cooking, cleaning, economizing — these are all women's responsibilities. Men's responsibilities are to fix something if it breaks, and to earn money for food."* Such an outlook creates a clear asymmetry in obligations: the male role is defined in terms of protection and income, while the female role is defined by service within the home.

Some participants describe how their work inside the home remains invisible and devalued. Larisa recalls suggesting to her husband that they spend a few days at a hotel for a holiday, to which he replied, *"Why go to a hotel? We have an all-inclusive home."* She answered, *"Yes, you have all-inclusive — but I am the one who prepares everything."* This brief exchange captures a characteristic imbalance: domestic labor is taken for granted as part of the "natural order" rather than recognized as labor requiring effort and deserving appreciation.

At the same time, some women refuse to reproduce these norms uncritically and insist on redistributing responsibilities. Valeria, for example, openly resists the expected domestic script, saying *"Spare me from Turkish breakfasts. Thirty-five little plates? I do not want that,"* and she details how she taught her partner to participate in household tasks: *"I taught a Turk to clean balconies and iron, even though for 50 years he had never done it."* These examples show that despite strong normative pressure, women actively strive to construct a more balanced domestic arrangement. In doing so, they assert their agency by challenging traditional roles and involving their husbands in creating a shared domestic space.

5.1.3. The Husband's Family and Personal Boundaries

The interviews repeatedly emphasize that the most intense patriarchal pressure often comes from the extended family, which becomes an active agent in regulating a woman's life. The expected role of a wife is frequently defined by the ideal of a "humble bride" – a woman ready to accept her lower position in the hierarchy, serve guests, and remain continuously available to her husband's family. Inna's experience vividly illustrates this form of pressure. She recalls being told by her in-laws, *"You are our daughter now… we can come at any moment to our room in Istanbul."* Similarly, Vera describes unannounced visits from relatives as deeply disrespectful: *"They can come at any moment they want, they do not call, do not warn you, and for them it is normal… I had just finished work, and I was in shock."* These examples show how a woman's personal space can be treated as a shared zone for the entire family, effectively depriving her of privacy and autonomy.

In some cases, it is the family, rather than the husband, that imposes demands in matters of religion or culture. Daria, for instance, describes direct expectations from her husband's relatives: *"They still expect me to become Muslim… and cover myself."* Here, patriarchal norms are transmitted as collective family discipline, adding another layer of pressure on the woman. Yet the analysis also shows that women develop diverse strategies for dealing with these intrusions. Their responses range from open refusal and conflict to more covert avoidance tactics. Svetlana describes a crucial moment of support from her husband, who acted as a buffer against his family's interference: *"They would hand me veils and say: come on, cover yourself. But my husband immediately said: 'No. Stay out of it.'"* In such instances, the husband's intervention helps redraw boundaries and protect the wife's autonomy. Thus, the boundaries of a woman's personal freedom are not fixed; they are continuously negotiated within the familial sphere, and women actively seek to carve out and defend a private space even under extended family scrutiny.

Overall, the findings indicate that mothers-in-law often serve as enforcers of patriarchal norms in these transnational families. As senior women in a patrilineal household, they may initially wield considerable authority over the new daughter-in-law supervising her domestic performance, dictating "proper" behavior, and expecting deference to family hierarchy. In doing so, mothers-in-law help reproduce traditional gender arrangements, essentially upholding the same patriarchal rules from which they once benefitted. However, this power is not permanent. Over time, many mothers-in-law lose their grip as the younger couple gains autonomy, and the wife becomes more confident in setting boundaries. The new wife's growing adaptation, bolstered by her own education, the husband's support, or separate residence, gradually limits the mother-in-law's influence. In other words, the older woman's patriarchal bargaining (Kandiyoti, 1988) diminishes once the bride is no longer an outsider in need of tutelage. This dynamic shows how an older generation's authority can erode, illustrating that women who once policed patriarchal customs eventually find their leverage waning as family power balances shift.

5.1.4. Variability of Patriarchal Models

Comparative analysis of the narratives makes it possible to outline a tentative typology of patriarchal relationship models, reflecting the different ways these norms are enacted in practice:

- **Intensive model:** characterized by strict control of the woman's behavior and appearance, a rigid division of responsibilities, and significant interference from the extended family in the couple's affairs. This model allows little to no deviation from traditional hierarchies.

- **Intermediate model:** defined by persistent pressure from family and cultural norms, but within the couple there begin to emerge pockets of flexibility and renegotiation of rules. Some traditional expectations remain in force, yet the couple may privately adjust certain arrangements.

- **Flexible model:** based on negotiated arrangements with responsibilities divided pragmatically according to skills and circumstances. Patriarchal expectations are minimized or carry little decisive influence over the couple's decisions.

When looking at the distribution of these models across the interviews, the intermediate model is the most common. In these cases, cultural and family norms do exert pressure, but within the marriage the partners gradually soften strict rules through negotiation and individualized agreements. The intensive model occurs less frequently; however, when it does occur it produces the most conflictual and traumatic experiences, especially in the early stages of marriage. The flexible model is the least common, described by only a few participants, usually those whose relationships were consciously built on principles of partnership, and in which the women enjoyed a relatively high level of autonomy even before migration.

Crucially, these models are not static. The data show that relationship dynamics can shift over time from a more rigid configuration to a more flexible one as trust and mutual understanding grow. The reverse trajectory, from freedom to strict control, was also noted but is much rarer and typically coincides with serious marital breakdown.

In other words, even within a strongly patriarchal starting point, change is possible in the direction of greater equality as the couple's mutual adjustments accumulate.

In this section, we saw that patriarchal norms pervade multiple domains of marital life, imposing controls on women's behavior, domestic roles, and personal autonomy. However, these norms are neither monolithic nor unchallenged: women actively negotiate and resist within the constraints, leading to varied models of marital hierarchy. This causally sets the stage for the next section, which examines how power and agency are distributed and exercised under these conditions.

5.2. Agency and Power Dynamics in Cross-border Marriages

The interviews show that the distribution of power in these cross-border marriages is not static; it develops over time along a spectrum ranging from strict male dominance to more egalitarian partnership models. Power is exercised through control over resources (financial, legal, informational), through the regulation of a woman's behavior and movement, and through the degree of access she has to decision-making. This dynamic is not one-dimensional: it encompasses both enforcement of control in some cases and the emergence of partnership in others.

It is important to emphasize that power dynamics cannot be reduced solely to male control and female restriction. A significant number of respondents demonstrate a high degree of personal agency even within constrained environments. They describe areas of life where they make decisions independently, manage resources on their own, and build relationships based on equality without economic or domestic pressure. Thus, the spectrum of power models in these marriages extends from rigidly controlled arrangements to genuinely egalitarian ones in which female agency becomes a key principle of interaction. However, this agency is not boundless; even women's autonomy is often exercised within certain structural limits, as the more constrained contexts can circumscribe how far their independence can stretch.

5.2.1. Models of Power Distribution and Their Proportions

Based on the empirical data, three main configurations of power can be identified:

- **Vertical model (strict control):** Decision-making is concentrated in the husband's hands; the wife's access to financial and legal resources is tightly restricted. A system of prohibitions may be in place, including control over the woman's communications, documents, and movements. This model reflects a clear hierarchy where the woman's agency is heavily curtailed.

- **Hybrid model:** Combines elements of control in specific domains with areas where the woman can make independent decisions. For example, a husband might retain control over major finances, public interactions, or travel, while the wife has latitude in day-to-day household management or personal purchases. These marriages involve constant balancing and negotiation: conflicts are resolved through dialogue, but ultimately the husband often retains the "final say" on contested issues.

- **Partnership model:** Decision-making is shared, resources are accessible to both spouses, and boundaries are defined by mutual trust and agreement. In this model, neither partner unilaterally controls the other; instead, power is consciously distributed and both partners view each other as equals.

In this sample, the hybrid model is the most prevalent. Many marriages fall into this category, where some domains of the woman's life are free from oversight while others remain under her husband's implicit or explicit control. Vertical models occur less often, but they have the most damaging impact on women's agency and as a consequence, on marriage overall when they do appear. Partnership models account for a significant subset of cases, demonstrating that with trust and the woman's economic independence, the need for control can be eliminated entirely.

5.2.2. Economic and Legal Control

The financial and legal sphere is one of the most sensitive areas where unequal power can be observed. Participants who found themselves under strict control emphasize that their access to information and resources was deliberately limited and that key decisions were made without their involvement.

Galina's experience illustrates this clearly. *"I did not know what his salary was. He would just say: it is enough for us, that is all."* Her attempts to initiate joint economic projects were shut down: when she proposed starting a small business together, her husband refused, and any financial inquiries on her part were ignored. This case shows a combination of economic control and legal vulnerability – for a long time Galina remained without citizenship or independent legal status in Turkey, leaving her with no formal tools of influence in the marriage.

In other narratives, financial inequality is expressed more softly yet still shapes the power structure. Valeria emphasizes that her professional steps depend entirely on her partner, resulting in an invisible, but stable form of dependency. Similarly, Zinaida is allowed to manage only a fixed portion of the household budget and has no say in larger financial decisions: *"There is a joint account, I manage it, but the amount is fixed – thirty thousand, for food and the house."* In these scenarios, the woman may handle day-to-day expenses, but strategic financial control remains with the husband.

By contrast, several women such as Karina, Miroslava, Kristina, Elvira, and Evelina describe the opposite situation. Thanks to either their own economic independence or a relationship built on trust, they maintain a high level of control over personal decisions. Karina states plainly: *"He cannot control me because I earn my own money."* Miroslava, who is financially dependent, notes, *"He never asks for a report about where or how money was spent."* Elvira also has full autonomy in her personal spending and meetings, without needing her husband's approval.

Thus, economic independence and access to one's own resources emerge as crucial factors in the distribution of power. When a woman lacks independent income, ownership, or legal status, decision-making power tends to concentrate on the husband's side. Conversely, when she possesses financial resources or secure rights of her own, the power balance becomes more equitable and may even shift in her favor.

5.2.3. Decision-Making and Control over Everyday Life

Power dynamics also manifest in how the couple divides the right to make decisions, both in everyday matters and on important life choices. In a number of cases, decision-making was almost entirely controlled by the husband, and any attempts by the wife

to act independently provoked sanctions or pushback. Anna's story is telling: whenever she initiated something on her own, her husband blocked it, and conflicts often ended with her being isolated in the home. *"I separated a room for myself. Let him come and visit,"* she says, describing how her sphere of influence shrank to a single room as a result of these power struggles.

In other couples, softer, more flexible models of power sharing have emerged. A woman may have the ability to make decisions, but she is expected to keep her partner continuously informed, reflecting an underlying asymmetry. Inna stresses: *"I can inform him, but I do not ask for permission,"* highlighting that while she exercises autonomy in daily choices, she still must report her actions. Yet even in this more balanced arrangement, certain restrictions can persist, for example, Inna's husband explicitly forbids specific actions: *"He says: you cannot post photos in a swimsuit."* This indicates that informal consent in some areas coexists with explicit control in others.

In the most flexible families, decisions are built on trust and dialogue. Miroslava notes, *"We discuss it together. There is no such thing as one of us making all the decisions."* Similarly, Kristina says, *"I do not ask for permission. But I always inform him. That is respect, not control."* In these relationships, the distinction between informing and asking permission is crucial – communication is maintained, but not as a means of seeking approval, rather as a mutual courtesy. Decision-making here is effectively joint, and both partners feel they have a say without undermining each other's dignity.

5.2.4. Tactics of Resistance and the Formation of Agency

Even under strong control, women develop active strategies of resistance. These strategies are diverse and creative, ranging from the use of humor to quiet long-term planning, selective non-compliance with rules, and careful negotiation to achieve their aims. Rather than openly defying their husbands in every instance, which could provoke conflict or even risk their security, many women find indirect ways to reclaim agency within a constrained environment.

For example, Alina's mode of resistance is expressed through humor and parallel planning. She recounts that when her husband made personal demands, even down to

wanting her to wear smaller clothing sizes, she would playfully turn it back on him: *"He wanted me to wear a smaller size... I would reply: 'Maybe you should try a medium size too?'"* At the same time, Alina was quietly preparing for the possibility of leaving the marriage: *"I saved money, moved my things, and set some aside for a rainy day. I knew it would end."* In this way, she maintained a facade of acquiescence through humor while methodically building an exit strategy.

Olesya takes a more defiant psychological stance. She explains that she refuses to respond to the word "must." Any time someone in the family tells her she "must" do something, it triggers in her an incentive to do the opposite. This personal rule becomes her silent rebellion against being ordered around. Ulyana, on the other hand, employs a subtler tactic: she lets her husband feel that decisions are his, while in reality she guides outcomes behind the scenes. *"It has to be done in such a way that he thinks it was his decision. I manipulate,"* she admits. By influencing her husband's decision-making process without confronting him, she steers the marriage in a direction that aligns more with her preferences. In a different approach, Raisa chooses *"quiet patience"* as her strategy: *"I am patient, I do everything quietly, and it works."* Her compliance is strategic; by not openly challenging her husband, she avoids direct conflict and gradually finds that her consistent, calm fulfillment of duties grants her a degree of peace and indirect influence.

In more egalitarian couples, by contrast, agency is exercised not through resistance, but through active cooperation. Many women in such relationships describe open dialogue and mutual respect as the main tools for establishing boundaries. Here, "resistance" per se is less necessary because the partnership model already grants them voice; instead, their agency is reflected in jointly setting the terms of their life together.

5.2.5. Agency and Independence as a Dominant Vector

Despite instances of male control in some marriages, the overall body of interviews shows that women's agency is, in most cases, vividly and consistently expressed. A significant number of respondents describe exercising a high degree of independence in their daily lives. For example, many women report the following freedoms in their marriages:

- **Independent financial management:** handling personal and even joint finances without oversight or the need to report every expense.

- **Autonomy in daily activities:** planning trips, outings, and purchases on their own – in some cases even using their husband's bank cards freely – indicating a high level of trust.

- **Personal decision-making:** making their own choices regarding domestic arrangements, work, education, and other life domains, rather than deferring to their spouse.

- **Willingness to confront control:** openly resisting or negotiating if any attempt at control does arise, rather than silently complying.

Indeed, for a large portion of these narratives, complete financial and domestic autonomy is a defining feature: women manage resources freely, make decisions without needing to "ask permission," and conduct their relationships with partners on the basis of trust. In such cases, the partnership model is not just an ideal proclaimed in words but is realized in everyday practice. This layer of experience balances the overall picture, demonstrating that even in a context initially shaped by patriarchal norms it is fully possible to build a marriage on trust and the personal independence of the woman.

Thus, the spectrum of power models truly ranges from rigid hierarchy to hybrid forms to genuine partnerships. For one group of women, the key challenge remains an ongoing struggle against control over resources and decisions; for another, equally numerous group, control is largely absent, and they actively exercise financial and personal freedom. In all scenarios, women's agency stands out as a central resource in their marriages. For many, this agency is expressed not only as resistance to specific restrictions, but as the natural, day-to-day exercise of independence, pursued confidently, without fear and without undue pressure.

Power dynamics determine the scope of women's autonomy. They influence not only who decides and who obeys, but also women's emotional well-being and the coping strategies they develop. In other words, the extent of power inequality shapes whether

a woman feels vulnerable or empowered, and how she navigates her situation, a linkage we explore in the following section.

5.3. Emotional Experiences, Challenges, and Coping Strategies

While marriage migration entails structural inequalities and vulnerabilities, the experience cannot be viewed solely through a one-dimensional lens of victimhood. Research on transnational marriages (Constable, 2005; Charsley, 2012) emphasizes that the intersection of different cultures, disparities in legal status, and unequal starting positions in a new environment create specific challenges for women. At the same time, our findings show that women do not remain passive in the face of these challenges. Much of the earlier literature has focused on the limitations and risks women face as marriage migrants (Pessar and Mahler, 2003; Piper, 2008). In contrast, the material from this study shifts the focus to another dimension: the strategies that women themselves develop to cope with difficulties and gradually build a stable life under new conditions. In this approach, marriage migration is understood as an ongoing process in which women are agents who devise coping practices amidst uncertainty, create new resources, restructure relationships, and reorganize their own space.

The respondents' experiences encompass a wide array of situations: domestic and emotional struggles during the initial months in Turkey, difficulties adapting to a new cultural environment, the evolving dynamics of marital relations, the influence of family patterns from past and present, and the mechanisms by which they seek support. Notably, their narratives show that even under considerable hardship, women do not merely encounter problems passively, they also actively search for solutions, tap into internal and external resources, and develop personal forms of resilience. Support from husbands and close friends or relatives, the creation of new social ties, and skills in managing conflict all emerge as essential elements of their adaptive experiences.

For clarity, the analysis in this section is organized around several key themes that correspond to the sequence of issues explored in the interviews. It begins with an examination of personal and domestic difficulties during the first months after relocation, and the initial strategies women employ to overcome them. It then turns to

emotional dynamics within marriage – how women negotiate with their partners and regulate conflicts. Next, attention is given to the constraints and criticism women encounter in daily life and the ways they respond in order to maintain their personal boundaries. Following that, I consider the partner's support that helps women cope with crises of adaptation. Finally, the section addresses the role of family experience from the women's upbringing, which for some serves as a supportive model and for others as something to consciously resist, and how this background influences their search for a new model of relationships.

5.3.1. Personal and Domestic Difficulties and the First Strategies for Overcoming Them

For most women, the first period after moving to Turkey is a time when their familiar world seems to collapse, leaving them in a place with no stable reference points where almost everything must be started from scratch. Migration studies describe this stage as a period of primary adaptation, when migrants face a sudden change in social and cultural context and must reorganize their lives at the most basic levels (Berry, 1997; Ryan, 2018). The interviews confirm that for women who have come to Turkey through marriage, this initial adjustment phase is especially intense. Immediately after relocation, feelings of isolation, loss of control over everyday life, and the urgent need to develop new coping methods come to the forefront.

Many respondents recall that in the first weeks and months they tried to minimize any contact with the outside world, as even simple daily situations caused intense stress. Margarita admits: *"For a month and a half I did not leave the house, I did not see anyone except my husband and children. I am nobody here. I do not understand anything. I cannot control anything at all."* For her, a turning point came when she was able to use a bank card to make purchases on her own, a small act that symbolized the return of at least some sphere of autonomy: *"It became easier for me when I regained control over my life."* This example shows that at the earliest stage of adaptation, even minimal opportunities to act independently, like handling money or shopping, take on great significance in restoring a sense of agency.

A similar feeling of disorientation is described by Marina, who confesses: *"It was hard for me to go out to buy bread... I lay there, I cried, with a runny nose… he did not leave, he endured all of it."* Instead of withdrawing completely or giving up, she devised a simple personal rule for herself: allow a period of confusion and anxiety, then deliberately return to routine tasks. In practice, this meant permitting herself to stress or break down temporarily, but afterward obliging herself to get up and, say, go to the store or clean the house. Such small disciplines helped her regain a sense of control over herself and her environment.

Valeria uses a vivid metaphor to describe the adaptation process: *"I am like a tree that has been uprooted and transplanted; it has not taken root."* Her words convey the complete sense of being uprooted from familiar soil. At the same time, she emphasizes that over time she found her own method of coping: *"My motto is, I freak out, and then I move on."* This "motto" encapsulates a pattern of acknowledging emotional turmoil but not getting stuck in it – she allows herself to express frustration or fear, but after that emotional release, she pushes herself to move forward. Even if her actions are very small, the commitment to move on helps prevent helplessness from taking over.

Alongside these emotional shocks, women encounter unexpectedly difficult adjustments in the realm of everyday organization and infrastructure. Lada connects her inner turmoil, even physical changes like significant weight gain, with a new lifestyle and disrupted routines: *"I gained 30 kilograms. Everything changed – food, rhythm, control over my body."* Her body's reaction exemplifies how deeply daily habits are intertwined with emotional well-being. Larisa speaks of a specific frustration: the lack of punctuality and predictability in local services. *"When the repairman does not come for four months, and my air conditioner is broken – every day I look at it,"* she says, contrasting her own desire for order with what she perceives as Turkish indifference to schedules. For Zinaida, one of the most painful challenges came from the institutional encounters when she tried to achieve the documents for her daughter: *"I cried after visiting the migration office, it was pure humiliation,"* she admits, linking her emotional breakdowns to a feeling of powerlessness in the face of a bureaucratic system she cannot navigate or influence.

For some participants, this early stage was so overwhelming that they could not cope without professional help or medication. Vera shares a particularly dire experience: *"For the first year I was on antidepressants. I lived with his parents. She [mother-in-law] was mentally ill, he [father-in-law] yelled, he fed the cats at six in the morning – he shouted 'gel-gel-gel.' I was in hell. I wanted to kill everyone."* In her case, the chaotic living situation, residing with in-laws amid conflict and mental illness, led to severe distress. Vera explains that reaching out to her mother and a psychologist was what ultimately helped her survive that period and gradually return to a more stable state of mind. This indicates that seeking professional help or a trusted confidant can be a crucial strategy for breaking out of isolation and despair.

Overall, the women's stories show that the first months after moving are a time when numerous challenges accumulate, from the simple fear of stepping outside to the profound feeling that nothing is under their control. However, these same narratives make it clear that women do not remain in a state of paralysis. Step by step, they devise ways to regain control and stability. Sometimes these are very small steps – going to the shop, independently managing a bit of money, or setting an internal rule for when to stop feeling sorry for oneself and start moving forward. Other times they involve more significant decisions, like seeking out a psychologist or identifying supportive people to talk to. In the end, even amid social and emotional disorientation, these women begin to build coping strategies that become the foundation for further integration and the construction of a new life.

5.3.2. Emotional Dynamics in Marriage: Conflicts, Misunderstandings, and Ways of Overcoming Them

Once women gradually begin to adapt to the new daily environment, the next serious challenge is managing relationships within the marriage (and extended family) in a new cultural setting. The interviews show that emotional conflicts and misunderstandings within couples are not exceptions; most women encountered them. However, it is precisely through confronting these frictions that women developed specific interaction strategies and methods of negotiation with their partners. The literature on transnational marriages notes that the intersection of different cultural codes and the uneven integration of spouses into a new environment create tension that

requires constant negotiation and the development of new communication rules (Constable, 2005; Erel, 2010; Charsley, 2012). The data echo this: conflicts arose, but they became a catalyst for women to move from a position of vulnerability to one of actively maintaining emotional balance in the family.

According to respondents, conflicts in their marriages usually did not stem from fundamental incompatibilities or values, but rather from everyday stressors: fatigue, pressures from relatives, language difficulties, and differing communication styles. In recounting these episodes, women not only describe the conflicts themselves, but also how they learned to deal with them. Their accounts frequently illustrate a progression, from initially feeling hurt or helpless to actively experimenting with approaches to manage disagreements. In short, we see a transition from initial vulnerability to deliberate efforts at preserving harmony.

One striking story of conflict involves violations of personal boundaries by in-laws. Inna describes how, after her wedding, her mother-in-law's behavior became openly humiliating. Inna's personal belongings were moved around or rifled through in the closets; when Inna tried to assert some boundaries, the situation escalated dramatically. *"They threw me out the door, shouting. I went to Istanbul alone,"* she recounts. This experience was devastating, amounting to a symbolic erasure of her status and identity, she ceased to feel like a member of her husband's family at all. In this extreme case, the conflict led to a temporary separation and highlighted the fragility of the woman's position within her husband's family early on.

For many women, an important conflict-management tactic is the ability to temporarily step away from a heated situation to reduce tension. Lada gives a simple but telling example: *"Sometimes I just take the trash and leave for five minutes so I don't explode."* By physically removing herself for a short break, she gains time to calm down and avoid saying or doing things in anger. This small, practical maneuver allows her to regain self-control and prevents a minor disagreement from turning into a destructive argument. It illustrates how women create their own "time-out" mechanisms to cope with emotionally charged moments.

Other couples adopt a strategy of delayed discussion, intentionally postponing conflict resolution until both partners have calmed down. Daria recalls a period of intense strain: *"I felt like an abandoned kitten… We even talked about divorce… but then we always take a breath and talk calmly."* According to her, this approach, stepping back and revisiting the issue later with clear heads, allows them to address important problems without the conversation deteriorating into threats of rupture or irreparable words. This is especially significant in situations where the husband is effectively the only close support for the woman in the new country; preserving the relationship by managing conflict constructively becomes critical to her overall well-being.

In some families, by contrast, an agreement is made to tackle issues immediately through dialogue, preventing resentment from festering. Kristina describes this proactive communication style: *"We do not have conflicts. We talk immediately."* For her and her husband, the central principle is not letting any discontent linger unspoken, they address misunderstandings in the moment, which for them prevents small issues from growing larger.

However, even these strategies can clash if partners have different emotional approaches. There are cases where men prefer to talk things out right away, while women need time and space to withdraw and process, requiring both sides to find a compromise. Evelina explains: *"I withdraw into myself. He wants to talk. We deal with things differently."* This difference in coping styles means that the couple has to establish a special form of coexistence that accounts for emotional differences. Such stories show that in a new intercultural context, couples often forge unique emotional arrangements to accommodate each other's ways of handling stress.

A separate category of marital challenges involves not open conflicts, but topics too painful or taboo to discuss. Vera provides an example: conversations about the future, specifically about her aging in-laws, became off-limits. *"The most painful topic is the death of his parents. I say: they are old, let us discuss what will happen. He says: I do not want to talk about it."* For her, the inability to talk about these inevitable life events heightens her feelings. Avoiding the topic does not reduce her anxiety about it, if anything, the silence intensifies her worry, since it cannot be jointly managed or planned for. This underscores that communication challenges can also be about what

is left unsaid due to cultural taboos or personal denial, and such silence can itself become a stressor.

These narratives highlight that women do not reduce themselves to the role of someone who simply *endures* conflict or adapts unilaterally to keep the peace. On the contrary, they actively seek ways to influence the nature of interactions. They negotiate "rules" with their husbands, for example, agreeing to take pauses, or explicitly stating which behaviors or words are off-limits. They articulate their boundaries and insist on their own communication style being respected. Over time, these practices become important tools of adaptation. Conflicts gradually shift from being purely destabilizing events to becoming spaces where new family norms are formed, norms about how to argue, how to reconcile, and how to understand each other better.

This experience confirms that marital relationships in a new environment are not only a zone of dependence for the migrant woman but also a space for daily work on building mutual understanding. Even when cultural and linguistic differences create additional hurdles, women develop their own coping methods that allow them to maintain equilibrium and to feel like active participants in the process, rather than passive objects of circumstance. In sum, while they may initially feel emotionally vulnerable, these women learn to manage conflict in constructive ways, thereby regaining a sense of control and partnership in their marriages.

5.3.3. Criticism and Restrictions: Boundaries and Ways of Responding

In examining the everyday experiences of marriage migrants, in most cases, these women do not face systematic or harsh prohibitions on their actions. However, their narratives do contain episodes of soft restrictions and criticism, which create a distinct area of tension and compel women to develop personal strategies for response.

Restrictions most often concern relatively everyday matters: how a woman dresses or presents herself, ways of communicating with relatives and friends, what she posts on social media, or going out late at night. For most women, these kinds of restrictions are perceived as a cultural peculiarity of their environment rather than as overt "bans." Still, when they encounter such expectations, many note the need to maintain boundaries and negotiate rules that are acceptable to both partners. In other words,

even minor attempts by a husband to curb his wife's behavior, like suggesting she not go out alone after dark, or hinting she should dress more modestly around his family, become moments where women consciously decide how to respond so as not to cede too much autonomy.

A more sensitive issue arises with criticism from the husband. In the context of adaptation, criticism is felt especially acutely because it coincides with an overall sense of vulnerability. Valeria admits that when her husband criticized her during a difficult moment, she felt deeply hurt: *"You are my only person, and you start to put pressure on me. I just want to run away."* In that situation, his words came across as pressure rather than help, making her want to escape. Sofia similarly says she is hurt by certain comparisons her husband made with other women: *"If you say one more time that a Moroccan woman speaks better, I will stop speaking Turkish."* And Karina recalls a moment of rough criticism during an argument: *"I always feel like I want to divorce him... He told me to fuck off."* These examples are isolated cases in the sense that not all women experienced overt insults or harsh comparisons. However, they show that in moments of emotional tension, even a single phrase can be perceived as a serious threat to a trusting relationship. For some participants, criticism becomes so painful precisely because it is experienced as an additional blow on top of the challenges of adaptation. In Valeria's case, for instance, when her husband failed to understand her state and instead voiced impatience, she experienced it as a profound lack of support at a time she most needed it.

It is important to emphasize that women generally do not dwell on these episodes as proof of some overarching inequality or fatal flaw in their marriage. On the contrary, they tend to actively develop ways of responding to such incidents. Some women choose a strategy of ignoring hurtful remarks, essentially not dignifying the criticism with a reaction, so as not to give a casual outburst too much significance and to avoid escalating the conflict. Others prefer to set firm boundaries and openly communicate what is unacceptable. For example, when Sofia's husband made the invidious comparison to another woman's language skills, Sofia immediately drew a line by refusing to continue tolerating such comments. There are also those who resort to using

irony or humor to defuse the tension without engaging in direct confrontation, effectively disarming a critical comment by treating it lightly or turning it into a joke.

This experience can be understood in the context of everyday strategies of resistance. Even when faced with criticism or mild controlling behaviors, women build their own behavioral responses aimed at maintaining autonomy while also preserving their relationships. These practices show that adaptation in marriage occurs not only in managing practical daily tasks but also in the realm of personal boundaries and self-respect. The women demonstrate an ability to uphold their positions and dignity without necessarily resorting to open fights; through negotiation and internal mechanisms of emotional protection, they shield themselves from undue pressure. In essence, they learn to resist subtle forms of control in such a way that they keep their sense of self intact, yet do not "dynamite" the relationship in the process.

5.3.4. Support from the Partner

In almost all the narratives, the question of support from the husband during the first months and years in the new country occupies a central place. Migration is accompanied by a rupture of familiar social ties, leaving the husband as the main (and sometimes only) guide into the new reality. His participation in the domestic and emotional processes of adaptation largely determines how acutely the difficulties of the early years are felt by the woman. The stories of the participants consistently show that having someone nearby who is willing to share the burden greatly reduces feelings of isolation and creates a sense of protection. This is consistent with research emphasizing the crucial role of close relationships, particularly spousal support, in the successful adaptation of marriage migrants.

Husbands' support takes many forms. It includes not only emotional presence (being patient, listening, offering encouragement), but also concrete practical assistance: accompanying the wife to government offices or clinics, helping with residence documents, traveling together to explore new places, and explaining the "rules" of life in the new environment from unwritten cultural norms to basic tasks. Miroslava, for example, emphasizes her husband's constant presence during her early struggles: *"He sits next to me, talks, tries... he does not leave me alone."* It was precisely his

willingness to be there in difficult moments, she explains, that helped her cope with episodes of panic and disorientation.

Such support is particularly important in the first years, when women are highly sensitive to any sign of judgment or impatience from those closest to them. A husband's patience and willingness to help creates an atmosphere of trust. It allows the woman to devote her energy to other aspects of adaptation, like learning the language or finding her footing socially, because she feels secure in the knowledge that her partner "has her back." In this way, the husband's support becomes not just everyday help, but a key resource that significantly influences how safe the woman feels and how capable she is of gradually overcoming the vulnerabilities of the initial years.

5.3.5. The Role of the Russian Family Experience: a Resource and a Form of Resistance

An important element of adaptation in these new marital circumstances is the influence of the family in which the women grew up. The interviews indicate that this influence is twofold. For some women, their parental family provides a model or point of reference that they willingly follow; for others, it serves as a background from which they consciously distance themselves, building new relationships on essentially opposite principles.

The first pattern can be described as reliance on internalized values and familiar models. Some participants note that it was the example of their own parents that actually helped them adapt more quickly to married life in Turkey. Daria, for instance, says: *"In my family it was the man is the head, the woman is the neck. This helped me build roles."* In her case, the traditional gender roles she observed growing up became a natural reference point in her intercultural marriage, guiding how she and her husband divide responsibilities and what expectations she holds of herself. Because she had seen a similar hierarchy at home, albeit in a different cultural context, fitting into a patriarchal structure abroad felt familiar and thus less challenging.

The second pattern is a conscious resistance to the parental script. Many women, on the contrary, deliberately strive to ensure that their new relationships do not mirror the dynamics of their families of origin. Nadezhda states this intention explicitly: *"No*

alcohol, only honest relationships. That comes from my childhood." For her, it is crucial not to reproduce the destructive practices she witnessed growing up. Evelina offers another perspective: she emphasizes that Russian family patterns, ones she experienced or observed, had inhibited her, and she explains that meeting her Turkish husband gave her the first experience of a "healthy family." *"In Russia, those patterns held me back, but he has a healthy family. He is my support,"* she says. This indicates that, for Evelina, the departure from her home country also meant escaping dysfunctional family legacies, and her marriage became an opportunity to do things differently than what she had known before.

These stories confirm that migration often becomes a turning point for rethinking family patterns and searching for new models of behavior. Women do not simply transfer their parental family experience wholesale into the new context. Instead, they actively sift through that experience, deciding what they value and what they absolutely do not want to replicate. As a result, family experience functions as a kind of reference axis – one that they either continue along or consciously pivot away from, as they form their own trajectory. In practical terms, a woman with a positive family model may emulate her mother's resilience or her parents' partnership style, using it as a resource in her marriage. Conversely, a woman from a troubled family may be strongly motivated to break the cycle and establish a very different kind of marital environment. In both cases, the influence of the past is evident, but it is not determinative; it is mediated by the woman's agency as she chooses which parts of her upbringing to carry forward and which to leave behind.

Taken together, the respondents' narratives show that marriage migration cannot be viewed solely through the lens of vulnerability and structural pressure. Even in the face of serious challenges, women demonstrate a capacity to act and to develop their own coping strategies. These strategies include reorganizing everyday life, negotiating within the family, expanding networks of support, and finding resources both in themselves and in their surroundings. In effect, their experience can be described as a process in which structural difficulties become a space for action and the formation of new forms of agency.

Overall, we see that the emotional journey of marriage migrants encompasses intense early hardships, the negotiation of conflicts, the critical importance of partner support, the navigation of minor controls and criticisms, and a reflective use of personal and family history. Despite unequal starting resources and cultural pressures, women actively cope by carving out small autonomies, leveraging support networks, and adapting or rejecting familial models. Together, these experiences illustrate how structural difficulties become arenas for women's action and resilience, albeit an ambivalent form of resilience that both challenges and coexists with patriarchal structures. Having examined how these women manage day-to-day challenges and emotional life, we now turn to the long-term transformations they undergo as a result of these processes.

5.4. Personal Transformations and Strategies of Adaptation

This final part of the analysis focuses on how the women, after years of living in Turkey, evaluate their experiences and personal changes. While earlier parts of the chapter concentrated on the difficulties and daily survival mechanisms of the initial period, here the focus shifts to the long-term transformations that occur in their perception of themselves, their worldview, and their place in both their home and host societies. The interviews show that migration through marriage not only requires women to adapt to new conditions in the short term but also becomes a process that profoundly influences their identity, value systems, and life priorities over the years.

Unlike the initial stage, characterized by disorientation and the urgent search for footholds – after several years many women describe their journey as one of building a new form of resilience. This mature stage of experience contains complex and even contradictory emotions: longing for their former lives, an ambiguous sense of where "home" is, a desire to reassess old habits, and simultaneously an understanding that migration has endowed them with new qualities and perspectives on the world.

A special place in their accounts is given to the strategies that help them cope with ongoing uncertainty, as well as the ways they formulate long-term plans and manage everyday crises once the immediacy of the initial adaptation has passed. These strategies can be situated within a broader theoretical framework that emphasizes the

active role of migrants in shaping their own life trajectories (Levitt and Glick Schiller, 2004; Ryan, 2018). In line with this perspective, women in our study are not simply adapting to circumstances passively; they are gradually creating new models of life that integrate the experiences they had before migration with the realities of their new environment.

One important result of this process is a fundamental reassessment of marriage and of self. Initial expectations, often colored by idealized or romanticized ideas about life abroad and marriage, give way to a more sober understanding of their own capabilities and limits. Over time, the women report achieving greater internal autonomy and a more confident establishment of personal boundaries. Thus, the data in this section indicate that marriage migration becomes not only a challenge to be endured, but also a source of deep internal transformation and the acquisition of new personal resources.

5.4.1. A Sense of Home and Spatial Identity

The question of whether these women feel "at home" after migration proved to be a revealing one, as their answers reflect contradictions in their experiences of belonging. The interviews show that the concept of *home* ceases to be tied strictly to a specific territory; instead, it becomes a fluid category defined by people, social ties, and a personal sense of safety.

For those who have succeeded in building a life and finding support in Turkey, the country gradually becomes a space where it is possible to take root. Vera recalls an emotional moment: *"When we crossed from Georgia into Turkey, they said 'hoşgeldiniz' at the border, and I had a lump in my throat."* Diana similarly describes returning to Turkey after a visit abroad: *"When I came back from Moscow and saw Adana, I realized that I had come home."* Lada conveys the shift in her feelings vividly: *"When I looked at airplanes in Moscow, I always wanted to fly away. And now I look and think how good it is that it is not my flight."* These statements are particularly revealing: the feeling of being home did not arise immediately upon moving but developed as the women established a familiar circle of daily concerns, a comfortable rhythm, and a set of close people who became the center of their new

lives. In essence, home became associated with routine and relationships rather than geography.

However, a significant proportion of women describe themselves as living *"between two countries."* Daria puts it this way: *"Home is where my husband and children are. But in everything else, I still feel like a visitor."* Inna admits: *"I have a suitcase mood. I cannot say this is my home. I just live."* These words show that for many, belonging is split between two places – their country of origin and their new country – and neither place is perceived as an unconditional, complete home. They may deeply value their family and new connections in Turkey yet still feel like outsiders in the broader society; at the same time, after years away, they may no longer fully belong to their country of origin either.

Finally, there are stories where Turkey never becomes a place of belonging at all. Anna, after going through a severe marital crisis and divorce, says bluntly: *"I realized that I could not live here. I went back."* Her case represents one extreme of the spectrum, showing that not everyone goes through a process of "rooting" in the new land – for some, the migration ends with a return to their point of origin, and the new country remains a chapter that closes rather than a new home.

This diversity of experiences highlights that the spatial identity of marriage migrants is shaped by multiple factors: the length of time they have resided in Turkey, the nature and stability of their marriage, the quality of their social environment, and the degree of personal autonomy they manage to attain. For these women, home is not merely a spot on the map – it is a configuration of people, resources, and feelings of stability. In the context of marriage migration, home is a dynamic and relational notion. It is built around relationships (spouse, children, friends), points of support (a steady job, a community, supportive in-laws), and the ability to influence one's own life (language proficiency, economic independence). Where these conditions are met, Turkey can truly become *home*. In their absence, the women often continue to feel that they exist "between two worlds," with a divided sense of belonging.

5.4.2. What Feels Missing

When women look back at their lives before migration, their narratives most often revolve around two main areas of loss. The first concerns the rupture of social ties and the disappearance of their habitual support network. Migration cuts off the close contacts that once provided a sense of security and helped them cope with difficulties. Marina puts it simply: *"I miss my friends, the possibility just to go out and meet."* For many, their social circle back home was not only a source of communication and fun, but also an essential part of their self-perception; losing this support during the first years abroad was one of the most painful consequences of migration.

The second line of nostalgia is associated with the urban environment and cultural space they left behind. Women speak about missing the atmosphere of large cities with familiar infrastructure, a rich cultural life, and a dynamic daily rhythm. Zinaida emphasizes: *"I miss the Sadovoye Ring, the theater, the gym,"* referring to iconic aspects of city life in Moscow. Margarita adds: *"I miss the freedom and independence that I had there."* And Nadezhda admits: *"The marketplace — that hurts the most. When you look at Wildberries, you want to cry,"* implying that browsing an online marketplace from home makes her yearn for the convenient lifestyle she once had. These remarks are not so much about specific activities as they are expressions of longing for an entire way of life that felt convenient, stimulating, and liberating.

It is precisely this combination of losses – social and cultural – that creates the particular tension of the first years post-migration. Women find themselves in a situation where the familiar sources of social and cultural capital are gone, and the new sources are either not yet established or cannot fully replace what they once had. Their narratives make it clear that longing for their past life is not only about missing particular people or places, but also about missing the rhythm and meaning that structured their days and gave them a sense of purpose and self-worth. In essence, they mourn aspects of identity that were reinforced by their old environment – whether it was being a professional among colleagues, a friend who could spontaneously meet up with others, or simply a person confident in navigating her city and society.

5.4.3. Personal Qualities and Coping Strategies

Despite externally different trajectories of adaptation, the women's narratives reveal a common core: a set of personal qualities and developed strategies that help them manage situations of uncertainty and limited resources. Importantly, the respondents themselves emphasize that these qualities are not so much innate traits as they are shaped in the process of living abroad, forged by necessity during the toughest years.

One of the most frequently mentioned qualities is patience – specifically, the ability to endure long periods of uncertainty without losing composure. Women explain that in the initial stage it was impossible to change many situations quickly (whether it was bureaucracy, or waiting to find friends, or learning the language), so they had to literally learn to "live in pause." Daria notes: *"It makes me shake that they are so slow… and I want things done now… I realized that I had to learn to let go and not try to control everything. Otherwise, you will lose your mind here."* The ability to stop trying to force events and to allow time to pass becomes a personal form of protection from stress. In other words, letting go and trusting that some problems will resolve slowly or that one will eventually adapt became a coping mechanism to avoid constant frustration. Another important quality is flexibility – the ability to adjust one's expectations and habits to the new environment. This manifests as a willingness to accept local rhythms and rules, and a conscious refusal to engage in direct comparisons with how things were "back home."

Along with cultivating these personal qualities, women develop a wide range of coping strategies to handle challenges. Broadly, their strategies can be grouped into a few categories:

- **Action-oriented strategies** (the most common)**:** If one approach fails, they revise their plans or find alternative solutions. Many described a trial-and-error mindset, for instance, if a bureaucratic path is blocked, finding another way or seeking a different contact; if making local friends is difficult, perhaps reaching out online to compatriots; if direct confrontation with a husband doesn't work, trying a more diplomatic conversation later. They keep problem-solving actively rather than giving up.

- **Avoidance or pause strategies:** Some women consciously take a temporary step back from a problem. They might leave a situation if tensions run high or give themselves a day off from worrying about integration, or delay a difficult discussion until emotions cool down. This intentional pausing is a strategy to prevent burnout and to ensure that when they do address an issue, they can do so calmly and effectively.

- **Help-seeking strategies:** Many learn to seek resources outside themselves. This includes turning to professionals like psychologists or counselors for emotional support, drawing on the experience of others who have lived in Turkey longer for practical tips, and leaning on the support of close relatives or friends back home through calls and messages. Rather than trying to handle everything alone, they gradually create a support system, even if it's a virtual one or a long-distance one – to help them navigate challenges.

Finally, an important place in their strategies is occupied by the creation of small personal rituals of control: talking with a friend, going to the beach or for a walk, painting by numbers, eating a piece of chocolate or ice cream, or finding comfort in activities that provide a sense of stability. These micro-practices, simple at first glance, restore the feeling that not every aspect of life is out of control.

Thus, the coping strategies these women develop go beyond mere day-to-day problem-solving; they become a way of reestablishing a balance between the limitations they face and the capabilities they still have. Through cultivating patience and flexibility, and through employing a mix of proactive, avoidant, and help-seeking tactics along with small everyday rituals, the women learn not only to survive stress but also gradually to regain a sense of agency in their new country. Over time, what begins as an effort to simply cope evolves into a broader empowerment: they realize they can influence their circumstances, even if in modest ways, and that insight builds confidence for the future.

5.4.4. Personal Changes

When the women describe who they have become after several years of life in Turkey, their stories almost always revolve around one idea: not only have external circumstances changed – *they themselves* have been transformed. The experience of

marriage migration reshapes their character, their outlook on life, and their ways of interacting with others.

One of the most noticeable changes they cite is a greater sense of calm, relaxation, and self-control. Many note that whereas in the past they might have reacted impulsively to difficulties or tried to control every detail, life in the new country has taught them to pause and "wait out" crises without panic. Daria says: *"I have become more patient and calmer. Here you cannot control everything."* Marina echoes a similar thought: *"I learned to let go… in Turkey nothing goes according to plan, and you need to accept that."* These reflections suggest that living through unpredictability day in and day out has instilled in them an ability to manage stress with composure. They no longer frantically attempt to fix every problem immediately; instead, they approach challenges more stoically, understanding that some things will resolve in time or that some uncertainties must simply be lived with.

A second change that emerges is a more realistic and sober view of expectations, both of life and of other people. Many women admit that migrating, especially under the optimistic auspices of marriage, initially carried an illusion that life would somehow be easier or happier "abroad." That illusion has been dismantled. The unpredictability and trials of life in Turkey taught them to rely primarily on themselves. They describe becoming stronger and more independent, with a heightened sense of responsibility for their own lives. In essence, they have grown more adult in their outlook, less likely to assume things will be taken care of for them, more aware that they must plan for contingencies (like having their own savings or career path). This self-reliance is often accompanied by a certain skepticism or at least a pragmatic view of relationships: they no longer idealize people (whether husbands or others) as saviors or sources of automatic support, understanding instead that everyone has limitations.

For many, an important discovery has been that after enduring crises and bouts of loneliness, they have learned to value small sources of joy and security much more than before. Their accounts do not suggest that their core personality underwent a radical change; rather, their priorities shifted. Many mention that before, their energy was directed at outward growth – career ambitions, broad social life, constant forward movement. After migration, especially once they overcame the initial chaos, their

focus turned to building a stable environment around themselves and practicing self-care within that space. Achievements are now measured in terms of well-being (a peaceful home, a loving family, genuine friendships) rather than just external milestones. In other words, there is a revaluation of what matters: stability, health, and happiness take precedence over status or hustle.

Finally, a significant result of this journey is the development of the ability to establish boundaries. In the new environment, as earlier sections detailed, women face the risk of "dissolving" into others' expectations, whether due to cultural norms, family pressures, or dependency. Through time, many learned to assert their own space and say no when needed. This boundary-setting becomes a source of resilience in itself. For example, several women described how initially they bent over backwards to please in-laws or to adapt to their husband's way, but later they started carving out non-negotiable personal time or insisting on decisions that concerned them. This newfound assertiveness signifies an internal change: they recognize their right to have their own domain (physical or emotional) and defending it becomes a part of their strengthened character.

All these changes show that marriage migration, despite the challenges and stresses it entails, is a process through which women learn to manage their lives differently, approach their own capabilities more consciously, and come to accept life's unpredictability with greater calm. They emerge as more resilient, self-aware individuals. In sum, what began as a period of vulnerability and loss evolves into a journey of personal growth, where these women redefine themselves and often come out feeling more secure in who they are.

5.4.5. Victims or Agents?

The experiences analyzed in this chapter contribute to a rethinking of marriage migration that transcends the simplistic binary of "victim" versus "autonomous agent." These women's lives do not fit neatly into either category. On the one hand, they are clearly not merely passive victims: even under significant constraints – patriarchal norms, legal dependency, cultural dislocation – they employ ingenuity, resilience, and assertiveness to shape their circumstances. On the other hand, their agency is not

absolute or unfettered; it is exercised within and against a framework of unequal power relations that they did not choose. Thus, portraying them as fully "autonomous" in the liberal sense would ignore the very real social and structural limits on their choices.

The concept of ambivalent resilience encapsulates this complex reality. The women demonstrate resilience in that they cope, adapt, and find ways to assert their will, but that very process of adaptation is ambivalent: it can involve compromise with patriarchy as much as defiance of it. For example, a woman might gain substantial influence in her household over time yet still express that influence in forms deemed acceptable by her husband or in-laws. Her strength lies in navigating this delicate balance.

By examining patriarchal expectations, power negotiations, emotional coping, and personal transformations in tandem, we see that vulnerability and agency coexist in these marriages. A woman can be vulnerable in one domain (say, financially or legally) while quite powerful in another (managing day-to-day decisions or emotional climate). Over time, many women in our study moved out of severe vulnerability into more secure and empowered positions, but this was usually a gradual, negotiated process, not a dramatic emancipation. Their trajectories challenge any narrative that would reduce them to helpless brides or, conversely, celebrate them simply as empowered "global women" making free choices. The truth, as this chapter has shown, lies in between.

In rethinking marriage migration through this more dialectical lens, we acknowledge that women are active subjects who make decisions, strategize, and exercise will, but always in relation to the social structures and relationships around them. Their autonomy is relational and often partial. They forge spaces of freedom and assertiveness within marriages that are also spaces of love, obligation, cultural negotiation, and sometimes coercion. Recognizing this complexity is vital for academics, policy-makers, and support organizations alike, because it calls for nuanced approaches that neither patronize these women as only victims nor ignore the real constraints they face.

In conclusion, the chapter's findings invite a departure from binary thinking. They encourage an understanding of marriage migration as a dynamic interplay of constraint and choice, oppression and innovation. Such an understanding values the women's voices and strategies, their quiet revolutions and day-to-day resistances, while also confronting the patriarchal and structural inequalities that frame their lives. By moving beyond the victim/autonomy dichotomy, we gain a more truthful and empowering narrative of what these women experience and how they themselves become agents of change, both in their personal lives and, incrementally, in the social worlds they inhabit.

5.5. Challenging Patriarchy: Discussion

This chapter presented a nuanced picture of how patriarchy operates and is negotiated in the context of Russian-speaking women's marriage migration to Turkey. The findings demonstrate that a persistent patriarchal framework shapes these women's lives – from expected gender roles and family hierarchies to imbalances in legal and economic power. Crucially, however, this patriarchy is neither uniform nor unchallenged. The women's experiences show that patriarchal norms are often contested and reshaped in everyday practice, especially as women navigate conditions of unequal resources.

Early in their marriages, many women enter a field of unequal capital in Bourdieu's sense (economic, social, cultural capital). They often lack local social networks (social capital), fluency in language and familiarity with the system (cultural capital), and sometimes even independent income or legal status (economic and symbolic capital). These disparities initially reinforce patriarchal arrangements – for example, a husband may have more authority by virtue of his greater resources and knowledge of the environment. In such cases, the patriarchal order appears coherent and solid: women face stricter controls, have fewer avenues for independent action, and depend heavily on their husbands or in-laws.

Yet, within these structural constraints, women exercise agency in creative ways. As the analysis showed, many women actively seek to acquire resources – learning the language, building friendships, finding work – which gradually shifts the balance of

power. As they gain cultural and social capital, they become less isolated and more capable of negotiating or resisting demands. For instance, women who learn Turkish and become legally secure (through citizenship or stable status) can better assert themselves against controlling behavior. We see patriarchal expectations being bent or negotiated: dress codes become suggestions rather than orders, domestic duties are shared rather than assumed, and family interference is mediated by the woman's newly established boundaries or by supportive husbands.

Agency in this context is very much agency under constraint. The women do not have free choice in a vacuum; rather, they operate within limits set by their marriages, their dependent status as migrants, and the surrounding cultural norms. Their agency often takes the form of tactical maneuvering – subtle resistance, strategic compliance, or incremental assertion of independence – rather than outright rebellion. This is why I describe their resilience as "ambivalent." On one hand, it is empowering: they clearly refuse to be mere victims and instead find ways to improve their situations, whether through dialogue, accumulating personal savings, or quietly defying certain expectations (e.g. ignoring unreasonable criticism, or carving out personal time). On the other hand, this resilience is ambivalent because it coexists with – and sometimes even helps sustain – the very patriarchal structures they push against. By coping and adapting, the women often make the marriage "work" without fundamentally overthrowing its patriarchal basis. For example, tolerating minor restrictions or placating in-laws can be seen as reinforcing those behaviors even as it allows the woman to survive and subtly change the situation in her favor.

In summary, the stories illustrate how patriarchy is both upheld and challenged in marriages where resources are unequally distributed. The husbands' greater access to money, language, family support, or legal authority initially sets a clear power differential. However, the wives are not passive recipients of patriarchal control; they respond with what might be termed ambivalent agency: they adopt patience and indirect strategies to endure and gradually transform their circumstances. Over time, many marriages move along the continuum from a strict patriarchal model toward more hybrid or even partnership arrangements, driven in part by the women's determined actions within their constraints. This synthesis underscores that any

analysis of marriage migration must account for both structure and agency: the structural inequalities (gendered and legal) that shape options, and the human agency that navigates and sometimes subverts those structures.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

The chapter opens by returning to the study's four initial assumptions as set out in Section 1.5. It examines these assumptions through the lens of empirical analyses. The purpose is to test how well the original propositions hold when confronted with the evidence, to identify points of confirmation or divergence, and to reformulate each assumption in light of the specific mechanisms, constraints, and strategies revealed in the data. This process anchors the conclusion in the thesis's conceptual framework while integrating the full analytical depth of the findings.

Assumption 1: Migration in a patriarchal context necessitates capital transformation. The findings strongly support this assumption. Women's pre-migration resources (education, job skills, social networks) often lost immediate value in Turkey's patriarchal environment, requiring women to adapt and transform their capitals. Many participants noted that professional credentials from Russia were not directly recognized or usable in Turkey, especially given legal barriers to employment. For example, a spouse-sponsored residence permit does not automatically confer the right to work, leaving most women initially stating, *"I do not have the right to work"*. In practice, obtaining a work permit was so cumbersome that few even considered it, illustrating how legal constraints forced women to recalibrate their economic and cultural capital.

Instead, they drew on soft skills and informal competencies to re-establish themselves. For instance, women leveraged foreign language ability, organizational savvy, and everyday know-how acquired in Russia to navigate Turkish daily life and support their households. One respondent used her management education to help run her husband's business and another applied legal training to handle local bureaucracy independently.

Such examples show capital conversion in action: formal qualifications might be devalued, but they were recombined into new forms of usefulness.

At the same time, women had to acquire new cultural skills (like learning Turkish cuisine and norms) from scratch, underscoring that migration demanded both relinquishing and rebuilding capital. Overall, the evidence confirms Assumption 1's core claim that relocation into a patriarchal setting mandates a reconfiguration of resources. I refine this assumption to state that in the Turkish context, Russian wives had to actively recode and reassemble their economic, cultural, social, and symbolic capital to fit a new socio-cultural field where their original capital endowments were only partially recognized.

Transformation was not optional but imperative for integration and stability. Crucially, this capital restructuring was a dynamic process: women continuously identified which aspects of their prior capital could be "actualized" in Turkey and which had to be supplemented or altered through new learning. In sum, the study finds that marriage migration into a patriarchal milieu indeed compels an ongoing conversion and accumulation of capital in novel forms, confirming Assumption 1. The revised Assumption 1 specific to this study is: *Russian marriage migrants in Turkey must reconstruct their accumulated capital – educational, professional, social, and symbolic – for it to retain value and utility under local patriarchal conditions, as their pre-migration capital alone is insufficient to secure agency or integration*.

Assumption 2: Forms of capital are context-dependent and power-sensitive. The evidence partially supports and nuances this assumption. The study revealed that the value of each form of capital was highly contingent on Turkey's patriarchal context, and that capitals could either amplify or mitigate women's vulnerability depending on how it aligned with local power structures.

For example, being a "Russian wife", a form of symbolic capital attached to one's identity, carried an ambivalent weight. On one hand, several women experienced this status as a stigma that increased their social vulnerability: almost all participants reported encountering ethnic stereotypes or bias, from suspicious treatment by officials to casual derogatory remarks. One interviewee noted that when visiting her Turkish

in-laws, she faced stricter dress codes than a local daughter-in-law, being told to wear baggy trousers while the Turkish woman wore shorts. This implies that the symbolic capital of being a foreign wife can initially exacerbate patriarchal controls, marking the woman as an outsider subject to closer scrutiny. On the other hand, some women found ways to convert or augment their symbolic capital to gain recognition in intimate circles: for instance, by demonstrating respect for family norms or excelling in caregiving roles, they earned appreciation from husbands and in-laws that partially counteracted the outsider stigma. Thus, the *"Russian wife"* label could gradually transform from a liability into a badge of cosmopolitan distinction or family honor, illustrating the context-dependent duality of symbolic capital.

Similarly, language skills and social networks proved to be context-dependent capitals that significantly affected power dynamics. Women who invested in learning Turkish (a cultural capital conversion) and built supportive friendships (social capital) were better integrated and less isolated, which in turn reduced their dependence on husbands. Indeed, participants with fluent Turkish and active social engagement reported forming connections more easily and mitigating the power imbalance of being a newcomer. By contrast, those lacking local language struggled to communicate beyond their spouse's circle and felt voiceless, which heightened their powerlessness in daily situations.

Economic capital likewise had divergent effects: in marriages where the husband controlled all financial resources, the woman's dependency was acute, whereas if a woman had independent income or assets, whether brought from abroad or earned later, her bargaining power increased markedly. It could be seen, for example, that one woman without Turkish citizenship or a job was kept uninformed about family finances and excluded from major decisions, reinforcing a steep power hierarchy. In contrast, another participant noted, *"He cannot control me because I earn my own money,"* indicating that her economic capital directly translated to personal autonomy within the marriage. These patterns confirm that capitals are indeed *power-sensitive*: who controls critical resources (money, legal status, language proficiency, social connections) determines the internal power balance of the marriage.

Assumption 2 is thus upheld in showing that the host context can devalue certain capitals and inflate others, shaping women's vulnerability or leverage. However, the findings qualify A2 by emphasizing agency: women actively worked to acquire context-specific capitals (e.g. learning Turkish, forming new networks) to shift power in their favor. The assumption is refined to: *In the patriarchal Turkish setting, a marriage migrant's capitals only translate into empowerment if it matches local norms and needs – for instance, local language fluency, legal residency rights, and supportive networks become pivotal capital. Misaligned capitals (like unrecognized credentials or family outsider status) can heighten dependency, whereas context-attuned capital accumulation (such as cultural adaptation and social ties) reduces vulnerability and redistributes power within intimate relationships.* This nuanced view highlights that forms of capital do not carry universal value but are continually re-evaluated within the power dynamics of the receiving society.

Assumption 3: Women's experiences encompass both trauma and agency. The empirical evidence strongly supports this assumption, demonstrating that Russian marriage migrants' lives are neither uniformly oppressive nor uniformly empowering, but an admixture of hardship and resilience. On the one hand, participants' narratives contain ample accounts of trauma, highlighting discrimination, dependency, and even violence in their new lives. Many women confronted social prejudice, and some endured pronounced patriarchal domination in their marriages or extended families. Several described experiences of psychological or physical abuse and intense isolation. For example, one participant who lived with her in-laws depicted the situation as *"hell"*, suffering constant stress to the point of requiring antidepressants and therapy to cope. Others spoke of husbands who exercised strict control over their movements, communications, and finances – instances of male dominance that left these women feeling stripped of autonomy and "like a nobody" in the initial period of migration. These accounts confirm that the patriarchal structures in Turkey can inflict serious trauma: women have been subjected to domineering in-law expectations, gender-related double standards, and, in the worst cases, domestic violence and coercive control.

At the same time, however, the study finds that these women are not passive victims. In line with Assumption 3, most respondents actively cultivated survival and empowerment strategies alongside enduring hardship. The interviews reveal remarkable agentic responses: women found emotional support, asserted boundaries, and negotiated greater equality in various creative ways. For instance, even under abusive conditions, one interviewee (Yana) transformed her personal talent into a means of escape – secretly selling her artwork to earn money for therapy and legal documents, thereby plotting a secure exit from the marriage. This and similar stories illustrate that agency often emerged in the midst of adversity: women might *"quietly, but steadily"* build leverage, whether by saving money unbeknownst to controlling husbands, or by covertly seeking information on their rights and assistance.

Moreover, many participants recounted positive experiences that counterbalanced their struggles. Nearly all mentioned some form of support or fulfillment, be it a caring husband, encouragement from friends, personal growth from overcoming challenges, or the joy found in children and family life. A number of women explicitly credited their spouses for emotional support during the difficult early months of adaptation. Others highlighted how successfully mastering new tasks gave them a sense of pride and competence. Importantly, even those in relatively equitable marriages acknowledged structural issues (like initial legal dependency) but simultaneously emphasized their independent decision-making and mutual respect with their husbands.

Thus, the data confirm that the lived reality of these migrants is multidimensional: episodes of disempowerment and suffering are real, yet they are interwoven with acts of coping, resistance, and incremental empowerment. Assumption 3 is therefore validated – women's experiences indeed span both trauma and agency – and it is refined to reflect the specific balance observed: *for Russian women in Turkish marriages, vulnerability (stemming from patriarchal norms, social exclusion, and legal and/or economic dependence) coexists with resilience and strategic agency, as women not only adapt to challenges but also devise ways to assert themselves, obtain support, and cultivate well-being within the constraints.* The study's feminist lens

captures this duality, moving beyond a one-dimensional victim narrative and showing how suffering and strength co-occur in these migration trajectories.

Assumption 4: Personal and social spaces are sites of resistance and adaptation. The findings fully support this assumption by illustrating that everyday life domains – the home, the friendship circle, community and online platforms – are indeed active theaters where women negotiate identity, autonomy, and belonging. Far from being passive backdrops, these personal and social spaces became arenas of micro-level resistance to patriarchal pressures and laboratories for creative adaptation.

The women in this study continuously used their domestic routines, hobbies, social interactions, and even virtual communities to retain or rebuild a sense of self in Turkey. For example, within the household, many wives subtly reshaped gender norms: one respondent refused to unilaterally shoulder all domestic labor and successfully made her husband engaged in housework despite his 50 years of never doing it. Another participant, a long-time vegetarian, resisted complete conformity to local foodways by finding compromises (introducing her husband to salads and sending him to his mother's home when he craved meat) instead of abandoning her dietary identity. These instances show how women asserted personal agency in intimate space – the very domain patriarchy often treats as a private arena of male authority – by carving out room for their preferences and enlisting their partners' cooperation in new arrangements.

Likewise, in the realm of friendships and peer networks, Russian migrant women actively created support systems that doubled as spaces of empowerment. Many formed tight bonds with fellow Russian-speaking women in Turkey, establishing chat groups, meet-ups, and informal associations that provided practical aid and emotional solidarity. In these largely women-only social spaces, participants exchanged advice on navigating life in Turkey and offered help "if a husband beats you or there is no money," as one woman explained of her community. Such networks served as a parallel social capital, independent of their husbands, where they could be heard and understood.

Moreover, several women leveraged online spaces (blogs, Telegram chats, Facebook groups) as arenas of resistance and self-expression. Notably, one interviewee who was isolated and abused found vital support through a Facebook group for women against violence in Turkey: members guided her with information and contacts that enabled her to secretly plan and execute an escape from her marriage. Her story, and that of another participant who likened herself to a sultan confined in a harem but later divorced and pursued higher education, exemplify how even in extreme constraint, women sought refuge and empowerment in personal networks and digital communities. These everyday and virtual spaces allowed women to redefine their identities, for instance, by continuing to practice elements of their native culture in private, or by sharing experiences with others in similar positions, they reaffirmed that they were more than just "foreign wives" under patriarchy.

Assumption 4 is thus strongly corroborated: daily life spheres (from kitchens to online forums) proved to be political spaces where migrant women actively engaged in the "struggle for recognition, stability, and the right to be oneself". I refine this assumption to specify that in this context, *Russian marriage migrants turned personal domains and peer networks into crucial sites of resilience. Through these, they quietly challenged patriarchal norms by preserving aspects of their own lifestyle, setting boundaries, and supporting one another and adapted to Turkish society on their own terms.* Rather than merely preserving their pre-migration capital, women reorganized and redefined their capital within these intimate spaces, using them to sustain their identities and mount everyday resistance to the pressures to completely assimilate or submit. The conclusion is that even under the pervasive patriarchy of the host society, women's personal and social realms functioned as incubators of agency – confirming the essence of Assumption 4.

In summary, all four assumptions are either supported or nuanced by the empirical evidence rather than outright contradicted. The initial theoretical expectations are largely corroborated, but the study adds depth by detailing *how* each dynamic plays out in practice. The refined assumptions now encapsulate the complex reality: (A1) capital must be reconstrued in migration; (A2) capital's power effects depend on context, though women can acquire empowering capital; (A3) experiences are

concurrently traumatic and empowering; and (A4) everyday personal/social arenas are crucibles of quiet resistance and adaptation. This alignment between assumption and finding demonstrates the utility of the study's conceptual framework while also tailoring it to the lived experiences of Russian women in Turkey.

Collectively, the above findings weave into a clear causal narrative of how cultural, economic, social, and symbolic capital function as mechanisms of strategic action for these women within the Turkish patriarchal regime. Upon arrival in Turkey, the women often found themselves in a position of acute dependency and vulnerability: unfamiliar with the language and local norms, lacking independent legal status or income, and sometimes facing distrust or stigma, they entered marriages where traditional gender hierarchies initially favored the husband's authority. This early stage can be seen as one where their pre-existing capital (education, skills, personal qualities) was not immediately transferable, tipping the balance of power heavily towards their husbands and in-laws. For many, the first months were marked by isolation and a loss of control. However, as time progressed, a crucial causal sequence unfolded: women began actively converting and accumulating new forms of capital to alter their circumstances.

First, they tapped into or acquired cultural capital relevant to the host society – learning Turkish, understanding local customs, and repurposing their knowledge. Mastering the language and daily routines was often the foundational step that unlocked other avenues. For instance, gaining linguistic proficiency enabled women to navigate institutions on their own, from grocery shopping to handling residency paperwork, which in turn restored a degree of personal autonomy and confidence.

Second, as cultural capital grew, many women leveraged it to develop social capital and even economic capital. Language skills and acclimation allowed them to form new social ties – be it friendships with neighbors, colleagues from eventual jobs, or connections within the Russian diaspora. These networks provided emotional support and practical information, buffering the women against the loneliness and marginalization that patriarchal isolation can cause. In the interviews, those who quickly found a community (local or expatriate) clearly fared better in terms of agency; their social capital became a protective layer, offering advice, childcare help, or a

refuge in times of marital conflict. Indeed, acquiring even a modest independent income was a critical turning point in the causal chain: once a woman had economic capital of her own, her bargaining power at home increased. As the data showed, a woman who contributes financially or holds savings is far less constrained – she can make spending choices and even envision leaving an untenable marriage if needed, whereas without resources she would be economically trapped.

Third, the women's growing cultural, social, and economic capital gradually translated into symbolic capital – that is, recognition and esteem in the eyes of those around them. Over time, many women moved from being seen as *"foreign brides"* (a status met with suspicion in some quarters) to being respected as competent wives, mothers, professionals, or community members. This shift in perception was earned through their visible contributions and adaptations: a wife who learned to speak fluent Turkish, ran the household adeptly, or engaged kindly with her husband's relatives could transform initial skepticism into praise. As their symbolic capital increased, these women could negotiate with greater confidence and were less readily dismissed by family members or officials.

The interplay of these capitals created a self-reinforcing cycle of strategic empowerment. Each form of capital bolstered the others: cultural fluency fostered social connections; social support opened pathways to economic ventures and provided emotional resilience; economic independence enhanced the women's social standing and negotiating power at home; and accruing symbolic respect further protected them from patriarchal belittlement or violence. Over the course of their marriages, many women thus moved along a continuum from near-total dependence to a more partnered or even assertive role, reshaping the power dynamics of their marriages in the process.

In essence, cultural, economic, social, and symbolic capitals functioned as interlocking mechanisms of agency that these women strategically mobilized to navigate and challenge the patriarchal regime in Turkey. Rather than direct confrontation, their strategy was often one of incremental empowerment: each small gain in resources or respect translated into slightly more room to maneuver, which they then used to achieve the next gain. Over time, this cumulative process altered the causal balance –

from a scenario where patriarchy had all the leverage to one where the woman had built multiple forms of support and leverage of her own. The end result for many was a qualitatively improved position: while still operating within a patriarchal society, they had carved out personal autonomy and negotiated relationships that were far more equitable than when they began. This narrative highlights that capitals were not static attributes but dynamic tools of strategic action. By continuously converting and deploying their capitals, women engaged in an ongoing, quiet reconfiguration of power in their marriages and communities, thereby both coping with and subtly transforming local patriarchal structures.

This research makes several noteworthy contributions to the scholarly understanding of gender, migration, and social capital. Conceptually, the study bridges Bourdieu's theory of capital with feminist analyses of patriarchy in a novel way, showing how the conversion of capital can serve as a lens to observe agency within oppressive structures. By applying the capitals framework (economic, cultural, social, symbolic) to marriage migration, the thesis extends that framework beyond economic or cultural contexts into the intimate realm of family and gender relations. The concept of capital transformation was enriched here with a gendered dimension: the research demonstrates how women's ability to deploy their capital is mediated by a patriarchal field – a contribution that refines migration theory by accounting for power and gender norms. In other words, the study provides a more nuanced theory of how migrant women negotiate structural constraints: rather than viewing integration as a linear accumulation of host-country capital, I see it as a contested process where capital must be fought for, recoded, or defended in the face of patriarchal gatekeeping.

The research also contributes to feminist migration literature by documenting the rarely studied Russian–Turkish marriage migration through a critical, agency-aware perspective. It challenges and complicates earlier portrayals of post-Soviet marriage migrants (which often cast them as either "victims of trafficking" or simplistic agents of economic mobility) by evidencing the multifaceted reality – these women experience subordination and empowerment, often simultaneously.

Empirically, the study offers rich, first-hand data drawn from 29 in-depth interviews, giving voice to a population that has been understudied in academia. The detailed

accounts of how these women navigate daily life, manage relationships, and create support systems provide an original contribution to knowledge. This includes new insights into phenomena such as the role of diaspora women's networks in mitigating domestic abuse, the informal strategies migrant wives use to assert independence, and the nuanced evolution of marital power dynamics over time. These empirical findings not only enrich the specific case of Russian women in Turkey but also have resonance for understanding marriage migration in other patriarchal contexts, as they highlight universal mechanisms, like the importance of legal status and social support for migrant spouses.

Moreover, the findings of this research provide rich material for comparing the experiences of Russian women with other migrant groups and highlight the different roles that patriarchy may play in shaping migration trajectories. For instance, while for Uzbek women strict patriarchal norms act as a major push factor for migration (Akcapar and Çakır, 2024), this dimension is far less pronounced for Russian migrants. If Uzbek women, similarly to Syrian and Afghan women, perceive Turkey primarily as a space of emancipation, where increased mobility, access to education, and the ability to navigate public life are seen as liberation from restrictive patriarchal systems (Ulutaş and Kahya Hızarcı, 2024; Çınar, 2025), Russian women experience Turkey more as a context of constraints. Yet, due to their higher adaptability, they actively construct new social networks and transform different forms of capital. Such a comparison is crucial for understanding that migration policy cannot be uniformly applied to all migrants; instead, it requires sensitivity to the cultural and social backgrounds of different groups. This underscores the importance of flexible, differentiated approaches to migration governance that consider the specific trajectories and resources of women from diverse origins.

The study is not without its limitations, which must be acknowledged to contextualize the findings. First, the sample, while diverse in age and background, was limited to 29 women and thus cannot capture the full spectrum of Russian marriage migrant experiences. There may be perspectives missing, for example, women who are completely socially isolated or those who did not wish to speak about very sensitive issues might be underrepresented. The research was also geographically focused,

potentially overlooking experiences in more rural regions of Turkey where patriarchal norms and integration challenges could manifest differently.

Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the interviews (mostly reflecting on experiences at a single point in time) limits our ability to make definitive claims about long-term change. Although the narratives did capture retrospectives and some longitudinal elements with women reflecting on how their situation evolved over years, a longitudinal study could more rigorously track capital transformation and empowerment trajectories over time.

Another limitation concerns possible selection bias: participants were largely recruited via networks and snowball sampling, which might mean the sample leans towards women who are relatively more connected or willing to share. Those in the most extreme situations of control or abuse could have been unable or afraid to participate, meaning the study might understate the severity of some patriarchal constraints.

In terms of methodology, all data relied on self-reporting, which introduces subjectivity; women's accounts are filtered through memory and personal interpretation. However, given the focus on lived experience, this subjective lens is also a strength, as it reveals perception and meaning – still, it is worth noting that the study did not independently verify all claims. Recognizing these limitations suggests caution in generalizing the findings universally; rather, they provide deep qualitative insight into the cases at hand and a basis for further investigation.

Building on the study's insights, several realistic legal and policy measures could better support marriage migrants and address the structural issues identified.

First, authorities could establish a multilingual digital platform dedicated to marriage and family issues, including cross-border marriages. Beyond providing basic legal guidance, this platform should serve as an encyclopedic resource offering both practical and theoretical information. It could host expert-written articles on topics such as conflict resolution, child-rearing, and adaptation strategies, while also offering a directory of relevant contacts (legal aid, counseling, community services). Importantly, the platform could integrate contributions from psychologists and family counselors fluent in different languages and trained specifically in working with

migrant families. Since migration-related family issues often differ from those faced by non-migrant households, professionals engaging with this platform should undergo additional training to understand the cultural and psychological dimensions of cross-border families.

Second, public institutions should revise educational and media content to counteract harmful stereotypes not only about Russian women but about migrants more broadly. This includes a systematic review of school history textbooks to identify and correct outdated or one-sided narratives about Russia (e.g., tropes that implicitly project past geopolitical aims into the present). Textbooks should clearly distinguish historical realities from contemporary relations and avoid reproducing inherited stereotypes that may undermine intercultural understanding. To that end, the Ministry of Education could convene a commission of independent historians, curriculum specialists, and educators—including comparative and bilateral academic voices—to audit and update materials, align them with evidence-based historiography, and articulate what learning outcomes Turkey seeks in shaping students' perceptions of Russia today. Such curriculum work, paired with media literacy initiatives, would encourage nuance, reduce prejudice, and support constructive bilateral relations.

Third, policymakers might commission research into Turkish public anxieties about migration and foreign spouses. Understanding prevailing public fears or misconceptions (for instance, concerns about cultural incompatibility or security) can inform more targeted awareness campaigns and preempt backlash, ensuring that integration efforts are grounded in social reality. Alongside this, awareness campaigns developed through universities and media platforms could cultivate public understanding, encourage intercultural dialogue, and frame migration as an opportunity for national development. Since migration is already a structural reality in Turkey, treating it as a resource rather than a threat should become a matter of state policy.

Fourth, legal reforms should address the economic vulnerabilities highlighted in this thesis: simplifying the work permit process for foreign wives and expediting recognition of foreign diplomas and professional credentials would allow these women to re-enter the workforce in line with their qualifications. Enabling easier access to

employment not only empowers the women economically but also reduces the leverage that husbands or in-laws may hold over them.

Finally, local governments, NGOs, and migration offices should invest in capacity building for professionals working with migrants. Social workers, psychologists, and frontline staff in migration services require targeted re-training to recognize the specific challenges of migrant families, which differ from those of non-migrant households. Short professional development programs could enhance their cultural awareness, reduce conflict, and improve service delivery. In addition, migration office staff would benefit from acquiring at least basic English skills to improve accessibility, since many migrants cannot be expected to speak Turkish fluently upon arrival. Such measures would not only improve the everyday experiences of migrants but also foster greater trust in institutions and reduce tensions that currently undermine integration.

Overall, returning to the overarching research question of this thesis – what role did various forms of capital play in Russian women's migration experiences, and how did they enable strategic action vis-à-vis local patriarchy – I can conclude that capitals were pivotal in both shaping and buffering the women's experiences.

Cultural, economic, social, and symbolic capital were the mechanisms through which these women exercised strategy: they leveraged whatever resources they had, and actively sought new resources, to navigate the challenges of life in a patriarchal context. Capitals thus acted as both shields and swords – buffering vulnerability by providing support and options and enabling strategic action by giving women leverage to alter their situation.

A woman with higher cultural capital (education, language) could find ways to solve problems without depending wholly on her husband; one with social capital (friends, community) had alternatives to isolation and could muster collective help; one with economic capital (her own income or savings) could negotiate or even exit a harmful marriage; and one with symbolic capital (recognized respect and belonging) could assert herself more freely without being dismissed.

Thus, capitals gave these women the toolkit to be strategic actors rather than helpless subjects in the face of patriarchy. They did not overthrow the patriarchal order – indeed

many norms remained intact – but through the incremental empowerment that capital accumulation afforded, they carved out personal agency and resilience within that order. This study's narrative of transformation, therefore, illuminates how even in restrictive environments, change is possible through persistent, strategic use of resources.

Looking forward, future research could build on these insights by examining similar processes among other groups of marriage migrants or by conducting longitudinal studies to see how these women's deployment of capital and their relative autonomy evolve over the decades. Comparative work might explore, for example, whether women from different cultural backgrounds employ similar capital-based strategies in other patriarchal societies, or how the second generation (children of these unions) benefit from or contribute to their mothers' capital accumulation.

In conclusion, the experiences of Russian marriage migrants in Turkey highlight the profound role of capital in migration and integration: capitals are not only assets to be gained but are actively weaponized by women as instruments of survival, adaptation, and subtle resistance. Empowering migrant women, therefore, means increasing their access to these forms of capital and removing the barriers to their utilization. By doing so, we can help transform patriarchal contexts from within, fostering greater equality and well-being for the women at the heart of these transnational families. Future research should continue to investigate these dynamics, extending the dialog between theories of capital and gender with ever more nuanced, context-rich studies, ultimately contributing to policies and practices that support migrant women's agency and dignity.

REFERENCES

Abadan-Unat, N. (1977). Implications of migration on emancipation and pseudo-emancipation of Turkish women. *International Migration Review, 11*(1), 31–57.

Abraham, M. (2000). *Speaking the unspeakable: Marital violence among South Asian immigrants in the United States*. Rutgers University Press.

Abu-Lughod, L. (1991). Writing against culture. In R. G. Fox (Ed.), *Recapturing anthropology: Working in the present* (pp. 137–162). School of American Research Press.

Acker, J. (1989). The problem with patriarchy. *Sociology, 23*(2), 235–240.

Agathangelou, A. M., & Ling, L. H. M. (2003). Desire industries: Sex trafficking, UN peacekeeping, and the neo-liberal world order. *Brown Journal of World Affairs, 10*(1), 137–148.

Akalın, A. (2007). Hired as a caregiver, demanded as a housewife: Becoming a migrant domestic worker in Turkey. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 14*(3), 209–225.

Akcapar, S. K., & Çakır, D. (2024). Feminization of labour migration from Uzbekistan to Turkey: the role of neoliberal policies, patriarchy and social networks. *Central Asian Survey*, 1–21.

Akhtar, S. (1999). *Immigration and identity: Turmoil, treatment, and transformation*. Jason Aronson.

Anthias, F. (1983). Sexual divisions and ethnic adaptation: The case of Greek-Cypriot women. In A. Phizacklea (Ed.), *One way ticket: Migration and female labour* (pp. 73–94). Routledge.

Anthias, F. (2012). Transnational mobilities, migration research and intersectionality: Towards a translocational frame. *Nordic Journal of Migration Research, 2*(2), 102–110.

Anthias, F., & Yuval-Davis, N. (1993). *Racialized boundaries: Race, nation, gender, colour and class and the anti-racist struggle*. Routledge.

Antonova-Ünlü, E., Sağın-Şimşek, Ç., Ateşman, E., & Lozovska, A. (2015). Russian immigrant diaspora in Turkey: Language use, preference and attitudes. *Turkish Studies, 16*(3), 391–410.

Atalay, Z. (2019). Partners in patriarchy: Faith-based organizations and neoliberalism in Turkey. *Critical Sociology, 45*(3), 431–445.

Aydiner, C. (2020). The implications of gender on international migration. *Equal Times*.

Baker, W. (1990). Market networks and corporate behavior. *American Journal of Sociology, 96*(3), 589–625.

Baltaeva, L. B. (2015). The transformation of the position of a woman in the Republic of Turkey in the twentieth century. *Journal of Sustainable Development, 8*(7), 61–68.

Bauder, H. (2008). Citizenship as capital: The distinction of migrant labor. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political, 33*(3), 315–333.

Beechey, V. (1979). On patriarchy. *Feminist Review, 3*(1), 66–82.

Bélanger, D., & Flynn, A. (2018). Gender and migration: Evidence from transnational marriage migration. In N. E. Riley & J. Brunson (Eds.), *International handbook on gender and demographic processes* (pp. 153–172). Springer.

Benstead, L. J. (2021). Conceptualizing and measuring patriarchy: The importance of feminist theory. *Politics & Gender, 17*(2), 424–431.

Berry, J. W. (1997). Immigration, acculturation, and adaptation. *Applied Psychology: An International Review, 46*(1), 5–34.

Bhugra, D., & Becker, M. A. (2005). Migration, cultural bereavement and cultural identity. *World Psychiatry, 4*(1), 18–24.

Bloch, A. (2011). Emotion work, shame, and post-Soviet women entrepreneurs: Negotiating ideals of gender and labor in a global economy. *Identities, 18*(4), 317–351.

Bloch, A. (2011). Intimate circuits: Modernity, migration and marriage among post-Soviet women in Turkey. *Global Networks, 11*(4), 502–521.

Bloch, A. (2017). *Sex, love, and migration: Postsocialism, modernity, and intimacy from Istanbul to the Arctic*. Cornell University Press.

Block, L. (2014). On female victims and parallel worlds: Gender and ethnicity in policy frames of spousal migration in Germany. In F. Anthias & M. Pajnik (Eds.), *Contesting integration, engendering migration* (pp. 242–260). Palgrave Macmillan.

Bourdieu, P. (1979). Les trois états du capital culturel. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales, 30*, 3–6.

Bourdieu, P. (1980). Le capital social: Notes provisoires. *Actes de la recherche en sciences sociales, 31*, 2–3.

Bourdieu, P. (1986). The forms of capital. In J. G. Richardson (Ed.), *Handbook of theory and research for the sociology of education* (pp. 241–258). Greenwood Press.

Boyd, M., & Grieco, E. (2003). Women and migration: Incorporating gender into international migration theory. *Migration Information Source*. Migration Policy Institute.

Brettell, C. (2008). Theorising migration in anthropology: The social construction of networks, identities, communities and globalscapes. In C. B. Brettell & J. F. Hollifield (Eds.), *Migration theory: Talking across disciplines* (pp. 113–159). Routledge.

Brettell, C. (2017). Marriage and migration. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 46*, 81–97.

Bryceson, D., & Vuorela, U. (Eds.). (2003). *The transnational family: New European frontiers and global networks*. Berg.

Bryson, V. (1999). 'Patriarchy': A concept too useful to lose. *Contemporary Politics, 5*(4), 311–324.

Buijs, G. (1993). Introduction. In G. Buijs (Ed.), *Migrant women: Crossing boundaries and changing identities* (pp. xx–xx). Berg Publishers.

Burt, R. S. (1992). *Structural holes: The social structure of competition*. Harvard University Press.

Carroll, J. B., & Sapon, S. M. (1959). *Modern language aptitude test*. Psychological Corporation.

Castles, S., de Haas, H., & Miller, M. J. (2014). *The age of migration* (5th ed.). Palgrave Macmillan.

Charsley, K. (2012). *Transnational marriage: New perspectives from Europe and beyond*. Routledge.

Chen, Y. (2015). The "left-behind" wives of migrant men: Gendered vulnerabilities and agency. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 24*(1), 79–98.

Chisom, O. (2021). Effects of modern dating applications on healthy offline intimate relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic: A review of the Tinder dating application. *Advances in Journalism and Communication, 9*, 12–38.

Chiu, E., & Yeoh, B. S. A. (2021). State moralism and gendered gatekeeping in marriage migration: The Singapore case. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 47*(2), 389–405.

Çınar, P. T. (2025). Migration and the transformation of gender and parenting roles: Syrian and Afghan women in Turkey. *Women's Studies International Forum, 109,* 103041.

Coleman, J. S. (1990). *Foundations of social theory*. Harvard University Press.

Connell, R. W. (1990). The state, gender, and sexual politics: Theory and appraisal. *Theory and Society, 19*(5), 507–544.

Connell, R. W. (1998). Masculinities and globalization. *Men and Masculinities, 1*(1), 3–23.

Constable, N. (2003). *Romance on a global stage: Pen pals, virtual ethnography, and "mail-order" marriages*. University of California Press.

Çoşkun, E. (2015). Curbing sex trafficking in Turkey: The policy–practice divide. *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal, 24*(3), 327–352.

Crenshaw, K. W. (1995). Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color. In K. Crenshaw, N. Gotanda, G. Peller, & K. Thomas (Eds.), *Critical race theory* (pp. 357–383). New Press.

Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). Sage.

Curran, S., & Saguy, A. (2001). Migration and cultural change: A role for gender and social networks? *Journal of International Women's Studies, 2*(3), 114–132.

Cvajner, M. (2011). Hyper-femininity as decency: Beauty, womanhood and respect in migration. *Ethnography, 12*(3), 356–374.

De Bel-Air, F. (2017). *Migration profile: Turkey*.

Demir, O. Ö. (2010). Methods of sex trafficking: Findings of a case study in Turkey. *Global Crime, 11*(3), 314–335.

Demir, O. Ö., & Finckenauer, J. O. (2010). Victims of sex trafficking in Turkey: Characteristics, motivations, and dynamics. *Women & Criminal Justice, 20*(1–2), 57–88.

Deniz, A., & Özgür, E. M. (2012). A new system of migration: Female migration from Russia to Antalya (Turkey). *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, 47*, 1645–1652.

Deniz, A., & Özgür, E. M. (2013, May 11–13). Transnationalism and gender: Russian migrant women in Antalya. Paper presented at ICGM 2013 – International Conference on Gender and Migration: Critical Issues and Policy Implications, Marmara University, Sultanahmet Campus, Istanbul, Turkey.

Deniz, A., & Özgür, E. M. (2013). The Russian brides in Antalya: From migration to marriage, from marriage to migration [Extended abstract]. *Turkish Journal of Sociology, 27*(3), 167–175.

Deniz, A., & Özgür, E. M. (2014). A migration system formation based on tourism between Russia and Turkey (Antalya) / Rusya ile Türkiye arasında turizme dayalı bir göç sistemi oluşumu. *Ege Coğrafya Dergisi (Aegean Geographical Journal), 23*(2), 1–18.

Deniz, A., & Özgür, E. M. (2020). Mixed marriage and transnational marriage migration in the grip of political economy: Russian–Turkish case. *Journal of Population and Social Studies, 28*(4), 348–366.

Deniz, A., & Özgür, E. M. (2022). Local, institutional, or transnational? Social networks of Russian marriage migrants in Turkey. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 29*(2), 347–363.

Donato, K. M., Gabaccia, D., Holdaway, J., Manalansan, M., & Pessar, P. R. (2006). A glass half full? Gender in migration studies. *International Migration Review, 40*(1), 3–26.

Drobizheva, L. M. (1981). *Spiritual unity of the peoples of the USSR: A historical and sociological essay on interethnic relations* [In Russian]. Mysl'.

Eder, M., Yakovlev, A., & Çarkoglu, A. (2003). *Suitcase trade between Turkey and Russia: Microeconomics and institutional structure*. Moscow State University – Higher School of Economics.

Ehrenreich, B., & Hochschild, A. R. (2003). *Global woman: Nannies, maids and sex workers in the new economy*. Granta.

Eisenstein, Z. R. (Ed.). (1979). *Capitalist patriarchy and the case for socialist feminism*. NYU Press.

Engin, C., Hürman, H., & Harvey, K. (2020). Marriage and family in Turkey: Trends and attitudes. In R. Schoen (Ed.), *International handbook on the demography of marriage and the family* (pp. 105–119). Springer.

Erel, U. (2009). *Migrant women transforming citizenship: Life stories from Britain and Germany*. Ashgate.

Erel, U. (2010). Migrating cultural capital: Bourdieu in migration studies. *Sociology, 44*(4), 642–660.

Faist, T. (2000). Transnationalization in international migration: Implications for the study of citizenship and culture. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 23*(2), 189–222.

Farrell, B., VandeVusse, A., & Ocobock, A. (2012). Family change and the state of family sociology. *Current Sociology, 60*(3), 283–301.

Fox, G. L., & McBride Murry, V. (2000). Gender and families: Feminist perspectives and family research. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 62*(4), 1160–1172.

Gabaccia, D. (1994). *From the other side: Women, gender & immigrant life in the U.S., 1820–1990*. Indiana University Press.

Gazioğlu Terzi, E. (2022). The recent history of the women's movements in Turkey. *Journal of Social and Humanities Sciences Research, 9*(86), 1525–1532.

Geertz, C. (1973). *The interpretation of cultures*. Basic Books.

Glick Schiller, N., Basch, L., & Blanc-Szanton, C. (1992). Transnationalism: A new analytic framework for understanding migration. *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences, 645*(1), 1–24.

Goffman, E. (1956). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. University of Edinburgh, Social Sciences Research Centre.

Gold, S. J. (1995). Gender and social capital among Israeli immigrants in Los Angeles. *Diaspora, 4*(3), 267–301.

Gottfried, H. (1998). Beyond patriarchy? Theorising gender and class. *Sociology, 32*(3), 467–483.

Green, N. L. (2012). Changing paradigms in migration studies: From men to women to gender. *Gender & History, 24*(3), 782–798.

Gülçür, L., & İlkkaracan, P. (2002). The "Natasha" experience: Migrant sex workers from the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe in Turkey. *Women's Studies International Forum, 25*(4), 411–421.

Gunnarsson, E. (2017). Strategic femininity: Love and pragmatism in marriage migration. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 18*(4), 200–214.

Hagan, J., MacMillan, R., & Wheaton, B. (1996). New kid in town: Social capital and the life course effects of family migration on children. *American Sociological Review, 61*(3), 368–385.

Hao, L. (1994). *Kin support, welfare, and out-of-wedlock mothers*. Garland Publishing.

Hartmann, H. I. (1976). Capitalism, patriarchy, and job segregation by sex. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society, 1*(3), 137–169.

Hartsock, N. (1983). *Money, sex, and power: Toward a feminist historical materialism*. Longman.

Hasta, D., Deniz, A., Özgür, E. M., & Yüceşahin, M. M. (2014, May 16–17). Adaptation of Russians and Azerbaijanis to Antalya (Turkey). Paper presented at Oxford Migration Studies Society (OMSS) 2014 Annual Conference: Changing Global Realities – Migration, Movements, and Social Transformation, Kellogg College, University of Oxford.

Hondagneu-Sotelo, P., & Avila, E. (1997). "I'm here, but I'm there": The meanings of Latina transnational motherhood. *Gender and Society, 11*(5), 548–571.

Içduygu, A. (2001). *International migration in Turkey: The dynamics of migration in a regional context* [Report]. International Organization for Migration.

Içduygu, A. (2009). *International migration and human development in Turkey* (Human Development Research Paper 2009/52). United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Iontsev, V. A., Ryazantsev, S. V., & Iontseva, S. V. (2016). New trends and forms of emigration from Russia [In Russian]. *Ekonomika Regiona, 12*(2), 499–509.

Jawad, H., & Elmali-Karakaya, A. (2020). Interfaith marriages in Islam from a woman's perspective: Turkish women's interfaith marriage practices in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 40*(1), 128–147.

Joy, M., Game, A., & Toshniwal, B. (2020). Rethinking Bourdieu: Gender, social space and migration. *Journal of Sociology, 56*(4), 707–724.

Kandiyoti, D. (1988). Bargaining with patriarchy. *Gender & Society, 2*(3), 274–290.

Kandiyoti, D. (2019). The triple role of the state in gender politics: Turkey's new patriarchy. *Social Politics, 26*(3), 338–344.

Kaşka, S. (2006). The new international migration and migrant women in Turkey: The case of Moldovan domestic workers. *MiReKoc Research Project Report*, 85–115.

Kazmina, O. E. (2009). *The Russian Orthodox Church and the new religious situation in Russia: The ethno-confessional dimension of the problem* [In Russian]. Lomonosov Moscow State University.

Keesing, R. M. (1974). Theories of culture. *Annual Review of Anthropology, 3*, 73–97.

Kim, J. (2018). Migration-facilitating capital: A Bourdieusian theory of international migration. *Sociological Theory, 36*(3), 262–288.

Kivisto, P. (2001). Theorizing transnational immigration: A critical review of current efforts. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 24*(4), 549–577.

Kofman, E. (2004). Family-related migration: A critical review of European studies. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 30*(2), 243–262.

Koğacıoğlu, D. (2005). Citizenship in context: Rethinking women's relationships to the law in Turkey. In F. Birtek & T. Dragonas (Eds.), *Citizenship and the nation-state in Greece and Turkey* (pp. 144–160). Routledge.

Koshulko, O. (2016). *Women from North move to South: Turkey's female movers from the former Soviet Union countries*. Centre for Europe, University of Warsaw.

Kosmachev, A. (2008). Russkie v Stambule: vzglyad iznutri (sotsiologicheskiy srez) [Russians in Istanbul: An inside view (A sociological snapshot)]. In *Russkie sootechestvenniki v Turtsii: istoriya i sovremennost'* [Russian compatriots in Turkey: History and modernity] (pp. 168, 172, 177–180). Istanbul.

Kuper, A. (1999). *Culture, the anthropologists' account*. Harvard University Press.

Kurtuluş, M., Özdemir, S., Karbeyaz, K., Özkök, M. S., & Karaarslan, B. (2024). Femicide and suspicious female deaths in Turkey: The need for the Istanbul Convention. *Journal of Forensic and Legal Medicine, 104*, 102040.

Levitt, P. (1998). Social remittances: Migration driven local-level forms of cultural diffusion. *International Migration Review, 32*(4), 926–948.

Levitt, P. (2002). Transnational migration: Taking stock and future directions. *Global Networks, 1*(3), 195–216.

Levitt, P., & Schiller, N. G. (2004). Conceptualizing simultaneity: A transnational social field perspective on society. *International Migration Review, 38*(3), 1002–1039.

Li, S. (2016). The construct validity of language aptitude: A meta-analysis. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 38*(4), 801–842.

Lourie, S. V. (2018). Interethnic marriages as part of the Soviet state script: A sociocultural approach. *Social Sciences and Contemporary World, 2018*(3), 108–121.

Lutz, H. (2008). *Migration and domestic work: A European perspective on a global theme*. Ashgate.

Madianou, M., & Miller, D. (2012). Polymedia: Towards a new theory of digital media in interpersonal communication. *International Journal of Cultural Studies, 16*(2), 169–187.

Mahler, S. J., & Pessar, P. R. (2001). Gendered geographies of power: Analyzing gender across transnational spaces. *Identities, 7*(4), 441–459.

Mahler, S. J., & Pessar, P. R. (2006). Gender matters: Ethnographers bring gender from the periphery to the core of migration studies. *International Migration Review, 40*(1), 27–63.

McCall, L. (2005). The complexity of intersectionality. *Signs, 30*(3), 1771–1800.

Merali, Y. (2008). Unregistered marriages and gendered citizenship: Moral gatekeeping in Finland's immigration policy. *Finnish Journal of Ethnicity and Migration, 3*(1), 20–28.

Mezentseva, B. (1992). Equal opportunities in employment or "protective" measures: Women facing a choice [In Russian]. In Z. Khotkina (Ed.), *Women and social policy* (pp. 23–48). ISEPN RAN.

Miller, D. (2012). *Consumption and its consequences*. Polity.

Miller, D., Costa, E., Haynes, N., et al. (2016). *How the world changed social media*. UCL Press.

Miller, D., Costa, E., Haynes, N., et al. (2021). *The global smartphone: Beyond a youth technology*. UCL Press.

Millett, K. (1969). *Sexual politics*. Doubleday.

Mira, H. (2020). Patriarchal culture and women's vulnerability: A study of marriage migrants. *Journal of International Women's Studies, 21*(1), 4–15.

Mohanty, C. T. (1984). Under Western eyes: Feminist scholarship and colonial discourses. *Boundary 2, 12/13*, 333–358.

Mohanty, C. T. (2003). "Under Western eyes" revisited: Feminist solidarity through anticapitalist struggles. *Signs, 28*(2), 499–535.

Moore, H. (1988). *Feminism and anthropology*. University of Minnesota Press.

Moret, J., Andrikopoulos, A., & Dahinden, J. (2019). Contesting categories: Cross-border marriages from the perspectives of the state, spouses and researchers. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 45*(14), 2689–2705.

Morokvašić, M. (1984). Birds of passage are also women…. *International Migration Review, 18*(4), 886–907.

Morokvašić, M. (1987). *Jugoslawische Frauen: Die Emigration – und danach*. Stroemfeld, Roter Stern.

Morokvašić, M. (2007). Migration, gender, empowerment. In I. Lenz, C. Ullrich, & B. Fersch (Eds.), *Gender orders unbound? Globalisation, restructuring and reciprocity* (pp. 69–97). Barbara Budrich Publishers.

Morokvašić, M. (2014). Gendering migration: Women and mobility in the 21st century. *Migracijske i etničke teme, 30*(3), 355–378.

Narynbaev, A. I. (1966). Experience of a sociological study of interethnic marriage [In Russian]. In *Nations and national relations* (pp. 65–79). Ilim.

Nock, S. L. (1995). Commitment and dependency in marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 57*(2), 503–514.

Oishi, N. (2005). *Women in motion*. Stanford University Press.

Ortega, J., & Hergovich, P. (2017). The strength of absent ties: Social integration via online dating. *SSRN Electronic Journal*.

Öztürkmen, A. (2013). The women's movement under Ottoman and Republican rule: A historical reappraisal. *Journal of Women's History, 25*(4), 255–264.

Ozyegin, G. (2018). Rethinking patriarchy through unpatriarchal male desires. In J. W. Scott, C. R. McCann, & C. R. Sassler (Eds.), *Gender reckonings* (pp. 233–253). New York University Press.

Parcel, T. L., & Menaghan, E. G. (1994). Early parental work, family social capital, and early childhood outcomes. *American Journal of Sociology, 99*(4), 972–1009.

Parreñas, R. S. (2001). *Servants of globalization: Women, migration, and domestic work*. Stanford University Press.

Parreñas, R. S. (2011). *Illicit flirtations: Labor, migration and sex trafficking in Tokyo*. Stanford University Press.

Patil, V. (2013). From patriarchy to intersectionality: A transnational feminist assessment of how far we've really come. *Signs, 38*(4), 847–867.

Pellander, S. (2015). "An acceptable marriage": Marriage migration and moral gatekeeping in Finland. *Journal of Family Issues, 36*(11), 1472–1489.

Piper, N. (Ed.). (2008). *New perspectives on gender and migration: Livelihoods, rights and entitlements*. Routledge.

Pollert, A. (1996). Gender and class revisited; or, the poverty of "patriarchy." *Sociology, 30*(4), 639–659.

Portes, A. (1998). Social capital: Its origins and applications in modern sociology. *Annual Review of Sociology, 24*, 1–24.

Posadskaya, A. (1996). Women's studies in Russia: Perspectives of a new vision [In Russian]. In M. Malysheva (Ed.), *Gender aspects of social transformation* (pp. 11–24). ISEPN RAN.

Puri, S., Adams, V., Ivey, S., & Nachtigall, R. (2011). "There is such a thing as too many daughters, but not too many sons": A qualitative study of son preference and fetal sex selection among Indian immigrants in the United States. *Social Science & Medicine, 72*(7), 1169–1176.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.

Reed-Danahay, D. (2022). *Bourdieu and social space: Mobilities, trajectories, emplacement*. Berghahn Books.

Reiterer, S. M., Hu, X., Sumathi, T. A., & Singh, N. C. (2013). Biological foundations of language aptitude: From individual differences to second language acquisition. *Language Learning, 63*(S1), 1–44.

Rimashevskaya, N. (2006). Reforming the social sphere in the context of gender relations [In Russian]. In *Gender as a tool of understanding and transforming society* (pp. 58–69). ROO MCGI; Soltex.

Rumbaut, R. G. (1977). Ties that bind: Immigration and immigrant families in the United States. In A. Booth, A. C. Crouter, & N. Landale (Eds.), *Immigration and the family: Research and policy on US immigrants* (pp. 3–45). Erlbaum.

Ryan, L. (2007). Migrant women, social networks, and motherhood: The experiences of Irish nurses in Britain. *Sociology, 41*(2), 295–312.

Ryan, L., Sales, R., Tilki, M., & Siara, B. (2008). Social networks, social support and social capital: The experiences of recent Polish migrants in London. *Sociology, 42*(4), 672–690.

Sabieva, L. Kh. (1979). *Interethnic marriages and the family as a reflection of a new type of national relations* (Candidate of Historical Sciences dissertation abstract) [In Russian]. Moscow State University Press.

Sam, D. L., & Berry, J. W. (2010). Acculturation: When individuals and groups of different cultural backgrounds meet. *Perspectives on Psychological Science, 5*(4), 472–481.

Satanovsky, E., & Starodubtsev, I. (2023). *Turkish dialogues. Global politics as it is – without tolerance or censorship* [In Russian]. Eksmo.

Schiff, M. (1992). Social capital, labor mobility, and welfare: The impact of uniting states. *Rationality and Society, 4*(2), 157–175.

Scott, J. C. (1985). *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance*. Yale University Press.

Scott, J. C. (1990). *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts*. Yale University Press.

Shinozaki, K. (2015). *Migrant citizenship from below: Family, migration, and integration in Germany*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Sinke, S. M. (2006). Gender and migration: Historical perspectives. *International Migration Review, 40*(1), 82–103.

Sivoplyasova, S. Yu. (2018). "Russian wives" in the Middle East: Contemporary features of marriage migration. In *Women and men in migration processes of the past and present: Proceedings of the 12th International Scientific Conference of the Russian Association of Researchers in Women's History and the Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, RAS* (pp. 474–477). IEA RAS.

Sivoplyasova, S. Yu. (2019). Marriage migration of Russian women: Regulatory possibilities. In *Proceedings of the scientific conference "Gender relations in the contemporary world: Governance, economy, social policy"* (p. 298). Moscow–Ivanovo–Plyos.

Skaptadóttir, U. D. (2019). Transnational practices and migrant capital: The case of Filipino women in Iceland. *Social Inclusion, 7*(4), 211–220.

Skehan, P. (1998). *A cognitive approach to language learning*. Oxford University Press.

Soroko, E. L. (2014). Ethnically mixed married couples in the Russian Federation [In Russian]. *Demographic Review, 1*(4), 96–123.

Starodubtsev, I. (2017). *Russia and Turkey: 500 years of uneasy neighbourhood* [In Russian]. E Publishing House.

Susokolov, A. A. (1987). *International families in the USSR* [In Russian]. Nauka.

Svašek, M. (2010). On the move: Emotions and human mobility. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 36*(6), 865–880.

Tavcer, S. (2006). The trafficking of women for sexual exploitation: The situation from the Republic of Moldova to Western Europe. *Police Practice and Research, 7*(2), 135–147.

Temkina, A., & Zdravomyslova, E. (2014). Gender's crooked path: Feminism confronts Russian patriarchy [In Russian]. *Current Sociology, 62*(2), 253–270.

Terentyeva, L. N. (1974). Formation of ethnic self-consciousness in nationally mixed families [In Russian]. Paper presented at the 8th World Congress of Sociology, Toronto, Canada. Institute of Sociological Research, Soviet Sociological Association.

Therborn, G. (2004). *Between sex and power: Family in the world 1900–2000*. Polity Press.

Timmerman, C., Lodewyckx, I., & Wets, J. (2009). Marriage at the intersection between tradition and globalization: Turkish marriage migration between Emirdag and Belgium (1989–2008). *The History of the Family, 14*(2), 232–244.

Toksöz, G., & Ünlütürk Ulutaş, Ç. (2012). Is migration feminized? A gender and ethnicity based review of the literature on irregular migration to Turkey. In *Turkey, migration and the EU* (Vol. 5, pp. 85–111). Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI).

Toksöz, G., & Ünlütürk Ulutaş, Ç. (2012). Is migration feminized? A gender- and ethnicity-based review of the literature on irregular migration to Turkey. In S. P. Elitok & T. Straubhaar (Eds.), *Turkey, migration and the EU: Potentials, challenges and opportunities* (pp. 85–111). Hamburg University Press.

Tyldum, G. (2013). Dependence and human trafficking in the context of transnational marriage. *International Migration, 51*(4), 103–115.

Uğur-Çınar, M. (2017). Embedded neopatrimonialism: Patriarchy and democracy in Turkey. *Social Politics: International Studies in Gender, State & Society, 24*(3), 324–343.

Ulutaş, B., & Kahya Hızarcı, D. (2024). Post-migration social adaptation and normalisation: educational needs of Syrian women in Türkiye. *Studies in the Education of Adults*, 1–19.

Van Hear, N. (2010). Theories of migration and social change. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 36*(10), 1531–1536.

Vertovec, S. (2009). *Transnationalism* (1st ed.). Routledge.

Visyagin, I. A. (2023). The influence of ethnically mixed marriages on the demographic situation in Russia [In Russian]. *Vestnik Nauki, 4*(5/62).

Voronina, O. (1988). A woman in a "man's" society [In Russian]. *Sociological Research, 2*, 104–110.

Voronina, O. (1993). Woman and socialism: An attempt at feminist analysis [In Russian]. In *Feminism: East – West – Russia* (pp. 205–225). Nauka.

Walby, S. (1989). Theorising patriarchy. *Sociology, 23*(2), 213–234.

Williams, L. (Ed.). (2010). *Global marriage: Cross-border marriage migration in global context*. Palgrave Macmillan.

Wong, P. C. M., & Ettlinger, M. (2011). Predictors of language learning success: What we know and what we don't. *Topics in Cognitive Science, 3*(1), 3–9.

Wray, H. (2011). *Regulating marriage migration into the UK: A stranger in the home*. Ashgate.

Yeung, W. J. J., & Mu, Z. (2019). Migration and marriage in Asian contexts. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies, 46*(14), 2863–2879.

Yükseker, D. (2004). Trust and gender in a transnational market: The public culture of Laleli, Istanbul. *Public Culture, 16*(1), 47–65.

Zdravomyslova, E. A., & Temkina, A. A. (2015). *12 lectures on the sociology of gender* [In Russian]. European University at Saint Petersburg Press.

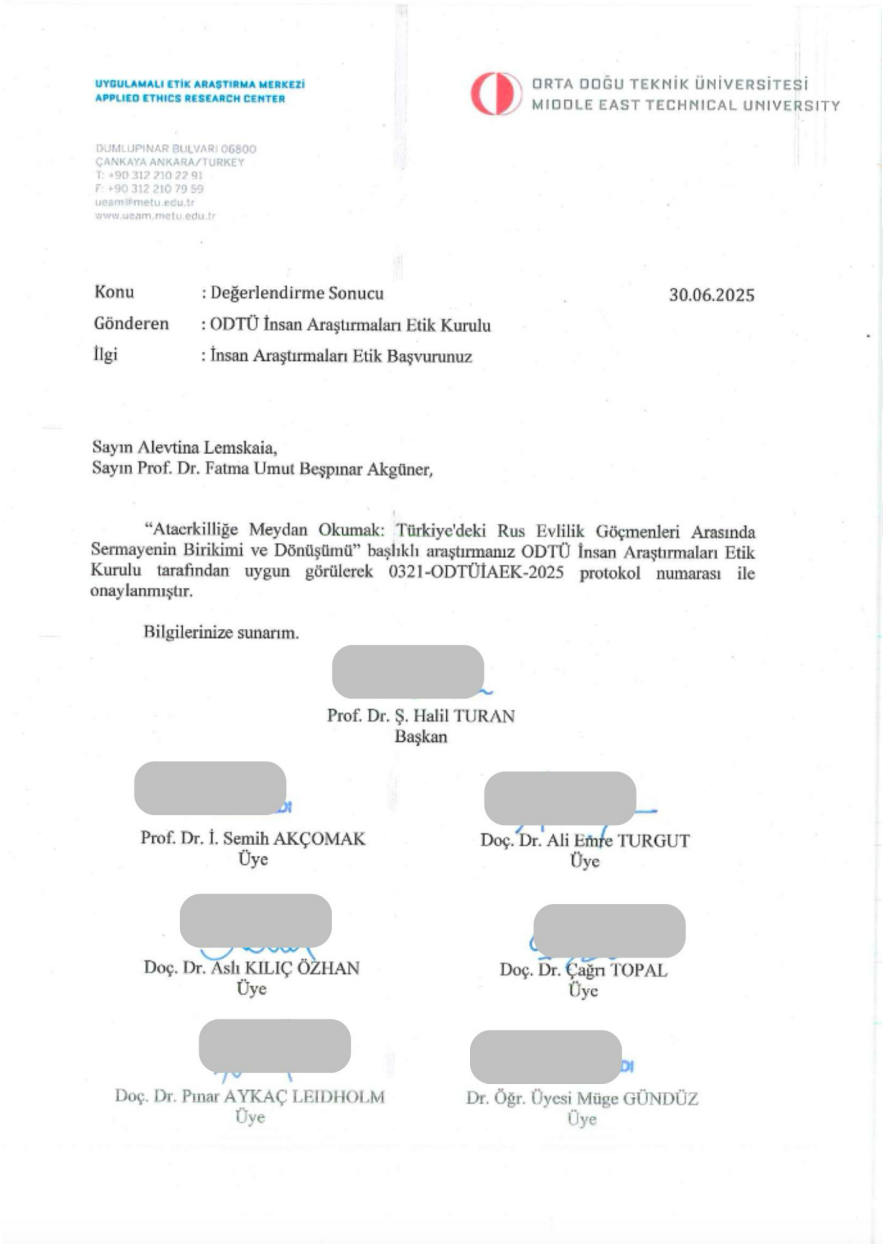
Zhidkova, T. (2016). *Media representations of migrant sex workers from former Soviet Union countries to Turkey* (Doctoral dissertation). İhsan Doğramacı Bilkent University.

Zhidkova, T. V. (2017). Female migration from former Soviet Union countries to Turkey. *Demography. Sociology. Economics, 3*(1), 7–20.

Zhidkova, T. V. (2017). The problem of sexual exploitation of women from former Soviet Union countries in Turkey. *Demography. Sociology. Economics, 3*(1), 21–34.

APPENDICES

A. APPROVAL OF THE METU HUMAN SUBJECTS ETHICS COMMITTEE



UYGULAMALI ETİK ARAŞTIRMA MERKEZİ
APPLIED ETHICS RESEARCH CENTER

DUMLUPINAR BULVARI 06800
ÇANKAYA ANKARA/TURKEY
T: +90 312 210 22 91
F: +90 312 210 79 59
ueam@metu.edu.tr
www.ueam.metu.edu.tr

ORTA DOĞU TEKNİK ÜNİVERSİTESİ
MIDDLE EAST TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY

Konu : Değerlendirme Sonucu 30.06.2025
Gönderen : ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu
İlgi : İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Başvurunuz

Sayın Alevtina Lemskaia,
Sayın Prof. Dr. Fatma Umut Beşpınar Akgüner,

"Ataerkilliğe Meydan Okumak: Türkiye'deki Rus Evlilik Göçmenleri Arasında Sermayenin Birikimi ve Dönüşümü" başlıklı araştırmanız ODTÜ İnsan Araştırmaları Etik Kurulu tarafından uygun görülerek 0321-ODTÜİAEK-2025 protokol numarası ile onaylanmıştır.

Bilgilerinize sunarım.

Prof. Dr. Ş. Halil TURAN
Başkan

Prof. Dr. İ. Semih AKÇOMAK
Üye

Doç. Dr. Ali Emre TURGUT
Üye

Doç. Dr. Aslı KILIÇ ÖZHAN
Üye

Doç. Dr. Çağrı TOPAL
Üye

Doç. Dr. Pınar AYKAÇ LEIDHOLM
Üye

Dr. Öğr. Üyesi Müge GÜNDÜZ
Üye

B. INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Kişisel Bilgiler ve Göç Bağlamı

1. Tam adınız ve yaşınız nedir?
2. Nerede doğdunuz?
3. Şu anda nerede yaşıyorsunuz?
4. Türkiye'de kaç yıldır yaşıyorsunuz?
5. Türkiye'ye taşınmadan önce bu ülkeyi ziyaret etmiş miydiniz? Hangi amaçla?
6. Eşinizle nasıl ve nerede tanıştınız?
7. Eşiniz aslen nerelidir?
8. Eşinizle tanışmadan önce yabancı biriyle evlenmeyi planlıyor muydunuz?

Sermaye Dönüşümü

Ekonomik Sermaye

9. Eğitim durumunuz nedir? Nerede ve hangi alanda eğitim aldınız?
10. Türkiye'ye taşınmadan önce çalışıyor muydunuz? Hangi pozisyonda ve hangi şirkette? Geliriniz bağımsız yaşamaya yeterli miydi?
11. Türkiye'ye taşınma süreci nasıl gerçekleşti: kimin girişimiyle oldu, masrafları kim karşıladı, tek başınıza mı yoksa partnerinizle birlikte mi taşındınız?
12. Şu anda çalışıyor musunuz?
13. Türkiye'de iş bulma ya da mesleki gelişim açısından zorluk yaşadınız mı?
14. Geliriniz hobilerinizle ilgilenmek veya özgürce harcama yapmak için yeterli mi?
15. Partneriniz size maddi destek sağlıyor mu? Hangi şekillerde?
16. Kirada mı yaşıyorsunuz yoksa ev size mi ya da partnerinize mi ait?

Sosyal Sermaye

17. Türkiye'ye taşındıktan sonra sosyal etkileşim eksikliği hissettiniz mi?

18. Türk arkadaşlarınız ya da tanıdıklarınız var mı?
19. Türkiye'deki Rusça konuşan toplulukla iletişiminizi sürdürüyor musunuz?
20. Sizin için Rusça konuşanlarla mı yoksa Türklerle mi arkadaşlık kurmak daha kolay?
21. Türkiye'de arkadaşlarınızla birlikte vakit geçirirken neler yapıyorsunuz? Hangi etkinliklerde bulunuyorsunuz?
22. Rusya'daki aileniz, arkadaşlarınız ya da eski iş arkadaşlarınızla iletişiminiz devam ediyor mu?
23. Bir sorunla ya da zor bir durumla karşılaştığınızda genelde kiminle konuşuyorsunuz?

Kültürel Sermaye

24. Rusya'da edindiğiniz hangi bilgi veya beceriler Türkiye'de işinize yaradı?
25. Türkiye'de geçersiz kalan bilgi ya da becerileriniz oldu mu?
26. Türkiye'de yaşamak için yeni bir şey öğrenmek zorunda kaldınız mı?
27. Partnerinizle iletişim kurarken çoğunlukla hangi dili kullanıyorsunuz?
28. Türkçe öğrendiniz mi? Nasıl çalıştınız, şu anki seviyeniz nedir?
29. Partnerinizle rahatça iletişim kurabiliyor ve günlük görevleri Türkçe ile çözebiliyor musunuz?
30. Türkiye'de boş zamanlarınızı nasıl geçiriyorsunuz? Kendi başınıza neler yapmaktan keyif alıyorsunuz?
31. Partnerinizin sizinle gurur duyduğu veya sıkça vurguladığı kişisel yetenekleriniz, nitelikleriniz, hobileriniz ya da yaratıcı ilgi alanlarınız var mı?

Sembolik Sermaye

32. Bir ilişkide ya da toplumda değerli ve saygı duyulan biri olduğunuzu ne hissettirir?

33. Bu değerde hissedilme durumu sizin için Rusya'da ve Türkiye'de nasıl farklılaşıyor?

34. Türkiye'de size yönelik tutumu nasıl algılıyorsunuz: saygı görüyor musunuz, görmezden mi geliniyorsunuz, yoksa yüzeysel bir ilgi mi söz konusu?

35. Önyargılı veya kalıp yargılara dayalı muameleyle karşılaştınız mı? Örnek verebilir misiniz?

36. Partneriniz, ailesi, arkadaş çevresi ya da kamu kurumlarıyla olan etkileşimlerinizde milliyetiniz veya cinsiyetiniz nedeniyle ayrımcılık hissettiniz mi?

37. Rusya'da veya Türkiye'de açık bir saygısızlık veya şiddet deneyiminiz oldu mu?

38. Partneriniz, ailesi, çevresi veya kamu kurumlarıyla ilişkinizde milliyet veya cinsiyet temelinde ayrımcılığa uğradığınızı hissediyor musunuz?

Ataerkil Beklentiler ve Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rolleri

39.Partnerinizin bir kadın olarak size yönelik ne tür beklenti veya taleplerini fark ettiniz?

40. Ailenizde/ilişkinizde hangi ev işleri "kadına ait", hangileri "erkeğe ait" olarak görülüyor?

41. Partnerinizin ya da çevrenizdekilerin davranışlarınız, eş olarak sorumluluklarınız ya da dış görünüşünüzle ilgili beklenti veya baskı hissettiniz mi?

42. Partnerinizle hayatın hangi konularını gerçekten paylaştığınızı düşünüyorsunuz? Hangi alanlarda daha çok bağ kuruyorsunuz, hangilerinde ise genellikle gerginlik ya da anlaşmazlık yaşanıyor?

43. Rusya'daki ailenizde kadınlardan ne beklenirdi? Türkiye'ye taşınmadan önce evlilikte kadının rolünü ve sorumluluklarını nasıl hayal ederdiniz?

İlişkilerde Öznellik ve Güç Dinamikleri

44. Hayatınızın hangi önemli alanlarında partnerinizin onayı veya katılımı olmadan bağımsız kararlar alabiliyorsunuz? Kendi başınıza karar aldığınızda ne oluyor?

45. Partneriniz kişisel kararlarınıza (örneğin dış görünüşünüz, kıyafetleriniz, kendinizi nasıl ifade ettiğiniz) müdahale ediyor mu? Eğer ediyorsa, bu sizi nasıl hissettiriyor?

46. Aile bütçesini kim kontrol ediyor? Ortak bütçeniz var mı? Parayı bağımsız şekilde yönetebiliyor musunuz? Son kararı kim veriyor?

Travma, Duygusal Deneyimler ve Destek

47. Türkiye'ye taşındıktan sonra karşılaştığınız kişisel zorluklar nelerdi?

48. Ev içi yaşantıda ne tür zorluklarla karşılaştınız?

49. Özellikle zorlandığınız, en çok güçlük çektiğiniz dönemler oldu mu?

50. Partnerinizle iletişimde zorlandığınızda bu sizi nasıl etkiliyor? Kendinizi nasıl hissediyorsunuz? Partnerinizin tepkisi nasıl oluyor?

51. Partneriniz tarafından tam olarak anlaşılamadığınızı düşündüğünüz konular var mı? Bu konular nelerdir ve partnerinizin tepkisi nasıldır?

52. Türkçeyi yeterince iyi ifade edemediğinizde partneriniz nasıl tepki veriyor?

53. Partneriniz sizi herhangi bir şekilde kısıtlıyor mu (duygusal olarak, dış görünüş, giyim, hareket özgürlüğü, kimlerle görüştüğünüz veya neler yaptığınız konularında)?

54. Partnerinizin sizi eleştirdiğini hissediyor musunuz? Bu eleştirilerin nedeni nedir? Yapıcı mı? Bu konuda nasıl hissediyorsunuz?

55. Partnerinizle olan çatışmaları genellikle nasıl çözüyorsunuz?

56. Ailenizden veya yakın çevrenizden aldığınız hangi değerler, davranışlar veya inançlar ilişkiler kurmanızda ve aile yaşantısını sürdürmenizde etkili oldu? Bunlar partnerinizle ilişkinizde yardımcı oldu mu?

57. Aile yaşantısındaki veya Türkiye'deki zorluklarla başa çıkmanıza kim ya da ne yardımcı oldu? Aileden gelen deneyim mi etkili oldu, yoksa başka kişiler ya da destek kaynaklarına mı başvurdunuz?

Kişisel Değişimler ve Uyum Stratejileri

58. Şu anda Türkiye'de kendinizi evinizde gibi hissediyor musunuz?

59. Taşınmadan önceki hayatınızda en çok neyi özlüyorsunuz?

60. Yaşadığınız yeri değiştirmek ister misiniz?

61. Türkiye'de yaşamın en zor yanı neydi?

62. Zorlukların üstesinden gelmenizi sağlayan kişisel özellikleriniz veya alışkanlıklarınız nelerdi?

63. Türkiye'ye taşındıktan sonra sizde ne gibi değişiklikler oldu?

64. Her şey planlandığı gibi gitmediğinde nasıl stratejiler izliyorsunuz?

65. Türkiye'ye evlilik amacıyla taşınmayı planlayan Rus kadınlara ne tavsiye ederdiniz? Göç öncesi ve sonrası neler yapılmamalı?

C. TURKISH SUMMARY / TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Rus kadınlarının evlilik yoluyla Türkiye'ye göçü, farklı ataerkillik biçimlerinin kesişiminde ve çeşitli sermaye türlerinin dönüşümü ekseninde incelenmektedir. Rus kadınlarının Türkiye'deki konumu uzun zamandır hem hayranlık hem de önyargılar uyandırmıştır; özellikle 1990'ların toplumsal tahayyülünden miras kalan stereotipler, bu kadınlara yönelik algıları etkilemeye devam etmektedir. Bu kadınların hayatlarını şekillendiren temel güçlerden biri, küresel ölçekte yaygın olmakla birlikte her toplumda tarihsel olarak özgül biçimler alan ataerkilliktir. Rusya'da patriyarkal normlar ve toplumsal cinsiyet rolleriyle yetişen bu kadınlar, Türkiye'de farklı kültürel kodlara dayalı başka bir ataerkillik düzeniyle karşılaşmaktadır. Bu durum, bir güç ve toplumsal ilişki sisteminden farklı bir sisteme geçiş anlamına gelen özgün bir deneyim yaratmaktadır; kadınların beraberlerinde getirdikleri toplumsal ve kültürel birikimler yeni bağlamda hem kaynak hem de kısıt haline gelebilmektedir. İşte ataerkil düzenlerin farklı tezahürleri arasındaki bu gerilim ve bunun göçmen kadınların yaşamlarına etkileri, çalışmanın çıkış noktasını oluşturmuştur.

Araştırma, bu deneyimin tek bir boyutuna odaklanmak yerine birbiriyle bağlantılı birkaç boyutu birden ele almaktadır: ataerkil yapıların farklı biçimleri arasındaki karşılaşma ve geçiş; kadınların beraberinde getirdikleri farklı sermaye (Bourdieu, 1986) türlerinin (ekonomik, sosyal, kültürel, simgesel) dönüşümü, kaybı veya yeniden kazanımı; ve kadınların bu değişimleri yönetmedeki öznel güçleri, stratejileri yani "kadın ajansı" (kadınların özne olarak eyleyebilme kapasitesi). Bu kapsamlı yaklaşım sayesinde, kadınların toplumsal hiyerarşilerle nasıl pazarlık ettikleri, yaşamlarını yeni koşullara nasıl uyarlayıp yeniden inşa ettikleri ve kaynaklarını yeni bir çevrede nasıl seferber ettikleri incelenebilmektedir. Kuramsal çerçeve olarak Pierre Bourdieu'nün sermaye kuramı temel alınmıştır; ekonomik, kültürel, sosyal ve simgesel sermaye türlerinin göç sürecinde nasıl dönüştüğü ve bu süreçlere kadınların ajanslarının nasıl etki ettiğine odaklanılmıştır. Böylelikle, Rus kadınlarının evlilik yoluyla göç deneyiminin ne tek taraflı bir mağduriyet hikâyesine ne de yalnızca bireysel bir "daha

iyi yaşam arayışı"na indirgenemeyecek kadar karmaşık ve çok katmanlı bir süreç olduğu gösterilmektedir.

Metodolojik olarak çalışma nitel bir araştırma deseni izlemektedir. Temel veri toplama yöntemi olarak yarı-yapılandırılmış derinlemesine mülakatlar kullanılmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında, Rusya'da doğup büyümüş ve Türk erkeklerle evlilik yaparak Türkiye'ye göç etmiş toplam 29 kadınla derinlemesine görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Katılımcılar yaş, eğitim ve sosyo-kültürel arka planları ile Türkiye'de yaşadıkları süre bakımından çeşitlilik göstermektedir. Bu çeşitlilik, farklı patriyarkal ve göç bağlamlarında sermaye biriktirme, yitirme veya yeniden dönüştürme süreçlerinin daha kapsamlı anlaşılmasını sağlamaktadır. Görüşmeler, kadınların Rusya'dan Türkiye'ye patriyarkal geçiş sürecini nasıl algıladıkları, bu sürece uyum sağlamak için hangi stratejileri geliştirdikleri ve bu stratejilerin soyut bir "kültür"den ziyade somut patriyarkal ilişkilere karşı birer tepki olarak nasıl değerlendirilebileceğini anlamaya yönelik sorular etrafında yürütülmüştür.

Araştırmacının konumu da metodolojinin önemli bir parçasıdır. Kendisi de Türkiye'de yaşayan Rus bir kadın olan araştırmacı, bu içerden deneyimi araştırma sürecine yansıtarak otobiyografik bir perspektif benimsemiştir. Araştırma sürecinde katılımcı gözlem teknikleriyle gündelik yaşama dair notlar tutulmuş, elde edilen nitel veriler anlatı analizi ve bağlamsal analiz yöntemleri ile çözümlenmiştir. Bu yöntemler, her bir kadının deneyimindeki ince nüansları yakalamaya olanak tanıyarak, patriyarkal yapıların gündelik yaşamda nasıl içselleştirilip hangi yollarla direnç gösterildiğini ortaya koymaya yardımcı olmuştur. Araştırmada etik onay alınmış, mahrem konuların incelenmesinde gizlilik ve hassasiyet ilkelerine titizlikle uyulmuştur. Araştırmacı, toplumsal cinsiyet ve göç olgusunu incelerken kendi önyargılarının ve konumunun farkında olarak refleksif bir yaklaşım sergilemiş, bu sayede hem güvenilirlik hem de etik açıdan sağlam bir yöntem izlenmiştir.

Görüşmeler, evlilik göçünün tek bir kalıba sığmayacak kadar çeşitli motivasyon ve hikâyeler barındırdığını göstermiştir. Bazı kadınlar göç etmeye önceden kararlı olup yabancı bir eş bulmak ya da kariyer imkânları peşinde planlı hareket etmişken, bazıları ise tamamen beklenmedik şekilde (örneğin tatilde başlayan bir ilişkiyle) kendilerini Türkiye'de bulmuştur. Karar süreçlerinde kişisel istekler, aşk ve duygusal bağlar,

iklim koşulları gibi etkenlerin yanı sıra Rusya'daki politik gelişmeler veya hamilelik gibi dış faktörler de rol oynamıştır. Yani bireysel inisiyatif (ajans) ile dış etkenler iç içe geçmektedir; bir yandan pek çok kadın göç kararında aktif rol oynarken diğer yandan partnerleriyle etkileşim içinde veya dış baskılar altında bu kararlar olgunlaşmıştır. Dolayısıyla evlilik yoluyla göç, tek bir nedene indirgenemeyen, çok etkenli bir süreç olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Nitekim örneklemdeki çoğu kadının göç kararı ekonomik bir zorunluluktan kaynaklanmamış; aksine evlilik göçü genellikle ekonomik krizle değil, daha yüksek eğitimli ve maddi olarak kendi geçimini sağlayabilen kadınların farklı arayışları ile gerçekleşmiştir.

Çalışmanın önemli bulgularından biri, kadınların sahip oldukları farklı sermaye türlerinin (ekonomik, sosyal, kültürel, simgesel) göçle birlikte belirgin dönüşümlere uğramasıdır. Türkiye'ye yeni yerleştikleri dönemde pek çok katılımcı, göç öncesinde biriktirdikleri kaynakların değer kaybettiğini deneyimlemiştir. Örneğin ekonomik sermaye bağlamında, Rusya'da elde ettikleri eğitim, mesleki kariyer ve gelir gibi kazanımlar Türkiye'de başlangıçta geçerliliğini büyük ölçüde yitirmiştir. Diplomalar ve uzmanlıklar hemen tanınmadığı veya aktarılamadığı için, yasal engeller ve iş piyasasının koşulları nedeniyle birçok kadın ev hanımı rolüne çekilmek zorunda kalmıştır. Sadece az sayıda katılımcı, uzaktan çalışma imkânı veren veya uluslararası geçerliliği olan meslekleri sayesinde finansal bağımsızlığını koruyabilmiştir. Bu durum, sermayenin değerinin bağlama göre değiştiğini gösterir: Bourdieu'cü anlamda beceri ve yeterliklerin değeri içinde bulunulan toplumsal alana bağlıdır. Nitekim Erel (2010) de göçmenlerin kültürel sermayesinin, sırtlarında taşıyabilecekleri sabit bir "çantadan" ziyade, gittikleri ülkede yeniden kodlanmaya ve tanınmaya ihtiyaç duyan bir birikim olduğunu belirtmektedir. Veriler de bunu doğrulamaktadır: Birçok profesyonel kadın, Türkiye'ye geldikten sonra ekonomik sermayelerini doğrudan gelire dönüştürmek yerine sosyal veya kültürel sermayeye çevirmeye yönelmişlerdir. Ücretli çalışamayan katılımcılar, emek ve zamanlarını doğrudan kazanca değil, sosyal bağlantılar kurmaya ve aile ilişkilerine yatırım yapmaya ayırmış; böylece uzun vadede mesleki becerilerini uygulayabilecekleri zemini hazırlamaya çalışmışlardır.

Göçle birlikte eski sermayelerdeki gerilemenin yanı sıra, yeni bağlama özgü bazı sermaye formları da önem kazanmaya başlamıştır. Örneğin dil yeterliği şeklinde

ortaya çıkan dilsel sermaye, Türkiye'deki yaşama uyumda kritik bir varlık haline gelmiştir. Türkçe öğrenip akıcı şekilde kullanabilenler, iş bulma ve sosyal çevre edinme konularında avantaj sağlarken, dil engelini aşamayanlar büyük ölçüde Rusça konuşulan çevrelerle sınırlı kalmıştır. Sosyal sermaye da göçün ilk aşamasında ciddi bir düşüş göstermiştir; kadınlar aşina oldukları destek ağlarını yitirerek yalnızlık ve izolasyon yaşamıştır. Bununla birlikte çoğu, zamanla sosyal ağlarını yeniden inşa etmeyi başarmıştır. Türkiye'deki diğer Rusça konuşan kişilerle dostluk toplulukları oluşturmuş, çevrimiçi gruplara katılmış ve yerli Türklerle de yeni ilişkiler geliştirmişlerdir. Bu yeni sosyal ağlar, duygusal destek, bilgi paylaşımı (hukuki haklar, sağlık hizmetleri, iş olanakları vb.) ve pratik yardım sağlayarak kadınların dayanıklılığını artırmıştır. Böylece sosyal sermaye, göçün hemen ardından neredeyse sıfır noktasına inse de, zamanla diaspora üyeleri ve yerel toplulukları kapsayacak şekilde genişleyen bir biçimde yeniden yapılanmıştır. Bourdieu (1979, 1980) ve Portes'in (1998) sosyal sermaye tanımlarında vurguladığı üzere, sosyal bağlar zaman ve güven yatırımı gerektiren bir kaynaktır; nitekim katılımcı kadınlar arkadaşlıklar kurmaya emek harcayarak bunun "temettülerini" aidiyet ve güven duygusu şeklinde geri almışlardır.

Kültürel sermaye bağlamında, katılımcıların birikimleri göç sonrasında "değerlendirilebilen" ve "değerlendirilemeyen" şeklinde iki kategoriye ayrılmıştır. Evrensel ve uyarlanabilir beceriler özellikle yararlı hale gelmiştir; örneğin bilgi işleme yeteneği, yabancı dil bilmek veya yeni beceriler öğrenmeye açıklık gibi özellikler Türkiye'de hayat kurarken işe yaramıştır. Katılımcıların eğitim düzeyi ve profesyonel birikimleri yeni anlamlar kazanmıştır: Kimi kadın, uzmanlık bilgisini doğrudan kullanamadığı için yeniden eğitim almayı seçmiş; yüksek eğitim düzeylerini bir temel olarak kullanarak Türkiye'de talep gören yeni beceriler edinmiştir. Buna karşılık, hukuk veya muhasebe gibi sadece kendi ülkesine özgü uzmanlık gerektiren bilgi ve beceriler atıl kalmıştır. Mesleki uzmanlık dışında, boş zaman etkinlikleri ve kişisel gelişim pratikleri de göçle sekteye uğramıştır. Özellikle küçük Türk şehirlerinde yaşayan bazı katılımcılar, tiyatro, atölye çalışmaları, arkadaşlarla entelektüel sohbetler gibi önceki kültürel uğraşlarına devam edememekten ötürü hayal kırıklığı dile getirmiştir. Zamanla bazıları alternatif yollar bulmuştur; örneğin çevrimiçi kurslara yönelme, okuma alışkanlığına ağırlık verme veya Türkiye'deki Rus topluluğu içinde

amatör klüpler düzenleme gibi yeniliklere gitmişlerdir. Bazı kadınlar ise önceki kültürel faaliyetlerinin geçici olarak "buzdolabına kaldırıldığını" ifade etmiştir. Bununla birlikte istisnasız tüm katılımcılar, yeni kültürel yeterlikler edinmek zorunda kalmıştır; Türk toplumunun norm ve geleneklerini, iletişim tarzlarını öğrenme ve Türk aile yapısının gerektirdiği eş ve gelin rollerine uyum sağlama gibi becerileri geliştirmişlerdir. Bu değişimler, Berry'nin (1997) göçü bir kültürleşme süreci olarak ele alan kuramını teyit etmektedir: En başarılı uyum stratejisi, kişinin kendi iç kültürel sermayesini korurken yerel grupla aktif etkileşime girmesidir (entegrasyon). Nitekim bu bulgu, Erel'in (2010) gözlemlerine paralel biçimde, göçmenlerin kültürel sermayesinin yok olmayıp göç ve toplumsal cinsiyet bağlamlarının etkisiyle yeniden örgütlendiğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Simgesel sermayedeki değişimler de birçok kadın için merkezi bir deneyim olmuştur. Araştırma, bir paradoks tespit etmektedir: Rusya'da belirli bir sosyal statüye sahip (örneğin başarılı bir mesleki kariyeri, tam ekonomik bağımsızlığı ve hatta mülkü olan) kadınlar, Türkiye'de özellikle ev hanımı konumuna geçtiklerinde geçici bir "görünmezlik" duygusu yaşayabilmektedir. Rusya'da kendilerine prestij kazandıran başarılarının dışarıdan tanınması neredeyse sıfıra inerken, bunun yanı sıra Türkiye'de "başarılı kadın" algısının farklı olması gibi dışsal önyargılar, onların simgesel sermayesini zedelemiştir. Bununla birlikte kadınlar eş zamanlı olarak kendilerine saygı ve değer sağlayan yeni kaynaklar da keşfetmiştir. Birçok katılımcı, annelik ve ev kadınlığı rollerinin Türkiye'de son derece saygın görüldüğünü vurgulayarak, toplumun kariyer konusunda daha az baskı yaptığını ama aile odaklı emeklerini takdir ettiğini belirtmiştir. Bazıları için bu odak değişimi rahatlatıcı olmuş; özel alanda aile içinde kendilerini gerçekleştirmek, memleketlerinde profesyonel rolleri sürdürdükleri zamana kıyasla daha huzurlu hissetmelerini sağlamıştır. Böylece göçmen kadının simgesel sermayesi bir düzlemden diğerine kaymıştır: Profesyonel kimliğiyle dış dünyadan eskisi kadar takdir görmese de, aile içinde bakım verici rolüyle daha fazla saygı görür hale gelmiştir. Elbette bu, yalnızca ailesi ve yakın çevresi tarafından değeri teslim edilen kadınlar için geçerlidir; buna karşılık, aşağılanma veya şiddet yaşayan kadınlar herhangi bir olumlu simgesel sermayeden yararlanamamış, daha ziyade içsel direnç ve özsaygı kaynaklarına tutunmak zorunda kalmıştır.

Genel olarak, araştırmanın ikinci temel bulgusu, göçün kadınların kaynak ve statülerinde başlangıçta sancılı bir kayıp yaratsa da zamanla aşılabilen bir dönüşüme yol açtığını göstermektedir. Başlangıçtaki gerileme, farklı sermaye biçimlerinin yitimiyle karakterize olurken, ardından gelen dönemde toparlanma ve dönüşüm gerçekleşmiş; yeni sermaye formları ve özsaygı kazanımı zeminleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Örneğin katılımcılar, zorlu bir dönemi geride bırakmış olmayı –ister kendi başlarına ister eş desteğiyle– bir başarı ölçütü olarak görüp bundan güç alabildiklerini belirtmişlerdir. Bu dinamik süreç, göçmenlerin zamanla göçe özgü sermaye biçimleri biriktirebildiğine dikkat çeken literatürle uyumludur (örneğin bkz. Kim, 2018).

Araştırmanın üçüncü önemli bulgusu, iki farklı ataerkil sistemin etkileşiminin kadınların hayatlarında oynadığı role ilişkindir. Rusya ve Türkiye'deki patriyarkal düzenler tarihsel ve kültürel açılardan farklılık göstermektedir. Katılımcı kadınlar, beklentilerini büyük ölçüde Sovyet sonrası dönemin ataerkil koşulları altında şekillendirmiştir; Sovyet ideolojisinden miras kalan resmi cinsiyet eşitliği söylemi mevcut olsa da, geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet normları güçlü biçimde varlığını sürdürmekte ancak kamusal söylemde üstü örtülü kalmaktadır. Türkiye'ye taşındıklarında ise daha açıktan kurumsallaşmış bir ataerkil yapı ile karşılaşmışlardır: Aile içindeki rollerin belirgin şekilde ayrıldığı, kültürel normlarca ve kimi zaman devlet politikalarınca desteklenen bir patriyarka söz konusudur. Bununla birlikte, Türk ataerkilliğinin tek biçimli olmadığı, bölgeden bölgeye, kentten kıra veya aileden aileye değişen tezahürleri olduğu vurgulanmalıdır. Araştırma, göç deneyiminin bu iki sistemi karşı karşıya getiren ve çatıştıran bir zemin oluşturduğunu göstermektedir. Kültürlerarası evliliklerin mahrem hayatında hem Rus hem Türk toplumsal cinsiyet kalıpları ortaya çıkmakta; bazen çatışmakta, bazen de yeni bir sentez halinde birleşmektedir. Örneğin birkaç kadın, ailelerine Rusya'dan getirdikleri daha eşitlikçi ilişki tarzını dâhil ettiklerini, bunun başta bazı Türk akrabalar için yadırgatıcı olsa da zamanla olumlu sonuçları görülünce eşlerinin bu tarzın bazı unsurlarını benimsediğini aktarmıştır. Diğer yandan, kadınların kendileri de Türk normlarından etkilenerek annelik ve evcimenliğin kişisel tatmin için temel olabileceğini, daha önce fark etmedikleri şekilde takdir etmeye başlamıştır. Bu örnekler, patriyarkanın sabit bir arka plan değil, göçle sınanan dinamik bir sistem olduğunu ortaya koymaktadır. Nitekim bulgular, patriyarkanın çok boyutlu ve esnek olduğunu, kadınların konumunun hem

kamusal hem özel patriyarka formları tarafından belirlendiğini öne süren kuramcıları (örneğin Benstead, 2021) desteklemektedir. Rus göçmenler bir patriyarkal konfigürasyondan diğerine geçerken, toplumsal cinsiyete dayalı iktidar mekanizmaları belirgin hale gelmektedir: Bazı yönler daha görünür olmaktadır (örneğin eşin ailesi tarafından uygulanan denetim), bazıları ise arka planda kalmaktadır (örneğin Rusya'da kadınların geleneksel olarak üstlendiği çoklu roller).

Evlilik içindeki toplumsal cinsiyet rolleri ve iktidar ilişkileri bakımından da geniş bir yelpaze gözlenmiştir. Neredeyse tüm ailelerde ataerkil beklentiler belli ölçüde ortaya çıkmakla birlikte, bunların şiddeti ve biçimi değişkenlik göstermiştir. Çoğunluk için tipik manzara, kocanın birincil geçim sağlayıcı ve karar verici, kadının ise evin idarecisi olması şeklindedir. Birçok kadın başlangıçta bu modeli benimsemiştir; kimi zaman doğum izni veya vatandaşlık alana dek çalışma izni olmaması gibi koşullar nedeniyle buna mecbur kalmışlar, kimi zaman da yeni koşulların etkisiyle gönüllü olarak ev içi role yönelmişlerdir. Bu durum, kocanın mali kontrol ve ev içi emeğe hâkimiyetine dayanan klasik "özel alan patriyarkası" kavramıyla uyumludur (Beechey, 1979; Walby, 1989; Benstead, 2021). Ancak kötümser beklentilerin aksine, her durumda tam bir eşitsizlik veya baskı söz konusu olmamıştır. İncelenen ailelerin yaklaşık yarısında tam eşitlik sağlanamasa bile en azından "esnek bir ataerkillik" ortaya çıkmıştır: Koca koruyucu ve temel geçim sağlayıcı rolünü sürdürmekle birlikte eşinin fikirlerine saygı duymakta, onun çalışma, eğitim görme veya hobilerle meşgul olma gibi kendini gerçekleştirme imkânlarını desteklemekte ve günlük kararları ortaklaşa almaktadır. Kadınlar bu tür ilişkileri, geleneksel çerçevede olmakla beraber "ortaklık odaklı" olarak tanımlamışlardır (Kandiyoti, 1988). Veriler, güç dağılımı açısından katı hiyerarşik modellerden (bazı örneklerde kocanın neredeyse tam kontrolü elinde tutup şiddete başvurduğu görülmüştür) bütünüyle simetrik düzenlere (bazı çiftlerde her iki eşin de ekonomik olarak bağımsız olup kararları eşit biçimde aldığı ilişkiler) uzanan çeşitli örnekler bulunduğunu göstermektedir. Vaka çoğunluğu ise bu uçların arasında yer almakta; patriyarkal öğelerin kişisel uzlaşılar ve karşılıklı sevgiyle yumuşatıldığı ara formlar şeklinde görülmektedir.

Bu araştırmanın belki de en önemli katkılarından biri, oldukça geleneksel aile düzenlerinde bile kadınların güçsüz nesneler haline gelmediğini ortaya koymasıdır.

Rus göçmen kadınların “ajansı”, yani kendi hayatlarına yön verebilme kapasitesi, hemen her durumda gözlemlenmiştir – gündelik küçük eylemlerden kritik kararlara dek. Dayatılan rolleri pasif biçimde kabullenmek yerine, kadınlar bunları aktif şekilde yeniden yorumlamış ve kendi koşullarına uyarlamıştır. Örneğin, kocasının evi "annesinin yaptığı gibi" yönetmesini istediği durumlarda, birden fazla kadın ev işlerinin bölümünü kendi istediği gibi paylaştırmanın veya yeni düzenlemeler getirmenin yolunu bulmuştur. Kimi harcamaların veya birikimlerin yönetiminde kendi kurallarını koymuş, örneğin ortak bütçeyi idare etme ya da temizlik standartlarını (banyo veya balkon temizliği gibi) kendi istediği biçimde uygulama gibi pratikler geliştirmiştir. Bu durum, resmî bir otoriteye sahip olmasa da kadınların pazarlık gücüne sahip olabileceğini göstermektedir. Neredeyse tüm katılımcılar, eşleriyle kurdukları iletişim sayesinde duygusal ve düşünsel bir etki yaratabildiklerini vurgulamıştır: Fikir ve önerilerini sabırla dile getirerek veya eşlerine destek olarak, kendi girişimlerinin yararını göstermişlerdir. Eşlerine karşı kullandıkları bu "yumuşak güç", ilişkileri dönüştürmede içsel bir araç işlevi görmüştür. Açık bir isyanın olmadığı ancak ast konumdakilerin davranışlarıyla sistemi kademeli olarak değiştirdiği “gizli direniş söylemleri” fikri (Scott, 1985, 1990) bu örneklerde doğrulanmaktadır.

Özellikle daha sert ataerkil kontrol altında yaşayan kadınların direniş ve uyum stratejileri dikkat çekicidir. Veriler, tepkilerin açık direnişten örtük muhalefete geniş bir yelpazede olduğunu göstermektedir. Bazı kadınlar, kocalarının belli taleplerini yerine getirmeyi açıkça reddetmiş, ultimatom vermiş ya da boşanma girişiminde bulunmuştur; bu tür açık direnme örnekleri, patriyarkal baskıya karşı doğrudan tavır alındığını gösterir. Daha örtük direniş biçimleri ise mizah kullanmak, alaycı bir tavır takınmak veya gizlice para biriktirerek kaçış planı yapmak (nitekim katılımcılardan biri, istismarcı eşinden ayrılmak için önceden para biriktirmiştir) gibi yöntemleri içerir. Bu uç örneklerin arasında ise uzlaşmaya dayalı taktikler yer alır: Örneğin kadınlar, giyim kuşam veya davranışta dışarıya yönelik bir ölçüde mütevazı/uyumlu görüntü vermeyi kabul edip karşılığında karar alma konusunda özerklik elde etmeye çalışmışlardır. Ya da eşlerinin davranışlarını etkilemek için onların üzerinde otoritesi olan aile büyükleri gibi kişilerin desteğini sağlamaya yönelmişlerdir. Ayrıca kimi kadınlar, kocalarının evde olmadığı zamanları kendi başlarına vakit geçirmek veya kocalarının erişimi dışında kadın arkadaş çevreleri oluşturmak gibi alternatif alanlar

yaratarak küçük "özerklik bölgeleri" kurmuştur. Vurgulanması gerekir ki, en yoğun denetim anlatılarında bile kadınlar neredeyse her zaman kendi benliklerini korumanın bir yolunu aramış ve çoğunlukla bulmuştur. Toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifinden bakıldığında, seçeneklerin kısıtlı olduğu durumlarda bile hatırı sayılır bir özneleşme (ajans) sergilemişlerdir. Kandiyoti'nin "Ataerkil Pazarlık" (1988) kavramsallaştırmasında öne sürdüğü gibi, kadınlar ataerkil toplumlarda salt boyun eğmez; ellerindeki mevcut kaynakları kullanarak kendileri için kabul edilebilir koşulları müzakere ederler. Bu çalışmadaki katılımcılar da tam olarak böyle bir pazarlık sergilemektedir: Kendi kısıtlarının (örneğin mali bağımlılıklarının) bilincinde olarak, bu sınırlar dâhilinde etkilerini azamiye çıkarmaya çabalamışlardır – kimi sevgi yoluyla, kimisi kurnazlıkla, bir diğeri ise açık çatışmayla.

Dikkat çekici bir diğer gözlem, görünürde eşitlikçi ve baskının olmadığı ailelerde bile kadın ajansının, bu eşitliği bilinçli biçimde sürdürme çabasında kendini göstermesidir. Bir başka deyişle, eşitlik kendiliğinden "verilmiş" değil; sürekli yeniden üretilip korunması gereken bir durumdur. Bazı katılımcılar, kendi sınırlarına saygı gösterilmesini sağlama konusunda her zaman dikkatli davrandıklarını ve roller konusunda eşleriyle yaşadıkları yanlış anlamaları açıkça dile getirerek çözdüklerini ifade etmiştir. Bu tutum, kadınların öz-düşünümsel (refleksif) davrandığını ve güç dengelerinde muhtemel kaymaları fark edip önlemeye hazır olduklarını göstermektedir. Sonuç olarak, bu çalışmanın üçüncü temel çıkarımı, ataerkil yapıların kadınların hayat senaryolarını ciddi kısıtlar getirse de bütünüyle önceden belirlemediğidir. Bu kadınlar, sadece kırılganlık taşıyan pasif özneler olmayıp; patriyarka ile bir diyaloga aktif biçimde girmekte, onun gereklerine bir yandan uyum sağlarken diğer yandan gündelik tezahürlerini dönüştürmektedir. Nitekim örnek olaylarımızda, bazı geleneksel hiyerarşileri korurken çiftlerin kendi geliştirdikleri yeni normları da barındıran özgün "melez" toplumsal cinsiyet düzenleri ortaya çıkmıştır. Bu sonuç, kadın ajansını yüceltmeden vurgulayan çağdaş feminist analizlerle uyumludur: Kadınların eyleme geçme ve koşulları değiştirme kapasiteleri teslim edilmekte, ancak yapısal bariyerlerin katılığı da göz ardı edilmemektedir (Merali, 2008; Erel, 2009; Williams, 2010; Shinozaki, 2015; Morokvašić, 2014; Deniz & Özgür, 2022, 2024). Çalışmamız, "mağdur kadınlar" ve "özgürleşmiş göçmenler" gibi

indirgemeci ikilikleri aşmaya katkı sunmakta; pratikte kırılganlık ile gücün her zaman bir arada var olduğunu göstermektedir.

Evlilik yoluyla göç, kadınlar için sadece zorlu bir süreç değil, aynı zamanda dönüştürücü bir kişisel deneyim olmuştur. Katılımcılar, uyum sağlamanın ilk aylarındaki yalnızlık ve nostalji dolu günlerden zaman içinde istikrar kazandıkları aşamalara geçerken belirgin içsel değişimler yaşamışlardır. Birçoğu, göç öncesine kıyasla daha bağımsız ve dirençli bireyler haline geldiklerini ifade etmiştir. İronik bir biçimde, maddi açıdan eşlerine bağımlı konumda kalanlar bile zamanla kendi istek ve hedeflerini daha net belirleyerek içsel bir özerklik kazanmışlardır. Kendi sınırlarını çizmeye ve geleceklerine dair planlar yapmaya başlamışlardır. Örneğin katılımcılardan biri, Türkiye'de anne olduktan sonra eğitimine devam etmek istediğini fark ederek, halen ev hanımı olsa da ilerisi için bu doğrultuda planlar yapmaya koyulmuştur. Bu tür dönüşümler, farklı bir kültüre maruz kalmanın dünya görüşünde genişlemeye yol açmasıyla eşzamanlı gerçekleşmiştir; başka bir toplumda yaşamak, kadınların rolü, aile ve devlet konularında yeni bakış açıları kazandırmıştır. Bazı katılımcılar, kendi memleketlerine ilişkin tutumlarını da yeniden değerlendirmiştir: Rusya'daki toplumsal gerçeklikleri uzaktan gözlemlemek, kimilerinde daha eleştirel bir tutum geliştirirken, kimilerinde ise kendi geleneklerine karşı daha sıcak bir yaklaşım doğurmuştur.

Bu bulgular, uyum sürecinin yalnız dışsal değil, aynı zamanda içsel bir yeniden yapılanmayı içerdiğini açıkça göstermektedir. Kadınlar yeni alışkanlıklar geliştirmiş, bazı önceki normları terk etmiş ve kendi kültürleri ile eşlerinin kültürü arasında denge kurmayı öğrenmişlerdir. Bazıları iki toplumdaki ataerkil yapıları bir arada gözlemlemenin etkisiyle genel olarak patriyarkaya daha eleştirel bakmaya başlamıştır. Her iki ülkenin deneyiminden, toplumsal cinsiyet ayrımcılığının daha derin mekanizmalarını fark etmiş ve bunları kınama eğilimi göstermişlerdir (nitekim yazarın kendisinin de patriyarka üzerine çalışırken bir "epistemolojik kriz" yaşadığından bahsedilmektedir; benzer bir sorgulama sürecini katılımcılar da Rus ve Türk gerçekliklerini kıyaslayarak yaşamıştır). Bazı kadınlar ise tam tersine geleneksel inançlarını pekiştirmiştir: Türk ataerkilliğinin uç örnekleriyle karşılaşmak, onları daha ılımlı geleneklere ve aile kurumunun rolüne daha çok değer verir hale getirmiştir.

Sonuç olarak, Rus kadınlarının evlilik göçü çok katmanlı bir yeniden yapılanma süreci olarak karşımıza çıkmaktadır. Bu süreç; kaynakların, sosyal ağların, kimliklerin ve toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin, makro (yapısal ve tarihsel patriyarka düzenleri, göç rejimleri), mezo (aile ve topluluk normları) ve mikro (bireysel stratejiler ve deneyimler) düzeylerin kesişiminde yeniden örgütlenmesini içermektedir. Bu araştırma, patriyarka kavramını analize dâhil etmenin göç çalışmalarını nasıl zenginleştirebileceğini göstermiştir; kamusal alandaki ekonomik veya kültürel boyutlara odaklanan birçok çalışmanın gözden kaçırdığı mahrem alandaki iktidar dinamikleri ve eşitsizlikler bu sayede görünür kılınmıştır. Ayrıca Pierre Bourdieu'nün sermaye kuramının toplumsal cinsiyete duyarlı bir olguya uygulanması, kaynakların kaybı ve yeniden kazanımı süreçlerini dinamik bir şekilde izlemeye imkân tanımış; "uyum sağladı/sağlayamadı" gibi statik ikiliklere düşmeden daha nüanslı bir değerlendirme yapılabilmiştir. Bu yaklaşımların bütünleştirilmesiyle çalışma, kırılganlık odaklı basitleştirici anlatıların ötesine geçerek, iki patriyarkal dünya arasında konumlanan kadınların onur, dayanışma ve öz-gerçekleştirme alanları inşa edebildiklerini ortaya koymuştur. Evet, bu kadınlar yapısal güçlere karşı kırılgan olmayı sürdürmektedir; ancak temel insani "onurlu bir yaşam" arzusu karşısında yapılar da mutlak ve yenilmez değildir. Nitekim elde edilen bulgular, feminist göç literatürünün vurguladığı şekilde, göçmen kadınları yaşamlarının aktif öznesi olarak görme gereğine işaret etmektedir. Bu kadınlar kendi hikâyelerinin yazarlarıdır, ancak hikâyelerini yazdıkları mürekkebin rengi, içinde bulundukları çevre tarafından belirlenmektedir. Son olarak, bu tez yalnızca akademik sonuçlar ortaya koymakla kalmayıp, uzun süre klişe tasvirlerin gölgesinde kalan bir kadın grubunun karmaşık ve çelişkili deneyimlerine ses vermektedir. Bu ses, iki kültür ve iktidar sistemi arasında yol alan kadınların dirençliliğine, yaratıcılığına ve gücüne tanıklık etmektedir.

D. THESIS PERMISSION FORM / TEZ İZİN FORMU

(Please fill out this form on computer. Double click on the boxes to fill them)

ENSTİTÜ / INSTITUTE

Fen Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Natural and Applied Sciences ☐

Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Social Sciences ☒

Uygulamalı Matematik Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Applied Mathematics ☐

Enformatik Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Informatics ☐

Deniz Bilimleri Enstitüsü / Graduate School of Marine Sciences ☐

YAZARIN / AUTHOR

Soyadı / Surname : Lemskaia
Adı / Name : Alevtina
Bölümü / Department : Sosyoloji / Sociology

TEZİN ADI / TITLE OF THE THESIS (**İngilizce** / English): CHALLENGING PATRIARCHY: THE ACCUMULATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF CAPITALS AMONG RUSSIAN MARRIAGE MIGRANTS IN TURKEY

TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE**:** **Yüksek Lisans** / Master ☒ **Doktora** / PhD ☐

1. **Tezin tamamı dünya çapında erişime açılacaktır. /** Release the entire work immediately for access worldwide. ☐
2. **Tez iki yıl süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır.** / Secure the entire work for patent and/or proprietary purposes for a period of **two years. *** ☐
3. **Tez altı ay süreyle erişime kapalı olacaktır.** / Secure the entire work for period of **six months**. ***** ☒

***** *Enstitü Yönetim Kurulu kararının basılı kopyası tezle birlikte kütüphaneye teslim edilecektir. / A copy of the decision of the Institute Administrative Committee will be delivered to the library together with the printed thesis.*

Yazarın imzası / Signature ..... **Tarih** / Date .....
(Kütüphaneye teslim ettiğiniz tarih. Elle doldurulacaktır.)
(Library submission date. Please fill out by hand.)

Tezin son sayfasıdır. / This is the last page of the thesis/dissertation.