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NEW DATING AND MARRIAGE PRACTICES OF MUSLIM WOMEN: MARRIAGE WEBSITES IN TURKEY

DOCTORATE THESIS

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PREFACE:

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RESUME :

Le mariage et les pratiques de sélection du partenaire sont deux sujets très importants dans la vie d'adulte en Turquie et ailleurs. De plus, le mariage a une grande importance pour les sociétés vu son rôle dans la vie des individus, et sa fonction de régulation de la « sexualité », de la « procréation », de la « monogamie » et de « l'économie politique » ; et de définition du « droit à la citoyenneté », et de « l'ordre de genre. » (Scott, 2002 ; Thernborn, 2004). Pourtant, de nos jours le mariage est largement perçu comme un lien entre les couples, basé sur le libre arbitre, l'amour et l'engagement (Scott, 2002 ; Borneman, 2005 ; Ingoldsby, 2006; Smart, 2011) malgré les critiques des académiciens qui questionnent « la liberté » de sélection de partenaires et les pratiques de mariage, tout en tenant compte des fonctions socio-économiques et politiques actuelles des institutions de mariage et des régulations sur le mariage (Ingoldsby, 2006).

A ce jour, dans la société turque actuelle où les styles de vie conservateurs sont en hausse en raison de l'influence du revivalisme religieux, les conditions et opportunités pour rencontrer des partenaires, sont de plus en plus réduites et les possibilités de socialisation des individus de sexes opposés deviennent de plus en plus limitées, particulièrement dans les régions sous-développées de la Turquie. A côté de cela, à la fois, la migration interne, l'urbanisation néolibérale et les projets de gentrification dans les zones urbaines compliquent la pratique de trouver un(e) partenaire dans leur environnement immédiat**.** Par conséquent, la création de nouveaux moyens de socialisation pour les individus est cruciale pour ceux qui ne disposent pas d'opportunités pour rencontrer leur futur partenaire. Dans ce contexte, il est possible de supposer que les formes de communication récemment induites, qui ont obtenu une popularité dans le monde entier et qui peuvent substituer l'interaction face à face, offrent de nouvelles possibilités aux individus cherchant des partenaires. Un exemple significatif de cette tendance serait les sites de mariage qui ont connu une grande popularité en Turquie lors de la dernière décennie. Comme les constats de cette étude le soulignent, un pourcentage considérable de turcs à la recherche de partenaires consulte des sites internet de mariage.

Cette étude a pour objectif de proposer une perspective des nouvelles pratiques de rencontres et de mariage des femmes musulmanes en Turquie, par l'analyse des nouvelles technologies de communication. Elle vise à rechercher sur quels points les nouvelles formes de médias utilisées par les femmes musulmanes pour les rencontres et les mariages, se superposent et/ou sont en contradiction avec les pratiques de sélection de partenaires et aux normes de genre ; et comment les utilisateurs de sites internet négocient ensemble les normes de ces sites, les normes de sélection traditionnelles/modernes de partenaires et les normes de genre turques. Ainsi, cette étude se base sur des données qui comprennent : l'analyse de sites internet de mariage islamiques et libéraux en Turquie, l'étude de la présentation de soi des utilisateurs de ces sites et leur usage pratique en prenant en compte l'épistémologie relationnelle de Bourdieu ; et elle présente une analyse comparative de la présentation de soi genrée et des pratiques par le biais de l'analyse des sites web de mariage libéraux et islamiques en Turquie.

Par conséquent cette thèse propose une analyse comparative des sites de mariage les plus populaire en Turquie avec une approche transdisciplinaire puisque l'étude et l'analyse du sujet nécessitent l'apport de diverses disciplines dont les sciences de la communication. En ce sens, le projet a pour objectif de présenter les acteurs et les utilisateurs principaux de ces sites de mariage pour pouvoir répondre à deux questions essentielles : « Qui sont les meneurs de jeu du champ qui concerne les mariages en ligne ? » ; et « Qui sont les utilisateurs de ces sites en Turquie ? » De plus, à la différence des études antérieures ayant été effectuées en Turquie dans ce domaine, notre étude tâche est d'explorer les identités institutionnelles, les normes,

l'architecture et l'infrastructure de la présentation de soi en question au sein des sites de mariage libéraux et islamiques en Turquie pour pouvoir en produire une analyse comparative. Ainsi cette étude observe la présentation de soi des utilisateurs des sites de mariage en Turquie, et ceci sera exclusivement basé sur les différences de genres dans la présentation de soi. A part ceci, outre la comparaison entre les utilisateurs et les utilisatrices des sites web de mariage islamiques et libéraux, notre étude essaiera de proposer une comparaison des critères de sélection de partenaires des turcs avec ceux des utilisateurs des sites de mariage. Cette étude a également le but d'analyser les pratiques genrées d'utilisateurs en partant d'entretiens semi-directifs avec ces utilisateurs de sites. Enfin, étant différente des « approches individualistes et rationalistes des rencontres sur internet » répandues (Schmitz, 2017: vii), cette étude se base sur une approche « constructiviste structuraliste » pour tâcher d'expliquer les sujets abordés.

Dans ce contexte, le 1er chapitre introduit à la fois au cadre théorique de Bourdieu et à d'autres théories afin d'y faire référence pour mener à bien cette étude. Premièrement, en lien avec la perspective théorique de Bourdieu qui précise que « l'habitus, le capital culturel et symbolique, et le champ » sont « historiques de manière inhérente » Steinmetz, 2011 : 51), nous tâcherons d'expliquer brièvement l'historicité des relations de genres, des pratiques de mariage et de sélection de partenaire dans les sociétés occidentales, au sein de l'Empire ottoman ainsi qu'en République Turque. Dans ce sens, comme à la fois l'Islam et les coutumes partiellement formés autour des normes religieuses de cette dernière jouent encore un rôle déterminant dans le processus de sélection de partenaires et de pratiques de mariage au sein des sociétés musulmanes, nous essaierons d'expliquer les principes du mariage islamique et de la sélection de partenaires avec l'interprétation de ces normes par le féminisme islamique. En plus du cours historique du mariage et de la sélection des partenaires, de l'interprétation religieuse des pratiques de mariage et de sélection de partenaires, les théories de sélection de partenaires seront également passé en revue. Dans cette objectif, seront introduites les théories classiques de sélection de partenaire auxquels Schmitz fait référence sous le nom de « Choix de Partenaire en tant qu'Agency au sein des Structures ou des MAS » ainsi que l'approche Bourdieusienne de sélection de partenaire proposée par Schmitz. Troisièmement, nous parlerons du champ médiatique pour pouvoir expliquer le « pouvoir symbolique » des médias sur les individus (Couldry, 2003) vu qu'ils apprennent « leurs premières, et souvent les plus permanentes, croyances concernant les significations sociales d'être homme ou femme et les manières masculines ou féminines de penser et d'agir » via les médias mais aussi via la famille, l'éducation et la religion. Cette analyse nous fournira le contexte théorique nécessaire pour l'étude de la présentation de soi des utilisateurs des sites internet de mariage. A côté de cela, nous aborderons aussi les pratiques médiatisées de sélection de partenaires en Turquie incluant les jeux de rencontre à la télévision, les émissions télévisées de mariage et les sites de rencontre et de mariage en Turquie.

Dans le deuxième chapitre, nous étudierons les sites de mariage en faisant référence aux théories du champ de Bourdieu. L'objectif dans ce chapitre est de présenter comment les sites de mariage se positionnent au sein du champ de formation des relations sur internet. Dans ce contexte, nous rapporterons à la fois l'analyse des identités institutionnelles des sites de mariage, de leurs contenus et de leurs architectures (Papacharissi, 2009). Aussi, ce chapitre couvre une analyse des noms, du design, de l'architecture, des connexions en ligne (hyperliens) et de l'infrastructure de la présentation des principaux sites de mariage en Turquie. Cette analyse fournie une comparaison entre les critères de sélection proposés par les sites de mariage islamiques et libéraux et ceux à l'œuvre aux sein de la société Turque. Enfin, il souligne les différences symboliques entre les questionnaires présents sur les sites de mariage islamiques et libéraux.

Le troisième chapitre rend compte des diverses manières dont les utilisateurs se présentent dans ces sites de mariage en Turquie. Il introduit, dans un premier lieu, un cadre théorique général sur la présentation de soi et par la suite, il présente comment le genre, les qualités spécifiques à la communication sur internet et les différences symboliques des sites de mariage affectent les stratégies de présentation de soi des utilisateurs. En second lieu, il introduit de manière détaillée la présentation de soi des utilisateurs. Cette analyse souligne les similitudes et les différences entre les utilisateurs de site libéral et islamique ainsi que celles entre les hommes et les femmes utilisant ces sites internet.

Dans le quatrième chapitre nous présentons une description détaillée des caractéristiques des habitus d'utilisateurs. Aussi, il s'agira de présenter leurs perceptions sur les sites de mariage, leurs pratiques d'usages, leur présentation de soi en ligne, leurs critères de sélection de partenaires, les étapes de formation des relations entre utilisateurs, et leurs interactions en ligne et hors ligne avec d'autres utilisateurs, afin de découvrir leurs motivations concernant leur adhésion à ces sites. De plus, ce chapitre propose une présentation détaillée qui permet de comprendre comment les utilisateurs négocient les attentes d'autres dépendamment de leurs attentes relationnelles, de leurs stratégies, de leurs genres, de leurs dispositions et de leurs capitaux.

En fin de compte, les données de cette étude démontrent que les pratiques de sélection de partenaires sur les sites de mariage ne peuvent être défini comme des pratiques basées sur des choix personnels dans le cadre des limitations de l'espace social. Ce qui forment les stratégies et pratiques de présentation de soi et de sélection de partenaires sur internet des utilisateurs sont les histoires personnelles des utilisateurs, les normes du champ religieux, le champ médiatique et les régulations mises en place par le champ de pouvoir mais aussi les caractéristiques distinctives de la communication sur internet, le positionnement de ces sites web de mariage islamiques et libéraux, leurs infrastructures de présentation de soi et leurs architectures.

ABSTRACT:

Marriage and mate selection practices are two important issues that comprise a fundamental part of adult life in Turkey and elsewhere. In addition to the role it plays in individuals lives, marriage is highly important for the societies as it regulates "sexuality", "arrangement of procreation", "enforce monogamy", "maintain political economy", define "the rights to citizenship" as well as a "gender order" (Scott, 2002; Thernborn, 2004). However, marriage is widely accepted as a bond between couples based on free-choice, love and commitment (Scott, 2002; Borneman, 2005; Ingoldsby, 2006; Smart, 2011) in our age despite the critiques of scholars questioning the "freedom" in mate selection and marriage practices in consideration of ongoing socio-economical and political functions of the marital institutions and the marital regulations arranging marriages (Ingoldsby, 2006).

In current Turkish society where conservative life styles are on the rise due to the influence of religious revivalism, the conditions and opportunities for meeting with spouse candidates are becoming more restricted and mixed-sex socialization facilities are getting more limited especially in the underdeveloped regions of Turkey. Besides, both internal immigration and neoliberal urbanization, gentrification projects in urban areas of Turkey complicate the practice of finding spouse candidate in the immediate environment. Therefore, the creation of new socialization facilities for individuals who are looking for spouse candidates are crucial for those who do not have the opportunities for meeting their prospective mates. In this context, one can assume that recent mediated communication formats that have gained world wide popularity and that substitute for face-to-face interaction offer new possibilities for individuals who search for mate candidates. An obvious example of this trend is marriage websites that have also gained immense popularity in Turkey in the last decade. Most importantly, as the findings of this dissertation study underline, a very significant percentage of Turkish citizens who are looking for spouse candidates appeal to online marriage websites for mate selection and marriage.

This thesis study aims to bring an understanding of new dating and marriage practices of Muslim women in Turkey through the analysis of new communication technologies and aims to investigate how new media forms that are used for dating and marriage by Muslim women coincide & collide with established and emerging mate selection practices and gender norms and how the users of these websites negotiate with the norms of these websites, traditional/ modern mate selection norms and gender norms of the Turkish society. This study then builds on the findings that include the analysis of Islamic and liberal marriage websites in Turkey, the examination of self presentation practices of marriage websites' users and their usage practices with taking Bourdieu's relational epistemology into account and presents a comparative analysis of gendered self presentation and usage practices through the analysis of Islamic and liberal marriage websites in Turkey.

Henceforth, this thesis proposes a comparative analysis of the leading Islamic and liberal marriage websites in Turkey with a trans disciplinary approach as the investigation and analysis of this subject requires the contribution of various disciplines together with media and communication studies. In this direction, it aims to introduce the main actors and users of these marriage websites in order to respond to two principal questions in the first place, "who are the play makers in online marriage field?" and "who are the users of these marriage websites in Turkey?". In the second place, unlike earlier Turkish works in this field of study, it explores the institutional identities, norms, architecture and self presentation infrastructure of these

websites to be able present a comparative analysis of Islamic and liberal marriage websites in Turkey. In the third place, this study examines the self presentations of Turkish marriage websites users, here the focus is exclusively on the gender differences in self presentation. Besides, in addition to the comparison between male and female users of Islamic and liberal marriage websites, it also compares the mate selection criteria of Turkish citizens with the users of these marriage websites. On the fourth place, this dissertation study aims to analyze the gendered user practices based on the semi-structured interviews which are realized by the users of these marriage websites. In addition to all these, as different from the widespread "individualistic and rationalist approaches to online dating" (Schmitz, 2017: vii), this study refers to a structural constructionist theoretical approach to be able to explain the issues investigated in this dissertation study.

Within this context, the first chapter of this study introduces Bourdieu's conceptual framework together with several other significant theories that are referred in this thesis to explain the issues embraced in this dissertation study. In parallel with Bourdieu's theoretical perspective which embraces "habitus, cultural and symbolic capital, and field" as "inherently historical" concepts (Steinmetz, 2011:51), an historical account of gender relationships, marriage and mate selection practices in occidental societies, Ottoman Empire and Turkish Republic are presented briefly. In this direction, as Islam still plays a determining role in mate selection and marriage practices together with ongoing customs shaped partially around these religious norms in Muslim societies, Islamic marriage and mate selection principles (together with Islamic feminists' interpretation of these norms) will be presented in this chapter as well. In addition to the historical account of marriage and mate selection and the religious interpretation of marriage and mate selection practices, mate selection theories are also reviewed in this study. In this regard, classical mate selection theories which Schmitz refers as "Mate Choice as Agency in Structures or MAS" (Schmitz, 2017: 51) are introduced together with the Bourdieusian mate selection approach Schmitz proposes. In the third place, the first chapter of this thesis also covers media field to be able to explain the "symbolic power" of media on individuals (Couldry, 2003) as individuals learn "their earliest, and often most lasting, beliefs about the social meanings of being male or female and thinking and behaving in masculine or feminine way" from media together with family, education and religion. This analysis will provide the necessary theoretical background for the investigation of self presentation of marriage website users. Besides, an analysis of mediated mate selection practices in Turkey is also introduced in this chapter. In this regard, television dating games, marriage television shows, dating and marriage websites in Turkey are presented briefly within the analysis of mediated mate selection practices.

In the second chapter of this thesis, Islamic and liberal marriage websites are approached with reference to Bourdieu's "field theory". The aim of this chapter is to present how marriage websites position themselves within the online relationship formation field. In this direction, the institutional identities of marriage websites are introduced together with the content and the architectural analysis (Papacharissi, 2009) of these websites. In this context, his chapter also covers the analysis of names, designs, connections (hyperlinks) and self-presentation infrastructures of principal marriage websites in Turkey. This analysis provides a comparison of mate selection criteria proposed by Islamic and liberal marriage websites and the mate selection criteria of Turkish society in general. Lastly, it highlights the symbolic differences between these questionnaires provided by Islamic and liberal marriage websites

The third chapter of this thesis provides an account of the different ways marriage website users present themselves in marriage websites in Turkey. In the first place, it introduces a theoretical framework about the presentation of the self in general and furthermore it presents how gender, distinctive qualities of computer-mediated communications, symbolic differences of marriage websites affect users' self presentation strategies. In the second place, it introduces a detailed analysis of the self presentation of marriage websites users. This analysis highlights the similarities and differences between the ways Islamic and liberal marriage website users present themselves in these marriage websites as well as the differences between female and male users of these websites.

The fourth chapter describes the habitus-based qualities of marriage website users in a more detailed manner. It also presents the perceptions of users about marriage websites, introduces their usage practices including their online self presentations, mate selection criteria, online relationship formation sequence and online / offline interactions with other members as well as it reveals users' motivations for being members of marriage websites in Turkey. In addition to these, this chapter also introduces a detailed presentation of how online marriage website users negotiate with the expectations of other users depending on their relationship goals and strategies, their gender, dispositions and capital(s).

The findings of this dissertation study demonstrate that online mate selection practices can not be simply defined as practices based on personal choices within the limitations of this social space. Users' personal histories, the norms of religious field, media field and the regulations brought by the field of power as well as the distinctive features of online communication, the positioning of these Islamic and liberal marriage websites, their self presentation infrastructures, their architectures shape users' online mate selection and self presentation strategies and practices.

ÖZET:

Evlilik ve eş seçme pratikleri, Türkiye'de ve diğer bir çok ülkede yaşayan yetişkin bireylerin yaşamlarındaki iki önemli konudur. Bireylerin yaşamlarındaki önemli rolünün yanı sıra, "cinselliği ve üremeyi düzenleme", "tekeşliliği uygulama", "siyasal ekonomiyi koruma", "vatandaşlık haklarını ve toplumsal cinsiyet düzenini belirleme" gibi önemli işlevlerin yerine getirilmesini sağlayan bir kurum olduğu için, evlilik toplumsal açıdan da büyük önem arz eder. (Scott, 2002; Thernborn, 2004). Bahsedilen toplumsal işlevlerine rağmen, günümüzde evlilik özgür seçime, sevgiye ve bağlılığa dayanan bir kurum olarak yaygın kabul görür (Scott, 2002; Borneman, 2005; Ingoldsby, 2006; Smart, 2011). Bu yaygın görüş ve özellikle evliliğin eş adaylarının "özgür seçimine" dayanan bir bağ olarak kabul görmesi karşısında bu kurumun toplumsal, ekonomik ve siyasi işlevlerini hatırlatan bir çok akademisyen bu görüşü eleştirmektedir (Ingoldsby, 2006).

Öte yandan, muhafazakar yaşam tarzlarının yükselişte olduğu günümüz Türk toplumunda, "kadın ve erkeklerin doğal ortamlarda tanışarak evlilik kararı alabilecekleri karma toplumsallaşma olanakları (özellikle az gelişmiş bölgelerde yaşan bireyler açısından) hâlâ çok kısıtlı, bazı kesimler için ise hiç mümkün değildir" (Tanrıöver & Sunam, 2017) ve giderek sınırlanmaktadır. Diğer bir yandan süregelmekte olan iç göç pratikleri ile birlikte, geçtiğimiz yıllarda hız kazanan neoliberal kentleşme ve mutenalaştırma projeleri de büyük kentlerde yaşayan bireylerin yakın çevrelerinden eş adayı bulma imkanlarını güçleştirmektedir. Dolayısıyla eş adayları ile tanışmak için yeterli olanaklara sahip olmayanlar açısından, "evlenme amacıyla birisiyle tanışma olanaklarının yaratılması her iki cins için de önem arz etmektedir" (Tanrıöver & Sunam, 2017). Bu bağlamda, yüz yüze iletişimin yerini almaya başlayan, bilgisayar ve yeni teknolojiler aracılığı ile bireylerin tanışmasına ve eş adayı bulmasına yardımcı olan dijital platformların eş adayı seçme pratikleri açısından yeni bir açılım oluşturduğu söylenebilir. Geçtiğimiz yıllarda giderek yaygınlık kazanan evlilik siteleri de bireylerin tanışmasına ve eş adayı bulmasına yardımcı olan dijital platformlar arasında yer almaktadır. Bu tez çalışmasının da altını çizdiği gibi, eş bulmak amacı ile çevrimiçi evlilik sitelerine üye olan kişi sayısı da oldukça yüksektir.

Bu çalışmanın amacı, yukarıda belirtilen yeni iletişim platformları aracılığı ile Türkiye'de Müslüman kadınların yeni tanışma ve evlenme pratiklerini inceleyerek, evlilik sitelerinin mevcut ve yeni ortaya çıkmakta olan eş seçme pratikleri ve toplumsal cinsiyet normları ile nasıl bir ilişki içinde olduğunu ve bu siteleri kullanan bireylerin geleneksel ve modern eş seçme normları ve yine toplumsal cinsiyet normları ile nasıl müzakere ettiğini göstermektir. Bu kapsamda, bu tez çalışması ana hatlarıyla Türkiye'deki İslami ve liberal olarak tanımladığımız evlilik sitelerinin, site üyelerinin benlik sunumlarının ve kullanım pratiklerinin analizini içermektedir. Aynı zamanda, bu çalışma Bourdieu'nün ilişkisel epistemoloji kuramı çerçevesinde İslami ve liberal evlilik sitelerinin karşılaştırılmalı analizini sunmaktadır.

Yukarıda bahsedilen bu amaçlar doğrultusunda ve araştırılan konunun farklı disiplinlerin katkısı ile incelenmesi gerektiğinden dolayı iletişim bilimleri ve medya çalışmaları ile birlikte bu çalışmada araştırılan konu farklı disiplinleri de ele alacak şekilde disiplinler ötesi bir yaklaşım ile ele alınmıştır. Bu bağlamda, bu tez çalışması ile öncelikle çevrimiçi ilişki kurma alanında yer alan başlıca aktörler ve bu alanda yer alan İslami ve liberal evlilik sitelerini kullanan bireyler ele alınmış ve incelenmiştir. İkinci olarak, yine bu alanda yer alan evlilik sitelerinin kurumsal kimlikleri, kuralları, mimarileri ve benlik sunumu alt-yapıları incelenerek,

İslami ve liberal evlilik sitelerinin karşılaştırılmalı analizi sunulmuştur. Bunun yanı sıra, kullanıcıların benlik sunumları, bu sunumlarda önemli bir role sahip olan toplumsal cinsiyet paradigması ile birlikte ele alınarak, kadın ve erkek kullanıcıların evlilik sitelerinde paylaştıkları benlik sunumları incelenmiştir. Aynı zamanda, Türkiye'de yaygın kabul gören eş seçme kriterleri ile evlilik sitelerinde kullanıcılara sunulan benlik sunumu alt-yapılarının mümkün kıldığı eş seçme kriterleri karşılaştırılarak analiz edilmiştir. Öte yandan, yarı yapılandırılmış mülakat çalışmalarının sağladığı bilgiler ışığında, site üyelerinin benlik sunumu dışındaki kullanım pratikleri yine toplumsal cinsiyet paradigması göz önüne alınarak incelenmiştir. Site kullanım pratiklerini " bireysel ve rasyonel" bakış açısı ile ele alan yaygın akademik çalışmalardan (Schmitz, 2017: vii) farklı olarak, bu çalışma kapsamında Bourdieu'nün "yapısalcı yapımcı" teorik çerçevesi göz önünde bulundurulmuş ve araştırma kapsamında yer alan konular bu çerçevede ele alınmıştır.

Bu tez çalışmasının birinci bölümünde, yukarıda bahsettiğimiz nedenlerden ötürü Bourdieu'nün "yapısalcı yapımcı" teorik çerçevesi ve bu tez kapsamında başvurulan diğer kuramlar ve teoriler incelenecektir. Bu bölümde incelenen ve Bourdieu'nün teorik çerçevesinde önemli yer tutan "habitus, alan, kültürel ve sembolik sermaye" kavramları "özleri itibariyle tarihsel" kavramlardır (Steinmetz, 2011:51). Bu bağlamda ve bahsedilen bu teorik çerçeve kapsamında, ilk bölümde toplumsal cinsiyet ilişkilerinin, evlilik ve eş seçme pratiklerinin batı toplumlarındaki, Osmanlı İmparatorluğu'ndaki ve Türkiye Cumhuriyeti'ndeki tarihi kısaca aktarılacaktır. Yine bu çerçevede, özellikle Müslüman toplumlardaki eş seçme ve evlilik pratiklerinde belirleyici bir role sahip olan dini kurallar (İslami feminist teorisyenlerin yorumları ile birlikte) incelenecektir. Eş seçme ve evlilik pratiklerinin tarihsel ve dini kurallar kapsamında incelenmesinin yanı sıra, bu tez çalışmasında Schmitz'in "Mate Choice as Agency in Structures or MAS" (Schmitz, 2017: 51) olarak tanımladığı klasik eş seçme teorileri paylaşılacak ve yine Schmitz'in, Bourdieu'cü bir bakış açısı ile ele aldığı eş seçme yaklaşımı sunulacaktır. Üçüncü olarak, bireylerin toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini öğrenmelerinde aile, eğitim ve din ile birlikte önemli bir role sahip olan, akademisyenlerin "sembolik güç" olarak tanımladıkları (Couldry, 2003) medya alanı analiz edilecektir. Bu analiz aynı zamanda kullanıcıların dijital medyada yer alan benlik sunumlarının incelenmesi için de gerekli altyapıyı oluşturmaktır. Ayrıca, medya aracılığı ile eş seçme pratikleri de tezin birinci bölümünde yer alacaktır. Bu bağlamda, tanışma ve evlendirme programları ile birlikte bu tezin incelediği çevrimiçi ilişki kurma alanında yer alan tanışma ve evlilik siteleri de kısaca tanıtılacaktır.

Bu tez çalışmasının ikinci bölümünde, İslami ve liberal evlilik siteleri Bourdieu'nün "alan kuramı" çerçevesinde incelenecektir. Bu bölümün temel amacı evlilik sitelerinin bu alanda kendilerini nasıl konumlandırdıklarını analiz etmek ve göstermektir. Bu kapsamda, evlilik sitelerinin kurumsal kimlikleri, bu sitelerin içerik analizleri ve mimari (Papacharissi, 2009) analizleri ile birlikte sunulacaktır. Yine bu bağlamda, bu çalışma kapsamında ele alınan başlıca sitelerin isimleri, tasarımları, çevrimiçi ağ üzerindeki bağlantıları ve benlik sunumu alt yapıları bu bölümde paylaşılacaktır. İslami ve liberal olarak tanımlandığımız evlilik sitelerinin kullanıcılarına benlik sunumlarını gerçekleştirmeleri için sağladıkları alt yapıların analizi ve bu yapıların sağladığı imkanlar ve sınırlamalar doğrultusunda sitelerin sundukları eş seçme kriterleri ile Türk toplumunda genel olarak kabul gören ve yaygın olan eş seçme kriterleri karşılaştırılacaktır. Bu analiz İslami ve liberal evlilik sitelerinin sembolik farklılıklarını göstermek açısından da oldukça faydalı olacaktır.

Bu çalışmanın üçüncü bölümünde ise kullanıcıların benlik sunumları ele alınacaktır. Bu kapsamda öncelikle benlik sunumu, bireylerin kendilerini sunma biçimleri ve toplumsal cinsiyet paradigması arasındaki ilişkiye dair teoriler, çevrimiçi iletişim araçlarının özgün niteliklerini aktaran araştırmalar ve evlilik sitelerinin sembolik farklılıkları paylaşılacaktır. İkinci olarak ise, çevrimiçi evlilik siteleri kullanıcıların beyanlarına dayanan içerik analizi sonucu elde edilen bilgiler yukarıda bahsedilen çalışmalar ve teoriler ile birlikte detaylı bir şekilde analiz edilecektir. Bu analiz bize hem İslami ve liberal evlilik sitelerinin kullanıcılarının benlik sunumları arasında bir karşılaştırma imkanı verecek, hem de kadın ve erkek kullanıcıların benlik sunumları arasındaki benzerlikleri ve farklılıkları görmemize olanak sağlayacaktır.

Bu tez çalışmasının dördüncü bölümünde ise, çevrimiçi evlilik sitesi kullanıcılarının habitüs kaynaklı özellikleri detaylı bir biçimde ele alınacaktır. Bu bölümde yukarıda belirtilen konu dışında, kullanıcıların çevrimiçi evlilik siteleri ile ilgili tutumları, bu sitelerde gerçekleştirdikleri benlik sunumları ve tanışma pratikleri, site kullanıcılarının eş seçme kriterleri, çevrimiçi ilişki kurma alanındaki sürecin işleyişi incelenecektir. Bunun yanı sıra çevrimiçi evlilik sitelerine üye olan bireylerin bu sitelere üye olma nedenleri ve kullanım stratejileri irdelenecektir. Bu analizler bize çevrimiçi evlilik sitelerinin kullanıcılarının, aynı sitelerde üye olan karşı cinsteki kullanıcıların beklentileri ile toplumsal cinsiyetlerine, kullanım amaçlarına, stratejilerine ve sermayelerine bağlı olarak nasıl müzakere ettiklerini gösterecektir.

Bu çalışmanın ana bulguları çevrimiçi eş seçme pratiklerini, bu sanal sosyal mekanların sınırları kapsamında yapılan bireysel ve rasyonel seçimlere dayanan pratikler olarak tanımlayamayacağımızı göstermiştir. Bu çalışma kullanıcıların bireysel geçmişleri, dinsel alanın ve medya alanının kuralları ve gücün alanı olarak tanımlanan devletin tanışma ve evlilik pratikleri kapsamında getirdikleri düzenlemeler ile beraber çevrimiçi evlilik sitelerinin özgün niteliklerinin, bu sitelerin çevrimiçi ilişki kurma alanındaki konumlarının, sitelerin benlik sunumu altyapılarının ve mimarilerinin kullanıcıların çevrimiçi eş seçme pratiklerini, benlik sunumlarını, stratejilerini ve kullanım pratiklerini şekillendirdiğini göstermektedir.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. Background

Marriage and mate selection practices are two important issues that comprise a fundamental part of adult life in Turkey and elsewhere. In addition to the role it plays in individuals lives, marriage is highly important for the societies as it regulates "sexuality", "arrangement of procreation", "enforce monogamy", "maintain political economy", define "the rights to citizenship" as well as a "gender order" (Scott, 2002; Thernborn, 2004). However, marriage is widely accepted as a bond between couples based on free-choice, love and commitment (Scott, 2002; Borneman, 2005; Ingoldsby, 2006; Smart, 2011) in our age despite the critiques of scholars questioning the "freedom" in mate selection and marriage practices in consideration of ongoing socio-economical and political functions of the marital institutions and the marital regulations arranging marriages (Ingoldsby, 2006).

In the second place, even though many academicians address the difficulty of presenting a "definition of marriage that applies to all cultures" (Thernborn, 2004; Coontz, 2005; Keefe, 2011; Smart, 2011), historical analysis of this social institution reveals the prevailing impact of "major religions and value systems of the world" on marriage and mate selection practices throughout the centuries in different societies (Therborn, 2004). Even though religious marriage practices are on the decline in USA, in some European countries and in some of their colonies, religion continues to "shape attitudes" about marriage as Scott claims (Scott, 2007). On the other hand, "religious revivalism" taking place in several societies in the world today (Turner, 2011: 11) affect marriage and mate selection practices in many countries including Turkey together with the lasting customs and traditions around this institution.

On the other hand, recent studies point to a considerable transformation in marriage and relationship practices especially in Europe and USA. In the first place, current marriage and divorce statistics indicate a clear decline of marriage and a significant increase in divorce rates in EU-28 countries. [1] Secondly, marriage is not considered as the only alternative for couples who want to organize their lives and raise children today and non-marital relationships,

[1] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Marriage_and_divorce_statistics

cohabitation practices and civil unions have become prevalent relationship practices among western couples in the last decades (Hopkins, 2011). Despite the considerable decline in marriages in Europe and USA, Turkey has the highest marriage rate among the countries included in Eurostat findings.[2]

When the functions of the marital institution are taken into account for Turkey where arranged marriage practices still prevail, scholars argue that marriage plays a fundamental role for "fostering family unity, protecting property, political linkages and patriarchal authority" (Aytaç, 1998) and it functions as an "effective remedy for the social problems and other risks of modernization and economic crises" (Buğra, 2007, 2012 in Acar & Altunok, 2013) along with the general functions of the institution stated above. In the last decade, while marriage has been encouraged by the political discourse and relevant policies (Korkman, 2016:1), premarital relationships and cohabitation practices have been questioned[3] and criticized by the political and religious fields in Turkey, even though there is no legal decision in the Turkish law inhibiting these practices. On that note, neither cohabitation agreements nor civil union agreements exist in Turkey and there is no judicial ground for them[4]. On the other hand, Turkish demography and population policies shifted considerably in the last ten years and the country surpassed "anti-natalist population planning policy of Turkey" and embraced a "high-fertility" policy (Acar & Altunok, 2013). As a final remark, it is also worthwhile to highlight the significance of marriage industry for the economy. Marriage engenders a 30 billion Turkish liras worth industry in Turkey when the costs of six hundred thousand people getting married each year is considered (TUIK, 02 March 2017).

Henceforth, in current Turkish society where conservative life styles are on the rise due to the influence of religious revivalism, the conditions and opportunities for meeting with spouse candidates are becoming more restricted and mixed-sex socialization facilities are getting more limited especially in the underdeveloped regions of Turkey. Besides, neoliberal urbanization and gentrification projects in urban areas of Turkey complicate the practice of

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Crude_marriage_rate,_selected_years,_1960-2015_(per_1_000_persons).png
[3] The political discourses questioning and criticizing the appropriateness female and male university students cohabiting can be given as an example of these types of discourses (t24.com, 08, November, 2013).
[4] http://www.lawyerturkey.org/2011/07/legitimacy-of-cohabitation-agreements.html

finding spouse candidate in the immediate environment.[5] Therefore, the creation of new socialization facilities for individuals who are looking for spouse candidates are crucial for those who do not have the opportunities for meeting their prospective mates. In this context, one can assume that recent mediated communication formats that have gained world wide popularity and that substitute for face-to-face interaction offer new possibilities for individuals who search for mate candidates. An obvious example of this trend is marriage websites that have also gained immense popularity in Turkey in the last decade. Most importantly, as the findings of this dissertation study underline, a very significant percentage of Turkish citizens who are looking for spouse candidates appeal to online marriage websites for mate selection and marriage.

Online dating and marriage websites

Using online dating and marriage websites has become a prevalent social practice over the past two decades in developed countries and relatively in a lesser scale in developing countries in the world due to digital gap[6] in these countries (Gunter, 2013: 174 -178). According to Pew Research Center's latest report on online dating (2016), "15% of U.S. adults use online dating sites or mobile dating applications" and in France "13 % of men and 10 % of women have at some point logged on to such an Internet site, according to a survey conducted in 2006" (Bajos/Bozon 2008 in Bergstörm, 2011: 319). The results of another research investigating "the rise of the internet as a social intermediary" assert that "17 % of heterosexual couples and 41 % of same-sex couples formed in the past 10 years met online" (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2010: 537). It is observed that the rising popularity of dating and marriage websites have resulted in the expansion of online dating and marriage market[7] and more than nine thousand online dating and marriage websites operate solely in USA[8] and Europe[9] as of today.

Mediated online mate selection practices have also gained significant popularity among internet users in Turkey in the last two decades. The findings of this study reveals that the first

[5] For more information, see: Gülçin Erdi Lelandais (2015), "Urbanisation under Neoliberal Conservatism in Turkey", **Centre for Policy and Research on Turkey (ResearchTurkey**), London, Research Turkey, Vol: IV (7), 2015, pp.54-67

[6] For more information, see: Michelle W. L. Fong (2009). Digital Divide: The Case of Developing Countries. **Issues in Informing Science and Information Technology.** Vol.6, 2009, pp. 471-478

[7] http://www.nasdaq.com/article/of-love-and-money-the-rise-of-the-online-dating-industry-cm579616

[8] http://theweek.com/article/index/256506/how-online-dating-became-a-2-billion-dollarindustry#axzz34cTWJ0do 6

[9] http://www.datingsitesreviews.com/staticpages/index.php?page=Online-Dating-Industry-Facts-Statistics

example of the online dating services and the first local one available in Turkey, *Siberalem* have reached more than a total number of 23 million customers since its departure in the last 17 years.[10] On the other hand, the findings also indicate that the total number of individuals who have subscribed to marriage websites approached 11 million since the launch of first marriage website in Turkey in mid 2000s.[11] When the various dating and marriage websites providing service in Turkey are taken into account, one can assume that a significant percentage of Turkish individuals participate in online mate selection practices.[12]

Together with the continuous growth of online dating and marriage industry in the last two decades, a considerable amount of academic literature regarding online dating and practices have emerged. The accumulation of the studies and researches referring to this specific domain have enabled subsequent researchers to review the outcomes of various disciplines and to define emerging themes and to assess the common theoretical perspectives in online dating and marriage studies. In this context, subsequent academicians questioned and evaluated primarily "who" were examined in the past researches and these academicians having different theoretical perspectives have identified different gaps regarding to this issue in correspondence. In the first place, Bergstörm claims that there are "two [principal] separate bodies of work" in the field of research regarding dating websites. Accordingly, she argues that while one body of the accumulated literature investigates "heterosexual individuals in search of romantic long-term relationships", the latter studies "internet use by men who seek sexual encounters with other men" (Bergström, 2011: 320). On the other hand, other researchers have asserted that most studies in this field focus on "specific national or cultural contexts" (Piela, 2011). In addition to these, scholars underline the limited amount of researches in "Muslim online matchmaking" in both "secular and religious contexts" (Piela, 2011). However, current review of literature on dating and marriage websites demonstrate that together with the "the implementation of endogamy by different economic actors" of the online dating and marriage market (Lardellier,

[10] Ayşe Gözde Ekmekçi (CEO of *Siberalem* and *Evlilik Merkezi* websites), personal communication, June 6, 2014. The results indicated above represent the total number of the users of *Siberalem* dating website until 2014. It is assumed that the total number of the users of this website has augmented

[11] According to the declarations of *eCift* and *Pembe Panjur* websites on 01.March.2017 on www.ecift.com and www.pembepanjur.com, *eCift* website has 5 million subscribers and *Pembe Panjur* has 4 million 130 thousand subscribers. *Gönülden Sevenler* had declared the number of their members as 2.205.545 on 15. October. 2015 as the website has removed this number, there is no recent information regarding the total number of their users in 2017. On the other hand, according to the account of the owner and manager of *Nasipse* marriage website in the personal communication that took place 06. June.2015, there are 300 thousand members using this marriage website.

[12] There are not any industry-specific reports revealing the actual size of Turkish online dating and marriage market as well as portraying the actual number of players in this market.

2015:91), several new dating and marriage websites have emerged in the last 10 years and gave rise to a further segmentation in the field in terms of gender, religion, race, occupation, class and so forth. In this direction, increasing segmentation in the online dating and marriage websites have also generated new questions about online mate selection practices and correspondingly researches started to examine "who contacts whom" in online dating and marriage field (Skopek, Schulz & Blossfeld, 2010). In parallel with these development, a considerable number of researches investigating online Muslim dating and marriage practices have come forth (Zwick & Chelariu, 2006; Piela, 2011; Mishra et al., 2013; Al-Saggaf, 2013; Bajnaid, 2016) especially in the last years, although still to a lesser extent in comparison to the body of research covering occidental "casual dating" and "dating for marriage" websites. On the other hand, researchers highlighting gender paradigm in their studies have produced a significant number of researches analyzing "gender differences" in online mate selection practices and online self presentation (Zheng, Yuan, Chang et al., 2016; Hall, Park, Song et al., 2010; Whitty, 2008).

In the second place, academicians have also examined and evaluated the common theoretical perspectives regarding online mate selection practices. On that note, Schmitz identified "a notable dominance of individualistic and rationalist approaches to online dating" (Schmitz, 2017: vii).

"There are many studies from the perspective of psychology or communication sciences which, for example, attempt to deduce strategies for online dating from the personalities of the users in question, or to trace their success on the partner market back to psychological characteristics. In a similarly epistemological vein, most genuine sociological approaches to online dating are characterized by an explicit individualistic perspective. This manifests itself perhaps most clearly in the widespread and widely unquestioned terms of mate choice, leading to a model of a (more or less) rational actor confronted with choice opportunities external to him or her" (Schmitz, 2017:2).

In comparison with the extensive international literature in various disciplines (sociology, communication sciences, social psychology, family studies and so forth) referring to online dating and marriage practices, the academic studies investigating online dating and marriage practices in Turkey are quite little and limited with a few narrow-scoped master thesis studies studying dating and marriage websites (Pala, 2015; Karaboğa, 2008) and a few academic articles (Tütüncü, 2007; Kaymas, 2010) providing descriptive analysis of Islamic marriage websites in Turkey. Even though these emerging studies point to an increasing

academic interest on marriage websites, the number and the depth of researches on this issue are still quite limited in Turkey compared to European and American literature particularly.

In regard of the information regarding the local and international literature presented above, it is seen that despite the relative increase in studies investigating Muslim online marriage practices, there are no comprehensive academic studies focusing on Turkish Muslim users. Secondly, the previous works on Turkish marriage websites do not define the main actors of online dating and marriage field and the user profile of marriage websites in Turkey whose total number have reached up to 11 million in the last years. In the third place, the literature review of existing research on this field demonstrate that there are no Turkish or international studies embracing Islamic and liberal marriage websites together and providing a comparative analysis of these websites and their user practices. In the fourth place, other than a few researches analyzing the self presentation practices of Turkish internet users (Aslanoğlu, 2016, Uğurlu, 2015; Bilis, 2014), there are no academic studies examining the self presentation of marriage website users as well as the user practices in these websites in Turkey. On the other part, despite the existence of a comprehensive literature investigating family (Özbay, 2014; Tekeli, 2006), marriage practices (Kavas & Thornton, 2013; Yüksel- Kaptanoğlu & Ergöçmen, 2012), premarital relationships (Özyeğin, 2015; Türkmen, 2014; Ellialtı 2012) and mate selection practices (Tekce, 2004; Hart, 2006; Özgen, 2014) in various disciplines (sociology, demography and family studies) in Turkey, there are no researches in these disciplines which investigate mate selection and marriage practices together with marriage websites.

This thesis therefore proposes a comparative analysis of the leading Islamic and liberal marriage websites in Turkey with a trans disciplinary approach as the investigation and analysis of this subject requires the contribution of various disciplines together with media and communication studies. In this direction, it aims to introduce the main actors and users of these marriage websites in order to respond to two principal questions in the first place, “who are the play makers in online marriage field?” and “who are the users of these marriage websites in Turkey?”. In the second place, unlike earlier Turkish works in this field of study, it explores the institutional identities, norms, architecture and self presentation infrastructure of these websites to be able present a comparative analysis of Islamic and liberal marriage websites in Turkey. In the third place, this study examines the self presentations of Turkish marriage websites users, here the focus is exclusively on the gender differences in self presentation. Besides, in addition to the comparison between male and female users of Islamic and liberal

marriage websites, it also compares the mate selection criteria of Turkish citizens with the users of these marriage websites. On the fourth place, this dissertation study aims to analyze the gendered user practices based on the semi-structured interviews which are realized by the users of these marriage websites. In addition to all these, as different from the widespread "individualistic and rationalist approaches to online dating" (Schmitz, 2017: vii), this study refers to a structural constructivist theoretical approach to be able to explain the issues investigated in this dissertation study.

2. Theoretical Framework

In this dissertation study, I will refer to Bourdieu's relational epistemology and his structuralist constructivism as the principal conceptual framework to examine Islamic and liberal marriage websites in Turkey while I will address several other significant theoretical approaches to be able explore the issues embraced in this dissertation study. First of all, I would like to specify the reasons why I refer to Bourdieu's theoretical framework and following that I will explain the main concepts of Bourdieu that will be referred throughout this thesis study.

As Pierre Bourdieu remarks in Outline of a Theory of Practice (1977), one of the biggest problems of social sciences is of "bridging the micro and macro levels" (Tsekeris & Lydaki, 2010: 68) and as a response to this problem, several academicians claim that with the theoretical perspective he proposes, Bourdieu challenges this problem in the social sciences. To set an example, Adkins states that "Bourdieu's social theory breaks with dualisms of classical social theory which dissociates structure and action" (Adkins, 2003:23) and Neveu describes Bourdieu's work as follows:

"His theoretical framework helps to think relationally, to move from micro to macro, to go beyond binary choices such as structures versus agency" (Neveu, 2007 :336).

Besides, as Schmitz draws attention to the difference of Bourdieu's thinking and individualistic paradigms, "Bourdieu's theory locates 'structure', in the sense of the material and symbolic constitution of the social space, not only between agents but also within agents" (Schmitz, 2017:86). In Bourdieu's relational thinking "social action is neither entirely determined nor entirely arbitrary" (Adkins, 2003:23). In this regard, Adkins underlines the importance of habitus in Bourdieu's framework as the habitus "concerns a dynamic intersection of structure and action: it both generates and shapes action" (Adkins, 2003:23).

Another genuine contribution of Bourdieu is related with the way his "main theoretical concepts (habitus, cultural and symbolic capital, and field) are inherently historical" (Steinmetz, 2011:51).

"Each of Bourdieu's main theoretical concepts (habitus, cultural and symbolic capital, and field) is inherently historical, in three specific senses. First, these concepts designate objects or structures that exist in a specific time and place and that are not omnihistorical or universal – even if the range of their application is sometimes as broad as the entire sweep of modernity or capitalism. Second, each of these concepts is described as a form of incorporated history" (Steinmetz, 2011:51).

Within the scope of this dissertation study, I will refer to Bourdieu's theoretical framework to be able to relate macro structural processes (gender, religion, media, politics) to micro level interactions between users of marriage websites, users' self presentation and other usage practices. In this specific context, main concepts of Bourdieu (habitus, cultural and symbolic capital, and field) are also crucial to understand how website users embody "the habits and attitudes, the culture, of those around them, and act back on that culture" strategically in their interactions with other users, their self presentations and in other usage practices (Dillon, 2015:422). For these reasons, I would be referring to Bourdieu's "structuralist constructivist" theoretical approach and his main concepts including habitus, capital, and field throughout in this dissertation study.

In line with this objective, I would like to explain what Bourdieu means by "structuralist constructivism" and his main concepts in the first place. Bourdieu defines his work as "constructivist structuralism" or "structuralist constructivism". He underlines that in his way of thinking, the meaning of structuralism has a different sense compared to Saussurean or Levi-Straussian tradition;

"By structuralism or structuralist, I mean that there exist, within the social world itself and not only within symbolic systems (language, myths, etc.), objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents, which are capable of guiding and constraining their practices or their representations. By constructivism, I mean that there is a twofold social genesis, on the one hand of the schemes of perception, thought and action which are constitutive of what I call habitus, and on the other hand of social structures, and particularly of what I call fields and of groups, notably those we ordinarily call social classes." (Bourdieu, 1989:14).

The difference of Bourdieu's structuralist constructivism from other macro perspectives (conflict theory and functionalist theory), does not only stem from Bourdieu's "relational

thinking" that transcends macro-micro distinction. Respectively, while "the concept of capital" is "central to both Bourdieu and Marx" (Desan, 2013:319) and both theoreticians stress the "transferability" of capital (Marx, 1867a:1 in Ashall, 2004:25), Bourdieu gives place to other forms of capital including cultural, symbolic, social capital in his theory (Desan, 2013:319). In the second place when we compare Bourdieu's model with Parsons[13], according to Swartz's interpretation of Bourdieu's work, Bourdieu does not conceive "human action as fundamentally a matter of cultural conformity" but he defines human action as "adaptive, "strategic" and "constitutive of cultural standards as well as adaptive to them" (Swartz, 2002:616). However, in Parson's theoretical framework, conformity is an important concept to explain human action. Turner explains Parson's conformism as follows:

"There is a double contingency between actor and culture. The cultural system is reinforced by actions which conform to the dominant culture; the social actor receives gratifications to personality as a consequence of carrying out actions which are compatible with dominant values. Social order is maintained because social actors are rewarded for their support. It is for this reason that much of the social system is given over to the discussion of deviance." (Turner, 2005).

Bourdieu claims that "the real is the relational" and he introduces "a relational" way of thinking (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992: 97). In order to explain the relational nature of the reality and how it is connected to habitus, capital, field and practice concepts, Maton (2017) refers to the horizontal and vertical dimensions of what Bourdieu defines as relational.

"First, Bourdieu (1990: 52–65) viewed practice as arising from relations between 'two histories' or evolving logics: agents' dispositions ('habitus') and the positions they occupy(by virtue of their 'capital') within an evolving system ('field'). As illustrated by the formula '[(habitus)(capital)] + field = practice' (Bourdieu 1986: 101), this horizontally relates concepts, offering a corrective to accounts that explore only either the attributes of agents or their social contexts. Second, each of these logics is itself relationally conceived: an agent's dispositions (habitus) are understood as one structure among a range of possible structures; and positions are explored in terms of an agent's status and resources (capital) in relation to those of other agents within a structured social universe (field) that is itself defined in relation to other social universes. This is to take field, capital, habitus and practice separately and vertically relate the specific structure of each to other possible structures." (Maton, 2017:2)

[13] Parsons's macro sociological perspective "focuses on functional specialization and integration" in the society (Chafetz, 2006:7). "Parsons and Bales (1955) link sex roles to differences in social functions, with males normatively adopting instrumental functions and females' expressive functions. These functional social roles were, however, tied to the dictates of a biological binary, and any profound variation in the roles and functions, such as women having careers, was understood to be dysfunctional to the stability of the social system" (Sydie, 2007 :247). For more information, see: Janet Saltzman Chafetz, **Handbook of Sociology of Gender**, Springer, 2006 and Rosalind A. Sydie, "The Sociology of Gender" in Bryant, Clifton D. & Dennis L. Peck (Ed.). **21st Century Sociology: A Reference Handbook**. Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2007

In this regard, when we embrace the main concepts of Bourdieu, first of all, Bourdieu defines the habitus as "the way in which the culture of a particular social group is embodied (internalized) in the individual, during the socialization process beginning in early childhood" (Bourdieu 1990: 53). In other saying, "habitus is the principle that organizes practices and representations – the orientation to the world and the behavior in it" (Arp Fallov & Armstrong, 2009:3). Thus, habitus can influence our actions and fabricate our social world but as Bourdieu underlines habitus is as a "not only a structuring structure, which organizes practices and the perception of practices, but also a structured structure" (Bourdieu, 1984 :170) which means that the habitus is also influenced by the external. Agents acquire the dispositions of habitus informally "through the experience of social interactions by processes of imitation, repetition, role-play and game participation" (Swartz, 2002: 626). However, even though habitus constrains thought and action, "Bourdieu's concept of habitus rejects all objectivist view that depict individual behavior as a directly determined response to some kind of external condition; cultural or material" (Swartz, 2002: 625). Thus, in his understanding, agents are rather strategic individuals responding to the constraints of their habitus and they take decision or actions in accordance with their dispositions in an improvised manner (Wood, Bunn, 2009:290).

In the second place, I would like to explain what Bourdieu means with the capital concept. Bourdieu defines three main forms of capital; economic[14], social[15] and cultural[16] in his article "the forms of capital" (Bourdieu, 1986:47). Bourdieu makes a distinction between economic capital; "the power exercised by money" and cultural capital; "the power exercised by resources inherited or acquired chiefly from family and educational systems" (Bennnerr cited in Shusterman, 2011:190). Thus, cultural capital incorporates all types of skills and resources that "function as assets" including "credentials, names, titles, carriage, bearing, voice; linguistic competence, erudition, grace, savoir faire" and so forth. (Bennnerr cited in

[14] "Economic capital, which is immediately and directly convertible into money and may be institutionalized in the form of property rights". For more information, see: Pierre Bourdieu, "The Forms of Capital", 1986 cited in John Richardson, (Ed) **Handbook of Theory and Research for the Sociology of Education**. New York: Greenwood Press, pp. 241-258

[15] "Social capital is the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to pos- session of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition--or in other words, to membership in a group-which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a 'credential' which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word." ibid., pp. 241-258.

[16] "Cultural capital, which is convertible, on certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications and as social capital, made up of social obligations ('connections'), which is convertible, in certain conditions, into economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of a title of nobility." ibid., pp. 241-258.

Shusterman, 2011:190). According to Bourdieu, cultural capital can appear in three forms; embodied state, objectified state and institutionalized state;

"Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books, dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematic, etc.; and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee." (Bourdieu, 1986: 47)

In his analysis of Bourdieu's theories of cultural attainment and social reproduction Goldthorpe states that, the transmission of embodied cultural capital constitutes a significant part of the "formation of the habitus" (Goldthorpe, 2007: 9) and Gaventa claims that cultural capital "plays a central role in societal power relations, as this 'provides the means for a non-economic form of domination and hierarchy, as classes distinguish themselves through taste" (Gaventa 2003: 6). In his book, "Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of the Taste" (1986), Bourdieu underlines the importance cultural products for the acceptance of social norms and creation of social order.

"Through all the hierarchies and classifications inscribed in objects (especially cultural products), in institutions (for example, the educational system) or simply in language, and through all the judgments, verdicts, gradings and warnings imposed by the institutions specially designed for this purpose, such as the family or the educational system, or constantly arising from the meetings and interactions of everyday life, the social order is progressively inscribed in people's minds." (Bourdieu, 1986: 471)

In addition to three main forms of capital, Bourdieu also gives account of another form of capital; "symbolic capital"[17]. This form of capital refers to "a degree of social recognition or prestige as an effect of possessing some of the aforementioned sorts of capital, such as cultural capital in cultural fields" and so forth (Bourdieu cited in Buchholz, 2016: 7).

"These forms of capital do not operate in isolation, but interact together to determine a person's position within any given field" (Archer, Dawson, Dewitt, et al., 2015).

[17] "Symbolic capital, that is to say, capital – in whatever form – insofar as it is represented, i.e., apprehended symbolically, in a relationship of knowledge or, more precisely, of misrecognition and recognition, presupposes the intervention of the habitus, as a socially constituted cognitive capacity." ibid., pp. 241-258.

Bourdieu suggests, “only semi-metaphorically, all forms of capital are subject to conversion, real capital to cultural capital, cultural capital to social capital”, and so forth (Nash, 1990: 432). The capital concepts provided by Bourdieu also helps him to redefine “class”;

“He defines class as a structural position in a distributional space of two resources: economic capital and cultural capital. An individual's combined returns from these two fields determine his or her class position.” (Gartman, 1991: 436)

In the third place, Bourdieu’s understanding of “distinction” and “taste” concepts are crucial to understand how social agents that are situated in physical and social spaces are defined by “exclusions or distinctions” (Reed-Danahay, 2004: 20). Bourdieu analyzes “taste” among different social groups including “working class”, “artists”, “the bourgeoisie” and “petit-bourgeoisie” and observes their differences in terms of their judgments of tastes. He argues that these judgments have social and cultural origins and they function as habitus “below the level of consciousness and language” (Bourdieu, 1984 cited in Reed-Danahay, 2004: 110).

“In fact, through the economic and social conditions which they presuppose, the different ways of relating to realities and fictions, of believing in fictions and the realities they simulate, with more or less distance and detachment, are very closely linked to the different possible positions in social space and, consequently, bound up with the systems of dispositions (habitus) characteristic of the different classes and class fractions. Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier.” (Bourdieu, 1984:5-6)

Furthermore, he denaturalizes the myth of free or autonomous taste understanding and states that “an agent has what he likes because he likes what he has, that is, the properties actually given to him in the distributions and legitimately assigned to him in the classifications”. (Bourdieu, 1984:175). These judgments of taste each individual holds also function as a strategy of distinction in Bourdieu’s way of thinking;

“Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed. And statistical analysis does indeed show that oppositions similar in structure to those found in cultural practices also appear in eating habits.” (Bourdieu, 1984:5-6)

Finally, Bourdieu defines field as a “relatively autonomous domain of activity that responds to rules of functioning and institutions that are specific to it and which define the relations among the agents” (Hilgers & Mangez, 2015:5). Bourdieu’s theory of fields sets itself

in a long line of reflection on 'the historical differentiation of social activities or functions and the social division of labour' (Lahire 1999: 26 cited in Hilgers & Mangez, 2015:5).

In the light of the Bourdieu's framework and his main concepts presented above, I will introduce the theories of several other academicians to be able explore various issues embraced in this dissertation study. In the first place, in parallel with Bourdieu's theoretical perspective which states that "habitus, cultural and symbolic capital, and field" are "inherently historical" and are not "universal" (Steinmetz, 2011:51), I will try to explain the historicity of gender relationships, marriage and mate selection practices[18]. Within this context, in the first place I will refer to theories of the academicians (Coontz, 2005; West, 2007; Schenkelberg & Kauffman, 2004; Laner, 2003) who investigate the historical transformation of marriage institution and mate selection practices in occidental countries and I will present marriage and pre-marital relationships practices in Ottoman Empire in reference to the analysis of historians (Duben & Behar, 2002; Ortaylı, 2009; Keddie, 2007) to provide the historical account of gender relationships, marriage and mate selection practices in Turkey and I will introduce the major gender, family and marriage reforms brought by Kemalist state feminism in the beginning of 20th century together with the critiques of Turkish feminist academicians that demonstrate the limitations of these reforms (Göle, 1996; Arat, 1994; İlkkaracan, 1998; Tekeli, 2006). This analysis will help us to see "how the meaning and organization of gender and sexuality vary over time" in different cultures as well as different time periods in any given state depending on state's as "the field of power" regulation of these practices (Loyal, 2017:3), as the comparison of Turkish and Ottoman marriage practices will reveal (Rahman, 2000; Weeks, 1986 in Brickell, 2006:88). In this framework, in order to explain current regulation of marriage and mate selection practices in Turkey, I also will refer to the theories examining the relationship between religious revivalism, neoliberalism and gender (Ayata & Doğangün, 2017;

[18] Other than Bourdieu, several other important theoreticians have also referred to historicity and contingency of of concepts gender, family and sexuality. Brickell simply defines historicist approaches' analysis of gender as "social constructionism as applied to history" (Brickell, 2006:90). According to Brickell, the studies conducted in this field of study introduce "the contingency of social arrangements and identities" and manifest "how the meaning and organization of gender and sexuality vary over time in any given culture" (Rahman, 2000; Weeks, 1986 in Brickell, 2006:88). Historicism in gender studies is beneficial to understand "the shifts in the interpretations and organization of sexuality" in different time contexts and as Brickell underscores, it enables us to see "the processes through which sexuality is differentially instantiated in individuals" (Brickell, 2006:92). Several academicians have investigated the social construction of sexuality throughout the history. Brickell acknowledges historicism as one of the perspectives of social constructionism and gives place to Foucault's work among other theoreticians of historicism. For more information regarding historicism and gender, see: Chris Brickell, "The Sociological Construction of Gender and Sexuality", **The Sociological Review**, Vol: 54(1), 2006, pp. 87-113 and Michel Foucault, **The History of Sexuality**, New York: Vintage Books, 1990.

Coşar, Yeğenoğlu, 2011; Özyeğin, 2015) and I will bring forward the reflections of academicians (Nauck & Klaus, 2008; Hart, 2006; Tekçe, 2004; Aytaç, 1998) in different fields of studies (sociology, demography and family studies) to examine the coexistence of "traditional" and "modern" mate selection and marriage practices in Turkey.

In this direction, in his explanation of the conditions for masculine domination throughout history, Bourdieu refers to "the historical labour of dehistoricization" and he states that "the masculine order has been continuously reproduced from age to age" (Bourdieu, 2002: 82 -83). In this regard, he includes three main social institutions who are responsible for the reproduction of unequal gender system and these institutions are the family, the church and the educational system according to the author. As religious field have also played a fundamental role in "dehistoricization" and "eternalization of the structure of the sexual division" throughout the history together with the "field of power" in occidental and oriental contexts and in this context, as Islam still plays a determining role in mate selection and marriage practices in Muslim societies especially in the last decades with the religious revivalism and ongoing customs shaped partially around the religious norms, I will explain the Islamic marriage and mate selection principles together with Islamic feminists' interpretation of these norms. On that note, I would like to define Islamic feminism in the first place and explain briefly the reasons why I refer to these interpretations.

Islamic feminism refers to a significant body of literature and discussion concerned with women's issues in the Middle East and other Muslim societies emerged in the last decades (Tohidi, 2003: 136), notably women scholars of Muslim background or Islamic faith who have challenged the unquestioned cultural ideas or "discourses" in different Muslim societies about widely acclaimed female roles and conduct. Islamic Feminism bases "its methodology and epistemology on both post colonial feminism and Islamic theology" (Tomac, 2011:4). As Leila

Ahmed calls "the core discourses of Islam", Qur'an, Sunna, Hadith and other sacred writings[19] are the main sources Islamic feminists base their work on.[20]

In this context, while my aim is not reifying any religion, I claim that the findings of Islamist feminists are important as these studies introduce "the contingency of social arrangements and identities" in Islamic contexts as they demonstrate how gender and sexuality vary over time in different Muslim cultures and as they manifest the role of patriarchal interpretations of Quran in ongoing gender inequality and oppression against women (Barlas 2002; Mubarak 2004) in several Islamic countries. On that note, it is worthwhile to share that even though some scholars like Moghadam (2002:1165) underscore the difficulty of attaining gender equality in the context of Islam, the literature brought by Islamic feminists are also important for "broadening the discursive universe", "expanding legal literacy" and increasing "gender consciousness" in Islam. (Ahmad, 2016: 7).

> As Wadud claims in her book 'Quran and Woman', conservative thinkers acknowledge the central religious texts as literal and accept them as definitive statements for all times and places, especially in the area of gender (Wadud, 1999, xiii). Wadud and other Islamic feminist scholars base their reading on the assumption that the language and

[19] In religious language, Muslims use the term *sunna* to refer to Prophet Mohammad's exemplary biography. The reports of the Sunna – "that is, what the Prophet had done or said, or even tacitly approved – took the form of specific narratives that became known as hadith" (Hallaq, 2009: 16). "The two most famous Sunni collections of hadiths are by al-Bukhar, and Muslim b. al Hajjaj. In addition, four other Sunni collections are added to the two to make a collection of six authoritative collections: Abu Da'ud, Ibn Majah, anNasa'i, and at-Tirmidhi. The Shii have their own collections based on lines of Shii transmitters. In modern times, Muslim reformers have often attacked over-reliance on hadiths as leading to uncritical adherence to past authority (taqlid), while others have seen it as a useful tool for reinterpretation of Qur'anic prescriptions. Each hadith is composed of two parts, an isnad or chain of authorities reporting the hadith, and the main text, usually short, called a matn." For further information, see: Wael B. Hallaq, **An Introduction to Islamic Law**, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009 and Gordon D. Newby, **A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam**, Oxford: Oneworld, 2002.

[20] Afsaneh Najmabadi, Amina Wadud, Asma Barlas, Barbara Stowasser, Fatima Mernissi, Hidayet Şefkat Tuksal, Leila Ahmed, Margot Badran, Shahla Sherkat and Ziba Mir Hosseini are among the well known scholars of this discipline. While all of them recognize their right to reinterpret Islamic law (Moghadam, 2002:1144), some scholars focus on the interpretation of Quran (Amina Wadud, Rıffat Hassan and Fatima Naseef), some others reexamine (Fatima Mernissi, Hidayet Şefkat Tuksal) Hadiths and yet others work on sharia based laws and fiqh (Ziba Mir Hosseini, Shaheen Sardar Ali and Aziza Al-Hibri). In terms of methodology, in addition to classic Islamic methodologies *ijtihad* and *tafsir*, they implement the tools of various disciplines including linguistics, history, literary criticism, sociology and anthropology. (Badran, 2009: 247). In Turkey, rather than Islamic Feminism, Islamic Women's Movement is a more prevalent and widely acclaimed movement among Muslim women scholars (Özdemir & Bayraktar, 2012: 86-87; Kocak, 2015:10). As Feyza Akınerdem claims there are only limited number of women using the methodology of Islamic Feminism in Turkey and Hidayet Şefkat Tuksal is the most prominent one among Turkish Islamic Feminist scholars. For more information, see: Esen Özdemir, & Sevi Bayraktar, **Amargi Feminizm Tartışmaları**, İstanbul: Amargi Yayınları, 2012; Margot Badran, **Feminism in Islam: Secular and Religious Convergences**, Oxford, England: Oneworld Publications, 2009; Valentine M. Moghadam, "Islamic Feminism and Its Discontents: Toward a Resolution of the Debate", **Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society**, Vol: 27(4), 2002 and Seyda Koçak, Kadın, İslam and Feminizm, **Academia**, 2015.

> cultural context in which the text is read creates varieties in the interpretation of Quran. They do not accept that there is only one interpretation of the Qur'an and they believe that this understanding limits the extent of the text (Wadud:5-6). Islamic Feminism challenges these conservative readings of Quran and Hadiths and reinterprets the role of the women in these central religious texts of Islam.
> However, as Barlas rightly claims "sexual inequality and discrimination are not a function merely of misogynistic readings of Islam" but also related with multiple factors that have nothing to do with religion and related with longstanding patriarchal structures and gender relationships present in Muslim and Non-Muslim societies.[21] (Barlas 2002: 2)
>
> "Paradoxically, and contrary to what is commonly assumed, Islam does not advance the thesis of women's inherent inferiority. Quite the contrary, it affirms the potential equality between the sexes." … "the existing inequality ...is the outcome of specific social institutions designed to restrain her (woman's) power" (Mernissi: 19)

As a part of the theoretical analysis of mate selection and marriage practices in this dissertation study, in addition to the historical account of marriage and mate selection and the religious interpretation of marriage and mate selection practices, I will also focus on the classical mate selection theories which Schmitz refers as "*Mate Choice as Agency in Structures or MAS"* (Schmitz, 2017: 51) together with the Bourdieusian framework Schmitz proposes to analyze mate selection practices of Islamic and liberal marriage website users (Schmitz, 2017).

In the fourth place, I will refer to media field[22] to explain the "symbolic power" of media on individuals (Couldry, 2003) as they learn "their earliest, and often most lasting, beliefs about the social meanings of being male or female and thinking and behaving in masculine or feminine way" from media together with family, education and religion. In this regard, I will present an analysis of the representation of gender in mainstream media (Gauntlett, 2008, Carter, 2011; Killborne, 1999; Berberick, 2010) and digital media (Castells, 2001; Consalvo, 2002; Hardey, 2002; Enguix, Ardévol, 2014) together with other forms of mediated dating and marriage practices (Fiske, 2005; Derose, Fürsich & Haskins, 2003; Demirel, 2011; Aytemur

[21] Islamic Feminists also remind us the misogyny practices preceding the rise of Islam in Mediterranean and Middle east societies. For further information, see Leila Ahmed, **Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate**. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992.

[22] "Bourdieu himself frequently used the term 'journalistic field' (champ journalistique): this notion dominates Bourdieu's only two published reflections on media, the two television addresses collected under the title On Television and Journalism (1998a). Sometimes we also find the term 'media field' (champ médiatique) (Bourdieu, 1996b: 47; cf Champagne, 2000). In this field (whether we call it 'journalistic' or 'media'), like all others, distinctive forms of capital are at stake. Both Bourdieu and Champagne discuss how far success in that field is increasingly defined by purely economic criteria, reducing its relative autonomy". For more information, see: Nick Couldry, "Media, symbolic power and the limits of Bourdieu's field theory", **Media@LSE Electronic Working Papers**, London School of Economics and Political Science, London, UK, 2003.

Nüfusçu &Yılmaz, 2014; Tölük & Özad, 2016; Akınerdem, 2017) that take place in mainstream media while I will also provide an analysis of the representation of gender in Turkish mainstream media (Alankuş, 2007; Uğur Tanrıöver, 2008) and Islamic media (Arat, 1995; Kılıçbay and Binark, 2002; Azak, 2013; Meşe, 2015 in Çetin, 2016a: 117; Kocamener, 2016). This analysis will provide the necessary theoretical background for the investigation of self presentation of marriage website users.

In order to define these marriage websites in Turkey, I will try to analyze these online social spaces with reference to Bourdieu's "field theory" to understand the internal / autonomous principles and external / heteronomous principles of these websites. In the second place, I will investigate the content analysis of these websites together with the architecture of these websites. In this regard, I will refer to Papacharissi's theoretical framework to analyze the architectural characteristics of marriage websites (2009).

From a Bourdieusian perspective, one can assume that not only the way how individuals choose their mates but also their self presentation practices to attract the attention of their potential mates in online relationship formation field are closely connected with their habitus (Wacquant, 2013: 297). However, the investigation of the interaction between different agents in online relationship formation field and they way they present themselves in these marriage websites also necessitate a micro perspective together with the Bourdieusian macro perspective to be able to conceive the strategies, interactions and self presentations of agents who take place in this field. In this direction, I will refer to Goffman's theoretical perspective to explain symbolic interaction and self presentation in reference to his works "Gender Advertisements" (1987), "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" (1956), "Stigma: notes on the management of spoiled identity (1963b).

Goffman's theoretical perspective is also important to understand the gender differences in everyday interactions and self presentations. Goffman's understanding of gender share certain similarities with several theorists studying gender and also with Bourdieu. Bourdieu "rejects the notion that perceived sex differences are simply natural or innate" (Pelak, Taylor & Whittier, 2006:148; Sintomer, 1999:209) and as Sintomer explains, he states that "femininity, masculinity, and their relations are social constructions, ones within which some are at a structural advantage in relation to others" (Sintomer, 1999:209). In a similar vein, Goffman also rejects essentialist explanations categorically and he states that "gender distinctions are

socially constructed" (Baran & Davis, 2015:316). Goffman also does not embrace the sex / gender distinction[23] as "he saw no biological truth to sex" (Brickell, 2006:93).

"Goffman rejects the widespread idea that gender-differentiated beliefs and practices reflect a somehow more fundamental biological division in the natures of men and women. Rather, institutional reflexivity posits that the different natures of men and women are constructed in and through the very beliefs and practices that supposedly honor and reflect this biological distinction" (Smith, 2010 in Jacobsen, 2010: 169).

On the other hand, despite the similarities they have in terms of their understanding of gender, the theoretical perspectives of Bourdieu and Goffman are quite different from each other; while Bourdieu offers a "more structuralistic perspective", the latter presents "a distinctly interactionist perspective" (Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 2015 :147 -161). Bourdieu's habitus concept enables "a presituational shaping" of "human encounters", where as Goffman's theory underscores the "immediacy" of the human interactions (Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 2015 :147 -161). In his own account of Goffman's understanding of gender, Bourdieu emphasizes the historicity of the habitus and criticize Goffman's understanding of schemes as he finds Goffman's analysis insufficient for explaining these schemes:

"The schemes of the sexually characterized habitus are not 'fundamental structuring alternatives', as Goffman would have it, but historical and highly differentiated structures, arising from a social space that is itself highly differentiated, which reproduce themselves through learning processes linked to the experience that agents have of the structures of these spaces" (Bourdieu, 2002: 104).

In this regard, I want to underline that within the Bourdieusian framework of this thesis study, while I will give place to Bourdieu's relational epistemology, and his main theoretical concepts to explain this field, the strategies of actors in their self presentation and usage practices, I will also be referring to Goffman's notions about self presentation and gender display to explain how online marriage website users present themselves in consideration of the theoretical differences of these two theoreticians. In this regard, recent studies reveal that Goffman's analysis of representation of gender in advertisements and the categories he

[23] "The 'sex/gender distinction', developed by Robert Stoller in 1968 and subsequently adopted for feminism by Ann Oakley and others. According to the distinction, 'sex' denotes a biological distinction between male and female, and 'gender' the cultural overlay that creates men and women, boys and girls". For more information, see: Chris Brickell, "The Sociological Construction of Gender and Sexuality", **The Sociological Review**, Vol: 54(1), 2006, pp.93

proposes in this work (Goffman, 1979) are still quite relevant with the way both women and men are represented in the media in general and the way they present themselves in digital media (Döring, Reif, Poeschl; 2016). In the second place, academicians observing the self presentation practices in online communities (Toma & Hancock, 2010; Bullingham& Vasconcelos, 2013) underline the appropriateness of Goffman's findings in "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" (1956) for online presentation of the self.

3. Research Questions

As already mentioned, my intention at the outset of this research was, firstly, to identify the ways marriage websites in Turkey negotiate with the norms of the society, particularly gender norms and mate selection norms of Turkish society. In the second place, this study aims to examine how users enact and challenge the written rules and the unwritten communal rules of marriage websites in Turkey in their self presentation and online mate selection practices. Thirdly, this dissertation study questions how users negotiate with gender and mate selection norms of Turkish society in their self presentation and online mate selection practices. In the fourth place, I aim to identify the ways users of marriage websites negotiate with the expectations of other users.

On this basis, four principal research questions were formulated:

1. How do marriage websites negotiate with established and emerging mate selection norms and gender norms in Turkish society?
2. How do the users of marriage websites negotiate with the written rules and the uncodified communal rules of marriage websites in Turkey?
3. How do the users of marriage websites negotiate with gender, religious and mate selection norms of Turkish society in their online mate selection and self presentation practices?
4. How do the users of marriage websites negotiate with the expectations of other users?

On this basis, four principal hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Marriage websites negotiate with mate selection norms and gender norms of Turkish society depending on their position in the online relationship formation field

Hypothesis 2: Marriage website users negotiate with the written rules and the uncodified communal rules of marriage websites depending on the positioning of the marriage website in the field and depending on their habitus

Hypothesis 3: Marriage website users negotiate with with gender, religious and mate selection norms of Turkish society in their online mate selection and self presentation practices depending on the positioning of the marriage website in the field and depending on their gender, dispositions, capital(s) and distinction strategies

Hypothesis 4: Marriage website users negotiate with the expectations of other users depending on their relationship goals and strategies, their gender, dispositions and capital(s)

4. Outline of Thesis

Chapter 1:

In this chapter, I have introduced several other theoretical perspectives that constitute the theoretical framework on which this dissertation study is based, together with Bourdieu's structural constructivism. In the first place, I presented the social functions of marriage institution, marriage types, the relationship between religion and marriage and I gave place to the transformation of the marriage in the western world. In the second place, I outlined classical mate selection theories while I also included a section which introduces Schmitz's Bourdieusian analysis of classical mate selection theories referred as "Mate Choice as Agency in Structure (MAS Paradigm)" and I presented the Bourdieusian analysis of mate selection practices of Schmitz. In the third place, I gave place to marriage and mate selection practices in Islam. In this section, I presented the religious norms and customs regarding marriage, premarital relationships together with Islamic feminists' account on these rules and customs and I described the implementation of these norms and customs in Ottoman society while I also provided a short account of the transformation of mate selection and marriage practices in the Ottoman Empire in the 19th century. In the fourth place, I introduced the Kemalist reforms regarding family, marriage and mate selection practices. Secondly, in order to explain the regulation of marriage and mate selection practices in Turkey, I shared an account of the influence of religious revivalism, neoliberalism on gender relations. Following this presentation, I described the marriage types and practices in Turkey. Finally, with the aim of presenting mate selection practices in Turkey, I provided background information regarding

decision making in mate selection, the way of meeting the spouse, the prefered qualities of the spouse in marriage practices in Turkey and I reviewed the pre-marital relationship and mate selection practices in current Turkish society. In the final section of this chapter, I presented media, gender and mediated dating and marriage practices. In this regard, I analyzed the representation of gender in international and Turkish mainstream media and digital media. I also brought forward mediated mate selection practices in Turkey including television dating games, marriage television show programs and I introduced the online relationship formation field.

Chapter 2:

In this chapter, I approach marriage websites in Turkey in reference to Bourdieu's field theory and I present a comparative analysis of Islamic and liberal marriage websites in Turkey. On that note, first of all, I present the main actors of online relationship formation field in Turkey. In this context, I also convey an analysis of the institutional identities of marriage websites and this part includes the analysis of names, designs, architectures and connections of principal marriage websites in Turkey. In the third place, I introduce the self-presentation infrastructure provided by marriage websites in Turkey. This analysis provides a comparison of existing mate selection criteria of Islamic and liberal marriage websites and the mate selection criteria of Turkish society in general and highlights the symbolics differences between these questionnaires provided by Islamic and liberal marriage websites. Lastly, I present the social media reflections of marriage websites in Turkey.

Chapter 3:

This chapter is an account of the different ways marriage websites users present themselves in marriage websites in Turkey. In the first place, it introduces a theoretical framework about the presentation of the self in general and furthermore, it presents how gender, distinctive qualities of computer-mediated communications, symbolic differences of marriage websites affect users' self presentation strategies. Within this context, I introduce a detailed analysis of the self presentation of marriage websites users that also underlines the similarities and differeces between Islamic and liberal marriage website users.

Chapter 4:

This aim of this chapter is to describe the habitus-based qualities of marriage website users in a more detailed manner, to understand their perceptions about marriage websites, to explore their usage practices including their online self presentations, mate selection criteria, online relationship formation sequence and online / offline interactions with other members as well as to discover their motivations for being members of marriage websites in Turkey. In addition to these, this chapter also introduces a detailed presentation of how online marriage website users negotiate with the expectations of other users depending on their relationship goals and strategies, their gender, dispositions and capital(s).

5. Methodology

5.1. Research Design

The present research is designed to reveal the positioning of marriage websites in online relationship formation field in Turkey, to present the online self presentations of marriage website users and to reveal their usage practices in a comparative manner with the main lines. In this research, a mixed method approach is implemented to provide a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon. In this section, first of all, I would like define netnography briefly and following that I will be providing the outline of the methods applied in this study. In the following sections, I will explain them in more detail.

Table 1.1: Research Design - Outline

Netnographic Observations	Netnographic observations of Islamic and liberal marriage websites
Semi Structured Interviews	Semi structured interviews with owners & managers of dating and marriage websites Semi structured interviews with users of Islamic & liberal marriage websites
Qualitative Online Content Analysis	Qualitative content analysis of Islamic & liberal marriage websites Qualitative content analysis of declarations of marriage website users in Islamic & liberal marriage websites Descriptive content analysis of social media reflections of marriage websites Qualitative content analysis of "first messages" of male users
Quantitative Online Content Analysis	Quantitative content analysis of declarations of marriage website users in Islamic & liberal marriage websites
Visual Online Content Analysis	Visual content analysis of profile pictures of Islamic and liberal marriage website users Visual content analysis of Islamic & liberal marriage websites

As Kozinets claims that "ethnographic research enables the researcher to gain a detailed and nuanced understanding of a social phenomenon, and then to capture and convey its cultural qualities" (Kozinets, 2010:55).

"Etnography provides a sense of the lived experience of culture members, as well as a grounded analysis of the structure of their group, how it functions, and how it compares to other groups. Social practices are carefully attended to and systems of meaning delicately unpacked" (Kozinets, 2010:55)

As "online communities form or manifest cultures, the learned beliefs, values and customs that serve to order, guide and direct the behavior of a particular society or group" (Kozinets, 2010:12), implementation of ethnographical research approaches for online communities are quite beneficial to explore what guides and directs the online practices. In this regard, I will be referring to the research methods of online ethnography (lurking, online participant observation, data collection and ethical standards) which is called by Kozinets as "netnography" (Kozinets, 2010) in this dissertation study as well as other methods that will be outlined as below.

In the first place my netnographic observations (Kozinetz, 2010) of Islamic and liberal marriage websites between February, 2014 and June, 2017 provided the basis of this research design as these observations provided me the necessary background information to formulate my research questions in this dissertation study as well. In this direction, this research includes semi-structured interviews with the owners and managers of marriage websites and users of Islamic and liberal marriage websites to understand the main play makers in the field and usage practices of website members. In the second place, a comparative content analysis of marriage websites is provided to reveal the institutional identities of these online platforms. In this context, while qualitative content analysis (Kim & Kuljis, 2010) method is implemented to examine the data collected within the netnographic fieldwork study (Kozinets, 2010: 98) which include the name, design and self presentation infrastructure of these websites, architecture of these websites are investigated with reference to the Papacharissi's framework (2009). In this direction, I also implemented the SEO analysis of the marriage websites to be able to reveal the connections of marriage websites on internet. On the other hand, in order to present the comparative analysis of the self presentation infrastructure of Islamic and liberal marriage websites (I claim that these self presentation infrastructure of marriage websites present the habitus of owners of these marriage websites in Turkey), I referred to the study of Rankin,

Ergin& Gökşen (2014) which reveals the cultural map of Turkey from a Bourdieusian perspective and I presented a comparative analysis of Islamic and liberal marriage websites in accordance with the main cultural clusters in Turkey. Besides, a descriptive content analysis of Facebook reflections of these websites are provided.

In addition to the methods presented above, this study also presents a comprehensive content analysis of online self presentations of marriage website users in Turkey. This analysis grounds on the declarations of marriage website users. Thus, the researcher analyzes the questionnaire formulated by the marriage websites, she does not implement a questionnaire study. Hereby, it should be noted that these declarations reflect the way users present themselves rather than their actual identities and they will be referred as the "declarative identities" of marriage website users in Turkey (Georges, 2009: 168). This statistical analysis of the declarations of marriage website users in Turkey covers their socio-demographical qualities, cultural tastes, physical qualities, nicknames. The information presented in this analysis refers to the data collected within the netnographic fieldwork study and the data shared by the owners / managers of these websites.

Apart from the methods mentioned above, gender display categories of Goffman (1987) and Kang (1997) are implemented together with shooting angle categories of Kress and van Leeuwen to analyze the visual content of marriage website users' profile pictures. Additionally, the self-presentation of users through their profile pictures are investigated with other categories including location, dressing / make up. The data presented here also refers to the data collected within the netnographic fieldwork study.

5.2. Personal Communication with Owners and Managers of Marriage Websites in Turkey

Within the scope of this dissertation study, I conducted six interviews with the owners and managers of dating and marriage websites. The rationale behind these semi-structured, in-depth interviews was to discover the main actors of this field, identify their business approach and positioning, understand the dynamics of this field and explore the challenges they face in online relationship formation field in Turkey. I preferred to conduct semi-structured interviews as this method allows for "collecting in-depth data due to the flexibility in the data collection process" (Silvermann, 1993 in Bajnaid, 2016:78). Besides, these semi-structured interviews

enabled me to explore the principal actors of this field in their work places. Thus I had the chance to observe the dynamics of the work environment of these actors as well. Furthermore, as I had succeeded in building a trust relationship with the managers and owners of these websites, they had accepted to share a comprehensive raw data referring to the socio-demographic information of their users and they also provided guidance and help to recruit users who would like to participate in this study.[24]

Table 1.2: Semi Structured Interviews - Manager / Owner of Marriage Websites

	Name	**Type**	**Location**	**Date**
1	Nasipse	Islamic Marriage	Bursa	June, 2014
3	Siberalem / Evlilik Merkezi	Dating / Marriage	İstanbul	June, 2014
4	Pembe Panjur	Marriage	İstanbul	June, 2015 (1st) May, 2016 (2nd)
5	eCift	Marriage	İstanbul	July, 2015; March, 2016 (2nd)

In the first place, I had contacted the owners of these marriage websites with telephone call and I explained the scope of my research briefly and asked their permission to conduct interviews with them. On that note, while I managed to reach the owners and managers of these websites with reference to the contact details of the company and my personal network, as the contact details of *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website were not revealed on their websites, I asked the aid of one of the owners of these marriage websites to provide the contact details of the owner of this marriage website. However, the owner of this Islamic marriage website declared that he did not prefer to participate in this study in our telephone conversation and he did not provide any other names from this company with whom I could have an interview to understand the dynamics of this website. For these reasons, I do not have any interviews with the owner or managers of this website.

I conducted my first face to face interview with the owner of *Nasipse* marriage website in Bursa, a large city located in Marmara Region of Turkey. In this interview, the owner described the dynamics of this sector, the user profile of this marriage website and he

[24] The recruitment process regarding participants who joined semi-structured interviews will be explained in detail in the next section.

commented on the usage practices of the site members. He also shared his reasons for establishing this business, why he preferred to establish a website with this positioning and he explained his financial model. Upon the completion of our personal communication, I contacted him a few more times to receive the raw statistical data revealing the user profile of this marriage website.

In the second place, I conducted an interview with the CEO of *Evlilik Merkezi* marriage website and *Siberalem* dating website. Even though these websites do not constitute the principal websites in my analysis, this interview provided a significant information regarding the development of dating and marriage websites in Turkey as *Siberalem* dating website had laid the foundation of dating and marriage market in the country and as the entrepreneurs who had established liberal dating and marriage websites in the following years (*Pembe Panjur* and *eCift*) were former employees of *Siberalem* dating website.

In the third place, I conducted two interviews with the owner of *Pembe Panjur* website in June, 2015 and May, 2016 and two interviews with the managers of *eCift* website in July, 2015 and March, 2016. These semi structured interviews and my observations of the work environment of these websites enabled me to identify the persons who are the main decision makers in the positioning of these websites and to see the relationship between their personal qualities and the way they position their websites. In addition to these, these interviews provided significant important about the dynamics of the field, the challenges they face and their revenue model as well.

5.3. Semi Structured Interviews with Marriage Website Users in Turkey

30 users were recruited for this qualitative research in total. 15 users were female users and 15 users were male users. The rationale behind these semi-structured, in-depth interviews with users of Islamic and liberal marriage website users in Turkey was to identify the socio-demographical qualities of marriage website users in a more detailed manner, to understand their perceptions about marriage websites, explore their usage practices including their online self presentations, mate selection criteria and online and offline interactions with other members as well as to discover their motivations for being members of marriage websites in Turkey. In addition to these, these interviews provided the necessary background to discover their perceptions about pre-marital relationships, sexuality and marriage.

"In qualitative research, the structured interview is quite limiting. Semi-structured interviews allow for more flexibility. They involve having a set of guiding questions that will keep the interview on track. However, the researcher can follow topics of interest during the interview without having to adhere to a structured set of questions" (Wilson, 2012:96).

As it was the case in personal communications with owners and managers of marriage websites in Turkey, semi-structured interview is preferred for the flexibility of the method and to be able to explore the user practices and perceptions in a more comprehensive manner.

Table 1.3: Semi Structured Interviews - Recruitments Process

Netnographic field invitation message	The researcher explains the research in an online written message and invites users to participate the research utilizing the messaging function of marriage websites and invite them to participate the research
Marriage website invitation announce	The website announces the research on their main page and invites users to participate the research
Marriage website recruitment	The managers of marriage websites contact married couples who had met with each other using these marriage websites and invite them to participate the research

The recruitment process was composed of several different phases by necessity for several reasons. In the first period of recruitment process during June-August 2015, I recruited users through netnographic field invitation message and with the aid of managers of marriage websites who had contacted married couples who had met with each other using these marriage websites and invite them to participate the research. In this period, I decided to limit my research with one Islamic marriage website and one liberal marriage website. As the architectural qualities of *eCift* marriage website brought some limitations to see the full profile of the opposite sex, I decided to recruit users from *Pembe Panjur*, the second biggest liberal marriage website in Turkey and the biggest Islamic marriage website in Turkey, *Gönülden Sevenler*. In this regard, I created two different profiles (male – female) in these websites. I organized my profile in a fashion that presents my researcher identity. In this regard, I did not respond questions regarding mate selection, I declared that my raison d'être in these marriage websites, in the personal form I explained clearly that I am a PhD student conducting research about marriage websites in Turkey. In order to protect my privacy, I did not share any photograph or contact information on my profile forms in both sites. In the second period, between February 2016 and October 2016, I decided to implement an additional recruitment strategy as I had faced some difficulties in the first period. Thus, in the second phase, with the permission of marriage website owners, I announced my research invitation on the main pages of *eCift* and *Pembe Panjur* marriage websites during the second phase of the recruitment process. The

reason I decided to add *eCift* in the second phase was related with the limited responses I received from *Pembe Panjur* marriage website in the first phase. As I could not contact with owners of *Gönülden Sevenler*, I did not have a chance to implement this second recruitment strategy in this marriage website. Lastly, the user number of *Nasipse* marriage website was much lesser than *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website and as the "Islamic" positioning of this website was not as clearly stated as it was the case in *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website, I decided to limit my research design with two liberal marriage websites and one Islamic marriage website.

Before sharing the further details of these three recruitment processes and its results, I would like to mention the reasons that complicate recruitment by netnographic field invitation message. In the first place, as it will be discussed in chapter two, using online dating and marriage websites is a taboo subject in Turkish society and users of these websites do not talk openly about their memberships. Therefore, I chose to recruit interviewees on the netnographic field. In the second place, it is worthwhile to mention that there is a binary gender division in these websites and users can only declare their sexual orientations as female or male. The architectures of marriage websites do not give the users the permission to see same sex users. Both the fact that online dating is a taboo subject in Turkey and the binary architecture of marriage websites constituted the impediments during my netnographic fieldwork both as an online participant observer and as a lurker. While *Pembe Panjur* and *eCift* marriage websites provided me free male membership in order for me to make observations and invite users to participate in this research, I had to purchase a membership several times to be able to continue my online field research and recruit members in *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website. In the third place, trust is a general problem among marriage website users and a few users have shared their previous experiences regarding fraud cases they witnessed on these marriage websites. Due to all the reasons stated above, a significant percentage of female users found the fact that a researcher contacting them via these websites to invite them for being participants in the research odd. On the contrary, as female users normally do not initiate relationships in these marriage websites, some male users responded my invitation positively while some male users approached my messages inviting them to participate in this research with suspicion.

On the other hand, as the main objective of marriage website users is mate selection, most of the users did not want to allocate their time for a research even though the research is related with online mate selection practices as well. Many users question the anonymity of these

marriage websites and they refrain from sharing too much information about themselves before they establish a trust relationship. In this regard, a significant percentage of users preferred not to respond to my messages or they refused to participate. In the third place, as it will be explained in detail in the third chapter of this dissertation study, male users constitute the biggest percentage in these marriage websites. Due this gender unbalance and the conventional relationship initiation process in Turkish marriage websites (as well as offline relationships) where male users take the initiative to start the conversation with female users, female users in these marriage websites receive excessive amount of messages from male users as it was also revealed in the declarations of female interviewees. In this regard, in their female interviewees mentioned not checking all the messages coming from male users. Eventually, I can state that male users were more willing to participate in this research. However, as the main purpose of this dissertation study was to discover the dating and marriage practices of female users in Turkey, despite the fact that the interviews of male users provided significant information regarding online mate selection practices, I limited the number of male participants to equalize the number of male and female participants.

Table 1.4: Semi Structured Interviews Recruitment Process 1 (Netnographic Field Invitation)

	Phase 1 June-August 2015		**Phase 2 February-October 2016**	
Netnographic field invitation message	total number of messages sent to invite users	total number of users recruited	total number of messages sent to invite users	total number of users recruited
Gönülden Sevenler	800	4	2000	9
Pembe Panjur[25]	800	2	1000	2
eCift[26]	-	-	200	0

Table 1.5: Semi Structured Interviews Recruitment Process 2 (Marriage Website Invitation Anno.)

	Phase 2 February-October 2016	
	Period 1 May-June 2016 total number of users recruited	Period 2 August-September 2016 total number of users recruited

[25] In the 2nd phase of the recruitment process, Pembe Panjur managers kindly requested me to continue the recruitment process via the marriage website announcement and I ended sending personal messages.

[26] eCift website did not allow me to contact with users in my own initiative. They asked me to send a list of 100 male and female users. I selected 50 female users and 50 male users, who are between 20-45 years old, living in the 10 biggest cities of Turkey. As none of the users I sent a message to invite to my research responded, I decided one more time to ask for permission to contact with another group of users via messages on these websites. However, I did not receive any response from these users.

Pembe Panjur	2	1
eCift	4	2

Table 1.6: Semi Structured Interviews Recruitment Process 3 (Marriage Website Recruitment)

	Phase 1 June -August 2015	
Marriage website recruitment	total number of messages invited by managers	total number of users recruited
Pembe Panjur	2	4

As Wilson claims in his account on the disadvantages of face to face interviews, several participants did not feel comfortable to participate this research with a face to face conversation (Wilson, 2012:96). In this regard, we can assume that this preference stems from two reasons. First of all, users do not feel comfortable especially in a research setting where they have to discuss personal issues such as online dating and mate selection practices and in the second place as online dating and marriage practices are accepted as a taboo subject, I observed that many participants did not feel comfortable to discuss their practices in an outdoor space.

In this direction, I want to underline the reasons why I did not prefer online interviews based on text messages, chat and emails. Bruckman states that "online interviews are of limited value" (Bruckman, 2006: 87) and the author further claims that that face to face or phone interviews offer far greater insight (Bruckman, 2006 in Kozinets, 2010: 46). In this regard, Kozinets also argues that "synchronous, text-based, chat interviews tend to offer a very thin and often rather rushed and superficial interaction" while he underlines that "online audio and audio visual connections, are extremely valuable" (Kozinets, 2010: 46). In addition to the authors' statements, I also had several experiences of online interview based on text during my netnographic field research. Even though this method allows the researcher to connect with more users, my observations demonstrated that due to the asynchronous nature of online communication, it is harder to have a comprehensive information exchange via online text messages.

In these conditions, I conducted most of my interviews using telephone and skype while I conducted 7 interviews in a face to face offline setting. Only one female participant accepted to have face to face meeting.

Table 1.7: Semi Structured Interviews – Interview Settings (n.30)

	Phase 1 June-August 2015			**Phase 1 February-October 2016**		
	cafe	**telephone**	**skype**	**cafe**	**telephone**	**skype**
Gönülden Sevenler	1	3	1	1	5	2
Pembe Panjur	5	0	0	0	3	3
eCift	-	-	-	0	3	3

In terms of sampling procedure used in this study, within the limitations and difficulties of recruiting participants as explained above, "convenience sampling" method is implemented (Robinson, 2014: 32). Convenience sampling "proceeds by way of locating any convenient cases who meet the required criteria and then selecting those who respond on a first-come-first-served basis until the sample size quotient is full" (Robinson, 2014: 32). Robinson states that the "best way of justifying the use of convenience samples in qualitative research is by defining the sample universe as demographically and geographically local" (Robinson, 2014: 32). When this kind of justification is made for the recruited participants in this study in terms of the socio-demographic qualities of participants regarding their age, city and education level, it is seen that the participants' average age and the residence area are similar to the declarations of marriage website users in general. However, the education level of participants is slightly higher than the declarations of marriage website users in terms of their education level. (See Appendix, Table E.1 for the detailed description of participants)

Table 1.8: Semi Structured Interviews – Participant Profile 1 / Gender (n.30)

	female	**male**	**total**
Gönülden Sevenler	8	5	13
Pembe Panjur	5	6	11
eCift	2	4	6

Table 1.9: Semi Structured Interviews – Participant Profile 2 / Average Age (n.30)

	female
Average Age	34,1

Table 1.10: Semi Structured Interviews – Participant Profile 3 / Residential City (n.30)

	İstanbul	**İzmir**	**Ankara**	**Tekirdağ**	**Kocaeli**	**Ağrı**	**Yalova**	**Adana**
City	16	5	4	1	1	1	1	1

Table 1.11: Semi Structured Interviews – Participant Profile 4 / Education level (n.30)

	Highschool	Undergraduate	Graduate	PhD
Education level	2	20	7	1

The interviews were also recorded by the sound recorder of an android mobile phone and I decoded them using the same application and word program of Microsoft MAC OS X. The analysis of semi structured interviews was realized by implementing thematic analysis method (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). The authors describe thematic analysis as "a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data. It minimally organizes and describes data set in rich detail" (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 79). Accordingly, this method constitutes of six sequential steps:

"Familiarizing (the researcher with) the data; generating initial codes; searching for themes; reviewing themes; defining and naming themes; and producing the report" (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 87-93).

In line with the steps of thematic analysis method, I analyzed the semi structured interviews conducted with owners and managers of websites and users of these websites. As a result, I explored the main themes in usage practices including online relationship formation and gender differences in online relationship initiation and formation.

5.4. Quantitative Content Analysis

Quantitative content analysis in this dissertation study refers to the analysis of declarations of marriage website users in Islamic & liberal marriage websites. In this context, I implemented two different strategies to collect the data regarding the declarative identities of marriage website users. After the completion of data collection process, the data obtained by these two different strategies was processed and analyzed by Microsoft Excel 2016 program.

In the first place, as I managed to build a trust relationship between the owners and managers of three marriage websites (*Pembe Panjur*, *eCift* and *Nasipse*), they accepted to share the raw data regarding the socio-demographic qualities of their users. In this respect, the statistical information referring to socio-demographic qualities of *Pembe Panjur*, *eCift* and *Nasipse* websites in this study reflect the raw data regarding the "declared" socio-demographic qualities (age, gender, civil status, city, education level, income level, religion, occupation, residence) which are obtained from the owners and managers of these websites with the

permission to use in this dissertation study. The socio-demographic statistics regarding *Pembe Panjur* marriage website reflects the information regarding 404.387 users who were subscribed to this website between the dates 22. June.2014 and 22. June.2015. The statistics which refer to *eCift* marriage website refers to the data shared by administrators referring to users who were subscribed to *eCift* website between August 2014 and August 2015. However, the administrators of this marriage website did not share the number of people who were subscribed to this website due to their corporate confidentiality obligations.[27] Thirdly, the statistical information on *Nasipse* users covers 300.000 users who were registered to this website since its establishment.

In the second place, I obtained the data regarding the socio-demographic information of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage together with other qualities of users that are analyzed as a part of their self presentation strategies using netnographic data collection methods. In this regard, as *Pembe Panjur* owners did not share any data other than the socio-demographic information of their users, I also referred to netnographic data collection methods to obtain relevant data as well. Kozinets describes these netnographic data collection methods as below:

"Two basic ways to capture data are to online save the file as a computer-readable file, or as a visual image of your screen as it appears when you see the data. Both of these methods have advantag~s as well as drawbacks. When the communal communications are mainly textual, as they are with bulletin boards, newsgroups, forums, microblogs, and wikis, then saving the file as a computer-readable file is the best option. The files from Google Groups and Yahoo! Groups are already presented on-screen as text files. When the data contain many visual cues as well as text, as is the case in audio and visual sharing sites, virtual worlds, some blogs, and some areas of social networking sites, then various methods of screen capture are preferred" (Kozinets, 2010: 99).

Thus, as the owner of *Gönülden Sevenler* website did not share any information regarding the socio-demographic analysis of its users, manual interface registration method is used to obtain the socio-demographic information of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website users as well as the information regarding their nicknames, character attributes, mate selection criteria, cultural tastes and physical qualities. The statistical information revealed in this study regarding this Islamic marriage website reflects the findings of 1636 *Gönülden Sevenler*

[27] During our interviews as the managers of the website stated that they experienced approximately 10 % increase in the number of users between 2014 and 2015, in this regard it is assumed that the raw data obtained from eCift might reflect the declaration of approximately 400.000 to 450.000 users. The total number of eCift users is declared as 5 million by the website. For more information, see: http://www.ecift.com/

members who were online at the peak use time on 27 June 2015.[28] In addition to the information obtained from the owners of *Pembe Panjur* marriage website, in order to investigate the statistical information regarding nicknames, character attributes, mate selection criteria, cultural tastes and physical qualities of *Pembe Panjur* marriage website users, manual interface registration method is used to access to this information. Accordingly, the statistical information revealed in this study regarding cultural tastes, physical qualities and nickname analysis of *Pembe Panjur* marriage website users' website reflects the findings of 1971 male users and 1343 female users who were online at the peak use time on 23 and 24 September 2016.

As the explanations regarding the data collection methods and the collected data reveal, there is a significant difference between the number of users between *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website and other websites. However, in the absence of other available data collection method that will provide a more comprehensive information regarding this website, the data referring to *Gönülden Sevenler* is important as it demonstrates the socio-demographic trends and how these users prefer to present themselves in this website. In the second place, it should be highlighted that all the data analysed in this quantitative content analysis reflect the declarations of users regarding their self presentations. As it will be discussed in Chapter three in detail, the motivations of users might lead them to misrepresent some qualities of themselves to be able to reflect the "idealized" versions of themselves (Goffman, 1959) and to be able to attract the attention of other users in these anonymous or quasi-anonymous (Wang, 2011: 486) online communities.

As a final remark on this analysis, in the absence of a previous research demonstrating the declarative or actual identities of marriage website users in Turkey, in order to be able to present how these declarations show similarities or discrepancies from Turkish citizens, I referred to the statistical findings of TUIK (Turkish Statistical Institute) to be able to present the similar and discrepant trends in the declarations of marriage website users in Turkey.

[28] In order to check the validity of these information, the data regarding 680 male users and 598 female users who were online at the peak use time on on 21 and 22 September 2016 were also obtained by manual interface registration method. This data was analyzed briefly to see the basic demographic qualities of users including age, education level and city. The results obtained in the second data collection phase correspond with the findings of the first data collection phase and the average age, cities and education level of users are quite similar with the first findings.

5.5. Visual Content Analysis

Visual content analysis in this dissertation study refers to the analysis of profile pictures of Islamic and liberal marriage website users and the visual design of marriage websites.

Regarding the analysis of self presentation of marriage websites users, in addition to netnographic observations (Kozinets, 2010) which take place between February 2014 and June 2017, the photographs uploaded by female and male users of Islamic and liberal marriage websites are observed with intense "non reactive observation" (lurker) method (Binark, 2015:140) as well between different time intervals for successive three weeks between 04. February. 2017 and 25. February. 2017. As a result of these observations, a total number of 1200 photographs belonging to 600 female and 600 male users in *Pembe Panjur* and *Gönülden Sevenler* websites' are obtained with manual interface registration method. These websites are chosen for this visual content analysis for two reasons. In the first place, the photographs of users in these websites are viewable by anyone who register these websites while in the other liberal marriage website *eCift*, the photographs are not open to every member and users can only see the photographs of other members they are interested in after a period of interaction between these two users if these users agree to make their photographs visible to them. In the second place, as the total number of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website is far more than *Nasipse* marriage website and its positioning as an Islamic marriage website is more clear compared to *Nasipse* marriage website, I decided to analyze the visual content uploaded by members of *Gönülden Sevenler* and compare the findings of this website with *Pembe Panjur* marriage website.

In this context, the profile pictures of male and female users in these two websites who were online for 4 subsequent days, during the peak hours of these sites (between 8 pm-12 am) are analyzed. In total, 1200 photographs are investigated. While a detailed socio-demographic analysis of this group will not be shared separately within the limitations of this visual content analysis, it can be claimed that the socio-demographic qualities of these users are similar to the socio-demographic qualities of members of these sites. On that note, it is worthwhile to state that the average age for these female and male users are thirty-four and they live in metropolitan regions of Turkey.

In the second place, a descriptive analysis of the visual images that take place in the main pages of marriage websites are observed and analyzed. This analysis will be explained in detail in the second chapter of this dissertation study.

5.6. Qualitative Online Content Analysis

As it was revealed in the beginning of this part on methodology, the architecture of these websites are investigated with reference to the Papacharissi's framework (2009). On the other hand, in order to present the comparative analysis of the self presentation infrastructure of Islamic and liberal marriage websites (I claim that these self presentation infrastructure of marriage websites present the habitus of owners of these marriage websites in Turkey), I referred to the study of Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen (2014) which reveals the cultural map of Turkey from a Bourdieusian perspective and I presented a comparative analysis of Islamic and liberal marriage websites in accordance with the main cultural clusters in Turkey. Besides, a descriptive content analysis of Facebook reflections of these websites are provided. In addition to these, the qualitative content analysis of self presentation of marriage website users in Turkey are also realized with reference to Bourdieu's framework.

6. Ethical Considerations

In this study, the instructions of scientific research and publication ethics[29] are taken into account together with the academic studies that provide a detailed ethical framework for qualitative researches (Shaw, 2003) and online community researches (Kozinets, 2010; Bowler Jr., 2010). In addition to this, the guidelines of gender sensitive research are taken into account. In this respect, the researcher paid "attention to the similarities and the differences between men and women's experiences and viewpoints, and gives equal value to each" (Leduc, 2009). Below, the ethical measures taken in this research are outlined:

[29] https://kms.kaysis.gov.tr/Home/Goster/96513?AspxAutoDetectCookieSupport=1

Table 1.12: Ethical Measures Taken in Research

Netnographic Observations	The researcher disclosed her presence, affiliations, and intentions to online community members during this research both in her interactions with the users of marriage websites and her user profile (Bowler Jr., 2010, Kozinets, 2010). Hence in her user profile, she introduced herself as a researcher and disclosed her intentions and avoided sharing any other information that does not align with the reasons for her presence in these websites The researcher informed the owners and managers of marriage websites about her intentions, the scope of her research and her research methods with written messages and personal communications (Bowler Jr., 2010, Kozinets, 2010).
Semi Structured Interviews	The researcher informed the owners and managers of marriage websites about her intentions, the scope of her research and her research methods with written messages and personal communications. The researcher informed research participants about her affiliations, intentions, the scope of her research and she obtained permission to share the interview findings The researcher did not disclose the names of the participants (users) in her analysis
Qualitative Online Content Analysis	In nickname analysis, the nicknames were analyzed according to their themes. In order not to reveal the nicknames of users, while theme is preserved in the examples shared in analysis, other information referring to nicknames were replaced with another example referring to this type of information (e.g. AyseİstanbulIs replaced as AslıİstanbulIs or Ahmet34 is replaced with Mehmet34).
Quantitative Online Content Analysis	In the statistical analysis of online content, the researcher did not disclose any personal information of the participants (users) in her analysis
Visual Online Content Analysis	In consideration of research ethics, the user rights and copyrights of marriage websites, the photographs of users presented in this study are edited in order to hide identities of marriage website users. In this respect, several features of the users (facial features, accessories, colors, attire and background) are transformed while their postures are preserved with the intention to reflect the gender representation categories of Goffman (1987) and Kang (1997)

CHAPTER 1: STRUCTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF MARRIAGE INSTITUTION AND MATE SELECTION PRACTICES

1. Marriage and Mate Selection

The Sage Dictionary of Sociology defines marriage as "the legally-ratified union, normally of a man and a woman" along with a remark underlining the same sex marriage gaining legal recognition in a number of societies in the recent decades (Bruce & Yearley, 2006: 182).

While marriage is accepted as a social contract, many academicians (Coontz, 2005; Ferraro, 2008; Thernborn, 2004) put emphasis on the regulatory attributes of the marriage institution. Ferraro calls marriage as a "socially approved" institution which regulates "the sexual and economic rights and obligations" between "two or more adult partners" (Ferraro, 2008:207). Thernborn describes this institution as a "socio-sexual" one which is connected with "the wider institutional complex of the family" and he claims that marriage "pertains to a specific sexual order, as well as to the more general social order" (Thernborn, 2004:131). Together with the other regulatory attributes marriage comprise, it is also defined as an institution that ensures the "means of creating kinship" ties (Keefe, 2011:897).

Several other theorists have also explored the previous and current functions of marriage institution in the society. In her book, 'Marriage, A History from Obedience to Intimacy or How Love Conquered Marriage' where she investigates the history of marriage in several societies, Coontz claims that the institution of marriage have been instrumental in "the organization of production", "the distribution of goods and people", "the coordination of division of labor by gender, age" and it ensured "the orchestration of people's personal rights and obligations in anything from sexual relations to inheritance of property" throughout the centuries (Coontz, 2005: 9). On the other hand, Therborn, who inquires into the study of families in the twentieth century, introduces five major functions of marriage institution including "regulation of sexuality", "arrangement of procreation", "social integration & division", "social status & house holding" and "maintenance of political economy" (Thernborn, 2004: 131-133).

Other than the functions of marriage mentioned above, marriage market also engenders a big industry worldwide and it is a significant source of income for various sectors related with marriage and wedding in many countries.[30]

Even though many academicians attempt to make the definition of this institution, some of them (Thernborn, 2004; Coontz, 2005; Keefe, 2011; Smart, 2011) addresses the difficulty of making a "definition of marriage that applies to all cultures". Thernborn represents this difficulty by exemplifying several different marriage types in Ghana, Ancient Hindu and so forth which vary according to "kin involvement and knowledge", "inter-family exchanges", "rituals performed", "the social status of the partners" (Vellenga, 1983 in Thernborn, 2004: 131) or "distinguished forms of acquiring a wife" (Mayne 1953 in Thernborn, 2004: 131). Thus, as marriage is an institution "defined by laws, culture, religion, historical and social context", not only how marriage is defined but also "what it might mean to the people who marry" changes over time and in different social contexts (Smart, 2011:354).

Together with the variations in the ways marriage and the functions it carries out has been defined in different time periods, the issues that have been central to the sociological investigations of marriage have also altered in time and have undergone a change especially in the last six decades. Smart claims that as "marriage was an institution which was taken for granted" as a "natural" and "common" practice in the 1950s and 1960s by the scholars of the period. Practices like "unmarried motherhood" or "divorce" which were considered as "deviant forms of behavior" were attracting the attention of the academicians rather than the institution itself (Smart, 2011:355).

"For years, historians treated families either as natural, taken-for-granted backdrops to "real" history or as mere epiphenomena, sets of inter- personal relationships far too individualized to accommodate systematic historical analysis. Only gradually did historians learn from sociologists, demographers, and economists to see families as social institutions in which variations could be related to socioeconomic pressures, cultural conflicts, and political transformations" (Coontz, 2000:283).

[30] "The global wedding market is now a $300 billion industry. $55 billion of that is the US wedding market, according to an IBISWorld report, and includes over 500,000 businesses, putting 750,000 people to work". For more information, see: Andre Bourque, "Technology Profit and Pivots in the $300 Billion Wedding Space", **Huffingtonpost**, January, 05, 2015. http://www.huffingtonpost.com/andre-bourque/technology-profit-and-piv_b_7193112.html

Besides, Smart argues that marriage alone was not treated as a separate field of study and family and marriage "tended to be treated together, with marriage being conventionally treated as little more than the threshold to family life" (Smart, 2011:355).

However, in the following decades of 20th century, several studies have been in conducted in the field of sociology of the family and marriage. In this context, *family ecology*, *structural functionalism*, *conflict theory* and *feminist perspectives* have been considered the major macro level theories in this field; while *symbolic interaction, social exchange*, *family development* and *family systems theories* are regarded as the major micro level theories in the sociology of the family and marriage (Strong, Cohen & DeVault, 2011: 37). In his evaluation of the studies in the recent years, Turner claims that "the emergence of gender studies, women's studies, and gay and lesbian studies" gives rise to "new questions and new foci of research" in the field and the sociological interest on "family as a key topic of research" has declined relatively together with "current sociological views of what constitutes gender and sexuality" (Turner, 2011: xvii).

1.1. Marriage Types

The institution of marriage has also been classified by academicians according to several different criteria including residence rules, number of spouses, customs and rules related with one's social group, the hierarchy of authority in the family, descent rules and individual's role in mate selection types.

In terms of residency, marriages are categorized into five groups as *matrilocal, patrilocal, avunculocal, bilocal* and *neolocal* marriages. According to the statistical information regarding residency types, 69 to 70 percent of societies are *patrilocal* (Ferraro, 2008: 222; Levinson & Malone, 1980 in Ponzetti & White: 995), 11 to 13 percent of societies are *matrilocal* (Ferraro, 2008:222; Ponzetti & White: 995) and 5 percent of societies are *neolocal* where couples live apart from their families (Ponzetti & White: 995). Additionally, the results of Murdock's "Ethnographic Atlas" (1967) demonstrate that married couples in 4 percent of the societies used to "live with or near the husband's mother's brother" (*avunculocal*) and married couples in 9 percent of the societies used to "live with the relatives of the wife or the husband" (*bilocal*) (Ferraro, 2008: 222).

With regard to marriages based on the number of spouses; cultural anthropologists define three types of marriages including *monogamy*, *polygyny* and *polyandry* (Ferraro, Andreatta, 2010: 218). While *monogamy* is the most prevalent marriage type in Europe and North America in terms of the number of spouses permitted; only "20 percent of 238 cultures worldwide" prefer monogamy (Broude, 1994 in Ponzetti: 1115). On that note, over 80 percent of societies practice *polygyny* and only a limited number of societies practice *polyandry*.[31]

Knox, & Schacht describe *endogamy* and *exogamy* as two forms of cultural pressure operative in mate selection (Knox, & Schacht, 2016:175). Accordingly, *endogamy* refers to marriages where a marriage partner is selected "within one's own social group, such as in the same race, religion, and social class". The authors state that race is a considerably determinant factor in mate choice as "over 95 percent of individuals end up selecting someone of the same race to marry" (Knox, & Schacht, 2016:175). Religion has also been a very important factor in mate choice through out the centuries and continues to affect mate decisions of many individuals and families as it will be discussed throughout this thesis.

On the other hand, in some societies there is a cultural pressure to "marry outside the family group" and Knox, & Schacht explain the reasons behind the exogamous pressures with "incest taboos" and "genetic defects" that might arise "in children whose parents are too closely related" (Knox, & Schacht, 2016:175 -176). While some states in USA prohibit first cousins from marrying each other (Knox, & Schacht, 2016:175 -176), first cousin marriage is a common marriage practice in several Muslim countries (Al-Gazali, Hamamy & Al-Arrayad, 2006) and in some regions in Turkey (Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu, & Ergöçmen, 2014:1709).

As Evans depicts, *patriarchy*[32] is not only a concept which is "used across a number of disciplines in both the social sciences and the humanities", but it is also a concept whose usage differs "between particular contexts" (Evans, 2011:433). Nevertheless, the term also points to the "the rule of men, not just over women but also over the general structure of social relations" across different disciplines and the term "patriarchal marriages" indicate marriages where the

[31] "Polyandry refers to one wife having several husbands at the same time, polygyny refers to one husband with two or more wives at the same time and monogamy is a marriage of one man to one woman". For more information, see: James M. White, "Definition of Marriage" In Ponzetti, James, J. (Ed.). **International Encyclopedia of Marriage and Family**, New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2003, pp. 1094-1098

"man has power over a family" (Evans, 2011:433). In contrast with the various usages of the term patriarchy, *matriarchy* is an "anthropological term which describes a society in which "descent and lineage are traced through the mother rather than the father" (Evans, 2011:373). However, Evans state that matriarchy can not be read "as the opposite to patriarchy" as matriarchal systems do not bestow "the same authority, nor access to property, as patriarchal systems do on men" (Evans, 2011:373). While matriarchal societies are explained with "descent and lineage" and descents are "traced through the mother rather than the father", matriarchal marriages can be described as marriages "in which women dominate the social and personal arrangements of the domestic space" (Evans, 2011:373).

Apart from the marriage types mentioned above, as in matriarchal societies, descent rules "define socially recognized kin groups by tracing connections through chains of parent-child ties" and the marriages classified by lineage include *matrilineal*, *patrilineal* and *bilateral* marriages.[33]

Finally, marriages are also categorized according to the way one's mate is chosen. Even though there are several other different terms that are used to describe various mating processes, the three main approaches are defined by Ingoldsby & Smith as *marriage by capture*, *marriage by arrangement*, and *free-choice mate selection* (Ingoldsby, 2006:133 -134).

In the first place, I would like to present what marriage by capture means briefly. While marriage by capture has never been accepted as a routine practice for marriage, women were captured by men in different societies and in different types (Ingoldsby & Smith, 2006:133). The authors describe marriage by capture as below;

"This typically occurred in patriarchal societies, in which women were often considered as property. Often women were seized as part of the spoils of war, and other times a specific woman was forced into marriage ' because the man wanted her and could not afford the bride-price or obtain the permission of her parents" (Ingoldsby & Smith, 2006:133).

[33] "*Patrilineal Marriage* describes a system in which possessions, identity or other values passed from father to son through the male line and *Matrilineal Marriage* describes a system in which property, titles or some other asset is inherited through the female." Steve Bruce & Steven Yearley, **The Sage Dictionary of Sociology**, Los Angeles: SAGE, 2008, pp. 227 and pp.187.

In the second place, I would like to explain marriage by arrangement briefly. Marriage by arrangement refers to "marriages arranged between the two families, and a verbal or written contract was agreed upon regarding the dowry or the bride wealth" (Georgas, 2003: 7). While arranged marriages have been accepted as "the most common method of mate selection" (Ingoldsby & Smith, 2006:133), Ingoldsby & Smith claim that arranged marriages are "more common when extended kin groups are strong and important" and the driving motivation behind these marriages are economical gains rather than love (Ingoldsby, 2006:134). However, recent studies demonstrate the decline in the percentage of marriages arranged by the families of the couple. According to one study, arranged marriages which constitute "72 % of all marriages in Asia and Africa at the beginning of 20th century" have decreased by approximately 40% at this century (Rubio, 2014:1). At the same time, as the results of the same study presents, 95% of all marriages in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh are arranged marriages even though young population living in the urban areas of these countries "have also started to move away from arranged marriages" (Rubio, 2014:1).

Stephens argues that major factors that determine mate choice in societies in which marriages are arranged are as below;

"The first is price. The groom's family may need to pay for the bride, with either money or labor. In some cultures, the situation is reversed, with the bride's family paying a dowry to the husband. In other cases, there is a direct exchange, where both families make payments to each other or simply trade women for each other's sons. The second consideration is social status. That is, the reputation of the family from which the spouse for one's child will come is very important. A third determinant is any continuous marriage arrangement. This refers to a set pattern for mate selection, which is carried on from generation to generation. For instance, cousin marriages are preferred in many societies. The final criteria for mate choice are sororate and levirate arrangements, which refer to second marriages and tend to be based on brideprice obligations" (Stephens, 1963 in Ingoldsby & Smith, 2006:134 - 135).

In the third place, I would like to define the free-choice marriages. Ingoldsby explains the decreasing role of parents in mate selection with the "shift from kinship and economic motives to personal ones" and states that free-choice mate selection occurs in "societies where the basic family unit is nuclear" (Ingoldsby & Smith, 2006:138). Coontz explains this recent phenomenon as follows;

"Only in the last two hundred years, as other economic and political institutions began to take over many of the roles once played by marriage, did Europeans and Americans begin to see marriage as a personal and private relationship that should fulfill their emotional and sexual

desires. Once that happened, free choice became the societal norm for mate selection, love became the main reason for marriage, and a successful marriage came to be defined as one that met the needs of its members." (Coontz, 2005:306-307)

Even though the name given to these types of marriages are free-choice marriages or love marriages, some scholars question the "freedom" in mate selection as they claim that "individual decisions operate together with the marital norms / traditions of different societies" and "these factors have important roles in marital regulations" (Ingoldsby, 2006:138). Free-choice marriages and arranged marriages will be discussed in detail in mate selection section.

1.2. Religion and Marriage

As it was briefly mentioned in the first section of this chapter, religion has been one of the important factors that influence mate selection decisions and marriage types. Thernborn states that "major religions and value systems of the world have invested marriage with different meanings" (Therborn, 2004: 133). Besides, not only the major religions but also the primary divisions of these religions and the sects belonging to them have contributed to the diversity of practices and beliefs regarding marriage.

In Christianity, both Orthodox and Catholic interpretations consider marriage as "a holy act, a sacrament, a gift of divine grace" (Thernborn, 2004: 133). Catholic tradition recognized that "mutual consent of bride and groom to marry was per se a valid criterion, unless voided by the Church" and it did not include any "reference to parental consent", besides it was inviolable "once sexually consummated" (Thernborn, 2004: 133). On the other hand, in the Orthodox tradition a marriage could only be valid with the recognition of the church and the blessing of the priest. Divorce was accepted if one of the partners committed adultery or was impotent and the remarriage of widows was not considered appropriate (Thernborn, 2004: 133-134). Protestantism not only differed from Catholic and Orthodox traditions in some respects but also the norms regarding marriage varied in the Protestant countries and different sects. In Protestantism, marriage was not considered as a "holy act" like Orthodox and Catholic interpretations of Christianity;

"Protestantism saw marriage as a worldly contract, though to be concluded by a clergyman according to church rules. Extensive sexual surveillance and jurisdiction were established in the Protestant world, from Calvin's time in Geneva and onwards, reaching their full deployment

in the seventeenth century… Divorce was possible, for instance under conditions of adultery and abandonment" (Thernborn, 2004: 134).

However, as historians recall, it is worthwhile to recall that the terms that we have accepted as absolute musts for getting married in the last centuries, in other words neither the conditions required by church or the state; nor the approval of the church or the state to legitimate marriage were imperatives that existed throughout the history of humanity.

"The ''tradition'' that marriage has to be licensed by the state or sanctified by the church is more recent than most people assume. In ancient Rome, for example, the difference between cohabitation and legal marriage was entirely subjective. It depended solely upon the partners' intent. And I am more than a little bemused when people talk about the traditional sanctity of the Christian wedding ceremony. For more than a thousand years, the Catholic church took the position that if a man and woman claimed that they had exchanged words of consent, whether in the kitchen or out by the haystack, then they were married" (Coontz, 2004:974).

In the world's third biggest religion, Hinduism[34], marriage is accepted as " a religious obligation and a holy institution, a sacrament, and as such in principle indissoluble, even by death" (Thernborn, 2004: 134-135). Thernborn claims that in India "marriage is a sacrament and no normal man or woman must die without receiving this sacrament" (Thernborn, 2004: 134-135). Different from other religions or major "ethical teachings", Buddhism does not approach marriage as a religious obligation or a holy institution (Thernborn, 2004: 134-135). Family lines, procreation and inter-generational family relations are the other motives for marriage in other non-Abrahamic religious teachings in China and Africa.[35]

Scholars studying marriage in Islam claim that both the central religious text, Quran and hadiths reflect Islam's positive attitude towards marriage and these texts encourage people to get married (while defining monasticism as unnatural and prohibited). In addition to the

[34] http://www.pewforum.org/2017/04/05/the-changing-global-religious-landscape/

[35] "According to the major normative code of the Confucian tradition in Imperial China, The Book of Rites: 'marriage ritual is the proper mergence of two family names in order to offer sacrifices to ancestors and carry on family lines' (Dai 1990: 183); 'The purpose of marriage is to unite two families with a view to harmonizing the friendship of two clans' (Chiu 1996: 4). Ontological and normative conceptions of the chain of being which links the living, the dead or departed members of the community, the spirits, and God or Gods, constitute a central part of African religions. This gives the inter-generational family relation a strong religious charge. Marriage as institutionalized procreation, then, is a religious, moral duty (Mbiti 1989: 130). The person who leaves no descendants then breaks the link of life. The memory of one's descendants also assures one of a life after death. Marriage conveys a right to the outcome of female fertility, and this is crucial, more than sexual monopoly or biologically based legitimacy. In African marriage in 1900, there was also more of an economic aspect than in the other major cultures of the world, as the major part of predominant subsistence agriculture was carried out by women (Boserup 1970). Marriage was a crucial form of labour supply." For further information, see: Göran Therborn, **Between Sex and Power: Family in the World**, 1920-2000. London: Routledge, 2004, pp. 135

Quranic verses[36] that encourage marriage and advise Muslim people about mate selection, the hadiths like "When a man marries he has fulfilled half of the religion; so let him fear God regarding the remaining half"" demonstrate the importance of marriage in Islam.[37] The relationship between Islam and marriage will be discussed in detail in the further sections in order to present the religious teachings of Islam on marriage and to see how it shapes mate selection practices of Muslim people in general and Muslim users of marriage websites in Turkey. However, it is worthwhile to mention the regulation of extra-marital and pre-marital relationships in Islam briefly. Adamczyk & Hayes claim that while "all major world religions discourage sex outside of marriage, they are not all equally effective in shaping behavior" as Islam does today (Adamczyk & Hayes, 2012: 742).

In our day, while in some Western countries as Grossi states that marriage is not as closely associated with religion and patriarchy as before (Grossi, 2014:37), a brief assessment of the civil[38] and religious marriage practices in the Middle East, USA and European countries manifests the persistence of religious ceremonies, practices and discourses in many countries.

First of all, "secularization" of marriage institution is a recent phenomenon that has occurred only in the last centuries for some Western countries. Dittgen claims that while "the replacement of religious marriage with civil-only marriage can be traced to the French Revolution in Western Europe", in former Soviet Bloc, it only starts after "post-1945 Communism" (Dittgen, 1995: 97). Talamante accounts for the beginning of civil marriage in France as below;

"At the very moment the Republic began, its leaders legislated marriage as a civil contract and divorce as a means to end that contract because they believed that any "inviolable agreement" risked losing the most fundamental liberty of the individual. The theoretical basis of this legislation paralleled that which asserted the right of the people to reject the monarchy, to break the social contract, and to form society anew." (Talamante, 2010: 143)

[36] For further information see, the verses al-Nur 24:32, al-Maida 5:6 and al-Nisa 4:25 In Abdullah Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Quran**, King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex, 1987

[37] For further information see, Riffat Hassan, "Marriage: Islamic Discourses", In Joseph, Suad (Eds.), **Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures: Family, Body, Sexuality and Health, Vol 3**, Leiden: Brill. 2006, pp.246-249

[38] Oxford Dictionaries define civil marriage as "a marriage solemnized as a civil contract without religious ceremony", see: https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/civil_marriage

In USA, the evolution of marriage from "a religious institution to a civil status" took place "at the end of the nineteenth century" (Kindregan, 2007). Common-law marriage which is defined as a "marriage is created through the consent and cohabitation of a couple rather than being solemnized and recorded by a church" was recognized by the court in 1877 (Kindregan, 2007:30).

When the recent marriage practices are taken into account, the researches show that sixty percent of the marriages in the ensemble of European countries[39] were either religious marriages or they were marriages followed by a religious ceremony (Dittgen, 1995: 119) in 1990. In our day, the percentage religious marriages are still on the decline in France, England and Wales and only one third of the marriages in these countries are marriages conducted by religious ceremonies (2012)[40] [41].

However, in several Western countries, including "USA, the UK and the Republic of Ireland, both ceremonies can be held together: the officiate at the religious ceremony also serves as an agent of the state to enact the civil marriage" (Kitzinger & Wilkinson, 2004:138). Besides in some European countries such as the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Italy, Latvia and Poland "a religious marriage is recognized by the state as equivalent to a civil marriage,"[42]

Despite the relative decline of religious marriages in the Western countries, some scholars argue that "religious origins of marriage also continue to shape attitudes and inform the views of many marriage defenders" (Scott, 2007:538) and "churches continue to take a very active interest in marriage, as evidenced by the public discourse around same-sex marriage" (Grossi, 2014:26).

On the other hand, Most Arab-Islamic countries apply the religious rules for marriage and many Arab-Islamic countries do not propose civil-only marriage to its citizens.

"Most Arab-Islamic countries defer personal status laws (also called family law) to religious institutions, as does Israel. Laws concerning marriage, divorce, inheritance, and child custody are under the aegis of the legally recognized religious institutions. There is no civil recourse: no civil marriage, divorce, or inheritance rules. Marriages between persons of different religions

[39] Former Soviet Union countries are not included in this analysis.
[40] http://www.lavie.fr/medias/infographies/le-mariage-religieux-aujourd-hui-31-03-2015-61677_699.php
[41] https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/marriagecohabitationandcivilpartnerships/bulletins/marriagesinenglandandwalesprovisional/2014-06-11
[42] https://www.oecd.org/els/family/SF_3_1_Marriage_and_divorce_rates.pdf

require the conversion of one of the partners, usually the wife, and the permission of the clergy performing the rites" (Joseph & Slyomovics, 2001: 5).

As distinct from other countries in Middle East where Muslims constitute the majority of the population, civil marriage is the legal marriage system in Turkey. However, 97,1 % of marriages in Turkey are conducted by both civil and religious marriage ceremonies, while only religious marriages constitute the 1,8 % of marriages in the country and 1,1 % of marriages are only civil marriages.[43]

1.3. The Transformation of the Marriage in The Western World

In this section, I would like to give a brief analysis of the transformation of the marriage institution in mostly occidental societies with the intention to provide the basis for comparing these practices with the current marriage practices in Turkey in the second part of this chapter. Having said that, the aim of this endeavor is not to evaluate these practices with the lenses "linear modernization theory"[44] provides us but I intend to represent the variations of relationship and marriage practices and the sources of these variations. There are two main reasons that makes this comparison necessary between Turkey and occidental countries. First of all, the society in Turkey is one that has been experiencing a kind of in betweenness between different value and thought systems of East and West and it is a country where a compelling transformation has undertaken with the Westernization efforts of the late Ottoman period elites and modernization project of Kemalizm together with the rise of Islamism in the recent years. Thus, several marriage or relationship practices that takes place in this section are also visible in Turkish society and they exist together with more traditional marriage practices in the country. Following this section, I will cover the mate selection theories to be able to present the strategies and mechanisms behind the current marriage and mating decisions.

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[43] http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=21869

[44] "Classical evolutionary theories maintained that there was basically one universal form of modernization. Enlightened thinkers of eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe were fascinated as well as repelled by cultural patterns found in other and apparently exotic parts of the world, but were also attracted to the notion of universalism. They tried to interpret cultural differences by integrating them into a theory of evolution or modernization, which was based on a continuum allegedly leading "citizens of the world" from barbarism to civilization." For more information, please see: Rita Liljeström, & Elizabeth Özdalga, **Autonomy and Dependence in the Family: Turkey and Sweden in Critical Perspective**, Istanbul: Svenska Forskningsinstituttet, 2002, pp:4

Scholars and theorists of late modernity studying the marriage and family trends in occidental societies summarize these trends with "increased participation of women in paid labor", "falling rates of marriage", "rising average age at marriage", "more people remaining single", "falling fertility rates" and "the emergence of social movements for gender and sexual rights" (Jackson, 2011: 20). Within this realm, Coontz's understanding of the transformation of marriage helps us to look at the changes in this social institution from a wider perspective. In contrast with the popular view that asserts that the relationship practices have changed tremendously in our era, at least in significant numbers of societies; Coontz simply states that "there is really nothing new under the sun when it comes to any particular practice or variation on marriage" (Coontz, 2004:974). Rather she argues that many of the relationship practices have already "been tried by some society at some point in time" (Coontz, 2004:974). However, she still calls the recent developments in this institution as "the contemporary revolution in marriage and family life" and she explains it as follows;

"Almost any separate way of organizing caregiving, childrearing, residential arrangements, sexual interactions, or interpersonal redistribution of resources has been tried by some society at some point in time. But the coexistence in one society of so many alternative ways of doing all of these different things—and the comparative legitimacy accorded to many of them—has never been seen before" (Coontz, 2004:974).

As the historical analysis of marriage institution sets forth, in contrast with the prevalence of "free-choice" or "love" marriages especially in the modern, industrialized societies (Beck and Beck-Gersheim 1995; Coontz, 2005; Ingoldsby & Smith, 2006; Illouz, 2012); "the individual needs and desires" were regarded as "secondary considerations" compared to political, social, and economic functions of marriages in the history of humanity (Coontz, 2004:977).

"For the propertied classes, marriage was the main way of consolidating wealth, transferring property, laying claim to political power, even concluding peace treaties. When upper-class men and women married, dowry, bride wealth, or tribute changed hands, making the match a major economic investment by the parents and other kin of the couple" (Coontz, 2004:977).

The economic and political functions of marriage was also important for middle and lower classes at a different level.

"Even middle-class families had a huge economic stake in who married whom…For most men, the dowry that a wife brought was the biggest infusion of cash, goods, or land that they would ever acquire. In the lower classes, marriage was also an economic and political transaction, but on a different scale… The concerns of commoners were more immediate: ''Do I marry

someone with fields near my fields?'' ''Will my prospective mate meet the approval of the neighbors and relatives on whom I depend?'' (Coontz, 2004:977).

Having shared the short presentation of some of the functions of marriage that affect mate selection criteria in the Western societies, I would like to give an account of the contradictory characteristics of the marriage institution in the 18th and 19th century. In this regard, I will mention the emergence of free-choice marriages and courtship practices which are regarded as the main mate selection principle in this time period, together with significant gender inequality and patriarchal marriage system of this era. First of all, I would like to present the coexistence of egalitarian and inegalitarian ideas of Enlightenment in terms of gender definition and gender roles and then I would like to mention the reflections of these ideas on marriage laws in this period.

The era of enlightenment denotes "the second half of the 18th century when a number of thinkers attacked tradition, autocracy and the Church and promoted rational analysis as the proper basis for the ordering of human affairs" (Bruce & Yearley, 2006: 87). The analysis of enlightenment era in terms of gender and women rights is quite controversial as the ideas and new practices emerged in this time period had both egalitarian and inegalitarian aspects. During this era, philosophers like Hobbes and Bentham who "supported the emancipation of women" took place in the intellectual scene together with others including Rousseau who "defend the democratic principles of equality" for men but did not advocate for sharing these rights with women (Cattunar & Gillis, 2014:1).

As an example of the egalitarian aspects of this era, Robertson analyzes the "main currents in European philosophy and in Catholic theology" and states that these schools of thought "proved themselves capable of supporting strikingly egalitarian conceptions of male and female natures, and in particular of women's mental powers" and "the original sin" doctrine in Christian theology lost its significance in this era (Robertson, 2007: 694 -696).

"No longer did Eve's original sin need to taint the treatment of all womankind; while the devaluation of the idea of a contract as inaugurating society made it impossible to ignore the formative role of the family in socializing children. Women thus had to be studied for their contribution to the family and their part in property relations, while the moral codes to which they were subject, and their treatment by men, became crucial aspects of the 'manners' of a society at any given stage of development" (Robertson, 2007: 694)

As Robertson's analysis reveals, women became a central topic in philosophical arguments in the enlightenment era, however the analysis of women in terms of their contribution to the family led to restrictive consequences for women as this analysis "presupposed not only their natural difference from men, but a limited moral and political capacity" while men were more credited more than women in terms of moral and political capacity (Robertson, 2007: 695). In this aspect, Soper's criticism on enlightenment is significant to understand mainstream enlightenment view on women:

"Enlightenment has espoused a conception of the individual as independent and self-directing while systematically denying women the means to develop autonomy and the forms of self-realization associated with it" (Soper, 2007: 706).

At the same time, it is worthwhile to mention that women as "enlightened subjects" contributed themselves to the intellectual discourse of the era as "essayists, novelists, scientists, salonnières, teachers, translators, moral didacts, theologians, poets, philosophers" (Knott & Taylor: 2007: xvii-xviii) as well and the ideas of prominent female writers of the period, notably "Mary Wollstonecraft's Vindication of the Rights of Woman" gave way to the suffrage movement (Remy-Hébert, 2011:2).

The period following the Enlightenment was The Victorian era which was "characterized as the domestic age, the age of the home", especially for women (Remy-Hébert, 2011:4). Even though the transformations in marriage and family in the 20th century are regarded as revolutionary changes, scholars studying the effects of Enlightenment and Industrialization in 18th and 19th centuries argue that the family types had already started to change in this period and love or free-choice marriage concept had gained significant importance in this period.

"In the 18th and 19th centuries, three simultaneous events touched the core of European family life: while the demographic revolution transformed family structure, industrialization changed gender roles and Enlightenment philosophies inspired new ideals of equality, personal freedom, and individualism. The convergence of these three revolutions caused the family to become more nuclear, private, and child centered as it also shrank in size. Male and female spheres came to be more sharply defined. Emotional functions replaced economic ones" (Accampo, 1989: xiii).[45]

[45] Ever so many scholars like Accompo have identified the impact Enlightenment and industrialization with the changes on family and marriage, the later findings demonstrated that some of these early findings were questionable. Scholars working on marriage and family state that "the nuclear family is not a product of the industrial revolution; it predominated long before" (Doumani, 2003:5; Coontz, 2000:283-285) and "the processes of modernity did not lead to the destruction of the extended family in industrial cities; rather, they led

While some of the findings of early academic works studying the impact of enlightenment and industrialization on family and marriage are later questioned by subsequent scholars, several scholars agree on the emergence of a new type of spouse selection in this period. Coontz argue that "the market economy and the advent of enlightenment" provided the conditions for the emergence of love marriage and "gave way to personal choice of spouses" in 18th century which is accepted as the main characteristic of modern Western marriage still today (Coontz, 2005:145).

"For the first time in five thousand years, marriage came to be seen as a private relationship between two individuals rather than one link in a larger system of political and economic alliances...where one marriage had been seen as the fundamental unit of work and politics, it was now viewed as a place of refuge from work, politics and community obligations." (Coontz, 2005:146).

In the Victorian times, love was idealized and praised as "the reason for marriage" and courtship turned into be "an extremely serious and important part in the lives of a heterosexual couple" (Schenkelberg & Kauffman, 2004: 1). Historically, the term courtship, as distinct from the modern dating concept "has been applied to situations where the intent to marry was explicit and referred to the socializing between young adults on the path to marriage" (Laner, 2003:385). In the Victorian society which is defined by Foucault as a society where "modern puritanism imposed its triple edict of taboo, nonexistence, and silence" (Foucault, 1978:5), women entering courtship relationship had to repress their sexuality and be "passionless" due to the strict social norms of Victorian society.[46] Besides, these newly emerging love marriages "brought the responsibility of choosing the right person" to marriage candidates as divorce was considered as an unwarrantable practice in that era (Schenkelberg & Kauffman, 2004: 5).

However, personal choice of partners and love marriages were not adopted all at once and in all places. In England, love marriages were quite limited until 1770s and in France, this new relationship was quite a controversial model up until mid-1800s. Many working-class families did not adopt the new norms of marital intimacy until the 20th century (Coontz,

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to an increase in co-residence with extended kin" (Doumani, 2003:5). For more information, see: Beshara Doumani, **Family History in the Middle East: Household, Property, and Gender**, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003 and Stephanie Coontz, "Historical Perspectives on Family Studies", **Journal of Marriage and Family**, 62 (2), 2000, pp. 283–297

[46] "As Cott notes, the idea of feminine sexuality was new since women had been considered more sexual than men before this time, but ideas on moral reform and sexual ideology had changed, leading women to be considered almost sexually neutered" (Cott, 1978:220 cited in Schenkelberg & Kauffman, 2004: 8-9). For more information, see: Schenkelberg, Meagan & Karen Kauffman, **Hidden passions: an example of Victorian courtship through the love letters of Eleanor Sherman and Alexander Thackara**, 2004.

2005:147). On the other hand, the romantic ideals which had started in Europe spread to many parts of the world including America and Russia. In 1724, Tsar Peter the Great outlawed forced marriages with the requirement of free mutual consent of partners (Coontz, 2005:147).

In contrast with the freedom brought to women for spouse selection in this period, it is not possible to define Victorian marriage as a liberating institution for women. West claims that marriage in the "Victorian era" was a social institution "that meant the erasure of the wife's civic, legal, and financial identity" (West, 2007:27). He accounts for this claim by referring to "the common-law doctrine of "coverture" summarized by Sir William Blackstone, which "transforms the individual" identity of the unmarried woman":

"By marriage, the husband and wife are one person in law: that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband; under whose wing, protection and cover, she performs everything" (West, 2007:27).

In this context, a wife in Victorian period "could not buy, sell or own property", "was subject to the lawful *chastisement* of her husband" and "the husband had the legal right to inflict "reasonable" physical punishment upon a disobedient wife". Besides she was not allowed to "take on tasks that might conflict with her domestic labors or necessary character traits that she needs to perform in the society". Finally, women in this period did not have the right to vote meaning that she had "no real power to change these laws through organized collective and political action" (West, 2007:27 - 32). On the other hand, in the century following the French revolution, "the place of woman in early nineteenth-century French society was fraught with contradictions" (Grogan, 1992: 1).

"She was worshipped as 'Muse and Madonna' of the society, 1 but was legally a non-person. She was the symbol of Truth and Justice, of Liberty and the Republic, yet she was simultaneously exploited and despised. In fact, the idealization of 'Woman' as abstract entity contrasted dramatically with the subordinate position of real women in the economic, political and civil structures of their society" (Grogan, 1992: 1).

Both the influence of Enlightenment movement and the ongoing gender inequalities at the Victorian Era gave rise to "woman movement" in 19th century. In "The Grounding of Modern Feminism" (1987), Cott defines it as a "movement operated from firm convictions about women's own ground of expected domesticity while aiming toward goals of equality between the sexes". Cott also claims that the demands of the women in that period were "equality of access to education, a single sexual standard, equal suffrage" (Cott, 1987:6). As a

result of the movement, in the beginning of 20th century many women gained entry to "many avenues of social, economic and political power from which women had felt excluded (Cott, 1987:7). On the other hand, the rising "individualism" ideology especially in United States of America had started to be influential in the period following "woman movement" and according to Cott, this ideology had been influential in reshaping the values of not only American society but also the "woman movement" in the United States:

"Like the ideal of equality of opportunity, the ideal of individual achievement had venerable supports in American ideology, and it was newly shored up in the 1920s by state rhetoric as well as private enterprise… The resort to individualism took the feminist standpoint that women's freedom and opportunities should not be less than men's, but individualism offered no way to achieve the goal except acting as though it had already been obtained. Although it produced outstanding models of individual accomplishment, it could not engender a program for change in the position of women as a group" (Cott, 1987:281).

Besides, "modern psychology, science, home economics, and advertising took over the feminist concept of individual choice" in the beginning of the 20th century and as the way Lemons articulates "they reinforced "the traditional role and place of women in the home, marriage, and motherhood (Lemons, J. T, 1989: 142).

By the 1950s, many uneven marriage practices of Victorian Era including "coverture, chastisement, disenfranchisement" had already disappeared from the marriage scene in USA and in all common-law countries. Married women could "own", sell and buy property in their own", "the state no longer granted a husband a right to corporeal punishment" and women could vote due to the achievements of "suffrage movement in 1910" (West, 2007:35). Besides, from the beginning of 20th century and onwards, the rise of urban culture and increased work opportunities for men and women in the cities had changed the strict courtship practices of 19th century and "the selection of dating partners began to become more autonomous, less under family supervision" and included "more sexual exploration" which could occur only at the last stage of the courtship in the previous decade (Laner, 2003:386).

Despite the changes that had happened in this social institution since the Victorian era, the scholars analyzing the marriage institution in 1950s still consider it as an inegalitarian, patriarchal institution (Coontz, 2005; West 2007) as "the cultural understanding of marriage at the mid twentieth century remained notably unequal and role defined" (West, 2007). The

"scarcity of work options" for women after the second world war, the marriage law which does not recognize "marital rape" as a crime, education system transferring "unequal marriage ideals", "the ongoing religious marriage system" and Christian values praising "the submission, sacrifice, and altruism for women" all contributed to the continuation of patriarchal marriage institution especially in United States (West, 2007:35-44).

In the next decades following 1950s, the institution remained relatively stable and people continued to get married "albeit an old age and lower rates" (West, 2007:45). However, the increase in the number of women gaining economical independence, youth movements transforming "the understanding of love"[47], political feminism, birth control techniques and "no fault laws" for divorce "making marriage terminable at will" make young people question "raison d'être" of marriage institution and shaped especially young people's expectations from love and marriage (West, 2007:45 -51).

Current marriage and divorce statistics indicate a clear decline of marriage and a significant increase in divorce rates in EU-28 countries[48] and PEW Research statistics demonstrate that "after decades of declining marriage rates and changes in family structure, the share of American adults who have never been married is at an historic high".[49] Turkey has always kept a relatively higher rate of marriage compared to many European countries in the time period between 1980 – 2015, even though marriage rates are also on the decline in the country. Nonetheless, according to the 2015 results of Eurostat, Turkey is the country with highest marriage rate among the countries included in Eurostat findings.[50]

On the other hand, recent researches and statistics also introduce the fact that marriage is not the only alternative for couples who want to organize their lives and raise children today. According to statistics, 18 million U.S. adults (2016) are in a cohabitation relationship and 42 % of the children in EU-28 are born in "non-marital relationships, among cohabiting couples

[47] During the 1968 movement in France, "the rigidity of marriage and the notion of the couple were questioned as the family was seen as a reproductive machine" and together with "free union", "separation of sex and reproduction was promoted". For more information, see: Claire Laubier, **The Condition of Women in France, 1945 To The Present: A Documentary Anthology**. London: Routledge, 1990, pp.47

[48] "Since 1965, the crude marriage rate in the EU-28 has declined by close to 50 % in relative terms (from 7,8 per 1 000 persons in 1965 to 4.1 in 2013). At the same time, the crude divorce rate increased from 0.8 per 1 000 persons in 1965 to 1.9 in 2013." For more information, see: http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Marriage_and_divorce_statistics

[49] http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/09/24/record-share-of-americans-have-never-married/

[50] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/File:Crude_marriage_rate,_selected_years,_1960-2015_(per_1_000_persons).png

and to lone parents".[51] As a final remark on the transformation of patriarchal marriage practices in the Western part of the world, civil unions are worthwhile to mention. While they are not counted as "the equivalent of marriage", civil unions are "socio- legal institutions" that "provide same-sex couples with many of the rights, benefits, and privileges typically associated with opposite- sex civil marriage" (Hopkins, 2011:291) and several countries had accepted civil unions in the last two decades.

As a final remark on the changing relationship and couple formation practices, neither cohabitation agreements nor civil union agreements exist in Turkey and there is no judicial ground for them.[52] According to the official statistical results, only 0.2 % of couples over 20 years prefer cohabitation in Turkey.[53]

In the light of the information shared above, it can be stated that the popular understanding of marriage as an institution based on free and individual choice have become widely accepted. In the next section, I will be questioning this popular understanding of marriage and mate selection practices and I will be presenting the theories related with these two concepts.

2. Marriage and Mate Selection Theories

As it was discussed in the previous sections, several social and political factors (enlightenment, suffrage movement, transformation of courtship, secularization of marriage, political feminism, etc.) have been influential for the emergence of popular understanding of marriage as an institution based on free and individual choice in the last centuries and several recent developments in the 20th century (comprising birth control, economic independence, facilitated divorce and so forth) caused people to change and question their expectations from this social institution as well as from their partners, especially in the last decades. Even though, in our age marriage is widely accepted as a bond between couples based on love and commitment, many scholars (Scott, 2002; Borneman, 2005; Ingoldsby, 2006; Smart, 2011) challenge this conventional understanding (Scott, 2002; Borneman, 2005, Schmitz, 2017).

[51] http://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Marriage_and_divorce_statistics
[52] http://www.lawyerturkey.org/2011/07/legitimacy-of-cohabitation-agreements.html
[53] http://www.oecd.org/els/soc/SF3_3_Cohabitation_rate_and_prevalence_of_other_forms_of_partnership_Jan2013.pdf

"The issues of sexuality and love marriage are often framed as one of choice, sexual or marital preference, but, of course, no form of human affiliation can be explained through individual choice alone. As humans, we make our own history, to paraphrase Marx, but not under conditions that we choose" (Borneman, 2005: 33).

In this regard, scholars highlight the relationship between the modern states and marriage institutions in the first place. In Public Vows, Scott argues that marriage policies underline "national belonging and the cohesion of the body politics", "enforce monogamy", define "the rights to citizenship" as well as a "gender order" (Scott, 2002: 3). A good example of the regulations and restrictions of the state that challenge the popular understanding of free-choice marriage is civil unions between same-sex partners. Some EU countries including Bulgaria, Latvia, Poland, Romania[54], several states in USA[55], majority of countries in Africa[56] and Asia[57] do not recognize same-sex unions.

In the second place, religion is still an important factor that determines mate selection practices both ideologically and as an institution that regulates marriage and mate selection practices. Especially in Arab-Islamic countries where there are no civil marriage regulations, authorities implement the Islamic laws and regulations regarding marriage and mate selection (Joseph & Slyomovics, 2001: 5). As it will be discussed in detail in the further sections on Islam and marital practices in general and in Turkey in particular, Islam introduces restrictions on mate selection and many individuals living in several Arab-Islamic countries experience these limitations brought by the religion.

Besides statistics showing the interracial marriage percentages reveal "how mate choice is being culturally and socially controlled" as only a very small percent of people marries someone outside their race[58] (Knox, & Schacht, 2016:175). In terms of class, in contrast with the representation of "romance between couples from widely divergent classes that ends in marriage or the promise of marriage in popular culture for more than two centuries" (Sharot,

[54] http://europa.eu/youreurope/citizens/family/couple/registered-partners/index_en.htm
[55] http://www.governing.com/gov-data/same-sex-marriage-civil-unions-doma-laws-by-state.html
[56] http://www.mambaonline.com/2016/11/30/marking-ten-years-sex-marriage-south-africa/
[57] https://www.voanews.com/a/asia-unlikely-to-follow-taiwan-on-same-sex-marriage/3872134.html
[58] "Of the almost 60 million married couples in the United States, less than 1 percent (0.007 per- cent) consists of a black spouse and white spouse. Those consisting of a Hispanic and a non- Hispanic spouse represent 3.6 percent". For more information, see: David Knox & Caroline Schacht, **Choices in Relationships: An Introduction to Marriage and the Family**, Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, 2010, pp.177

2017:2), the similarity of socio-economic status is a prevalent factor in mate selection at least in USA culture.[59]

Mate selection has been a popular research subject for academicians in different fields. In this section, first of all I will give place to cultural, sociological and psychological factors that Knox and Schacht define as filters in mate selection. In the second place, I will refer to the major mate selection theories, some of which utilize the filters mentioned in the first section together with Schmitz's overarching analysis of these major theories. Finally, I will present Schmitz's mate selection approach based on Bourdieu's relational sociology.

2.1. Filters in mate selection

In "Choices in Relationships", Knox & Schacht (2016) propose that cultural filters of mate selection refer to endogamous and exogamous marriage practices. As discussed before in the previous sections, endogamy refers to "cultural expectation to select a marriage partner within one's own social group, such as in the same race, religion, and social class" (Knox, & Schacht, 2016:175). Knox & Schacht claim that "endogamous pressures involve social approval and encouragement to select a partner within your own group (for example, someone of your own race and religion) and disapproval for selecting someone outside your own group" (Knox & Schacht, 2016:175). On the other hand, many societies constrain people from "marrying outside the family group" (Knox & Schacht, 2016:175 -176). Both "incest taboos" and "fear of genetic defects in children whose parents are too closely related" are the reasons behind this cultural pressure. Both religions and states impose restrictions on exogamous relationships while the measures taken vary in different religions and different states.

First of all, Knox, & Schacht define endogamy as the cultural pressures for sameness and they give place to homogamy as one of the social filters people use for mate selection and define this concept as an "individual initiative toward sameness" (Knox & Schacht, 2016:176). In the second place, homogamy (filtering mate candidates with sameness criteria in mate selection) is also one of the most studied and discussed approach in mate selection by many scholars (Becker, 1974; Blossfeld and Timm, 2003; Çelikaksoy et al. 2010 in Schmitz, 2017; Kalmijn & Flap, 2001; Clarkwest 2007; Amato et al., 2007; Knox & Zusman, 2009; Fisher,

[59] https://www.nytimes.com/2016/02/23/upshot/rise-in-marriages-of-equals-and-in-division-by-class.html

2009 in Knox, & Schacht, 2016). In their account, Knox, & Schacht give place to the researches on homogamy in mate selection and claim that these sociological researches support the belief that "we tend to be attracted to and become involved with those who are similar to ourselves" in terms of "age, race, religion, and social class" (Knox & Schacht, 2016:176).

The research on homogamy reveals that "most individuals select someone who is relatively close in age". Knox, & Schacht state that "men tend to select women three to five years younger than themselves" and according to their account, this creates an imbalance in "marriage market". As a result of this fact, "women have fewer partners to select" as "men choose from not only their same age group but also those younger than themselves" (Knox, & Schacht, 2016:178). Other than age, the findings of Kalmijn and Flap show that educational homogamy "operates strongly in selecting a live-in and marital partner" (Kalmijn & Flap, 2001 in Knox, & Schacht, 2016:178). Thus, just like age, educational homogamy is also a deterministic factor for educational homogamy in mate selection. The observations of Lewis and Oppenheimer reveal that "when people of similar education are not available, women are particularly likely to marry someone with less education" (Lewis & Oppenheimer, 2000 in Knox & Schacht, 2016:178).

According to Knox, & Schacht other than the criteria mentioned above, "social class, physical appearance, religion, personality, attachment, marital status and economic values" constitute the other criteria in homogamy theories of mate selection (Knox & Schacht, 2016:176 -181).

On their account on mate selection, Knox & Schacht also give place to three other theories which constitute "the psychological factors" in mate selection. The first theory they mention is "complementary-needs theory" and this theory "states that we tend to select mates whose needs are opposite and complementary to our own" (Knox & Schacht, 2016:182). In the second place, they include "exchange theory" that views mate selection as a process where individuals evaluate others by assessing "who offers the greatest rewards at the lowest cost" (Knox & Schacht, 2016:182 - 183).[60] And the final theory taken among the psychological

[60] While Knox & Schacht refer to "exchange theory" as one of the psychological factors in mate selection, several other academicians have used this concept in mate selection. As this theory requires a deeper explanation, it will be explained in detail in the following section where "Mating as Agency in Structure" (MAS) paradigm will be discussed.

factors in mate selection by Knox & Schacht is "role theory of mate selection". The academicians explain this theory as below;

"Role theory of mate selection (also known as modeling theory of mate selection) emphasizes that a son or daughter models after the parent of the same sex by selecting a partner similar to the one the parent selected. This means that a man looks for a wife who has similar characteristics to those of his mother and that a woman looks for a husband who is very similar to her father" (Knox & Schacht, 2016:184).

Lastly, the authors give place to the socio-biological explanations of mate selection together with the criticisms of this approach as they offer an "essentialist" explanation for gender differences in mate selection. According to this theory;

"Men look for a young, healthy, attractive, sexually conservative woman who will produce healthy children and invest in taking care of the children. Women, in contrast, look for an ambitious man with good economic capacity who will invest his resources in her children" (Knox & Schacht, 2016:189).

Socio-biological explanations of mate selection have been criticized by several academicians as they do not consider the conditions that have created prohibitions for women to access to "similar economic resources" as men can access (Knox & Schacht, 2016:189).

As it was revealed in Knox's & Schacht's presentation of filters (excluding endogamy and exogamy) that affect mate selection, the current academic tendency to embrace mate selection as a rational, individual choice will be analyzed in detail together with other major theories defining mate selection in the following section.

2.2. Mate Choice as Agency in Structure (MAS Paradigm)

In his analysis of traditional and current mate selection researches, Schmitz claims that different approaches analyzing couple formation share "a certain commonality" as they make a "paradigmatic distinction between agency and structure" (Schmitz, 2017: 50 - 51).

"Obviously, and despite different theoretical and empirical focuses, the foundations of social scientists addressing mating phenomena share a certain commonality. In all these approaches, the actor and his preferences are contrasted to external structures of the market and the associated opportunity structures." (Schmitz, 2017: 50).

Schmitz refers to this "paradigmatic distinction between agency and structure" in mate selection research as *Mate Choice as Agency in Structures or MAS* (Schmitz, 2017: 51). In this section, first of all, I would like to present the classical mate selection approaches and I will try to give account of Schmitz's explanation of MAS theories.

In his analysis of MAS, Schmitz states that in spite of their theoretical differences, most of the studies investigating couple formation process handle it as "a question of individual choice and as a phenomenon which has to take the subject as its starting point" and he argues that even the name given to this field of study - mate selection or mate choice reflect their "strong emphasis on individual choice" (Schmitz, 2017: 53). Schmitz propounds that MAS theoreticians justify their "strong emphasis on choice" by the argument that "throughout the twentieth century men and women were less likely to have been forced to marry a person of a particular background or social circle" (Corijn 2003: 39 in Schmitz, 2017: 53).

Schmitz names the mate selection approaches proposed by Blau, Becker, Hakim and other academicians as "classical theories of mate choice" and categorize these approaches as "Mating as Social Exchange", "Family Economics", "The Blau Space" and "Erotic Capital and Couple Formation".

"Mating as Social Exchange", "Family Economics" and "Erotic Capital and Couple Formation" approaches have several characteristics in common with the "exchange theory" revealed among the psychological filters in mate selection by Knox & Schacht while "The Blau Space" proposes a more structural approach in mate selection.

<u>Mating as Social Exchange</u>

In the first place, "Mating as Social Exchange" theory is a rationalist approach of mate selection and this approach supports the idea that "couple formation as a specific form of social and material exchange (Schmitz, 2017: 45).

"The basic assumption here is that men and women are trying to maximize their subjective utility by adjusting the distribution of reciprocal rewards via resource exchange. Two actors reciprocally satisfy their particular desires and needs through their respective partners (Thibaut and Kelley 1959). A relationship is considered worthwhile if the cost does not exceed the

benefit (Blau 1964: 114) and thus if it is balanced – that is, if the exchange of advantages is equitable" (Schmitz, 2017: 45).

The results of the exemplary researches and studies, Schmitz shares in his account on his social exchange approach include mate selection preferences related with "male socio-economic status resources for female physical attractiveness", "status-caste exchange between different ethnicities" and "male breadwinning for female homemaking" (Schmitz, 2017: 45).

Family Economics

Schmitz refers to Gary S. Becker to explain his "Family Economics" theory in the second place and he states that Becker presents a "micro-economic model of marriage markets" while he underlines the fact that Becker does not theorize mate selection process in it explicitly. In his article called "Economics of the family: marriage, children, and human capital" (1974), Becker defines the main principles of his "Family Economics" theory as follows;

"Two simple principles form the heart of the analysis. The first is that, since marriage is practically always voluntary, either by the persons marrying or their parents, the theory of preferences can be readily applied, and persons marrying (or their parents) can be assumed to expect to raise their utility level above what it would be were they to remain single. The second is that, since many men and women compete as they seek mates, a market in marriages can be presumed to exist. Each person tries to find the best mate, subject to the restrictions imposed by market conditions." (Becker, 1974:300)

Becker like many other MAS theorists defines mate selection as a "voluntary" individual choice while he does not analyze the social and cultural limitations in depth and he states that people choose their mates for maximizing the benefits of marriage. Furthermore, he proposes that men and women compete with each other in the marriage market to be able to find the best mate possible (Schmitz, 2017: 47).

The Blau Space

In the third place, Schmitz presents Blau Space which is "an explicit structural conception of couple formation" that was first put forward by Peter Blau". Schmitz defines Blau Space as "a spatial representation capable of visualizing the distribution of traits characteristic for a particular society" (Schmitz, 2017: 48-49). This spatial representation includes several parameters that refer to attributes of people in the society.

"The structures of societies and communities are delineated by parameters (Blau 1974). Structural parameters are the axes in the multidimensional space of social positions among which the population is distributed. They are attributes of people that underlie the distinctions they themselves generally make in their social relations, such as age, race, education, and socioeconomic status. People can be classified on the basis of innumerable attributes, any of which may be a parameter" (Blau, 1977: 30).

In his article "A Macrosociological Theory of Social Structure", Blau defines two different types of parameters which he refers as "nominal and "graduated" parameters.

"The two basic types of parameters are nominal and graduated parameters. A nominal parameter divides the population into subgroups with distinct boundaries and without an inherent rank order. Sex, religion, race, and place of residence are nominal parameters. A graduated parameter differentiates people in terms of a status rank order, which is in principle continuous, so that the parameter does not draw boundaries between strata. Income, wealth, education, and power are graduated parameters" (Blau, 1977: 30 -31).

In this theoretical representation of the society, proximity and/or similarity between actors condition their contact. Thus, according to this model, "human contact behavior is not seen as coincidental, but it is described as a decreasing function of distance" (Schmitz, 2017: 49).

"Blau assumes that actors in similar positions will also be predisposed to having similar experiences and characteristics, therefore leading – thanks in part to the increased likelihood of contact – to increased couple formation between actors with similar attributes (Blau 1977: 37). Accordingly, this model assumes homophilous preferences even more decisively than theories of partner preference" (Schmitz, 2017: 49).

However, one of the main assumption in this theoretical approach, more precisely the correlation between level of proximity and the human contact disregards "structured interdependencies between structure and action". In other saying, Schmitz argues that this model "neglects the fact that the structural probability of interaction due to physical proximity does not necessarily mean that the actors involved are motivated to interact and to form a relationship" (Schmitz, 2017: 57). Besides as this model is based on "objective social positions", it also "ignores cultural differences" (Schmitz, 2017: 57).

Erotic Capital and Couple Formation

Catherine Hakim presents a theory of erotic capital derived from Bourdieu's capital notion and she proposes that the physical appearance of women have an exchange value for "social mobility", "the labour market", "mating" and so forth (Hakim, 2010: 499). Hakim states that it is a "multi-faceted" capital consisting of "beauty", "sexual attractiveness", "social skills: grace, charm", "liveliness, a mixture of physical fitness, social energy, and good humour", "social presentation: style of dress, face-painting, perfume, jewellery or other adornments", "sexual competence, energy, erotic imagination, playfulness" (Hakim, 2010: 500-501).

Schmitz underlines the uses of erotic capital on couple formation in Hakim's theory. Accordingly, Hakim who justifies the effectiveness of this capital - based on recent empirical research on the importance of physical look in mate selection (Hakim, 2010: 507) states that "the first application of the theory of erotic capital is in mating and marriage markets" (Hakim, 2010: 507). Hakim criticizes feminist thinkers' insistence on economic, social capital and the measurement of "'gender equality' by "employment rates, occupational segregation, access to the top jobs, personal incomes" (Hakim, 2010: 511) and she stresses upon the opportunities of erotic capital for women.

"Women can thus exploit their erotic capital for upward social mobility through the marriage market instead of, or as well as, the labour market. The marriage market remains an avenue for upward social mobility long after the equal opportunities revolution opened up the labour market to women. Indeed, research suggests that marriage markets and labour markets can be equally important routes to social status and wealth for women in modern societies" (Hakim, 2010: 508).

Finally, Hakim argues that this form of capital is "empirically independent from other forms of capital" and it is "independent of social origin" (Schmitz, 2017: 46).

Hakim's theory can be contested in several ways using Bourdieu's framework which Hakim also makes use of in her theory. First of all, her proposition that "erotic capital is independent from other forms of capital and social origin" conflicts with some of the elements of this erotic capital as she includes social skills and social presentation in the definition of this capital.

"A key feature of erotic capital is that it can be completely independent of social origin and provide a vehicle for dramatic upward social mobility" (Hakim, 2011:18).

I claim that the qualities she mentions (Hakim, 2010: 500-501) are not universal and they can be acquired by the transmission of cultural capital through women's habitus. In the second place, as Bourdieu states human body is "the most indisputable materialization of class taste" (Bourdieu 1984: 190) and the social presentation skills included in erotic capital by Hakim (style of dress, face-painting, perfume, jewelry or other adornments, hairstyles) are markers of class and they are not independent of the economic or social capital.

2.3. Bourdieu and Mate Selection Practices

Bourdieu interprets the transformation of marriage institution by the "socioeconomic changes affecting the meaning of the dowry" along with the attitudinal changes toward the individual. Thus, in Bourdieu's explication, marriage had transformed into an institution of "individual choice" in one sense as "the authority of the patriarchal family system" does not impose limitations as it was the case before (Danahay, 2005:75). However, Bourdieu's account on the individual choice in mate selection differs greatly from the findings of several empirical researches and theories of MAS paradigm. In order to explain Bourdieu's perspective in mate selection, Schmitz remarks Bourdieu's critique of the conventional understanding of modern mate selection and refers to Bourdieu's idea that "the laissez-faire nature of the free partner market tends to conceal the structural necessities and forces that are constitutive for mating processes in our times" (Schmitz, 2017: 102). Furthermore, he articulates Bourdieu's thoughts on current mate selection practices and states that "habitus mechanisms have become more important" in modern mate selection practices as "direct group influences" (the intervention of family, state and religion, in modern societies) have decreased in the recent period (Schmitz, 2017: 102).

In this regard, I will try to explain Schmitz's theory of mate selection which utilizes Bourdieu's relational epistemology to investigate current mate selection practices in modern societies.[61] In his account of couple formation, Schmitz offers a grounded explanation of this

[61] Schmitz refers to Bourdieu's "relational epistemology" and he highlights Bourdieu and Wacquant's propositions that state "the real is the relational" and "relations are the 'material' out of which social reality is built" (Bourdieu, Wacquant 1992: 97 in Schmitz, 2017:85-86). For more information, see: Andreas Schmitz, **The Structure of Digital Partner Choice: A Bourdieusian Perspective**, Cham: Springer, 2017.

"individual choice" based on Bourdieu's "relational epistemology" and in this regard he differs significantly from "*Mate Choice as Agency in Structures"* paradigm theoreticians who consider "mating processes are thought of as individual choice acts within a given opportunity structure, which is usually referred to as a "partner market" or "marriage market", constituting the subject's field of eligible" (Schmitz, 2017: 50).

"Structure, from the relational point of view, is not reduced to infrastructure, normative structure, physical place, or actual contact opportunities, but is a relational entity. 'Society' is conceptualized as a relational entity – called social space – which comprises the interrelations between (classes of) agents and social spheres – i.e. social fields such as the economic or the scientific field. Social spaces and fields are defined by their relational structure, that is, their effective capital dimensions, their positional structure, the relevant objects of interests and competition, unquestioned beliefs, structures of meaning, etc." (Schmitz, 2017:86).

In the second place, Bourdieusian relational point of view enables Schmitz to perceive agent's role in mate selection different from "Mate Choice as Agency in Structures" paradigm theoreticians who stress upon the agency with the assumption that "the selection of a certain partner depends essentially on subjectively (and sometimes consciously) considered preferences for certain characteristics, such as socio-economic status, physical appearance, or age" (Schmitz, 2017:44). As distinct from some MAS theoreticians' emphasis on the rational and subjective mate selection, Schmitz supports the idea that "the agent does not stand in opposition to society as an external entity"; he claims that the agent "himself" – by way of his habitus" is "society" (Schmitz, 2016:87-88). At this point, in order to clarify the relationship between agency and choice, I would like to give Danahay's account on habitus and agency.
In "Locating Bourdieu", Danahay states that "much of Bourdieu's work was concerned with articulating the ways in which a person's social position affects the choices he or she makes in life" (Danahay, 2005:2). Thus, in Bourdieusian perspective, the choices one makes in life including mate selection, education, career decisions and so forth are related with "one's social position, cultural capital or values and resources connected to this" (Danahay, 2005:2), rather than being "conscious decisions or calculated strategies" (Danahay, 2005:2), to put it all in simple terms, the choices people make are "products of their habitus" (Danahay, 2005:2). Concordantly, Bourdieu explains the tastes or preferences in mate selection - excluding arranged, forced marriages - by socialization and the habitus.

"The earliest learning experiences, reinforced by all subsequent social experience, tended to shape schemes of perception and appreciation, in a word, tastes, which were applied to potential

partners as to other things: and even without any directly economic or social calculation, these tastes tended to rule our misalliances" (Bourdieu, 160 in Danahay, 2005:116)

In this context, Schmitz claims that "the act of choosing a mate" can not be reduced to "just behavior and synchronic sense of the individual actor" and he argues that "actively selecting actor of the MAS perspective" is guided by his habitus and s/he is "never completely the subject of his practices" (Schmitz, 2017: 102). However, this does not mean that the actor has a merely passive role in mate selection.

Schmitz supports the idea that "the agent does not stand in opposition to society as an external entity" as "he himself is – by way of his habitus – society" (Schmitz, 2016:87-88). Thus, in contrast with Blau's structuralist perspective, "the concept of habitus clearly emphasizes the active and creative side of practice" where individuals apply "certain strategies in order to improve or maintain their position" (Schmitz, 2016:88).

2.4. Marriage Market and Mate Selection

In this part of the mate selection section, I would like to share the ways theoreticians define the marriage market in general and following that I will refer to Schmitz's account on this subject.

Marriage market is simply defined as "the persons from among whom we select our partners" (Laner, 2003:385). As it was shared in the section where the mate selection perspectives of MAS theoreticians were discussed, economists of the family, nominately Gary S. Becker builds a model of marriage market. According to Becker's model, "marriage occurs only if the gains from marriage are positive and partners believe that the utility of being married is higher than the utility of remaining single" (Dalmia, 2011:1).

"A marriage market forms from competition among single men and women seeking mates. Marital matches are responsive to the personal traits of individuals, which influence their market and nonmarket productivity and are inputs to the household production function. The marriage market functions by choosing the optimal sorting of men and women that maximizes the average gain over all marriages" (Dalmia, 2011:1).

While many recent academicians refer to Becker's theory to account for mate selection in current societies, some other theorists give place to marriage market notion in their analysis to define the characteristics of the contemporary marriage markets. In this regard, it should be noted that the transformations that take place especially after the second half of the 20th century

in the marriage institution cause academicians to question the characteristics of marriage market in our era.

In this context, Illouz states that "pre-modern search for a mate was (more or less) horizontal: that is, it happened within one's own group" (Illouz, 2012: 52). However, in her account on modern societies, she sees a change in the horizontal character of marriage market;

"In modernity, on the other hand, given that race, socio-economic status, and religion are no longer formal obstacles to the choice of a mate, the competition becomes both horizontal and vertical, within one's social group, but often and quite typically outside of it, thus becoming in principle open to everyone. The competition over a partner becomes generalized. This is because social classes and social groups do not provide formal and formalized mechanisms for selection of a mate. The result is thus that the pool of potential partners becomes considerably enlarged and that everyone in principle competes with everyone else for the most desirable partners in a given social field" (Illouz, 2012: 52).

The claims of Illouz are highly questionable when the current mate selection practices are taken into account. While as Illouz claims, it is possible to state that there is a transformation in the marriage market in Western societies, the results of current researches on marriages and mating practices and ongoing marriage regulations does not allow us to accept all of her claims. First of all, it is not possible to assert that religion is no more an obstacle in many societies especially when we take Muslim and Hindu cultures most especially into account (Joseph & Slyomovics, 2001: 5). In the second place, the results of the socio-demographic analyses demonstrate that the annulment of restrictions on race and socio-economic status have not given rise to heterogamy in western societies. The results of these studies show that only a very limited number of people get married with someone outside their race and socio economic class (Knox, & Schacht, 2016:175; Sharot, 2017:2). On the other hand, marriage is not the only option for people who want to organize their lives and raise children today, especially in the occidental societies. In this context, the analysis of couples cohabiting together also indicates to the importance of homogamy in mate selection in extramarital relationships. A recent study conducted on the census data for England and Wales from the ONS Longitudinal Study (LS) reveals the fact that as it is the case in marriage patterns, cohabitation also "does not after all seem to be associated with greater heterogamy" when factors like religion, social class, political views and so forth are taken into account (Brynin, Longhi and Pérez, 2009:81).

In the second place, Illouz also underlines the exchange logic of marriage market like Gary Becker and she states that "the transformation of marriage institution has resulted in the de-regulation of marriage market and changed the exchange practices" (Illouz, 2012 :53). From this point of view, Illouz claims that individuals who take place in the partner or marriage market today "freely exchange attributes of his or her self, conceived as an accretion of social, psychological, and sexual traits" (Illouz, 2012: 53-54).

In sum, when the accounts of the theorists that are presented by Knox & Schacht, MAS paradigm thinkers and Illouz are considered, their definition of "free choice marriage" and "marriage market" concepts share common qualities as most of them underline competition and exchange practices (while they do not always agree on "what individuals exchange in this market"). In addition to this as it was discussed in the previous pages, the scholars using marriage market concept in their mate selection theories define it as a free-market where individuals are recognized as agents who make their choices freely. In his analysis of marriage markets, Schmitz question the meaning of 'partner market' or 'marriage market' concepts as he does not find the theories on these concepts sufficient enough to explain these terms. He states that "partner markets' are mostly interpreted as a theoretical matter without the need for an exact theoretical conceptualization" (Schmitz, 2017: 30).

"Usually, no explicit definitions are given and the usage of the term 'market' is essentially metaphorical. In most cases, the term 'partner market' refers to a confined field of social interactions (such as a university or a nightclub) in which mating goals are pursued to a finite degree. However, from a theoretical point of view, such implicit definitions are not satisfactory and, as we will see, not strictly conclusive for empirical work either" (Schmitz, 2016: 30).

While several academicians who refer to Bourdieu's framework to explain mate selection and marriage practices (Kaberis & Koutsouris, 2012: 79; Keuzenkamp, 1994: 12) define "marriage market" as a field, Schmitz rather embraces marriage or partner market as "manifestations of the social space" (Schmitz, 2017:92).

"A partner market's (chance) structure is interpreted and constructed as a function of the structure of society as a whole, rather than via autonomous markets. This implies that mating processes are to be interpreted primarily in the context of competition between social classes and the different prices they get for the "products of their upbringing and education" (Bourdieu 2008: 184), and not as a form of partner market competition in its own right. Consequently, the partner market is neither conceptualized as an abstract entity separate from society, nor equated ad hoc to a specific social context of society (such as the university), but is constructed from the outset as a genuinely heteronomous object of research" (Schmitz, 2017:92).

He asserts that in Bourdieusian framework, "society is conceptualized as a relational entity – called social space – which comprises the interrelations between (classes of) agents and social spheres" (Schmitz, 2017: 87). Despite some characteristics of Blau space that resemble Bourdieusian social space (as it proposes "a multidimensional model of space and the spatial position of agents"), Schmitz's comparison of Blau space model with Bourdieusian social space reveals the differences in terms of agency concept, cultural values and norms (Schmitz, 2017: 87).

"The Blau space displays a clear difference here when compared to the social space, as no elaborated concept of agency or practice is implied in the former. Although Blau refers to "social relations between positions", which correspond to roles, he contests the significance of "internalized cultural values and norms [and] psychological preferences" (Blau 1987: 75) and rejects them as explanation for (mating) processes" (Schmitz, 2017: 87).

In the previous sections, I have tried to present variant definitions and functions of marriage together with diversified roles men and women have taken in this social institution particularly in the last two centuries. The cultural and social mechanisms that have been influential in reshaping this the marriage institution in time, have also affected how academicians handle this field of study. As this section on mate selection reveals, the transformations of the marriage institution and the "decreasing authority of the patriarchal family" (Danahay, 2005:75) have lead academicians to develop theories on couple formation based on "individual" and/or "rational" choice. In this regard, I gave place to Schmitz's analysis of mate selection theories and his emphasis on "the structural necessities and forces that are constitutive for mating processes in our times" (Schmitz, 2017: 102). As it was discussed before in the previous sections, religion has been influential in shaping the marriage practices and mate selection criteria. In the following section, I will give place to the way gender, marriage and mate selection practices were handled in Islam religion.

3. Gender, Marriage and Mate Selection in Islam

The analysis of the sociology of religion in the 19th century and a comprehensive investigation of sociology of religions definitely provide a valuable point of view. However, within the limitations of this study, I would narrow down my account on the sociology of the religion with the current issues at stake in the sociology of religion and I will focus on Islamic norms shaping gender roles, marriage and mate selection in general. Following that, in the next sections, I will focus on the influence of Islam on gender roles, marriage and mate selection in Turkey in particular.

One important issue which is stake today on the analysis of religion, gender and marriage practices is current "religious revivalism" taking place in several societies in the world. While in secular Northern European countries and their "colonies", there is a decline in religious practices and beliefs, Turner argues that "religion remains powerful… in many Catholic societies, especially in Latin America and Africa" (Turner, 2011: 11). Besides, in his account of the current state of religion, Turner highlights the emergence of "powerful movements of fundamentalist revivalism" especially in Abrahamic religions (Turner, 2011: 11).

"Religion appears to be increasingly an important component of public culture rather than simply a matter of private belief and practice" (Turner, 2011, xi).

In his account of the several important aspects that indicate the change in the religion(s) in modern era, other than "religious fundamentalism", he gives place to "hybrid forms of religion" and "radical religious movements" (Turner, 2011, xv - xviii). Before presenting the definitions of these issue briefly, I would like to remind Turner's point on the influence of globalization on religions. In this respect, in his evaluation of Islam, Turner mentions the well accepted argument that it is not possible to refer Islam singularly as several Islam(s) take place in different societies (Turner, 2011, xiv) in his account. However, he also reminds us Smith's claim that "modern conditions have made religions more self-consciously global in character" (Smart 1989: 556 in Turner, 2011, xiv).

Furthermore, in his explanation of religious fundamentalism, Turner criticizes the identification of this concept with "traditionalism" and he underlines the modern aspects of religious fundamentalism:

"Religious fundamentalism is often mistakenly defined as traditionalism, because it is seen to be anti-modern (Lechner and Boli, 2004 in Turner, 2011, xv). Religious revivalism is thus seen to be a protest against the secular consequences of global consumerism and Westernization…First, fundamentalist movements employ the full range of modern means of communication and organization, and secondly they are specifically anti-traditionalist in rejecting the taken-for-granted assumptions of traditional practice (Antoun, 2001 in Turner, 2011, xv). Fundamentalism is characteristically urban and its target has often been the rural" (Turner, 2011, xv).

In the second place, he refers to hybrid forms of religion. He argues that this new movement stems from the "interaction of different cultures through migration and the growth of diasporic communities creates" and he states that these hybrid forms of religion take place in in global cities, a new cultural complexity (Appadurai, 2001 in Turner, 2011, xvi) and they are "related to youth movements" (Edmunds and Turner, 2002 in Turner, 2011, xvi). He suggests to refer to this "global, hybrid religiosity" as a form of religious popular culture. (Turner, 2011, xvi).

In his explanation on the current situation of religion(s), Turner also addresses radical religious movements. He touches upon the student movements' importance to introduce the relationship between radical Islam and youth in "post-communist environment" (Turner, 2011, xviii).

"With the decline of communism, radical religion replaced secular politics as the rallying point of those who have experienced disappointment and alienation as a result of the failures of post-colonial nationalism" (Turner, 2011, xvii).

Turner also links religious radicalism with "rapid urbanization" and "the destruction of traditional communities and rural occupations" and he stresses upon the role of "the internet" and "the construction of global network technology" (Turner, 2011, xviii).

"The Internet and the construction of global network technology provided the communication apparatus that transformed local student discontent into a world-wide oppositional politics. Simple technology such as the use of cassettes was important in the circulation of radical sermons and played an important role in the early development of fundamentalist movements. …The Internet now plays a significant role in religious education and missions in the world religions, but paradoxically it has democratic characteristics that are also corrosive of religious authority. The modern Internet is devolved, local and flexible" (Turner, 2011, xviii).

As a final point on the current changes in religion(s), Turner underlines the connection between "modern consumerism" and religions while he names this current trend as "the commodification of religious objects and practices" (Turner, 2011, 29).

From a Bourdieusian point of view, the current changes that are at stake in the religious field on a global scale can not be investigated separately from the state(s) and other fields including political and economic ones. In his book, "Bourdieu's Theory of the State: A Critical Introduction", Loyal stresses upon the importance of state's role on the other fields and claims that "it is the bureaucratic field, as part of the field of power, that controls other fields by regulating and legitimating them" (Loyal, 2017:3).

"Bourdieu's analysis of the state, together with his discussion of the field of power, also allows us to understand in greater detail how social fields originate and are structured and shaped; an explanation that was heretofore missing from his work. It is the bureaucratic field, as part of the field of power, that controls other fields by regulating and legitimating them" (Loyal, 2017:2-3).

While Loyal's analysis is valuable to understand the regulation of all fields including the religious one, in his own analysis of religion, Bourdieu underlines the relationship between religious field and political field and he mentions the "contribution" of religious field in the "maintenance of political order" (Bourdieu, 1971:328-329 in Betances, 2007: 12).

"The structure of relationships between the religious field and the field of power requires, in each conjuncture, the configuration of the structure of relationships constitutive of the religious field. The religious field fulfills an external function of legitimization of the established order as long as the maintenance of the symbolic order contributes directly to maintenance of political order…The proper function (of the religious field) is to contribute by imposing, inculcating schemes of perception, thought and objective action agreed upon with the political structures" (Bourdieu, 1971:328-329 in Betances, 2007: 12).

On that note, Betances remind us the fact that "this complementary relationship does not exclude tensions and conflicts between the religious and political field" (Betances, 2007: 12). The history of the relationship between the religious field and political field in Turkey sets a good example on the two sides of the relation between the state, political field and the religious field. As it will be discussed in the further pages, in the early years of Turkish Republic, by "abolishing the caliphate", "banning religious social and educational institutions" and bringing a system that "control religious practices throughout the country", the state deprived the religious field of their power (Yavuz 2003: 49–50; Eligür 2010: 39–48 in Öztürk, 2015:122). On the contrary, starting from the mid 1970's onwards and especially after the military invention of 1980 when Turkish state changed its position towards religion and the military regime of that era "willingly adopted the *Türk İslam Sentezi* (Turkish Islamic Synthesis) as a semi-official state ideology" (Şen, 2010: 65-66), the country has experienced a "permanent enlargement of the religious field" (Şen, 2010: 66).

In the second place, the accounts of several academicians (Rudnyckyj, 2009; Atasoy, 2009; Moudouros, 2009) indicate the relationship between the current economic and the

religious fields. In his article on Bourdieu's criticism of neoliberalism[62], Mitrović drives forward the "ideology of neoliberalism" and he argues that "the power of the neoliberal ideology…rests upon peculiar social neo-Darwinism" according to Bourdieu (Mitrović, 2005: 43) and he defines Bourdieu's understanding of neoliberal ideology as below:

"Neoliberalism is, according to Bourdieu, an ideology of the forces of historical restoration, a form of conservative revolution whose actors want to sink and dissolve, in a cold water of calculation, all relationships and institutions of solidarity among people. This ideology declaratively refers to human rights and liberties while, in truth, it foregrounds the interests of the mega capital forces, of transnational corporations; besides, it is in function of their domination and hegemony at present. The neoliberal ideology, with its monetary strategy of economic development, has led to the destruction of the institutions of solidarity in the world as well as to the destruction of not only socialist states but also of the social-democratic model of capitalism in the world. It has led to mass unemployment, enormous uncontrolled exploitation, the destruction of the standards in the domain of labor and welfare legislature and social-darwinization of the relationships at national and international levels" (Mitrović, 2005: 41).

Both recent ethnographic studies and political analyses on the relevance between Islam and neoliberalism point at the relationship between neoliberalism and religion in contemporary Muslim societies. In his study, Rudnyckyj questions how "economic reform and neoliberal restructuring are conceived of and acted on as matters of religious piety and spiritual virtue" (Rudnyckyj, 2009:132) and he defines the outcomes of his ethnographic research in Indonesia investigating the relationship between Islam and neoliberalism as below:

"The creation of a spiritual economy in Indonesia is neither a wholesale translation of Weber's spirit of capitalism, nor is it a strict interpretation of Islamic texts and practices. It is an unprecedented assemblage that is as much the Islamization of neoliberalism as it is the neoliberalization of Islam" (Rudnyckyj, 2009: 131).

Another scholar, Moudouros analyses the "conservative democracy's" efforts made to harmonize the Islamic faith and all traditional values of Turkish society within the global neoliberal framework" (Moudouros, 2009: 847).

[62] Boas and Morse (2009:143-144) mention four different usages of the term "neoliberalism" in social sciences. In this dissertation study, I refer to "the most common uses of neoliberalism" that are directly related with the economic field; so I implicate to the definitions concerning "economic reform policies" and "development model". However, the academic discussions on the ideology of neoliberalism is also an important subject in the social sciences. Instead of referring them as "neoliberalism", these discussions will be referred as "the ideology of neoliberalism" or "neoliberal ideology" in this dissertation study. For more information, see: Boas, Taylor C., & Jordan Gans-Morse, "Neoliberalism: From New Liberal Philosophy to Anti-Liberal Slogan", **Studies in Comparative International Development**, Vol: 44(2), 2009, pp.137-161

"… 'Conservative Democracy' has brought to the forefront local, traditional values, including Islam, and adapts them to the neoliberal programme. At the same time, however, it has used these values as a tool, in order to achieve to a great extent, the stabilization of the values of globalization as we know it today" (Moudouros, 2009: 844).

In conclusion, even though the few studies presented here are less than enough to give a complete picture of the relationship between economic, political and religious fields, I think that this fairly short portrayal of the economic and political fields demonstrate the fact that the changes that take place in these fields are not isolated from the current issues at stake in the sociology of religion. As I mentioned in the beginning of this section, within the scope of this section, my aim is to understand the relationship between Islam, marriage and mate selection practices with a gender oriented analysis. Thus, at this point, I would like to continue my account on religion with the discussion on gender, marriage and mate selection practices in Islam. In the later sections where these issues will be discussed in Turkish context in detail, I will try to present how all these different fields are active in shaping the gender roles and practices in marriage and mate selection.

As it was discussed in the first section of this chapter, throughout the history, religion has been one of the important factors that influence mate selection decisions and marriage types and different religions "have invested marriage with different meanings" (Therborn, 2004: 133) in particular societies. Even though religious marriage practices are on the decline in USA, in some European countries and their colonies, religion continues to "shape attitudes" about marriage as Scott claims (Scott, 2007:538) and churches share their disapproval about "same-sex marriage" and influence public opinion regarding this issue (Grossi, 2014:26). On the other parts of the world, especially in several Arab-Islamic states and in India, religious marriage rules are applied and religious ceremonies are held to validate marriage.

On the other hand, as it was briefly mentioned in the section on gender studies, especially Abrahamic religions have been very influential for the definition gender roles and shaping the social expectations from men and women. In this regard, as stated earlier, many feminist scholars critique the essentialist definition of gender in religious texts and Bourdieu refers to religion as one of the main social institutions that is responsible for the reproduction of unequal gender systems in the societies (Bourdieu, 2002: 82 -83). In addition to this, recent studies analyzing the correlation between the "religious affiliation" and "gender inequality" also confirm Bourdieu's argument and they reveal the fact that "the lowest levels of gender inequality" are seen in the countries "where the majority of inhabitants are without religious

affiliation" (Klingorová & Havlíček, 2015:2).[63]

In terms of Bourdieu's contribution to the sociology of religion, some scholars argue that compared to his work on "the sociology of art, culture, or education, the study of power or social deprivation", his work on this subject "occupies a marginal space within the Bourdieu corpus" (Dianteill, 2003:529). While Turner agrees with Dianteill on the limited contribution of Bourdieu in the sociology of religion, he argues that "the notions of Bourdieu (embodiment, habitus, practice and field) offer a fruitful way of thinking about religion" (Turner, 2011:123). While the notions of Bourdieu that takes place in Turner's account are important to understand religion, his work on masculine domination also provides crucial insights to understand the relationship between gender and religion. Thus, first of all, I would like to return to Bourdieu's account on "the historical mechanisms responsible for the relative dehistoricization and eternalization of the structure of the sexual division" (Bourdieu, 2002: vii-viii).

"What appears, in history, as being eternal is merely the product of a labour of eternalization performed by interconnected institutions such as the family, the church, the state, the educational system, and also, in another order of things, sport and journalism" (Bourdieu, 2002: viii).

In this direction, first of all, I think that the analysis of Islam's role in "dehistoricization" and "eternalization of the structure of the sexual division" will be insightful to conceive the reproduction of gender roles and masculine domination in Muslim societies. Within this context, I will also refer to Islamic feminists' interpretation of marriage and mate selection practices in Islam.

In the second place, despite Kemalist elite's attempts to secularize the Turkish Republic since its establishment, "the society has not been secularized in total and Islam has been influential in people's individual, social and public lives" (Yılmaz, 2015: 63). Consequently, "unofficial" Islamic laws for family, marriage, mate selection "co-existed with the official secular civil code in the country" (Yılmaz, 2015: 63).

As it will be discussed in detail in the next section, there is no single interpretation of Islamic law as different schools of religious thought /law, diverse institutions and constructs in

[63] However, I claim that the results of these types of quantitative researches rush to conclusions as they do not investigate all the parameters related with religion and gender inequality in depth.

particular eras and societies created different systems. For these reasons even though Islam and Islamic law play a pivotal role in defining women's place in Muslim societies, the interpretation of the role of women take place variably in different Muslim societies and in particular time periods. In this regard, rather than solely sharing the Islamic laws that shape marriage and mate selections, I will present them together with marriage and mate selection practices in the Ottoman period to be able reveal the interpretations of these norms before Turkish Republic.

3.1. Marriage and Pre-Marital Relationships in Islam & Ottoman Empire

Marriage is a very important field in Islamic law and it is considered among the four major fields of Islamic law according to Muslim jurists (Hallaq, 2009 :28). Scholars studying marriage in Islam claim that both the central religious text, Quran and hadiths reflect Islam's positive attitude towards marriage and these texts encourage people to get married (while defining monasticism as unnatural and prohibited). In addition to the Quranic verses[64] that encourage marriage and advise Muslim people about mate selection, the hadiths like "When a man marries he has fulfilled half of the religion; so let him fear God regarding the remaining half"" demonstrate the importance of marriage in Islam.[65] Even though marriage practices vary in different schools of law and different regions, marriage is generally defined as a social contract between men and women in Islam.

The Qur'anic verses which provide the basis on marriage brought rules had changed the Pre-Islamic institution(s) of marriage and marriage customs. Even though the central religious book of Islam provides the foundation of the laws on marriage, different schools of thought / law in different regions have exercised these rules variably and in certain contexts they have given the way to prosecution of some early Pre-Islamic androcentric marriage practices as well.

[64] For further information see, the verses al-Nur 24:32, al-Maida 5:6 and al-Nisa 4:25 In Abdullah Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Quran**, King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex, 1987.

[65] For further information, see: Riffat Hassan, "Marriage: Islamic Discourses", In Joseph, Suad (Eds.), **Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures: Family, Body, Sexuality and Health**, Vol 3, Leiden: Brill. 2006, p.246-249

Marriage in Pre-Islamic societies

Despite the wide-claimed agreement between scholars on the existence of misogynic and discriminative practices among different communities of Arabia before the arrival of Islam, they do not always speak with a single voice in terms of the situation of women and traditions of marriage in Pre-Islamic societies, in comparison to Islamic societies.

Prelusively, the records of Jahalliya period demonstrate that the experience(s) of Pre-Islamic women in Arabic communities were not singular as there were variance among different communities in Arabia and variant communities had diverse modes of sexual politics (Ahmed, 1999: 42; Barlas, 2002: 170). In the second place, women's place in a society varied across different classes and it was not always codified in law. (Barlas, 2002: 170). Accordingly, marriage practices among Pre-Islamic communities were also diversified.

> In her book, 'Marriage and Slavery in Early Islam', Kecia Ali refers to Prophet Muhammad's wife, Aisha's account on four different types of marriage in Pre-Islamic Arab society. According to her account, among these four types of marriages, only one of the form marriage among them was patriarchal marriage - which was later adopted by Islam (Ali, 2010: 13-14). Ahmed and Abiad also underline the existence of matrilineal, uxorilocal, child marriages, temporary marriages (muta'a) – along with patrilineal, patriarchal marriage (Ahmed:41; Abiad: 12). In their accounts both Ali and Barlas refer to women's power to choose and refuse their husbands in some non patriarchal communities. In addition to that in some Pre-Islamic communities, women could remain with their kin after marriage and her children did not belong to the father but they belonged to her tribe (Barlas, 2002: 170) and in other cases women could have multiple sexual partners (Ali, 2010: 13-14).

Preemptively, Ahmed refers to the studies of the ancient cultures of Middle East to show that the women in general had an elevated status and further she highlights the superiority of female goddess in early cultures.[66] Following this account, she investigates the decline of women's status in subsequent cultures. Basing her argument on the theories of the origin of male dominance by scholars and thinkers like Robert Briffault, Frederick Engels, Eleanor Leacock, Rayna Rapp Reiter, Gayle Rubin and Gerda Lerner[67], Ahmed re-introduces the institutionalization of female subordination in Middle East with the rise of urban societies and city-states thesis and she criticizes the "androcentric theories proposing that the inferior social status of women is based on biology and nature"(Ahmed, 1992: 11-12). Furthermore, she refers to Lerner to give account of the differences for the situation of women in these early urban

[66] For further information on these studies, see Leila Ahmed, **Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate**. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992, pp. 250
[67] ibid., pp. 250

societies and city states.

"As Lerner and others have argued, the high status and economic rights of kin and dependent women were not in conflict with the patriarchal system but rather served the interests of ruling patriarchs by establishing power through a "patrimonial bureaucracy." (Ahmed, 1992:15)

In spite of all the rights women with high status in some Pre-Islamic societies enjoy, the records of early codes and laws also reveal the fact that many women suffered from androcentric marriage practices in many early Arabic communities, unlike preceding early Middle East communities.

> According to Code Hammurabi (circa 1752 b.c.e.), the man was the head of the family and he had to right (husband or father) to arrange marriages for his children. He also had the right to sell his wife to repay his debts. While adultery of wife was punished by death, men were free to have sexual intercourse with prostitutes and slaves. Even though monogamy was more common among the general public, men had the right to have a second wife if their first wives could not have children (Ahmed, 1992:13-14). Assyrian law (circa 1200 b.c.e.), coming ages after the Code Hammurabi manifests the maintenance of the authority of men over women in marriages. The number of the women in the harems were showing the prosperity of the elite and harems were growing larger. Incestuous marriage was not only permissible but appreciated according to common belief. The men could loan their wives without their consent (Ahmed, 1992:19). In the class system of the Zoroastrians, the laws allowed women to marry only with men from their social class. (Ahmed, 1992:20). Many records also point to the existence of misogynic practices like unrestricted concubinage, polygyny, slavery and burying baby girls alive (Barlas, 2002:170).

Marriage Contract in Islam and The Consent of the Bride

In Islam, marriage is called as *nikah* or *zawaj*. The term nikah has two meaning; the literal reading of nikah is "embracing or bonding" (Deuraseh, 2010: 112) and "sexual intercourse" (Riyani, 2016:42) and under Islamic law, it means marriage contract (Riyani, 2016:42).

In "A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam", Newby defines Islamic marriage as "a contract between a man and a woman over the age of majority and/or her *wali*, or guardian, subject to the terms of the negotiated contract" (Newby, 2004:141). Newby refers to the Qur'anic verses

(Al Nisa 4:3)[68] and (Al Nisa 4:19)[69] which define the conditions for asking consent of both parties in marriage. Ideally, Islamic marriage is based on the consent of both women and men when these two verses are considered together and "the woman is a fully autonomous human being" in terms of marriage contract according to Islam (Haddad & Newman, 2010:247).

The treatment of kin involvement in marriages by the early Muslim jurists', including guardianship and the consent of brides have been changed and entirely transformed in some countries over the centuries. However, as Kecia Ali claims, they still play "key symbolic, and sometimes legal, roles in most Muslim marriages" (Ali, 2010:62). Additionally, there is a disagreement among different schools of law on the consent of women and guardianship in marriage and still in our day, child marriage is a common incident in many Muslim societies (Haddad & Newman, 2010:247).

Many scholars highlight the Qur'anic verses that depict the conditions for marriage. According to these verses, we see that Islamic marriage should be "harmonious" and it should be "built with love and mercy" in compliance with Quran (Haddad & Newman, 2010: 57:58; Wadud, 1999: 78). These verses contradict with the marriage practices in which the consent of women is not taken. Haddad & Newman refer to Islamist scholar Abu Hanifa al-Numan, who approves that "once women have reached the age of reason; they have the same right as men to choose their spouse" and they state that a harmonious marriage based on "mutual love and compassion" can not be possible without the female partner's consent (Haddad & Newman, 2010: 57:58). Additionally, no verse in Quran or no evidence in the Sunnah of Prophet Muhammad require the guardianship as a condition for Islamic marriage contract. However, in practice the consent of the women has been asked together with the consent of the guardian, the silence of women is regarded as a form of acceptance in many Muslim countries and guardianship of males is only applied to girls.[70]

In Ottoman Empire, "people married through religious wedlock (dini nikah) officiated

[68] "If ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly with the orphans, marry women of your choice, Two or three or four; but if ye fear that ye shall not be able to deal justly [with them], then only one, or [a captive] that your right hands possess, that will be more suitable, to prevent you from doing injustice." Abdullah Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Quran**, King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex, 1987, pp.34

[69] "O ye who believe! Ye are forbidden to inherit women against their will. Nor should ye treat them with harshness, that ye may Take away part of the dower ye have given them, -except where they have been guilty of open lewdness; on the contrary live with them on a footing of kindness and equity. If ye take a dislike to them it may be that ye dislike a thing, and Allah brings about through it a great deal of good." Ibid., pp.35

[70] For further information, see: Jana Rumminger, Janine Moussa et al., **CEDAW and Muslim Family Laws in Search of Common Ground**, Selangor: Musawah, 2012, p.32

by the religious leader (imam) of the local mosque" (Kavas & Thornton, 2013:225). In terms of the consent of the bride and guardianship in marriage, until 1544, the consent of "a woman of legal age" was sufficient and the permissions of her guardians were not required to get married. However, in 1544, the Ottoman sultan so called "Suleyman the Magnificent" "issued a decree forbidding women to marry without the express permission of their guardians and instructing judges not to accept a marriage unless the bride's guardian had given his consent" (Tucker, 2009: 326). Even though, "most judges and muftis appear to have continued to hold the Hanafi position that women could arrange their own marriages" (Tucker, 2009: 326), as it will be revealed in the section on mate selection and marriages practices, the effects of the decree of 1544 is still visible in Turkish society. Besides in the 16th century, it became obligatory to register marriage contracts by a "sultanic decree". However, in practice this decree was not implemented regularly and the marriages were registered mostly in "Ottoman cities and towns" (Tucker, 2009: 326).

Mate Selection Criteria in Islam

Quranic verses and hadiths give directions about mate selection. Quran suggests Muslims to get married with "virtuous or chaste man or woman, regardless of differences in status or wealth" (al-Nur 24 :32). As Barlas mentions, the belief system of a spouse candidate is a determinant factor and Quran does not allow men to marry unbelievers unless they change their belief system. While men are allowed to marry the Jewish and Christian women, tradition rejects "Muslim women marry among the people of the book" even though there is no reference to this account in Quran. (Barlas, 2002:155)

In addition to the restrictions about the belief system, certain endogamic practices are also prohibited. Thus, men can not get married with their mothers, their daughters, their sisters and also it is forbidden to get married with the sisters of their father, their mother and daughters of their brothers and sisters. In addition to these limitations, they can not get married with foster mothers and sisters. Quran also bans the marriage of men to get married with the mother of their wives and their step daughters.[71]

[71] "Prohibited to you [For marriage] are:- Your mothers, daughters, sisters; father's sisters, Mother's sisters; brother's daughters, sister's daughters; foster-mothers [Who gave you suck], foster-sisters; your wives' mothers; your step-daughters under your guardianship, born of your wives to whom ye have gone in,- no prohibition if ye have not gone in;- [Those who have been] wives of your sons proceeding from your loins; and two sisters in wedlock at one and the same time, except for what is past; for Allah is Oft-forgiving, Most Merciful" In Abdullah Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Quran**, King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex, 1987, pp.36

Based on the hadiths, equivalency is another condition for marriage for Muslims. However, equivalency in mate selection has different significance for women and men according to the hadiths.

"Be aware the guardians marry women and they do not marry them but on the basis of being equivalent." [72]

The hadith referred above is about the mate selection of guardians for their daughters. Imber & Bedir claim that even though this hadith sets a general principle for marriage, Hanafi tradition – continuing under Ottoman and Turkish states - place importance upon the equivalency on belonging to same religion and religious sect and patrilineal lineage (Imber & Bedir, 2004:182). Other conditions for surveying equivalency are pietism, intelligence, wealth and the capability of male spouse candidate to pay for *mehr* and subsistence money (*nafaka*). However, in practice wealth and being capable of paying *mehr* and *nafaka* are considered as the most important factors for mate selection (Imber & Bedir, 2004:183).

In contrast with the mate selection criteria for women, the hadiths that define the spouse selection criteria for men do not put wealth forward. Besides, as it is discussed before belonging to same religion and religious sect and patrilineal lineage are not obligatory for males. On the contrary, the men are obliged to support his wife even if she is wealthy and especially during and after divorce (Barlas, 2002: 194).

"A woman is married for four things, i.e., her wealth, her family status, her beauty and her religion. So you should marry the religious woman (otherwise) you will be a loser."[73]

In terms of age, there is no mention of any specific age for marriage and no support demonstrating that child marriage practice is suggested by Quran (Hassan, 2006: 247; Imam et Al., 2005: 37). Similarly, in "Ottoman times there was no minimum age prescribed for marriage; until the child reached puberty it was up to the parents to decide" (Yılmaz, 2015: 59). According to Kavas & Thornton's account, "marriage occurred at an early age, fourteen to eighteen years for women and twenty to twenty-two for men" during the Ottoman empire (Kavas & Thornton, 2013:225). In 1917, "Ottoman Family Laws Ordinance (OFLO) of 1917 prescribed a minimum age of nine for women and ten for men" (Yılmaz, 2015: 59). As it will

[72] El-Merginani, **El-Hidaye**, Kahire: Matbaa-i Mustafa Babi el-Halebi, Vol:3, 1972, pp.291 in Colin Imber, **Şeriattan Kanuna: Ebussuud ve Osmanlı'da İslami Hukuk,** İstanbul: Tarih Vakfı Yurt Yayınları, 2004, pp.182

[73] https://sunnah.com/bukhari/67/28

be discussed in the further sections, even though there is a significant decline in the proportion of women who got married before age 18, early marriage which are only validated by a religious marriage ceremony is still an existing practice in Muslim countries and in Turkey.[74]

Premarital Relationships and Matchmaking in Islam

The sacred texts of Abrahamic religions forbid premarital sex, an opinion research suggests that Muslims attach more importance to virginity before marriage compared to other religions (Adamczyk & Hayes, 2010: 726). On the contrary, Islamic feminists argue that, Quran does not require women to be virgin to get married. Barlas addresses the exemplary life of Prophet Muhammad and his marriages with widow women and she states that "pure women are not simply virgins" (Barlas, 2002: 155-156). Barlas, further refers to verses about chastity (4:24, 5:6, 24:33)[75] to give account for her argument about the meaning of chastity in Quran and defines sexual morality as follows;

"Sexual morality, or purity, is a function not of one's nature or sexual identity, then, but of one's behavior. Further, purity is not the absence of sex, but the absence of certain types of sex (adultery, fornication)" (Barlas, 2002: 155).

Bachelorhood and celibacy are practices worthy of reprimand in Muslim culture where marriage is an encouraged practice by central religious texts (Bargach, 2006: 53). Especially women's celibacy is not favorable and generally considered as a disapproved situation as female sexuality is considered as fitna[76] (temptation) for men according to some hadiths.

"In order to end the sexual licentiousness and promiscuity that existed in pre-Islamic Arabia and in an effort to control paternity, Islam condemned all sexual relations outside marriage or ownership as zina, encouraging women and men to marry and labeling celibacy as the open door to temptations of all kinds." (Mernissi, 60)

In Islam, Muslim jurists advocated for regulating sexuality and feared adultery (*zina*) as they see consider it "destructive and even devastating to the community" (Bargach, 2006: 52)

[74] The proportion who married (civil and/ or religious) before age 18 declined from 38% to 14% in the three decades between 1978 and 2008. For more information, see İlknur Yüksel-Kaptanoğlu & Banu Akadli Ergöçmen, "Early Marriage", **Journal of Family Issues**, Vol: 35(12), 2014, pp.1709

[75] See Abdullah Yusuf Ali, **The Holy Quran**, King Fahd Holy Quran Printing Complex, 1987, pp.36, pp. 47 and pp.172

[76] "Women are associated with fitna, the destructive force of seduction. This is the same word used to describe the fratricidal çivil wars that tore the Islamic community apart after the time of Muhammad." For more information, see: Peter R. Demant, **Islam vs. Islamism: The Dilemma of the Muslim World**, Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2006, pp.82

and a "crime against religion" (Demant, 2006: 82). Thus in order to regulate sexuality in the society and avoid adultery / fornication, chastity "becomes a norm of behavior" for women which brings about an "imposed self control" for women and a "larger social control imposed from outside" (Bargach, 2006: 52-53). Adultery / fornication of women and homosexual relationships are still considered punishable practices in certain Muslim socities[77], while heterosexual male adultery (provided that it happens outside of home) is not sanctioned juridically in most Muslim countries.

On the other hand, when we consider courtship experiences in the Ottoman Era, while the authors accounts also confirm the strict rules to prevent "illicit contact between the sexes", the findings of Ambros's study show that there was some modest but "continuous frivolity and flirtation" going on in both the urban and rural Ottoman environment through the centuries. (Ambros, 2016: 185). Besides, the historians point to "marriage by capture" in Ottoman times and state that some of the cases might indicate the existence of the couples who "escape from an unwanted arranged marriage" (Keddie, 2007: 50).

Even though the studies above highlight some possible "choice-marriage" practices in Ottoman Empire, arranged marriage with the mentorship of *kılavuz* was the most common partner selection practice in Ottoman times. When a young man arrived the marriage age, his dispositions, preferences were asked in Ottoman society and then the family and the people surrounding his family searched for a suitable, virgin bride candidate for the prospect groom. The *kılavuz* women acting as the unofficial matchmaking institution of the society were taking an important role in partner selection practices. These women were responsible for bride search and transmission of information about the suitable bride candidates. If the candidates '*kılavuz* suggests were approved by the prospect groom's parents, the parents of the groom would make a visit to the prospect bride's house and this visit was named as *dünür gezme* in Ottoman society. If both sides approve this marriage, the engagement and marriage of these people were possible. (Fehim & Talu, 1950:11 in Yamal, 1981:1751). In order to make the final decision about the couple, whereas bride's family assess the social and economic capital of the groom, groom's family evaluate the respectability and honor of the bride's family together with bride's domestic skills and her beauty. Besides, marriage payments and the gifts presented to the bride's family play a role in the final decision. (Nüfusçu &Yılmaz, 2014: 32).

[77] For more information, see: Publications, U. I., **Middle East And Arabic Countries Environmental Law Handbook**, 2007, pp.22

Marriage payment – dower, bride price and nafaka

As it was discussed in the beginning of this chapter, not only for Islamic societies but also for many societies, marriage was an important institution for the transfer of wealth. On that note, Ali states that "dower, mehr or sadaq was the primary male obligation resulting from marriage" (Ali, 2010:49) and the only "legal property" a woman can obtain in early times of Islam (Ali, 2010:49). In her analysis of the conditions of early Islamic marriages, Kecia Ali gives a definition of *dower* and she states that *dower* practices carried similarities with "other commercial transactions" (Ali, 2010:54).

"In an ideal scenario, a bride received a dower of a specific item or amount, agreed on in advance, of value equal to or greater than her fair dower which was calculated with reference to her female relatives as well as the standards of her premarital place of residence, and adjusted upward or downward to account for her personal qualities, such as beauty, virginity, and wealth" (Ali, 2010:54).

In the Ottoman empire, in addition to the marriage payment (*mehr*), "the customary bride wealth (*başlık parası*) was another form of marriage payment" especially in Anatolia. This marriage payment was considered as a substitution for "the loss of labor of the girl", it was also "valued as a symbol of chastity" and it was paid to the bride's father unlike *mehr* or *dower* (Kavas & Thornton, 2013:225).

Buturović and Schick state that the purpose of paying *mehr* was "to secure the man's absolute and exclusive right to have sexual intercourse with his wife" (Buturović and Schick, 2007: 245).

3.2. The Path from Shari'a to The First Family Law in Muslim World: The Transformation of Mate Selection and Marriage Practices in The Ottoman Empire in The 19th Century

The last period of the Ottoman Empire was characterized by several transformations and reforms in several institutions which modernized "the military, financial, judicial, and administrative spheres". Turkish historians studying especially "Tanzimat or reform period (1839–76)" define it as "a time when a new type of Ottoman person began to emerge. (Ortaylı, 2009:214).

The westernization movements brought by national elites in the 19th century not only gave rise to substantial changes in several institutions in the country as mentioned above but

also improved the status of women and enabled them to enter "into the public spheres of politics, education and employment"[78] (Jamal, 2007: 210).

"It was also a time when significant changes began to be felt in the life of Ottoman women. The traditional structure of the family in the rural countryside as well as in the larger cities came increasingly under the pressure of changes in agriculture, education, communications, and technology. At the same time, the issue of women's liberation began to occupy an increasingly important place. From the Islamic modernists to the newly founded political reform groups, most thinkers of the region advocated changes in the traditional family structure and in the social status of women" (Ortaylı, 2009:214).

These changes regarding "women's social status" and "their inclusion in the public sphere" created controversy in the society and as it's revealed in Jamal's interpretation, they "became framed as an issue of Islam versus modernity (Jamal, 2007: 209). According to Altınbaş's interpretation, these "new Ottoman women" together with "male educated urban elites comprised a sociocultural lobby for change" in the late Ottoman society (Altınbaş, 2014: 8) against marriages arranged by families and "the custom that forbade bride and groom to see each other before the wedding" (Altınbaş, 2014: 5). In her account of 19th century Ottoman istanbulites and its intellectuals, Altınbas mentions the expectations of these individuals about mate selection process and marriage practices as below:

"The lifestyles and habits of the enlightened intellectuals and elites…and the women writers in the late Ottoman Journals had changed gradually with the reforms. These groups of people had started to feel more comfortable in the nuclear family structure based on monogamous unions with a spouse freely chosen and egalitarian relationships among family members" (Altınbas, 2014:5).

In addition to that, they highlighted the importance of "tastes, social backgrounds, and ideas" in mate selection (Altınbaş, 2014: 6) and they laid emphasis on free-choice marriages for happy marriages based on love. In her analysis of these demands, Altınbaş states that "the romantic ideal as a precondition for a happy marriage was certainly a different perspective to that held by the previous generations" (Altınbaş, 2014: 6).

[78] "Women's rights, in particular to education and to access professions, gained importance in post- Reform (Tanzimat 1839) Ottoman Turkey and accelerated during the First and Second Constitutional Eras (Meşrutiyet). The İnas Darülfünun (University for women) and the İnas Sanayi-i Nefise Mekteb-i Alisi (Women's school of fine arts) were both established in 1914, during the Second Constitutional Era of 1908–18". For more information, see: Zeynep Y. Yaman, "Turkey, Arts: Visual Arts and Artists" in Joseph, Suad (Ed.), **Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures**, **Vol:5**, Leiden: Brill, 2007, pp.168

On that note, as Ottoman Empire was not composed of a homogeneous society, the agendas of different groups showed variations. While some intellectuals "were directly campaigning against the traditional type of marriage and family structure" as mentioned above, "Islamic modernists came up with new interpretations of the sharia to justify abolishing or at least restricting polygamy" (Ortaylı, 2009:214).

In their book where they observe the Istanbul families between 1880-1940, Duben and Behar claim that "the introduction of the idea that a man and a woman should unite in matrimony of their own volition and only if they were in love caused great intellectual and emotional turmoil in the late nineteenth century" (Duben & Behar, 2002:87). Different from the demands of 19th century Ottoman istanbulites and its intellectuals, the conservative families of the period did not approve the "free-choice marriage" requisitions of educated, urban men and women. As a result, women who regard love as a prerequisite for marriage were labeled as "immoral women", whereas men expressing such claims were seen as "womanizers" (Karay, 1996: 37-44) by the conservative part of the society.

However, the demands of different groups in the Ottoman society about marriage practices found their reflections in the governmental edicts (*ferman*) of 1844 and 1862 to some extent and as a result, some of the traditional norms regarding marriage practices in the Ottoman Empire started to change partially:

"Thus a *ferman* of May 1844 ordered that daughters of age must be allowed to marry of their own free will without any interference from their parents, and that payments such as *başlık* were illegal and could not be rendered to brides' parents. Eighteen years later, in 1862, governmental edicts in connection with these *ferman* were issued. Ten articles in all, they prohibited extravagant weddings and the payment of *başlık* while setting the amounts of *mahr* at 100 *kuruş* for the poor, 500 *kuruş* for the middle class, and 1,000 *kuruş* for the wealthy. The very poor would pay nothing. All this was intended to make marriage easier. The edicts further abolished the custom of presentation of gifts by the groom to his bride's relatives after the wedding…" (Ortaylı, 2009:215).

In 1889, "the revolutionary political group", Committee of Union and Progress (CUP)[79] – whose members later became the "founders of modern Turkey" - was established (Hanioğlu,

[79] Committee of Union and Progress Originally founded as a student organization, the revolutionary political group known as the Ottoman Committee of Union and Progress (CUP) would go through many incarnations and divisions between its inception on June 2, 1889 and its demise in 1926. For more information, see: Şükrü M. Hanioğlu, "Committee of Union and Progress", (ed.) Gabor Agoston & Bruce Masters, **Encyclopedia of the Ottoman Empire**, New York: Facts on File, Inc. 2009, pp.139

2009: 139). The political ideals of CUP "generally inclined toward secularization, westernization, Turkism, and centralization" (Hanioğlu, 2009: 139) and they seized power and ruled the Ottoman Empire during 1908–1918 (Altınbaş, 2014:2). One of the "ideological projects" of CUP was about "a new family model" that would establish "a balance of power (equality) between men and women" (Altınbaş, 2014:4). This new, modern and nuclear family model constituted the base of CUP's "nation building" project (Altınbaş, 2014:2-4).

Even though the family law enacted in 1917 "did not introduce any serious reforms" (Ortaylı, 2009:215), as it is revealed in the accounts of Örücü and Ortaylı, it was "the first standard legal text of its kind in any Islamic society" (Örücü, 2016: 336; Ortaylı, 2009:215). Other than being its own kind, this law was also significant as it "imposed state supervision of marriage for Ottomans of all religions" (Ortaylı, 2009:215).

"As a general principle, according to Zafer Toprak, the family is no longer considered as a private realm during fundamental transformation periods of history. It becomes instead regarded as part of the public sphere, and the state may intervene to reshape family practices and structures along with the more usual political and social spheres of activity"

Finally, it brought some changes to the Shari'a norms regarding family (Örücü, 2016:336), including "the decree lent women some protection against husband-initiated divorce and polygamy" (Altınbaş, 2014:3-4) and it brought a minimum age requirement for men and women (Yılmaz, 2015: 59). In sum, it can be stated that the transformations brought to family laws by CUP leaders in the last years of the Ottoman Empire formed the basis of the family model that CUP leaders established in the new Turkish Republic.

4. Gender, Marriage and Mate Selection Practices in Turkey

4.1. State Feminism and Gender Politics in Turkey

After the establishment of Turkish Republic, Swiss civil code was brought in 1926 to implement "major legal family reforms" and to replace traditional mode of living with occidental norms. Together with this civil code, "polygyny was banned; minimum ages for marriage were introduced; gender equality in inheritance was enacted; and equal child custody rights for both parents" were granted (Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 230). While "the reorganization of residential patterns and nuclear family were encouraged" by the politicians, extended family model was criticized and discouraged (Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 230).

In the early years of the republic, as Turkish state regarded women as “the bearers of Westernization, carriers of secularization and actresses in public realm” (Göle, 1996 in Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 230), several important measures were taken in this period “to engage women in social and political life” such as providing free and accessible “secular elementary education”, recruiting women “into the labor force, both as professionals and as laborers” and “granting women the right to vote and to be elected to offices in”[80] (Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 230).

Despite, the policies that “led to considerable progress in certain areas” for women, several scholars claim that the policies taken during this period “fell short of achieving gender equality” (Arat, 1994:57-58). On that note, Arat argues that “Kemalism was limited in it intentions in regard to the change in women's social role and gender relations and sought progress only to the level that had prevailed in the West where the female was still the "second sex" (Arat, 1994:57-58) and she asserts that Kemalist reforms were undertaken to “equip the Turkish women with education and finer skills, only to improve their contribution to the Republican patriarchy as better wives and mothers” (Arat, 1994:57-58). According to White, “the welfare and duties of women were discussed almost exclusively as attributes of the national ideal” by the leaders of the early Republican period (White, 2003: 146).

> “The ideal Republican woman was a "citizen woman," urban and urbane, socially progressive, but also uncomplaining and dutiful at home. Modernity, as defined by the Turkish state, included marriage and children as a national duty for women. Marriage was to be companionate, rather than contractual and segregated, and children were to be raised "scientifically" by mothers educated in the latest childrearing and household techniques from the West. Beyond that, state feminism did not concern itself with what happened behind the closed doors of the home. (White, 2003: 146)

In the second place, the influence of Kemalist reforms “has been only partial among lower socioeconomic groups and in the eastern rural areas” (Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 235). As İlkkaracan states, while “the regional differences in socio-economic conditions” have affected the “overall standard of living” negatively in the eastern Turkey, women experienced these difficulties more than men in these relatively underdeveloped regions of the country where

[80] “Women were given the right to vote and to be elected on 5 December 1934” and “from March 1935 onwards, 18 women deputies took their places in the Great National Assembly in Ankara”. For more information, see: Erik J. Zürcher, **Turkey: A Modern History**, J.B.Tauris, 2004, pp.177.

traditional gender norms prevailed (İlkkaracan, 1998:67). To set an example, "although primary school education has been mandatory in Turkey since 1927, in 1990 half of the women in Eastern Turkey were illiterate compared to 21.6 per cent of men" (İlkkaracan, 1998:67). This gap between socio-economic conditions of different regions of Turkey have played a significant part in the coexistence of different gender regimes and maintenance of traditional gender norms in the country since the establishment of the country. First of all, the poor conditions in the rural areas gave rise to a significant internal migration in the country after 1950s. While "the first few migrants wanted to learn, comprehend, and even adapt to the styles of living in the metropolitan areas", as "the numbers began to favor the incoming rural population" especially after 1980s, the newcomers "began to ignore the culture of the metropolitan cities" (Çarkoğlu, Kalaycıoğlu, 2009: 58) and carried the traditional and conservative norms of their habitus to these cities.[81] In the second place, internal migration caused rural women to lose their active rural lives and become jobless, "dependent housewives" in the cities (Tekeli, 2006 :122).

Thus, especially in these early days of the Turkish republic, a great majority of children and women living in rural communities or coming from economically disadvantaged families could not "obey these injunctions" to become modern Turkish citizens (White, 2003:146). In this context, White claims that "women who felt that their religious beliefs required them to dress modestly and cover their heads" and who continued to practice older customs which were not in line with formalist "modern" habits and tastes were either criticized as "uncivilized primitive" citizens or "romanticized as the 'noble' peasant" (White, 2003:146).

On the other hand, "despite the enormous changes and new opportunities for women, Turkish society was socially and sexually conservative, even in the cities" (White, 2003: 153). In this context, Turkish women had to "downplay their femininity and sexuality" and they had to "dress serious suits" even though they were encouraged not to veil themselves. As a result, while women had gained access to public space, education, work life and attained several rights (due to the struggles of Ottoman women in the last period of the Ottoman Empire and the rights granted by Turkish state in the beginning of the 20th century), the social understanding of gender

[81] "Internal migration has had a great impact on Turkey's population dynamics for decades. According to the 2000 population census, nearly 28% percent of the population was born in a different province that they now reside in. This ratio goes up to 62% for Istanbul, a major province that has drawn migrants for years". For more information, see: Ali Gökhan & Alpay Filiztekin, "The Determinants Of Internal Migration In Turkey", **EcoMod**, 2008, pp.1

roles and sexuality remained rather stable. That being said, the entry of many Turkish women into modern lifestyles did not diminish the cultural importance placed on virginity and honour associated with sexual morality and women's chastity.

"Contrary to the presuppositions of most analysts of the Mediterranean who view the honor and shame codes as inherent to the rural traditional community and not compatible with the nation-state, modernization in Turkey did not eliminate the preoccupation with women's chastity and virginity. Rather, Turkish modernization attributed to honor and shame a new significance by incorporating them, in Liisa Malkki's phrase, into the *national order of things*" (Parla, 2001:75).

In a similar fashion to "social imagination of virginity" in other Muslim countries (Alix, 2014:135), as distinct from "virginity of young men", women's virginity was identified with the honour of the family (Lee, 2011:114) and the patriarchal state. The endurance of the cultural importance placed on virginity and honour despite the Kemalist modernization project was also related with the androcentric structure of cultural and political field.

"The dominance of masculinist intellectual milieu in the Turkish context continued throughout the republican history and has led to the reproduction of patriarchy in Turkish political thought: most of the studies on the prominent political thinkers have been conducted without due regard to gender relations and patriarchy. In those rare cases where women and/or family have been integrated into the scope of analysis, this was done without questioning "the gendered expression of dualism" (Berktay 1999:270) that has put its stamp not only on Turkish political thought, but on political thought in general. This affected and reflected the way woman issue has been handled, either by men or by women" (Berktay, e.g: 7).

Ultimately, in the period following the military intervention of 1980s, "the state feminist project has been challenged by women with alternative views of what it means to participate in a modern society and by feminists who believe that women should be empowered as individuals, not just as a class" (White, 2003: 146). Thus following this period, the feminists brought up the private issues into the public realm and put up a struggle against the subordinate position of women in the private realm, honor killings, virginity tests and so forth.

"After the coup, a feminist women's movement developed on the basis of a completely revised analysis. A new generation of middleclass, left-wing, intellectual women, who were in touch with the ideas of the new wave of feminism in Western countries, proposed that the "paternalist Turkish state" was in fact a "patriarchal state", defending the interests of men. This new movement started in Istanbul with small awareness-raising groups that had discovered the famous slogan of Western feminists: "The private is political" (Tekeli, 2006:121).

Besides, together with the rise of feminism, "Turkey's bid for EU membership and the implementation of EU rules" have given rise to "legal regulations on marriage, divorce, and

gender equality, with several reforms made in Turkish civil and penal codes" (Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 230).

"The civil code that came into effect in 2002 established the full equality of men and women in the family. Women now legally have equal say as to where the family will reside, and they no longer legally have to ask their husbands for permission to be employed. Important changes concerned divorce, as the spouses were given equal rights over the family abode and property acquired during marriage. Amendments were implemented in the penal code in 2004 that brought higher sentences for sexual crimes, criminalized marital rape, and eliminated discrimination against non-virgin and unmarried women" (Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 230).

4.2. Religious Revivalism, Neoliberalism and Gender

Turkish "laicism"[82]was established in 1937 "to secularize public life", "political sphere" and to put "religious practice under state surveillance (Cady and Hurd, 2013:123) following the abolition of caliphate in 1924 which had opened the path to give "legitimacy to the new Turkish state on the basis of a national identity that is above religion" (Berkes, 1998 cited in Kadıoğlu, 2010:492). However, the state's official version of modernity based on a West oriented, secular nationalist ideology has never been the only project. Since the start of the Ottoman modernization efforts in the early nineteenth century, there have always been alternative projects of modernization that have understood and exploited the term in different ways. It was only "one of these projects that overpowered others and came to be the founding ideology of the state under the leadership of Atatürk", but "the institutionalization of this particular view did not entail the complete elimination of its rivals" (Çınar, 2005:5). During the course of the twentieth century, two significant shifts were experienced which worth mentioning to depict Turkey's modernization process. One of these was the rise of the Democrat Party regime in the 1950s when the meaning of "the West" shifted from Europe to North America. France was no longer the bearer of the "universal" norm of civilization as the mark of modernity for Turkey

[82] In this context, it is worthwhile to explain the unique features of Turkish secularism; "Turkish secularism differs from most Western forms, in three distinct ways. Firstly, Turkish secularism has always been something of a hybrid, drawing on Western philosophical discourse and the legacies of the Ottoman period at the same time. Secondly, secularization in the West (perhaps with the notable exception of France) has largely been understood as an organic, 'bottom up' social phenomenon largely working on, rather than emanating from, the state. In Turkey, in contrast, the state has been both the progenitor and the political and social focal point of secularism and secularization from the very beginning. Lastly, the founding fathers of Turkey chose to use the term laiklik1 (from the French, laicité) to explain the relation between state and religion, rather than that of secularism. Tis choice emphasizes the particular Ottoman/Turkish notion that it is the proper and legitimate function of the state to take the lead in setting the parameters of rightful religious conduct within society." For more information, see Ahmet Erdi Öztürk, "Turkey's Diyanet Under AKP Rule: From Protector To Imposer Of State Ideology?", **Southeast European and Black Sea Studies**, Vol: 16(4), 2016, pp. 619 - 635.

and it was replaced by the "United States, which was idealized as the ultimate example of an industrialized capitalist society", and became the "new mark of modernity" for Turkey (Çınar, 2010:115).

> Islam has clearly been a permanent partner in the state-led ideological configuration of cultural politics in Turkey since 1945. The Cold War state strategy was to contain real or potential Leftist and radical Islamist movements by refiguring Islam as a cultural component of official state ideology. In the wake of growth of left-wing movements in the late 1960s and 1970s, many Middle Eastern regimes encouraged the Islamic tide in hopes of neutralizing the left.

Following 1980's coup d'état, Turkish state changed its position towards religion and the military regime of that era "willingly adopted the *"Türk İslam Sentezi"* (Turkish Islamic Synthesis) as a semi-official state ideology" and "began to reorganize state apparatuses" accordingly (Şen, 2010: 65-66). Academicians further claim that the leading generals that came to power after the military intervention believed that this conflict between these groups stem from a kind of "moral crisis"; in other words, from the absence of religion in Turkish youth's life. In these terms, education played a crucial role and many measures were taken by the state to promote this emerging ideology.

> Imam-Hatip schools changed their policies and started to expand (Özgür, 2012: 47), additionally "religious, cultural and morals courses in primary and secondary schools" became obligatory following the military intervention (Gök, 2007:254). As Özgür claims, "Türk İslam sentezi aimed to overcome ethnic and ideological divisions in society by making Islam a socially unifying force" (Kafesoğlu, 1985; Timuroğlu, 1991; Karakaş, 2007 cited in Özgür, 2012: 48). Besides, the state encouraged the "building of mosques, the opening of more Quran courses and Imam-Hatip schools, and the employment of religiously conservative officials to ministries." (Özgür, 2012: 48).

The second shift came came in the 1980s with the advent of the Motherland Party and after coming to power in 1983, "the Motherland Party (MP) rearticulated Turkish–Islamic synthesis ideology within a neoliberal context as a mixture of neoliberalism, nationalism, and various Islamic platforms" (Atasoy, 2009:105).

> The electoral victory of the Refah Party in 1994 showed without a doubt that "secularism could no longer enjoy the position of unrivaled authority" in the public sphere. (Çınar, 2005:20). Under the leadership of Necmettin Erbakan for more than 40 years, the 'National View' movement has critiqued "western imperialism and "Turkey's adoption of western modernity (which RP regarded as the source of its economic problems), its political–military dependency, and its declining national

> sovereignty" (Atasoy, 2009:6). "National view represented an articulation of the capitalist economy, technology, culture, and Islam within a state-led national economic developmentalism" (Atasoy, 2009:7).

At the turn of the century a third shift seems to be in order with the rising popularity of political projects inspired by Islam that culminated in the electoral victory of the JDP (Justice and development Party). JDP was quite different from the previous Islamic parties for its "Neoliberal Islamic politics", "implementation of welfare policies" and "its stance to Western modernism" (Atasoy, 2009:126).

> First of all, JDP's Neoliberal Islamic politics imply a new form of politics which is emerging beyond the legally constructed, categorical notion of state-citizenship relations. JDP has unsettled state-centric organization of economic and social power under neoliberalism. Secondly, JDP government have not merely focused on state-centric organization of social welfare policies but based its social welfare policies largely on family and religious solidarity networks. Its family-centred social policy has focused on motivating and mobilizing religious civil society initiatives that can provide social assistance. Another differentiating point of Turkey's today's ruling party and its supporters from previous Islamic parties and their supporters is the way they approach Western modernism; JDP and religious networks that support JDP today were not critical of adoption of western modernity unlike Refah Party and Refah Party fans and they regard science and technology as the main components of economical progression. (Atasoy, 2009:126).

In her account on the transformations Turkey has undergone in the last decades, Özyeğin states that "the last two decades have seen a dramatic turn from a state-centered economy to a neoliberal order" and have paved the way for "the massive privatization of key sectors" in the country (Özyeğin, 2015:13). The military intervention and the new constitution coming in force in 1982 had already brought "vast liberalization of the economy within the context of globalization and European integration" and "the subsequent market-generated cultural forms had increased freedom of expression" even though the 1982's constitution itself was a rather restrictive one in terms of civil liberties. In this context, 1980s and 1990s gave rise to several identity movements including Kurdish, LBGTQ, Feminist (Özyeğin, 2015:11) and particularly Islamic movements among female students "protesting for the right to wear head coverings" in universities (Özyeğin, 2015:10).

In this context, Coşar and Yeğenoğlu claim that JDP's "terms in government have witnessed a moment in the history of the women's movement in Turkey" which was remarkable for three main reasons (Coşar, Yeğenoğlu, 2011:567):

This moment is marked by three main developments: the consolidation of neoliberal hegemony in the country that started with the 1980s; the accompanying rise of civil societal activism in the 1990s, in which the women's movement occupied a significant place; and Turkey's EU accession process. As such, it has inherently hosted clashes among alternative modes of patriarchy, namely: republican, liberal and neoliberal-conservative. (Coşar, Yeğenoğlu, 2011:567)

However, Ayata and Doğangün (2017) state that the analysis of JDP's gender policy presents a "contradictory picture" in the light of the "reforms made in Turkish civil and penal codes" (Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 230) and its promotion of "religio-conservative gender climate that simultaneously trivializes legal advances and unleashes traditional forces in a strongly traditional society" (Ayata & Doğangün, 2017: 2). The authors describe the results of this gender climate as follows:

"In such a gender climate, the propagation of religiously legitimized gender stereotypes polarizes social perceptions of gender relations and strictly divides social life into feminine and masculine spheres. Gender inequality and discrimination in the private and public spheres, moreover, is naturalized. The presence of power struggles between men and women in the family and in society is denied. The initiatives to promote women's employment and to combat domestic violence do not appear to encourage gender equality. The protectionist policies, although they meet the short-term interests of women, do not contribute to women's equal citizenship or their independent status in the family, the labour market and society" (Ayata & Doğangün, 2017: 13).

On that note, scholars claim that "neoliberal-conservative version of patriarchy" of JDP has been similar to republican version of patriarchy as "it defines the familial sphere as the natural locus of women", However, when the current politics of the party is evaluated in comparison to the first years of JDP, one can assume that the politics of the party present "an anti-feminist stance" (Coşar, Yeğenoğlu, 2011:567-568) that might result in the increasing "expansion of men's power over women's interests and bodies" (Ayata & Doğangün, 2017: 13).

4.3. The Regulation of Marriage and Mate Selection Practices in Turkey

When the functions of family and marriage are assessed for Turkey, it is seen that the political discourses and policies that have taken place in the last decade regarding marriage emphasize the functions of marriage related with the "regulation of sexuality" and the "arrangement of procreation" (Thernborn, 2004: 131-133). Even though the regulation of

sexuality and arrangement of procreation have always been important issues in Turkish politics, Turkey has experienced a noteworthy policy change regarding these issues.

As Dulong depicts in her analysis of political institutions, political institutions not only reflect the pre-existing inequalities but they can also contribute to "the unequal distribution of power in society between the sexes, classes and races" (Dulong, 2013: 285). In this context, one can assume that the closure of the "State Ministry for Women and Family Affairs" and its replacement with a "Ministry of Family and Social Policies" in 2011 sets a good example of this latter quality of political institutions and in a similar vein, several scholars regarded this replacement as a "steps back regarding the goal of gender equality" (Müftüler - Baç, 2012: 6). On the other hand, Turkish demography and population policies also shifted considerably in the last ten years and the country surpassed "anti-natalist population planning policy of Turkey" and embraced a "high-fertility" policy (Acar & Altunok, 2013:16).[83]

The recommendations of the politicians to produce "at least three" children (Acar & Altunok, 2013:16) and moral condemnation of "abortion as murder" (Korkman, 2016:2) were other examples of the change of political discourse regarding this issue in the country. Furthermore, "motherhood" is praised in reference to Islam in the public speeches of the politicians as exemplified in the following discourse "there is no status comparable to motherhood and this is the reason why 'our (Islamic) civilization' has placed heaven under the feet of mothers, and not those of fathers" (Çitak & Tür, 2008 in Acar & Altunok, 2013:21). In the last decade, while marriage has been encouraged in the political rhetoric (Korkman, 2016:1), premarital relationships and cohabitation practices have been questioned[84] and criticized by some politicians even though there is no legal decision in the Turkish law inhibiting these practices.

Despite the political field's emphasis on the the functions of marriage related with the "regulation of sexuality" and the "arrangement of procreation" (with reference to religion and establishment of moral order in the society), several scholars have drawn attention to other

[83] Some scholars regard this policy shift as "a governmental strategy that is premised upon the continued provision of a young, ample, and cheap labor force, which is hoped to equip Turkey with a competitive advantage in the global economy". For more information, see: Korkman, Zeynep K., "Politics of Intimacy in Turkey: A Distraction from 'Real' Politics?", **Journal of Middle East Women's Studies**, Vol: 12(1), 2016, pp.7

[84] The political discourses questioning and criticizing the appropriateness female and male university students cohabiting can be given as an example of these types of discourses (t24.com, 05, November, 2013).

functions of marriage and family which are related with sustaining neoliberal economic order. As it was revealed in the accounts of Moudorus (2009) and Rudnyckyj (2009) where they analyze the relationship between neoliberalism and religion in Muslim societies in the previous sections, many scholars claim that religious revivalism and "efforts to harmonize the Islamic faith and all traditional values of Turkish society" are connected with the neoliberal economic programs of the Muslim countries (Moudouros, 2009: 847). On that note, several academicians investigating the functions of the marriage institution related with "the coordination of division of labor by gender" (Coontz, 2005: 9) and "maintenance of political economy" (Thernborn, 2004: 131-133) argue that the preservation of the family and traditional gender roles through marriage institution is closely linked with maintenance of neoliberal economic system and Turkish welfare system.

"The contemporary politics of intimacy in Turkey seeks to regulate the realms of sexuality and reproduction in line with the intersecting rationales of neoliberalism and neo-conservatism. The state seeks to secure economic growth, profitability, and thus neoliberal capital accumulation by making labor abundantly available at a low cost, and to subsidize this process through increasing the rate and efficiency at which reproductive labors are appropriated in and through the patriarchal family, as I discuss at length elsewhere. Pushed into compulsory motherhood through limiting access to reproductive health services, naturalized as mothers and wives through the promotion of dominant gender ideologies, and encouraged through social assistance programs that channel their labors into domestic caring work, women as the bearers and caretakers of workers of the future, present, and past are key to this plan" (Korkman, 2016:7-8).

In this regard, Turkish scholars also claim that "strengthening the family institution" is regarded by Turkish politicians as "an effective remedy for the social problems and other risks of modernization and economic crises" (Buğra, 2007, 2012 in Acar & Altunok, 2013:18) and as it was partially revealed in Korkman's account, academicians argue that "both welfare system and labor market rest comfortably on the existing care regime where unpaid care work is undertaken almost exclusively by women" in Turkey (İlkkaracan, 2013:210). İlkkaracan clarifies the relationship between gender, labor market and welfare system as follows:

"The dynamics of capitalist growth throughout the economic modernization of the Turkish Republic have been such that they have not generated sufficient labor demand to absorb the abundance of female labor into the labor market. Consequently, the care regime and accompanying institutions, such as the welfare system and the labor market, have been shaped around a male-breadwinner family norm. With these institutions in place, the economic growth process has become less able to pull women into the labor market, leaving many women trapped in a cycle from which it is hard to break out" (İlkkaracan, 2013:210).

In the second place, other than maintaining the political economy and coordinating the division of labor by gender, marriage is also one of the important sectors of Turkish economy and it engenders a big industry in Turkey (as it is the case in many other countries) when the costs of around six hundred thousand people getting married in Turkey each year are taken into account (TUIK, 02 March 2017).[85]

In conclusion, when the accounts of scholars investigating the relationship between marriage and neoliberalism are taken into account, one can assume that ever increasing neo conservative and religious discourses around the institution of marriage and the policies that encourage marriage and high-fertility can not be taken solely as the manifestation of religious revivalism in Turkey but they are closely related with diminishing welfare system, the need for cheap labor force and other necessities of current neoliberal economic system in Turkey.

4.4. Marriage Types and Practices in Turkey

The fact that Turkey is a country that has been experiencing a kind of tension between different value and thought systems of East and West since its establishment finds its reflections in many realms of Turkish social practices including marriage. Thus, if one has to outline the current marriage practices in Turkey, the existence of hybrid systems can be the first remark to define Turkish marriage practices. "Traditional" and "modern" elements coexist in the marriage practices of Turkish couples as it was shared in the account of Kavas & Thornton:

> "The change and continuity in Turkey have resulted in the coexistence of indigenous and Western practices in people's families. As Thornton states, ''any adoption of developmental idealism, involves considerable mixing of indigenous family forms and those of developmental idealism into a hybrid family system.'' This is true in the Turkish case, as the joint occurrence of traditional (e.g., non-Western) and modern (e.g., Western) elements are evident and lead to a hybrid or mixed structure that manifests itself in the lives of people" (Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 224).

This inbetweenness between traditional and modern value systems and the hybridity arising from that are visible in many issues related with marriage including wedding ceremonies, household arrangements, gender roles in marriage and mate selection practices. In

[85] The approximate cost of setting a house and organizing a wedding ceremony is around 50.000 Turkish liras and current marriage and wedding industry constitutes an important sector of Turkish economy which is worth of 30 billion Turkish liras. For more information, see: Karaboğa, Kezban, "Türkiye'de Evlilik Sektörü 30 Milyar TL'yi Geçti", Dünya Gazetesi, June, 09, 2015, https://www.dunya.com/gundem/turkiyede-evlilik-sektoru-30-milyar-tlyi-gecti-haberi-282497

the first place, "wedding ceremonies" set a good example of this "hybrid family system in Turkey" (Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 232-233). The majority of Turkish citizens choose to get married with both both civil and religious marriage ceremonies as it was discussed in the beginning of this chapter.

In the second place, this hybridity is also substantially visible in the "household arrangements" of Turkish married couples. Even though more than eighty percent of the families are nuclear (Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 232), "61.3% of newlyweds live with family members at the beginning of marriage (Yüksel- Kaptanoğlu & Ergöçmen, 2012). On the other hand, "current sex roles also involve an interplay between the historical and the new" (Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 235) depending on the socio-economic situation, education level and the location of the couples:

"Today, while spousal relations are changing toward less domination by the husband and greater involvement of the wife in decision making, some conflicting gender roles still exist. That is, women are still usually in charge of household chores and child care regardless of their employment status" (Kavas & Thornton, 2013: 235).

Despite the existence of hybridity in several issues around marriage, there is a clear decline in some traditional marriage practices like "bride-wealth" (başlık parası) and "arranged-marriage". It is seen that the percentage of the population practicing "bride-wealth" dropped from "48 % to 18 % over the 30 years of observation" (Nauck & Klaus, 2008: 296)[86]. Besides, when the current marriage practices are compared with the 1959-1968 marriage cohort[87], there is fifteen percent decline in arranged marriage practices.

4.5. Mate Selection Practices in Turkey

The coexistence of modern and traditional qualities is also visible in the mate selection practices in Turkish individuals. Hart argues that "in urban areas and among secular people, marriage practices are similar to those in Europe and North America" as "some young people live together, decide to marry on their own and on the basis of romantic attachments". On the

[86] This custom also varies substantially by region and education, which is another strong indication for the unequal distribution of the two marriage regimes. Looking at the marriage cohort 1989-1998, bride wealth was paid for 53 % of women from the eastern part of Turkey compared to 16 % in the west, and for 52 % of women without any education compared to 3 % of women with at least a secondary education. Nauck, Bernhard and Daniela Klaus, "Family Change in Turkey: Peasant Society, Islam, and the Revolution 'From Above" in Jayakody, Rukmalie, Arland Thornton and William G. Axinn (eds.), **International Family Change: Ideational Perspectives**, 2008, pp. 296-297

[87] According to 1959-1968 marriage cohort, the percentage of arranged marriages was 74 % in ibid. pp. 296

other hand, she states that some other segments of the society get married by arranged marriage practices (Hart, 2006: 262). On that note, scholars state that arranged marriage practices are still common in Turkey as "they foster family unity and protect property, political linkages and patriarchal authority within extended families." (Aytaç, 1998:245). On the other hand, as different from the popular understanding of these practices, recent studies demonstrate that not all arranged marriages practices in Turkey can be regarded as identical practices and these practices do not necessarily refer to the absence of the consent of the bride and groom (Hart, 2006: 262; Tekçe, 2004). As the findings of Tekçe's research reveal, while in some cases arranged marriages can stand for the social and parental confirmation of an existing relationship between couples (Tekce, 2004:175), in other ones, it is seen that individuals "choose" arranged marriages as these types of marriages allow them to find someone that matches their mate selection criteria (Tekce, 2004:174). Besides Hart's study refer to several examples where a love bond emerges between couples who get married via arranged marriage practices (Hart, 2006: 262).

In order to be able to explain the coexistence of marriage practices regarded as "traditional" and "modern" ones in Turkey, socio-demographic qualities of married individuals in Turkey have to be taken into account. Accordingly, the findings demonstrate that age, educational status, socio-economic status and the area of residence influence marriage types and decisions significantly.

The Analysis of Decision Making in Mate Selection

As the latest findings of Family Structure Research in Turkey (2016) indicate, nearly sixty percent of marriages in Turkey are arranged marriages (TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey, 18 January 2017). The results demonstrate a significant decline in the percentage of choice marriages between the years 2013 and 2016.

Table 2.1: Decision For Marriage By Gender (TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey, 2016)[88]

	Choice marriage (with the approval of the family)	**Choice marriage** (without the approval of the family)	**Arranged marriage** (with the consent of the bride / groom)	**Arranged marriage** (without the consent of the bride / groom)	**Eloping / Abduction**	**Bride Exchange**	**Other**
Gender							
Male %	33,8	2,5	47,8	9	7	N/A	N/A
Female %	27,1	2,6		14,8		N/A	N/A

Another remarkable point is about the increase of marriages by capture (eloping and abduction), accordingly there is 2,5 % of increase in these types of marriages in the last three years (TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey 2016, 18 January 2017).

Table 2.2: Decision for marriage by gender 2 (TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey, 2013)

	Choice marriage (with the approval of the family)	**Choice marriage** (without the approval of the family)	**Arranged marriage** (with the consent of the bride / groom)	**Arranged marriage** (without the consent of the bride / groom)	**Eloping / Abduction**	**Bride Exchange**	**Other**
Gender							
Male %	45,2	2,7	41,8	5,6	4,3	0,3	0,1
Female %	37,3	3,1	42,9	11,7	4,5	0,4	0,1

The recent increase of arranged marriages and the decrease of the percentage of choice marriages can be interpreted as the reflection of rising conservatism and patriarchal revivalism in the country.[89] On the other hand, as the findings of TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey (2013) manifest, age, educational status, socio-economic status and the area of residence have significant effects on choice marriages. In the first place, it is seen that more than half of the younger individuals take marriage decisions themselves (with the approval of their family) while choice marriages were less frequent practices for older generations in Turkey. Besides, there is a continuous decrease in bride exchange and arranged marriage

[88] The full report of TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey 2016 is not released yet. Due to this reason, I referred to press releases sharing some of the findings of this report. However, as these releases only convey partial information about the results of the research, gender based findings of some titles can not be shared here.

[89] As the full report of TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey 2016 is not released yet, the breakdown of the findings in terms of age, educational level, socio-economic status and area of residence for 2016 are not available at the moment. Due to the absence of this data, it is not possible to share a comparison between the results of 2013 and 2016.

practices that are realized without the consent of the bride or groom as the age range decreases. Thus, one can assume that younger generations have more possibility to take their own decisions in marriage and they do not take part in forced marriages as the elder generations do.

Table 2.3: Decision for Marriage by Age (TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey, 2013)

	Choice marriage (with the approval of the family)	**Choice marriage** (without the approval of the family)	**Arranged marriage** (with the consent of the bride /groom)	**Arranged marriage** (without the consent of the bride / groom)	**Eloping / Abduction**	**Bride Exchange**	**Other**
Age							
18-24 %	52,2	5,3	33,8	2,2	6,2	0,2	0,0
25-34 %	53,7	3,4	34,6	3,3	4,7	0,3	0,0
35-44 %	46,0	2,8	41,3	5,7	3,7	0,4	0,1
45-54 %	34,8	2,8	48,5	9,3	4,2	0,4	0,2
55-64 %	32,0	2,6	47,4	13,1	4,6	0,3	0,0
65+ %	23,3	1,6	47,6	22,5	4,5	0,4	0,0

On the other side, the relationship between educational status and marriage types clearly indicate that a big percentage of well-educated men and women takes initiative to choose their partners themselves (while the approval of the family is still taken). On the contrary, when the educational level decreases, it is seen that choice marriages decrease and arranged marriages with / without the consent of the bride and groom increase.

Table 2.4: Decision for Marriage by Educational Status (TAYA Family Structure Research In Turkey, 2013)

	Choice marriage (with the approval of the family)	**Choice marriage** (without the approval of the family)	**Arranged marriage** (with the consent of the bride /groom)	**Arranged marriage** (without the consent of the bride / groom)	**Eloping / Abduction**	**Bride Exchange**	**Other**
Educational Status							
No schooling %	21,2	2,3	47,9	22,7	4,5	1,3	0,0
Primary School %	32,0	2,8	50,2	9,6	5,1	0,2	0,1
Elementary Secondary School %	43,5	3,6	42,1	4,6	6,0	0,2	0,0
Highschool %	58,8	3,4	32,1	2,3	3,2	0,0	0,1
Undergrduate Graduate %	78,1	2,4	17,7	0,9	0,7	0,0	0,1

There is also a strong correlation between the income level and marriage type. The findings point to the fact that a bigger percentage of individuals who have higher amount of economic capital get married with the partners they choose. On the contrary, as the amount of economic capital decreases, arranged marriage practices with / without the consent of the bride and groom increase.

Table 2.5: Decision for Marriage by Socio-Economic Status (TAYA Family Structure Research In Turkey, 2013)

	Choice marriage (with the approval of the family)	**Choice marriage** (without the approval of the family)	**Arranged marriage** (with the consent of the bride /groom)	**Arranged marriage** (without the consent of the bride / groom)	**Eloping / Abduction**	**Bride Exchange**	**Other**
Socio-economic Status							
Higher upper class %	84,8	2,2	11,7	0,6	0,4	0,0	0,1
Upper class %	67,8	2,3	25,6	2,5	1,6	0,0	0,1
Upper middle class %	48,9	2,3	39,5	5,9	3,3	0,0	0,1
Lower middle class %	33,6	2,9	47,1	10,6	5,5	0,3	0,0
Lower class %	27,8	3,6	48,8	12,6	5,1	1,0	0,0

As a final remark, the percentage of arranged marriages, arranged marriages without the consent of the bride / groom and marriage by capture are higher in the rural areas of Turkey compared to urban cities.[90] According too the findings of TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey, 2013, "the main regions where individuals get married through their own decision and approval of their family are Istanbul and West Marmara with 55%" and these regions are "followed by East Marmara (49%) and Aegean Region (45%)". The results indicate that the lowest percentage of choice marriages (23 %) and the highest percentage of arranged marriage without consent (60 %) are "observed in Central Anatolia". On the other hand, "the

[90] "As for the rural vs. urban breakdown of the first marriage decision; it is observed that arranged mar-riage takes place at a higher level in the rural area. The proportion of those who get married through arranged marriage or their own decision is 41% in the urban area, while it increases to 46% in the rural. A similar situation is observed among individuals who marry upon the decision of their family, through arranged marriage, without their own consent. This is 8% in the urban area, and goes up to 12% in the rural. The rural-urban difference in the first marriage decision is observed in marriages upon eloping/abduction. The rate of such marriages is 4% in the urban and 6% in the rural area. On the other hand, the rate of marriages upon the individual's own consent and approval of the family is higher in the urban areas (44%). Across the three major cities, the rates are more or less the same in Istanbul and Izmir regarding the decision to marry. In Ankara, the rate of individual decision of arranged marriage (47%), and arranged marriage through the decision of the family without the consent of the individual (10%), is higher compared to Istanbul and Izmir."

phenomenon of bride exchange is still present in the Southeast Anatolia region" and "3% of marriages in the region occur through bride exchange" (TAYA, 2011: 71).

The Analysis of the Way of Meeting the Spouse

When the way Turkish individuals meet with their spouse is evaluated, it is seen that family, relatives and neighborhood constitute the principal networks where people meet with their spouse. All the parameters indicated above in the analysis of the way marriage decision (age, education level, socio-economic status, urban vs. rural location) also shape the way both sexes meet with their spouse candidates.

Table 2.6: Comparison of Way of Meeting The Spouse Throughout Turkey Between 2006 and 2016 (TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey, 2006 and TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey 2016, 10 May 2017)[91]

	Family and relative network	**Neighborhood network**	**School / education network**	**Work network**	**Friends network**	**Internet**	**Other**
Turkey 2006 %	39,4	39,0	4,4	6,1	8,1	0,1	3,0
Turkey 2016 %	49,8	28,2	N/A	N/A	10,3	N/A	N/A

Accordingly, while more than half of the Turkish citizens who have higher level of education (university, master or upper educational degrees) and more than sixty percentage of individuals who have higher socio-economic status meet their spouses outside the principal networks mentioned above (these segments meet their spouse candidates at their school, business or friend circles), less than five percent of uneducated people and around six percentage of individuals who belong to lower socio-economic class meet their spouses via these circles.[92] Another significant finding of this research is the decreasing influence

[91] The full report of TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey 2016 is not published yet. Due to this reason, I referred to press releases sharing some of the findings of this report. However, as these releases only convey partial information about the results of the research, gender based findings of some titles can not be shared here.

[92] According to TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey 2013, 22,1 % of university graduates meet their spouses at their school circle, 16,8 % of them meet their spouses at their business circle, 15,6 % of them meet their spouses at their friend circle s and 0,3 % meet their spouses via internet and marriage agencies. 6,9 % of high school graduates meet their spouses at their school circle, 12,9 % meet their spouses at their business circle, 13,6 % them meet their spouses at their friend circle and 0,1 % meet their spouses via internet and marriage agencies. 1,2 % of primary school graduates meet their spouses at their school circle, 3,0 % meet their spouses at their business circle, 5,6 % and 0,6 % of uneducated people meet their spouses in school circle, 0,9 % meet t

neighborhood network. While neighborhood was the main network elderly people met their spouse candidates[93], the percentage of people who meet via this social circle is much lower for younger people. Besides when the difference between the year 2006 and 2016 is considered, a general decline in meeting via neighborhood network is visible. Regarding this issue, one can assume that internal migration, neoliberal urbanization and gentrification projects in Turkey can be the possible reasons behind this decrease in the practice of finding spouse candidate in the immediate environment.[94]

The Analysis of Qualities of the Spouse in Marriage Practices in Turkey

Despite the attempts of Ottoman elites to transform arranged marriage practices to free-choice marriages in the 19th century, the direct influence of family in mate selection practices (arranged marriage practices, bride exchange, etc.) is still prevalent in Turkey despite the relative decrease since the beginning of Turkish Republic. While the coexistence of "modern" free-choice marriages and "traditional" marriage practices can be explained with uneven modernization of the country, the populist agendas of the political parties and rising conservatism and religious revivalism especially in the last decades in bold outline, the social reproduction of these practices also has to be taken into account in order to understand the coexistence of these practices. As Bourdieu explains in "Marriage Strategies as Strategies of Social Reproduction", rather than being explicit and formal rules, marriage strategies are the products of one's habitus.

"The constraints surrounding every matrimonial choice are so numerous and appear in such complex combinations that the individuals involved cannot possibly deal with all of them consciously, even if they have mastered them on a different level... Far from being simple procedures, analogous to those invented by the legalistic imagination in its efforts to bend the law, far also from being reducible to formal and explicit rules, these strategies are the product of habitus, meaning the practical mastery of a small number of implicit principles that have spawned an infinite number of practices and follow their own pattern, although they are not based on obedience to any formal rule" (Bourdieu, 2002: 558).

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their spouses in business circle, 2,7 % meet their spouses in friend circle and 0,1 % of them meet their spouses via internet and marriage agencies. (TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey, 2013)

[93] 52,9 percent of individuals over 65 years old and 46,2 % percent of individuals between 55 and 64 years old have declared meeting with their spouse candidate in the neighborhood network. (TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey, 2013)

[94] For more information, see: Gülçin Erdi Lelandais (2015), "Urbanisation under Neoliberal Conservatism in Turkey", **Centre for Policy and Research on Turkey (ResearchTurkey**), London, Research Turkey, Vol: IV (7), 2015, pp.54-67

In his regard, one can assume that rural, relatively less educated families in Turkey have reproduced traditional marriage practices while urban, modern and relatively more educated families and individuals have adopted the free-choice marriage practices. However, when choice marriages are addressed, as the Bourdieusian analysis of mate selection practices brings forward, it is not possible to reduce "the act of choosing a mate" to "just behavior and synchronic sense of the individual actor" (Schmitz, 2017: 102). In this sense, we can think that the actors actively selecting their spouse are also guided by their habitus and they are "never completely the subject of his practices" (Schmitz, 2017: 102) even though they implement their marriage strategies which correlate with their habitus in the Bourdieusian sense. On the other hand, as the recent studies on arranged marriages practices (Hart, 2006; Tekçe, 2004), arranged marriages can also take hybrid forms and they can refer to individual strategies of brides and grooms as well. In this section, in the light of this thinking framework, I would like to analyze the general qualities of mate selection criteria in Turkey and in the second place, I would like to give place to the qualities Turkish individuals look for in mate selection.

When the qualities of spouses in current marriage bonds are analyzed, the existence of endogamic and homogamic principles are visible in Turkish marriages. In the first place interracial marriages are very rare in the country and only "one in about 40 marriages" that takes place in Turkey are realized by spouses belonging to different ethnic groups. Scholars interpret this fact as "a very strong tendency towards ethnic homogamy" (Gunduz-Hosgor, Smits, 2002: 429-430). In the second place, according to Turkish Family Structure Research (2006) results[95], sixty-nine percent of marriages occur among *hemşehri*, in other words among people coming from the same villages, cities or regions. Besides, the findings of the same research indicate that the religion of the prospective partner is a highly important criterion for taking marriage decisions and seventy-eight percent of men and eighty-four percent of women consider the religion of the prospective partner as an important criterion for taking marriage decisions.

[95] The statistical data about *hemşehri* marriages and importance of religion in prospective partner selection were not included in the 2011 version of Turkish Family Structure Research (TAYA). For this reason, the statistical data about *hemşehri* marriages and importance of religion in prospective partner selection in 2006 version of Turkish Family Structure Research (TAYA) is taken as a reference in this dissertation study.

In her analysis of the influence of endogamy in Turkish marriage practices, Özgen refers to Bourdieu's practice theory and she states that "practical knowledge of the world, or disposition, is acquired through an individual's position and his position-takings (viewpoints, anticipations, judgments) vis-à-vis others' in a social space" (Özgen, 2014: 38 -39). In this frame of thinking, one can assume that an individual develops a sense of "his/her place" as well as "others' place" (Bourdieu, 2000:130 in Özgen, 2014: 38 -39) by the internalization of external knowledge that s/he acquires through his/her habitus (Özgen, 2014: 38 -39). Therefore, individuals learn "who they should interact with, and how they should interact with (ethnic) others" (Özgen, 2014: 39) by their family, education, religious rules, media and so forth. In this study, the scholar also refers to the interaction between "ethnic boundaries" and "sexual boundaries" in Middle Eastern societies and she explains the "stigmatizations" that "solidify ethnic boundaries" (Özgen, 2014: 38).

> In Turkey, much like the rest of the Middle East, ethnic boundaries coincide with sexual boundaries. Sexual stereotypes and fantasies are frequently deployed to justify and stabilize ethnic hierarchy between groups. For example, sexual labels such as impure, promiscuous, or perverted are attributed to other's women to cast doubt on the chastity of out-group members and to affirm the purity of the group (see also McClintock 1995; Nagel 2003). These stigmatizations in turn help solidify ethnic boundaries. Thus, in more conservative societies inter-ethnic sexual relations often span across spheres of ethnicity and patriarchy, and factors like patriarchal inequality and sexual stigmatization need to be considered while analyzing boundary regulation (Özgen, 2014: 38).

In this context, one claim that the differences between individuals' habitus result can be influential in the reproduction of endogamic and homogamic practices. The findings of Turkish Family Structure Research (2006) indicate that the education level, the area of residence and socio-economic status are crucial in the reproduction of these endogamic preferences.

> To set an example, the rate of marriage among *hemşehri* people decreases with the increase of the level of education and *hemşehri* marriages among university graduates and post-graduates is 31 % lower than *hemşehri* marriages among uneducated citizens. In a similar vein, 90,1 % of people with low income level and 91,4 % of people with low education level consider religion as an important criterion for spouse selection. However, 62,5 % of university graduates and post-graduates and 62,7 % of high income earners place emphasis on the religion of their future husbands and wives (TAYA, 2006:153). In a similar vein, the persistence of consanguineous marriages (23,3 %) despite "the negative medical effects for children" correlates with socio-demographic qualities such as "rural residence, residence in poor areas of metropolitan cities… and low level of education" (Hancıoğlu & Tunçbilek, 1998 in Fışıloğlu, 2001: 215 - 222).

On the other hand, the analysis of the social qualities Turkish individuals look for in their spouse candidates share similarities with the general qualities of mate selection criteria in Turkey at a considerable extent and denotes the reproduction of endogamy in individual choices as well. To make it clear, "having similar family structure", "being religious", "coming from a similar religious sect", "coming from a similar ethnic background", "having similar social circle" and "coming from the same city/region" are the social qualities Turkish men and women attach importance to in mate selection (TAYA Research on Family Structure in Turkey 2011:93). Besides, the findings of this research related to individual mate selection criteria also display the existing gendered social order in Turkey where men are accepted as the bread-winners and the women are accepted as mothers and housewives. According to Hull's interpretation of Bourdieu's study on "masculine domination", the mechanisms reproducing gendered social order are "at work in modernized societies" as "the objective structures of the social space shape individual dispositions" (Hull, 2002: 351) and "people act and choose on the basis of these dispositions in turn reinforce the gendered social order" (Hull, 2002: 352). In this regard, while men do not attribute importance to the employment status, income level of the female spouse candidate, women set a premium on these qualities. Thus one can assume that a considerable part of Turkish individuals reproduces the gendered social order as they had internalized the external knowledge that they acquired through their habitus (Özgen, 2014: 38 -39)

> The social qualities women and men are looking for in their spouse candidates are quite similar except the qualities about "having a job", "high income level" and "good education level". 91,7 % of women state preferring a man who has a job, whereas only 52,7 % of men state it as a quality they look for in a female spouse candidate. Similarly, 44,8 % of women prefer a man with a high income and only 29,3 % of men prefer a woman with high income. Finally, 67,5 % of women and 58,5 % of men prefer a spouse candidate with "good education" (TAYA Research on Family Structure in Turkey 2011:93).

Finally, as the findings of TAYA Research on Family Structure in Turkey reveal, in comparison to other segments of Turkish society, urban, relatively affluent and younger individuals show a tendency to implement mate selection criteria and marriage strategies different from the other segments of the society. In the next section, I will try to clarify the reasons behind these trends together with the pre-marital relationship practices of young Turkish individuals.

The Analysis of Pre-Marital Relationship and Mate Selection Practices in Turkey

In the ever escalating tense atmosphere of Turkey where several practices and institutions are subject to transformation (Atasoy, 2009:149) today, the pre-marital relationship and mate selection practices in Turkey have attracted the attention of several scholars (Özyeğin, 2015; Türkmen, 2014; Ellialtı 2012) in the last years. However, before sharing the findings of these researches on the premarital practices of young Turkish people belonging to conservative and liberal social spheres, I would like to give place to Bourdieu's understanding of masculine domination and the accounts of scholars (Adkins, 2003; McNay, 1999) who refer to to Bourdieu's "reflexivity" and "feel for the game" concepts to question the possibility of social transformation and "detraditionalization of gender". In the second place, I would like to mention Göle's analysis of the changes that have taken place in Turkish society starting with the second period of Islamism in Turkey.

In his explanation of the conditions for masculine domination throughout history, Bourdieu refers to "the historical labour of dehistoricization" and he states that "the masculine order has been continuously reproduced from age to age" (Bourdieu, 2002: 82 -83). In this context, Bourdieu defines the family as "the most important part in the reproduction of masculine domination and the masculine vision" as this institution provides individuals "early experience of the sexual division of labor and the legitimate representation of that division, guaranteed by law and inscribed in language, imposes itself" (Bourdieu, 2002: 85). In the second place, he also regards the church responsible of reproducing the unequal gender system for reasons including "the deep-seated anti-feminism of a clergy", "the patriarchal values…in particular, the dogma of the radical inferiority of women" supported by church (Bourdieu, 2002: 85). Besides, he also stresses upon church's role on "the historical structures of the unconscious" through the "sacred texts" (Bourdieu, 2002: 85). Lastly, Bourdieu gives an account of the role of the educational system in "transmitting the presuppositions of the patriarchal representation" (Bourdieu, 2002: 86).

Another important contribution of Bourdieu to gender studies is related with his definition of symbolic violence[96] in Masculine Domination (2002). Bourdieu argues that what

[96] "Bourdieu (1998) defined symbolic violence as an extension of the term violence to include other forms of violence. According to Bourdieu, symbolic violence is an imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning upon groups or classes, accepted as legitimate. It is related to various modes of social and cultural domination. Symbolic violence is the unnoticed (partly unconscious) domination that people maintain in everyday living.

women apperceive the reality and "the power relations in which they are held" through "schemes of thought" are "the product of embodiment of those power relations".

"…The androcentric representation of biological reproduction and social reproduction is invested with the objectivity of a common sense, a practical, doxic consensus on the sense of practices. And women themselves apprehend all reality, and in particular the power relations in which they are held, through schemes of thought that are the product of embodiment of those power relations and which are expressed in the founding oppositions of the symbolic order. It follows that their acts of cognition are acts of practical recognition, doxic acceptance, a belief that does not need to be thought and affirmed as such, and which in a sense 'makes' the symbolic violence which it undergoes" (Bourdieu, 2002: 34).

In this respect, primarily I would like to give place to Adkins's account which questions the possibility of the transformation of gender roles and masculine domination in the society. In her analysis, Adkins refers to the discussions of feminist scholars that highlight "Bourdieu's arguments about social transformation" and "critical reflexivity" (Adkins, 2003:21) and she further explains Bourdieu's notion of "feel for the game" as follows:

"Specifically, for Bourdieu social change and heightened capacities for critical reflexivity are understood to be potentially at issue when there is a lack of fit between habitus and field, that is, when there is discord between the previously routine adjustment of subjective and objective structures: a dissonance between the feel for the game and the game itself. While, as noted above, for the most part Bourdieu sees compatibility between habitus and field, this unity is however neither fixed nor inevitable" (Adkins, 2003:26-27).

Another feminist scholar, McNay referring to "Bourdieusian-influenced understanding of social change" (Adkins, 2003:29) suggests that women gaining access to "traditionally non-feminine spheres of action" (McNay, 1999: 107 in Adkins, 2003:29) generates "a lack of fit between gendered habitus and field" (Adkins, 2003:29). According to McNay's understanding of Bourdieu's theory, this critical reflexivity can lead to "transformations" in gender roles and practices in the societies (Adkins, 2003:30).

On that note, it is worthwhile to recall the studies of Nilüfer Göle who investigates urban, educated and veiled women that take part in Islamic movement as mentioned above. I

Because symbolic violence is practiced and repeated in everyday life, people do not realize that certain act or attitude contain symbolic violence. He further states that symbolic violence is a soft violence applied by subject to other subjects. Symbolic violence is repeated from time to time through education in the family, formal schooling or informal learning. For more information, see: Udasmoro, Wening, "Symbolic Violence in Everyday Narrations: Gender Construction in Indonesian Television", **Asian Journal of Social Sciences & Humanities**, Vol:2 /3, 2013, pp: 155-156

suggest that the entrance of these individuals to spaces which were accepted as "traditionally non-feminine" places for pious Turkish women (Adkins, 2003:29) sets a good example of Bourdieu's understanding of the "dissonance between the feel for the game and the game itself" (Adkins, 2003:26-27). In a similar vein, Göle argues that the veiled women recently gaining visibility in public space; sharing urban, political and educational spaces in Turkey together with men create "ambiguities" and "unfolding tensions" in the society as the existence of these veiled women in public space contradict with both the traditional gender roles and gender roles defined by Westernist modernism[97] in Turkey (Göle, 1997a:22). Göle further states that these new Islamic actors not only transform the ongoing relationship between conservative men and women around their "collective" political identities and "personal" life strategies but also they "re-appropriate modernity and challenge the Westernist mode of modernism" (Göle, 1997a:133).

In the second place, I would like to give place to Özyeğin's analysis of young Turks' attitudes and practices regarding sexuality, gender roles, premarital and marital relationship practices. In her study which was realized two decades after Göle's research on Islamic women actors, Özyeğin refers to two concepts that she finds useful to explain the common points between these young Turkish people who come from different segments of the society (heterosexually identified women, heterosexually identified men, pious women, and gay-identified men). First of all, Özyeğin brings up Suad Joseph's "notion of connectivity" that she describes as "a model of selfhood rooted in fluidity that serves as an alternative to the (Western) model of the autonomous, bounded self" (Özyeğin, 2015:4).

"This setting supports the production of selves "who invite, require and initiate involvement with others in the shaping of the self" (Joseph 1993, 468). This paradigm of identity formation suggests that connective persons "[come] to see [themselves] as part of another" so concretely that their sense of completion and "security, identity, integrity, dignity, and self-worth . . . [are] tied to the actions of [that person]" (Joseph 1994, 55)" (Özyeğin, 2015:4).

Özyeğin argues that "the key component of selfhood is a relational experience with members of one's family" while she underlines that Joseph's connectivity notion "does not exclude the possibility that individuals understand themselves through the language of

[97] "Modernity in Turkey is defined with reference to a civilization project, which stands for the attainment of Western ways of life rather than for the strength of local class dynamics and the transformation of traditions." For further information, see: Nilüfer Göle, **The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling**, Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1997a, pp. 133

autonomy" (Özyeğin, 2015:4).[98] Furthermore, she refers to the importance of Joseph's connectivity notion to explain the tensions she observed in young Turks who feel torn in between the value systems and desired practices of occidental and local cultures. Özyeğin argues that young individuals in Turkey experience this tension "in different ways depending on gender- and class-based affiliations of privilege and vulnerability as well as provincial and urban origins" (Özyeğin, 2015:5).

"On the one hand, there is the desire to surrender to the seduction of sexual modernity, to renounce the normative model of selfless femininity and protective masculinity, and to reject power and authority located external to the individual. On the other hand, there is the longing to remain loyal and organically connected to social relations, identities, and histories that underwrite the construction of identity through connectivity" (Özyeğin, 2015:5).

In the second place, Özyeğin makes reference to "façade" notion and she defines this concept as "a form of deception, a barrier, a form of protection, and a liberating means by which to claim a new/different self/identity" (Özyeğin, 2015:5). Özyeğin mentions two different functions of façades. In the first place, she claims that façades "provide resistance, and repudiation, and can offer access to feelings, identities, and experiences whose pursuits give individuals agency" and in the second place she states that "they also permit enactments of rituals of conformity, connectivity, and continuity (Özyeğin, 2015:5). The façade examples she addresses can be helpful to clarify this notion:

"The conjuncture of façades occurs in different domains: when secular young women forsake virgin identities but put on ambiguous identities; when pious women are compelled to enter the university with secular appearances, masquerading as secularly Muslim; when gay men's same-sex desires become "open secrets" but they remain "secret subjects"; and when young heterosexual men carry the outward signs of escape from patriarchal constructions of masculinity as controlling and dominant while exercising gender domination" (Özyeğin, 2015: 5).

I claim that these notions cited above, especially the façade concept[99] Özyeğin mentions in her study is useful to understand how the habitus of young Turks coming from different backgrounds are shaped and how these habitus influence their practices. Besides, this concept can be functional to clarify the strategies of young Turkish men and women who grew up under

[98] On that note, one can assume that the high percentage of choice marriages that are realized by the consent of the bride's or groom's parents can also be seen as a reflection of this notion in Turkish society.
[99] This façade notion will also be referred in the third chapter of this dissertation study to explain how users construct their online self-presentations in marriage websites in Turkey to be able to convey presentations of themselves that align with the social norms.

the influence of value systems in the rather collectivist culture (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2007 in Silton, 2017:65) Turkey and who feel a dissonance between their habitus and the fields they enter. In this context, one can assume that these young people resort to "façade" mechanism strategically to cope with the tensions arising from the conflicting aspects of the coexisting cultural categories such as private /public, tradition/modernity and religious/secular.

On the other hand, other studies who investigate the premarital experiences of young Turkish women put forward the fact that not all the individuals refer to this "façade" mechanism in order to cope with the tensions and dissonances existing in Turkish society when they enter pre-marital relationships. These studies refer to other available strategies that enable women to transgress or remain within the borders of the norms of their habitus shaped by the rules of the society. In her investigation of the pre-marital experiences of young, pious Turkish women, Türkmen states that "women who choose Islamic way of living take different positions in consideration to "marriage, gender roles and premarital affairs". Türkmen argues that while some pious Turkish women which she names as "Obedients" interiorize the Islamic norms of their habitus and "have limited relationship with the other sex", other pious women that she refers as "Strategic Freedom Seekers" or "Questioners" open up space for themselves either by referring to mechanisms resembling to Özyeğin's façade notion or by questioning social restrictions of Islam and referring to other possible interpretations of the religion other than the dominant patriarchal and conservative understanding of Islam in their habitus.

From this viewpoint, it can be stated that these latter pious women who enter into pre-marital relationships with men openly without referring to façades (within the limitations of their religious understanding or by questioning these limitations) not only give priority to their "individual" life strategies instead of their "collective" Islamic identities but also contribute to "the transformation of existing relations between women and men" (Göle, 2004:140) to some extent. On the other hand, when we return to façade notion brought forward by Özyeğin, one can assume that this mechanism enables young people to transgress the boundaries of the social norms and enable them to practice acts that contradict with their habitus. However, these strategies do not cause the transformation of "schemes of thought that are the product of embodiment of gendered power relations" in the society as these young people who act with the ambition to preserve their connections keep their practices hidden from the ones who constitute the principal agents in their habitus.

In sum, the analysis of marriage decisions and the way of meeting the spouse in Turkey demonstrate clearly the influence of habitus in shaping mate selection practices and the way of meeting with the spouse. Well educated, urban, relatively affluent and younger individuals who have higher economic and social capital (business, school, education, friends) in comparison to other segments of Turkish society have more opportunity to meet with people other than the ones in their immediate surrounding and to choose their spouse candidates in these multiple social circles. Besides, this section of the society attaches less importance to endogamic marriage practices compared to less educated, less affluent people having rural backgrounds. However, as Özyeğin's study put forwards these individuals act with the aim of keeping their connections and the marriage practices of these individuals manifest the importance of their connections as the majority of this segment practice choice marriages with the consent of their parents.

In the second place, state as "the field of power" controlling educational, economical, media and religious fields by "regulating and legitimating them" (Loyal, 2017:3) plays a fundamental role in shaping the habitus of Turkish individuals. In this regard, one can assume that the significant decline of "traditional" marriage practices like bride-wealth or arranged marriages since the establishment of Turkey until the recent times were related with the modernization and westernization efforts of the state and the measures taken by the state to realize this objective. On the other hand, as it was shared in this chapter, a retrogressive trend has been observed between the years 2013 and 2016 which indicates a significant decrease in choice marriages and an increase in arranged marriages as marriage by capture. This trend can also be evaluated with Turkey's changing political aspirations to raise "a pious generation" (Philips, 2017:6) and the recent measures taken in educational, religious, media and political field to realize these aspirations.[100] Even though, the entrance of pious women into public fields have transformed not only the gender role expectations of Turkish society but also conservative understanding of pre-marital practices in the last decades to a certain extent, it is not possible to assert about the persistence of this trend in the presence of new measures taken in economical, educational and religious fields in the last years.

[100] This argument needs a further clarification and once the findings of TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey 2016 (including the breakdown of recent mate selection practices in terms of age and education) are released, the influence of the transformations in these fields in shaping habitus and mate selection practices can be evaluated with a clearer perspective.

In this current period of Turkish state, where the first signs of gender segregation policies becoming apparent in the public space with women-only transformation services in one of the biggest cities of Turkey (Özkan, 14 June 2017) and the rising demands of certain segments of the society for the annulation of mixed-sex education at least at imam-hatip schools (t24, 18 October 2014), one can assume that the contexts that enable mixed-socialization for Turkish people might lessen in the recent future. Besides as discussed in brief in this section, the neoliberal urbanization projects inhibit neighborhood relations which has been one of the principal networks for Turkish people to find marriage partners. In this regard, in a period when the mate selection possibilities public space offer is in a downtrend, mediated mate selection practices can be referred as new social spaces that can enable men and women to meet with their spouse candidates.

As a final remark, the findings indicate that the percentage of Turkish citizens who meet their spouses on internet is only 0,1 % (TAYA, 2011: 71)[101]. However, this conclusion is highly contestable in the light of the findings of this dissertation study. The accounts of the owners, managers and users of marriage and dating websites in Turkey manifest the stigma attached to dating and marriage website users in Turkey and it is seen that many users and couples who found their spouses on these marriage websites refrain from making it public. (In the second chapter of this study, this issue will be explained in detail.)

5. Media, Gender and Mediated Marriage Practices

Stuart Hall defines representation as "an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture" (Hall, 1997:15) and he claims that "the way people are represented affects the way they realize their self-presentation" (Hall cited in Varol, 2014:304). In the light of this theoretical perspective, the representation of women in mainstream media and digital media will be presented together with a brief analysis of mediated marriage practices in Turkey in this section and the analysis of users' self-presentation will be presented in the third chapter of this dissertation study.

[101] The recent press releases TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey 2016 do not include any information regarding online mate selection practices.

5.1. Gender and Mainstream Media

Together with the second phase of feminism, the amount of researches and studies investigating the representation of women in mainstream media gained momentum. Especially, after 1980s, new disciplines emerged out of the intersection of women and media studies and many important researches and studies analyzing the representation of women in the magazines (Ballaster vd., 1991; Basu 2001; Beetham 1996; Currie 1999; Hermes 1995), in newspapers (Rhodes, 2001; Steiner, 1998), in soap operas (Brunsdon, 2000; Brown, 1994; Geraghty, 1990), in films (Lloyd and Johnson 2003; Stacey 1994; Vares 2002) and advertisements (Belkaoui and Belkaoui, 1976; Goffman, 1979 in Carter, 2011:371) were accomplished in this period.[102]

The analysis of the representation of gender in media is a critical subject of study as media is one of the fields (together with family, education and religion) from which individuals learn "their earliest, and often most lasting, beliefs about the social meanings of being male or female and thinking and behaving in masculine or feminine way" (Kendall, 2012: 324). On that note, it is worthwhile to recall Bourdieu's "symbolic violence" concept. Bourdieu defines symbolic violence as "an imposition of systems of symbolism and meaning upon groups or classes, accepted as legitimate" (Udasmoro, 2013:155-156). In his account of Bourdieu's concept, Udasmoro claims that this type of violence is "the unnoticed domination that people maintain in everyday living" which is "consumed through the production of text and meaning in the conversation, advertisement, film, novels and other cultural products" (Udasmoro, 2013:155-156). In this direction, several scholars state that the reproduction of gender stereotypes by media "reinforces inequality between women and men and "can lead to inequality, discrimination and violence against women" (López 2007; Simón 2010 in Fernández, Bedia et al, 2016:823).

Media studies investigating the representation of women starting from 1970s onwards discovered that women were represented in media with gender stereotypes, in other words, either within the boundaries of private space, at home as mothers and/or wives or as objects of pleasure conveying the dominant beauty ideals of the period (Gauntlett, 2008: 287-288). In this sense, I would like to refer to the analysis of gender advertisements by media scholars as these advertisements typify the representation of women in mainstream media in this period:

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[102] For a more detailed analysis of media studies on gender, see: Cynthia Carter & Linda Steiner, **Critical Readings: Media and Gender**, Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2004.

"…Researchers have found that men and women are typically portrayed advertising gender-specific items – men with alcohol, vehicles, or business products, while women tend to be associated with domestic products (Gill, 2007). Authority has also traditionally been associated with men, and voiceovers are almost always male (Bretl and Cantor, 1988). While women have tended to be depicted as passive sexual objects, more recently there has been an increase in the number of advertisements showing women as active sexual subjects" (Carter, 2011:372).

On the other hand, starting from 1970s onwards, "the absence or marginal status of women working" in the communications sector were also questioned together with the limited representation of women in the news. Recent findings about the representation of women as "news subjects" demonstrate the ongoing gender gap in this area (Carter, 2011:371).

"When they do show up in the news, they tend to be in the roles of victim or celebrity (and sometimes both) (Zoch and VanSlyke Turk, 1998). That said, in the 2010 study, it was found that there had been an improvement in the number of women as news subjects from 17 percent of people in the news in 1995 to 24 percent in 2010" (Carter, 2011:372).

In the late 1990s, a paradigm shift is experienced in media studies as gender concept has taken on a new significance in the social sciences and as a result of this shift, new disciplines including "masculinity" and "queer" studies emerged out of this context. In this regard, while some "gender researchers became increasingly interested in analyzing the ways in which men and male sex roles were portrayed in the media" (Craig,1992; Jackson et al., 2001; Kama, 2002; Tincknell et al., 2003 in Carter & Steiner, 2004: 4; Skelly & Lundstrom, 1981; Fejes, 1992; Beynon, 2002; Farrell, 2003 in Carter, 2011:370), others have in studied the reflections of queer subjectivities in the traditional and digital media (Gross, 2001; Sender, 2004; Campbell, 2007 in Sender, 2011:207-217). Besides, as it is revealed in Gauntlett's analysis of occidental mainstream media between 1970 and 2007, it is possible to assert that mainstream media have undergone change to some extent in the last decades when the recent media formats and media contents are taken into account. In the second place, his analysis demonstrates the fact that current eclectic structures of media texts allow more place to more divergent representation styles compared to traditional representations of men and women before.

"Traditional gender categories have not been shattered, of course: for instance, men's magazines in the first decade of the twenty-first century have become, if anything, more comfortable with gazing at semi-naked women in an old-fashioned, objectifying manner. Some things change and adapt at different rates, then, but if we look across the media landscape over the past couple of decades, things are clearly changing in a particular direction, and alternative ideas and images have created some space for a greater diversity of identities" (Gauntlett, 2008:279).

On the other hand, some other authors claim that media still does not allow for the representations of all women other than urban, middle class and white ones. As an illustration of this argument, Harris states that "Capitalist societies are happy to celebrate the successes of young women, because they are also economically empowered consumers" (Harris, 2004 in Gauntlett, 2008: 284-285). Besides, feminist media theoreticians give explanation of how consumption practices affect our identity formation (Killborne, 1999; Berberick, 2010) and in contrast to changes that have taken place in media in the recent years, they state that media's pressure on women to present themselves with "feminine image" and "beauty ideals" continue to affect women together with the prevalent consumption practices:

"Women with the help of feminism got rid of oppressive feminine roles, but they could not rid themselves of 'feminine image' which oppresses women as consumers as well as workers of consumer culture" (Killborne 1999; Berberick 2010; Jacobson and Mazur 1995 cited in Malik, 2014: 89).

Having shared the brief summary of the representation of gender in mainstream media, at this point, I would like to refer to the last decade when digital media gained worldwide prevalence. While Gauntlett highlights the difficulties of "providing a meaningful analysis of representations of gender online" due to immense amount of information and diversity of representations digital media embodies (Gauntlett, 2008: 72), several media scholars have labored to be able to account for the possibilities digital media holds for the representation of gender on this "new" media.

5.2. Gender and Digital Media

In this section, in the first place I would like to present two different viewpoints on digital media. The first perspective refers to the emancipatory possibilities of digital media for the representation of gender and the second one consider the recent developments in digital media as reproducing the gender inequalities of mainstream media.

Early Years of Digital Media: Cyberfeminism and Escape From Embodiment

Despite some of the emancipatory benefits of technological developments like contraceptive methods (Volkart, 2004: 98 in Varol, 2014:220), some scholars argue that second wave feminists "tended to examine technological developments as socially and culturally constructed" ones (Consalvo, 2002: 1). On the other side, notwithstanding with the contribution of women throughout the history to "develop new technologies", technology has been regarded

as “a masculine creation” (Consalvo, 2002: 1) and as an integral part of “capitalist and patriarchal system” (Varol, 2014:220). Besides, contributions of women were “largely marginalized, and their participation often ignored or written out of history” (Consalvo, 2002: 1). As a result, a new field in gender and media studies called “cyberfeminism” emerged both as a reaction to underestimation of women’s contribution to technology and a call for women “to become more active in technological areas” (Consalvo, 2002: 1).

In this regard, some cyberfeminists observing the early phases of online communication came up with overdetermined explanations about the role of internet in the society and they considered cyberspace as a liberating place, free from the binary definitions of gender. While some of them argued that internet had the potential to change gender and racial regimes of power through “identity tourism” (Nakamura 2002; Turkle 1997); others claimed it allowed for “the escape from embodiment” (Hansen 2006; Nouraie-Simone 2005). In this context, the online identities and “online self-representations” were seen as “a self realization which is seen to operate free from the constraints imposed by offline social order” (Nakamura, 1995: 1; Cavanagh, 2007:120) and “disengaged from gender, ethnicity and other problematic constructions” and “float free of biological and sociocultural determinant” (Dery, 1993 cited in Hardey, 2002:581).

The propositions of cyberfeminist scholars mentioned above had been criticized for several reasons; in the first place covering only a limited field of online interactions, overestimating the emancipatory role of internet and overlooking the fact that “technologies are embedded in structures of power” (Consalvo, 2002: 2). Besides, they were also criticized for ignoring the digital divide and thus neglecting the difficulties for some women to take part in digital media (Consalvo, 2002: 2).

As Castells pointed out these early online practices of “role-playing” and “identity building” in MUDs that are cited by cybercultural thinkers to explain their theories on “identity tourism”, “escape from embodiment” and so forth were not common online practices but they were practices adopted and practiced by only a limited number of young Internet users (Castells, 2001: 118). Other researchers studying the current online practices not only confirm Castell’s argument about the limitedness of online contexts that allow role playing and identity building but they also claim that along with the growth of internet, these types of practices that take place within the domains of MUDs and chat rooms “has become increasingly used in ways that are grounded in pre-existing social and economic processes” (Hardey, 2002:58). Besides many

theorists investigating online practices underscore the relationship between online environment (dating website, blog, facebook, Instagram, tinder or online game) and identity performance; they claim that "the affordances of a particular medium and the social conventions that emerge around that particular form of communication" (Merchant, 2006:237) limit the ways online individuals may present themselves and perform identities.

"Clearly, the internet has not brought about a decoupling of sex and gender, a breakdown in the gender binary, or an end to patriarchal heterosexism. This is due to a variety of factors, including the mainstreaming of internet technologies since the 1990s, social media's emphasis on maintaining a "real" online identity, and the structural nature of sexism" (Marwick, 2013: 59 -75).

As a result, in contrast with the deficiency of cybercultural thinkers' covering a considerably limited field of online interactions to explain the emerging online self, further studies covered a wider analysis of these interactions and they showed that unlike the prepositions of cybercultural theorists, "online and offline experiences integrate the reality of everyday life" (Enguix, Ardévol, 2014:503).

However, it would be wrong to claim that new online media formats and contents did not bring any change in terms of the representation of the gender. In the last decade, digital spaces including Twitter, Facebook and Instagram have provided "the opportunities for feminist rhetoric to be heard and noticed" and "fostered a flow of relationships, resources, ideas, and action" (Lane, 2015). Besides "digital technology has influenced the production, circulation, and consumption of feminist and queer media" (Berry et al., 2003; Campbell, 2004; Jackson, 2011; Ng, 2011, 2013; Puente, 2011; Puente and Jiménez, 2009; Rodrigues and Smaill, 2008 in Tan, 2017: 2).

Reproduction of Gender Inequalities in Digital Media

In contrast with the cyberfeminists' perspective that stresses upon the emancipatory possibilities of the technology and particularly digital media, several scholars contest this view and they state that "new technologies…can provide new spaces for the regeneration of discourses favoring maleness" (Ross, 2010, p. 129 in Tsatsou, 2011:518).

In this context, scholars address online platforms that target male audience such as computer games, online pornography and so forth. With regard to computer games, Ross states that "computer games promote male characters while providing sexualized and stereotyped

representations of women" (Ross, 2010, p. 129 in in Tsatsou, 2011:518). On the other hand, another scholar Morahan-Martin state that "pornography has proliferated online, much objectifying and victimizing women and girls" (Morahan-Martin, 2000, p. 683 in Tsatsou, 2011:518-519). In her analysis of online pornography, Tsatsou refers to reemergence of the "pre-existing phenomena" of pornography which "essentially signify that physical possession of the female is the natural right of the male" (Dworkin, 1981, p. 203 in Tsatsou, 2011:519).

Some scholars interpret these developments as "re-masculinization on the Internet" (Chow-White, 2006, pp. 893–895 in Tsatsou, 2011:519) or name them as "re-patriarchalization", in which "new paths and further scope are given to patriarchal ideologies and practices" (Tsatsou, 2011:519).

On the other hand, several researches have investigated the influence of representation of gender in mainstream media on the self presentation of online users and the results demonstrate the fact that the representation of men and women on mass media affect users' self-presentation in digital platforms (Kapidzic & Martins, 2015; Döring, Reif & Poeschl, 2016; Tanrıöver & Sunam, 2017). Thus, the representation of femininity and masculinity or in other saying, the gender stereotypes produced in mainstream media (as it was discussed in the beginning of this section) are reproduced to a certain extent in the self-presentations of individuals who take part on social media, online networking sites and online dating and marriage platforms.

As a final remark, we can not afford to neglect the digital divide between men and women as it was mentioned in Consalvo's account above (Consalvo, 2002: 2). The relative Pick and Sarkar give account of the gender gap in ICT usage as below:

"A gender gap in ICT usage is persistent worldwide, although more accentuated for developing nations including in Africa (Deen-Swarray et al. 2012). It is closely associated with income and education gaps. Women worldwide tend to have lower incomes than men, which leads to lower their ICT use, due in part to costs of hardware, software, bandwidth, and services. Also, in many nations, women have lower average educational levels than men. As a result, women may have less educational exposure, training and education in technology and associated skills" (Pick & Sarkar, 2015: 86).

In his article, "Bourdieu, Technique and Technology", Sterne argues that technologies "are embodied in lived practice through habitus" and in this article he explains the relationship between technology and social struggles with a Bourdieusian perspective:

"They are embodied in lived practice through habitus, and so even the most basic 'phenomenological' aspects of technological practice and experience are themselves parts of the habitus…and so the 'form', 'use' and 'function' of a technology cannot be separated from the practices with which it is bundled. As part of the habitus, technologies and their techniques become ways of experiencing and negotiating fields. Technologies are always implicated in and shaped by social struggles" (Sterne, 2003: 385).

As the discussions that take place in this section reveal, it is not possible to assess the relationship between gender and digital media separately without taking society and social norms into consideration. Along the lines of critiques of cyberfeminism, "technologies do not have an existence independent of social practice, they cannot be studied in isolation from society or from one another" (Sterne, 2003: 385). On the other side, as a relatively new medium, digital media not only brings new possibilities, new modes of communication and shapes the interaction process between individuals but it also influences the content that takes place in this medium (i.e. twitter, facebook). In sum, as the examples mentioned above (like pornography sites, online dating websites, etc.) indicate, the platforms on digital media carry both the potential to reproduce gender stereotypes existing in mainstream media and challenge them depending on the regulations brought by the state and the social norms of that society.

5.3. The Representation of Gender in Turkish Media

The representation of gender in Turkish media has been studied by several Turkish scholars and in this regard academicians have investigated the representation of gender in Turkish television and soap operas (Bora & Bora, 2010; Nacaroğlu, Erdemir, vd. 2011, Yücel, 2011; Tanrıöver, 2008; Özsoy, 2006; Akbulut, 2004), in Turkish newscast and news in Turkish print media (Alankuş & Kerestecioğlu, 2007; Tanrıöver, 2008), Turkish cinema (Oktan, 2008; Elmacı, 2011), magazines (Aydoğan, 2008; Yapar, 1999), advertisements (Çık, 2017; Çolakoğlu, 2008; Yalın, 2006; Elden & Ulukök, 2004; Mengü, 2004), music videos (Uçar, 2014), social media (Uçar, 2015; Kanık, 2011; Alemdaroğlu, Demirtaş; 2004) and so forth.

Uğur Tanrıöver claims that in Turkish mainstream media, women are represented either as "sex objects or objects of desire", "melodramatic elements", "magazine contents" or they are presented for their feminine beauty to add visual elements to news as "wall flowers" in general (Uğur Tanrıöver, 2008: 123). The analysis of newscast and news in Turkish print media reveal the fact that the representation of women in Turkish news does not convey positive messages owing to the presentation of women in the news as either "victims" or "blameful ones" (Eser,

2007 cited in Alankuş, 2007:50). Besides, the findings of pop music videos demonstrate that "gender display in music videos conveys a message that women's roles in the society are being sexy and subordinate and that men's role in the society is being aggressive and dominant" (Uçar, 2014).

As an integral part of the dominant representation realm, the studies on the representation of women in advertising also provides an insight about the widespread values and changing representations of women in Turkish media. The outcomes of the researches studying gender representation in advertisements reveal the fact new role models (media career wise, easygoing, liberal, who takes care of herself, etc.) have commenced to be presented in Turkish media recently (Çık, 2017:97) together with stereotypic representations of women where they are portrayed as either housewives or mothers. On the other hand, despite the increase of the percentage of women working in journalism sector in Turkey, scholars state that "sexist division of labor is still prevalent" in Turkey and job security is quite low for women in this sector (Alankuş, 2007:48).

At the beginning of this section, the transformation of the occidental media has been assessed. When Turkish media is taken into account, it is hard to claim that there is a significant transformation in Turkish media with reference to the representation of women. However, an apparent diversification is observed in the recent years together with the second phase of Islamic movement in the last decades. In this context, veiled women highlighting their Muslim identities, television program formats with religious content have become visible not only in conservative media channels, newspapers and magazines but also in the mainstream media. These developments have also attracted the attention of Turkish scholars and both Islamic media (Arat, 1995; Kılıçbay and Binark, 2002; Azak, 2013; Meşe, 2015 in Çetin, 2016a: 117) and Islamic broadcasting (Öncü, 1995; Erol Işık, 2013; Yörük, 2014 in Çetin, 2016a: 117) have become the new research areas at the intersection of academic studies on Islam and media. As it was mentioned in the beginning of the fourth section of this chapter, in their analysis of recent developments in the religious field and particularly Islam, several academicians emphasize the "the commodification of religious objects and practices" (Turner, 2011, 29), together with the relationship between neoliberalism and religion in contemporary Muslim societies (Rudnyckyj, 2009:132). In this regard, Turkish scholars investigating Islamic media and broadcasting also link the enlargement of Islamic media with the development of "neoliberal market economy"

(Çetin, 2016a: 121). In order to illustrate this recent phenomenon, Islamic fashion magazines, television series and Islamic televangelism can be addressed.

Researchers who have observed these magazines claim that Muslim women are not only represented with the traditional roles (mother/wife) attributed to women but also as women with careers. Another important finding of these researches is the common use of "model poses" and "make-up" in these magazines which take precedence over religious preoccupation with modesty (Meşe, 2015).

Secondly, the analysis of a relatively new genre in Turkey, to put it more clearly the studies on Islamic television series indicate a clear segregation of public and private space in terms of gender representation. While male characters are associated with "public space", women are presented in the "domestic space" in Islamic television series in Turkey (Enneli, 2010; p. 216). According to Enneli's study, women partaking in public space in these series are portrayed as "facile" women who "got stuck in earthly pleasures" and who are far away from the advisable behaviors and attitudes of pious women on moral grounds (Enneli, 2010; p. 218). In his analysis of the transformation of Islamic television in Turkey, Kocamaner (2016) describes on Islamic television series as follows:

"In addition to the endorsement of neoliberal market rationality, these family shows simultaneously advocate upholding so-called "traditional family values" through love, caring, devotion, and self-sacrifice— as opposed to those values considered to be endemic in contemporary consumerist society such as autonomy, individualism, and self-centeredness" (Kocamener, 2016).

Furthermore, another important development in the Turkish broadcasting is "Islamic televangelism"[103]. Çetin argues that "Islamic televangelism on Turkish television has shifted from the 'secular' perspective of Yaşar Nuri Öztürk (Öncü, 1995) towards a more Islamist one as exemplified by televangelists such as Ömer Döngeloğlu, Ahmet Mahmut Ünlü and Nihat Hatipoğlu" (Çetin, 2016a: 119). On that note, it is worthwhile to mention that religious TV and

[103] "Televangelism refers to 'a new form of religious broadcasting combining television and evangelism' (Musthafa, 2014, p. 14). Televangelism started in the USA in the 1960s where it was mostly related to local churches (Thomas and Lee, 2012; Howell, 2014), whereas today, it describes a diversity of religious practices on television across different religions including Hinduism, Islam and many others. In other words, 'today televangelism is a global, cross-religious phenomenon' (Thomas and Lee, 2012, p. 2)". For more information, see: Kumru Belgin Çetin, "Religious Broadcasting and the 'Fantastic' Tele-Universe of Adnan Oktars A9 TV", **Journal of Cultural Studies, Faculty of Communication, Hacettepe University**, Vol:3(1), 2016, pp.116-132

radio programs are the the second important source for obtaining religious information after "the consultancy of inner circle who have religious knowledge" according to the results of the survey on religion in Turkey (DİB, 2014; p. xxxii)[104].

As a final remark on Turkish media, the regulation of media field is also important for the analysis of Turkish media in general and for the representation of gender in the media in particular. As Çetin underlines in her article, Turkish Radio and Television Law (1983) "defines the appropriateness of what is broadcasted according to various principles that include the requirement of general morals, national traditions and spiritual value" (Çetin, 2016b: 694) and Radio and Television Supreme Council[105] has the authority to apply this code and censure the television and radio content that are not considered in line with the key principles of television and radio broadcasting in Turkey. Accordingly, these key principles are "family, moral values and nationalism" and they are "considered complementary and need to be protected within the Turkish media culture" (Çetin, 2016b: 694-695).

5.4. The Representation of Gender in Turkish Digital Media

The brief analysis of the representation of gender in Turkish digital media puts forward certain similarities between the analysis of digital media in general as the challenges and possibilities discussed in the previous section find their places in Turkish digital media to some extent. On the other side, the reflections of the recent socio-political developments in Turkey that have affected mainstream media in Turkey are also visible when the recent changes in Turkish digital media are taken into account.

In the first place, as it was revealed in the discussion of the opportunities that digital media in terms of gender representation, internet have contributed to the efforts of women rights defenders in Turkey to shape gender policy as it enabled leading feminist groups in Turkey "to bring together large groups of women which were not common during 1980s and 1990s" (Marshall, 2014: 122; Terkan, 2010:52). Secondly, internet have provided an alternative social space for LBGTQ activists to be able to get organized and challenge the stereotypical

[104] Religious clerks (27,2 %), informal religious books (17,3 %) and religious books published by the directorate of religious affairs (16,3 %) are the other sources people rely on for obtaining religious information. (DİB, 2014; p. xxxii)
[105] https://www.rtuk.gov.tr/en

representation of gender and gender binary system in mainstream Turkish media to some extent in the last decade (Görkemli, 2012).

On the other hand, in common with several other developing countries (Deen-Swarray et al. 2012), the gender gap in ICT usage has been present in Turkey. Turkish scholars emphasize the risks of this digital divide and as it is revealed in Törenli's account this gap is interpreted as the "social exclusion" of non-privileged women from "informational activities" (Törenli, 2006: 453).

> For women, cultural and social norms and statutes present additional barriers to access, raising concerns that ICTs could create new forms of gender inequalities. ICTs and digital networks for women in the broader community are used extensively (as a privilege) by well-educated and elite women. This situation results in social exclusion from informational activities for the others (Törenli, 2006: 453).

In terms of the representation of gender in online news portals, the findings of the researchers' point to a relative difference compared to Turkish mainstream media in terms of the percentage of female newsmakers and the content of these news prepared by female newsmakers -which includes more political news compared to mainstream media (Uğur Tanrıöver, Sözeri, Vitrinel et al., 2008: 51-58) "online news content" production by female journalists and editors". However, the content analysis of online news portals manifests the prevalence of the stereotypical representation of gender roles as it is the case in Turkish mainstream media (Akmeşe & Deniz, 2015: 324; Uğur Tanrıöver, Sözeri, Vitrinel et al., 2008: 48). Besides, just like the regulation of radio and television in Turkey, the regulation of digital media provides the means to limit the visibility of non-heteronormative groups and individuals. As an illustration of this implementation, the "Internet Law" has been promulgated by Telecommunications Communication Presidency (TİB) several times for "taking down" LGBTQ websites (Akdeniz and Altıparmak, 2008: 18 and Akdeniz, 2010b: 19 in Szulc, 2014:1535). In addition to this, several words "referring to homosexuality have been also banned through family and child filters introduced in Turkey in November 2011" (Szulc, 2014:1536).

As a final note on this brief description of Turkish digital media scene in terms of the representation of gender, the representation of pious identities in digital media have also been an important topic (Aslanoğlu, 2016). This issue will be discussed in detail in the chapter where the self-presentation of marriage websites is presented.

5.5. Mediated Mate Selection Practices in Turkey

The history of mediated mate selection practices in Turkey is quite old in Turkey. The spouse ads published in *Musavvar Malumat* in the last decades of Ottoman Empire reveals the fact that personal ads in newspapers to find partners has at least 111 years of history in the country. (Habertürk, 2011). However, Turkish literature on these practices is quite limited and mediated mate selection practices have only attracted the attention of Turkish scholars in the last decade. Main academic focus in Turkey is on marriage TV shows (Demirel, 2011; Aytemur Nüfusçu &Yılmaz, 2014; Tölük & Özad, 2016; Akınerdem, 2017) and to a lesser extent on marriage websites (Tütüncü, 2007; Kaymas, 2010).

On the other hand, there are quite a number of studies conducted on mediated mate selection practices in USA, Europe, Pasific and South Asia and some of these academic works also cover personal ads in newspapers and dating games on television, the research areas which are not studied in Turkey (Aries, Duby et al.; Koestner & Wheeler, 1988; Baize & Schroeder, 1995 in Hetsrorni, 2000: 90). One of the studies on personal ads in newspapers was conducted by Marc Martin with the aim to investigate the "social, moral, and physical characteristics people look for" in early mate selection practices between 1930s and 1970s. In order to see the self-presentations of advertisers, the scholar analyzed "Le Chasseur Français" which was a "monthly magazine that includes advertisements for spouses" (Aries, Duby et al., 1991: 217). As it was revealed in Martin's research and in several other researches, mate selection criteria, gender differences in mate selection and self-presentation and changing nature of mate selection criteria during the 20th century have been the some of the main questions researchers studied in terms of print ads.

In the mid 1960s, the emergence of dating games in television enlarged the field of mediated marriage practices studies and scholars identified new research questions to be investigated.

"In its earliest configuration, developed by US television producer Chuck Berry in 1965 as *The Dating Game*, the dating programme was a studio-based show presenting a bachelor/ette's blind selection of a romantic partner based on answers to a series of usually whimsical questions. This format proved so popular that *The Dating Game* remained in syndication off and on for over three decades, until 1999, and served as the inspiration for *Blind Date* (ITV, 1985–2003) in the UK and *Perfect Match* (Network Ten, 1984–9, 2002) in Australia" (Kavka, 2012: 120).

In this realm, the representation of gender roles and gender differences in mate selection have been investigated by several authors studying television dating games. First of all, I would like to give place to studies who demonstrate media's capacity to challenge traditional gender roles. In this context, I will refer to Hetsroni's investigation of dating games on MTV. In her analysis, Hetsroni accounts for the reasons why physical quality comes to the forefront in dating games on TV in the first place:

"Physical qualities may, therefore, be the only verifiable criteria to use in the context of a TV game show, because reliable information is so scant and because decisions must be made extremely rapidly" (Hetsroni, 2000: 99-100).

In the second place, Hetsroni counts in the effects of age and program format together with gender differences in mate selection. According to the results of her study, when other criteria for mate selection are also taken into account together with primacy of physical qualities for mate selection, the scholar states that "there was no significant difference between male and female contestants of dating game shows" (Hetsroni, 2000: 100-101). As a result of this finding, Hetsroni claims that the formats and target audiences of the dating game programs also affect gender display on the television and further she asserts that in comparison with dating games formats targeting housewives, this dating game format targeting younger audience signalizes "the strength of the mass media capability to reduce gender differences" (Hetsroni, 2000: 101-102).

In his reference of a popular, prime time dating game TV show called "Perfect Match" in Australian television, Fiske "celebrates the challenge that dating programs pose to the dominant ideology" (Derose, Fürsich & Haskins, 2003: 173).

"*Perfect Match* is one of those challenges. In general, it defines sexuality as a source of pleasure for both genders, and does not grant its "moral" use within the family the ideological status of the "natural" and therefore the "right." In other words, it extends to women the definition of sexuality that had previously been reserved for men" (Fiske, 2005:141).

While the dating games referred above have been appreciated for challenging gender stereotypes to a certain extent, even same scholars who celebrate these shows including Fiske have kept them in the line of fire for the same reasons they celebrate them (Fiske, 2005:146). On his account on *Perfect Match,* Fiske underlines the fact that these major dating game programs like *Perfect Match* only allow a certain "sort of women who appear on it to those who fit the dominant stereotype (white, young, employed, conventionally attractive, heterosexual)"

(Fiske, 2005:146). On the other hand, second criticism of these games is about their use of *supertext* and *polysemy* which legitimize the "hegemonic view on dating and sexuality" (Derose, Fürsich & Haskins, 2003:185). In their analysis of another dating game on television which was called *Blind Date*, Derose, Fürsich & Haskins explain the use of intertextuality on television and its relationship between gender norms as below:

"We find that the fusion of the footage and pop-up commentary tends to frame the participants as either conforming to or deviating from the dominant ideology of gender, class, and ethnic representations. Deviation from accepted characteristics of aesthetics, class, and social and intellectual skills is discouraged and punished through the supertext" (Derose, Fürsich & Haskins, 2003:185).

Television Dating Games in Turkey

When Turkish mediated mate selection practices are taken into account, we see the continuation of personal ad practices to find partners for marriage but at the same time, in line with the technological developments and state policies regulating media, other mediated mate selection formats have taken their place in Turkey as well.

In this regard, early 1990s were important years for the mediated couple formation practices. During these years, Turkish audience had met new television channels with the wave of liberalization policies putting an end to state monopoly in television broadcasting. In 1991, a television show called *Saklambaç* appeared as the first example of the program format to find partners via television channels and the show became one of the TV shows that broke rating records. This program shared similarities with television dating games mentioned above and the program format was also similar to *Perfect Match* or *Blind Date* dating games.[106] The biggest difference of this program from the popular television shows that serve to find partner today in Turkey was its format, just like the examples shared above, *Saklambaç* was promoted as a liberal dating game, not as a television program to find marriage partners.

> *Saklambaç* dating game consisted of two parts. As the name connotes[107], the male and female contestants could not see each other until the end of the game and face-to-face interaction between participants took place only at the end of the game. Primarily, contestants had to present themselves briefly and in general these self-presentations consisted of tastes and life style preferences that were indicative of urban, educated,

[106] John Fiske, **Reading the Popular**, London: Routledge, 2005, pp.140-146
[107] Saklambaç means "hide and seek" in Turkish language.

> secular, middle / upper middle class tastes in Turkey in early 1990s. In the second place, depending on the program flow, either one male or one female contestant assumed the "chooser role" and s/he interrogated the three other participants with question cards prepared according to this dating game format. These questions were rather flirtatious and humoristic ones prepared with the intent of entertaining the TV audience and enabling the candidates to present themselves and their lifestyles to some extent. Nurseli İdiz[108] was the presenter of the show and she performed the witty intermediary role in this dating game. The selected candidate and the chooser were rewarded with an upscale dating night which consisted of a luxurious transportation service with a limousine, a dinner at an upscale restaurant and a night-out in a popular bar / disco (Karas, 2013). As a final remark on *Saklambaç*, unlike marriage TV shows that had been aired mainly in the daytime in the last decade (until the recent schedule changes in May 2017), this program was a prime time program and it was not targeting housewives as current marriage TV shows.

Just like the other international versions of dating games mentioned above, this program both challenged and conformed the gender stereotypes. In the early 1990s - even it was 10 % less than the current marriage practices in Turkey (TUIK, 2016) – half of the Turkish marriages were arranged marriages. In this context, the portrayal of women as agents who choose their male partners in this dating game was a non-conformist representation of women. In the second place, the framed goal of this game was no more than dating, the contesters were just encouraged to find a partner to spend a luxurious evening together. On the other side, as it is revealed in the description of this Turkish dating game, the selection of contestants by *Saklambaç* program connotes the exclusion of individuals who do not fit the dominant gender norms of 1990s. Thus, the contestants represent the aesthetics and social skills of urban, educated middle /upper class who embrace Western values during this period. However, the use of *polysemy* was very limited and the cheering of the audience was only serving the purpose to encourage participants, it was not used in discriminative manner and finally *supertext* was not used in the program (Karas, 2013). This TV dating game presented by Nurseli İdiz lasted only 4 years and it ended in 1996.

[108] In the years after, another presenter called Rüya Ersavcı started presenting the same show and she could not keep the witty edge Nurseli İdiz displayed. Ersavcı presented a conformist intermediary role compared to the first presenter of the show that made this format popular in Turkey in 1991. As a result, the program lost its popularity in the later years.

Marriage Shows in Turkish Television

In the second half of 2000s, one year after the launch of Turkey's first marriage website, a similar tendency was also observed in Turkish televisions in 2007 and the first marriage show was broadcasted in this year (Akınerdem, 2017:1). This program format which also broke rating records several times in daytime programs gained an ever bigger space on Turkish television in time; the total number of hours allocated to three main marriage shows by the leading television channels (Star TV, ATV and FOX) was 50 hours per week in 2011(Demirel, 2011: 159).

In terms of the contestants, it is seen that Turkish citizens or Turkish immigrants who live in Europe make applications to join the marriage programs on television (Akınerdem, 2014:7). As it is revealed in Barkın's account, at least, "the representation of the participants" constitute a heterogeneous group as they present different aims and expectations. While there are several participants who want to find a spouse candidate, some of them join this program to find an affluent husband who will provide a roof for their kids and some others join these shows to be able to become famous (Barkın, 2011). Besides, Akınerdem's ethnographic study points also to the fact that some female participants consider these shows as "secure places and secure ways" to find spouse candidates (Akınerdem, 2014:7). Finally, the findings of Aytemur Nüfusçu &Yılmaz on the participant profile is also worth to mention. The scholars interpret some contestants as "ones who can not be involved in the marriage market" in normal circumstances. Accordingly, "elders, widows, housegirls, immigrants and individuals with low income level" are also included as contestants in the marriage programs on television (Aytemur Nüfusçu &Yılmaz, 2014: 38). In comparison with *Saklambaç* dating game, we can say that marriage TV shows represent non-homogenous social groups in Turkish society compared to selection of contestants of TV dating game, *Saklambaç*.

In the second place, the participants have to pass through a detailed selection process executed by the program producers to be able to join this program. Marriages shows are defined as "reality shows" (Akınerdem, 2014:7) and like other reality shows "other than producing the reality", reality shows like marriage programs are "media formats that open its reality and credibility to question" quintessentially (Akınerdem, 2014:4). Besides, this format influences the selection criteria of its contestants and participants according to media scholars. Mast explains this process as follows:

"Producers of 'reality shows' strongly value candidates who demonstrate a capacity to re-present themselves for the camera in a riveting fashion, and to do so (seemingly) 'naturally', with no or few signs of premeditation or self-consciousness… Or, as Bonner (2003) contends, 'ordinariness is not enough' to appear on television since 'some are more usefully ordinary than others'" (Mast: 2016:908).

In this regard, contestants' representation of reality is also an integral part of these shows and their "realness" and "credibility" is not only questioned by the general television audience watching the show on their televisions at home but it is also questioned by program participants. On that note, as Akınerdem states in addition to "the factualness and consistency" of their narratives, contestants are also questioned in terms of their coherence to "social norms" (Akınerdem, 2014:7). Thus, in a way the reactions of the other participants that take place during the show fulfil the task of reminding social norms by penalizing the contestants when they deviate from the norms with hooting down and applauding them when they conform to gender norms and expectations. To set an example, if the male candidate's age is younger than the female contestant, the participants reprimand this relationship and show their disapproval openly in these marriage programs (Akıner & Eren, 2013: 9-10).

At this point, I would like to refer to the representation of other mate selection of criteria of men and women in these shows. In their analysis of the expectations of contestants in these shows on television, Aytemur Nüfusçu & Yılmaz state that mate selection criteria of male participants include "being chaste (sometimes they refer to "wearing head scarf" as well), honest, respectful", "having homemaking skills", "being able to take good care of the husband and the kids" and "not having bad habits". On the other hand, according to the authors, the mate selection criteria of women demonstrate the fact that in these TV shows "woman's understanding of the marriage" is represented as "an agreement to ameliorate their financial and social conditions" (Aytemur Nüfusçu &Yılmaz, 2014: 37).

"To exemplify, the male spouse candidate should have a satisfactory income and social security. Besides he should own a house and a car, in short both auditors and the contestants in this marriage program underline the importance of male candidate's sufficient economic means to support the family" (Aytemur Nüfusçu &Yılmaz, 2014: 37).

Other than transmitting these mate selection criteria based on traditional gender roles, these marriage programs also reproduce the unequal representation of men and women in the mainstream media. While "self devotion and sufferings of women are normalized", men are presented as "confident, strong and successful individuals" (Demirel, 2011:13).

In sum, Turkish media scholars argue that Turkish marriage programs "maintain and reinforce patriarchal ideology and traditional gender roles" (Kaya, 2013:82) and "reinforce marriage as a social institution" (Aytemur Nüfusçu &Yılmaz, 2014: 37). Besides, in contrast with their free-choice / love marriage claims, scholars argue that these programs "reproduce arranged marriages" practices "in many different forms and conditions" (Aytemur Nüfusçu &Yılmaz, 2014: 37).

Online Dating and Marriage Websites

Using online dating and marriage websites has become a prevalent social practice over the past two decades (Bajos, Bozon 2008; Brym, Lenton 2001; Daneback 2006; Hogan et al.2011; Madden, Lenhart 2006; Schulz et al.2008, cited in Bergström, 2011:319). According to Pew Research Center's latest report on online dating (2016), "15% of U.S. adults use online dating sites or mobile dating applications" and "5% of Americans who are in a marriage or committed relationship have met their significant other online".[109] The results of another research investigating "the rise of the internet as a social intermediary" assert that "17 % of heterosexual couples and 41 % of same-sex couples formed in the past 10 years met online" (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2010: 537). It is observed that the rise of the popularity of dating and marriage websites have resulted in the expansion of online dating and marriage market[110] and more than nine thousand online dating and marriage websites operate solely in USA[111] and Europe[112] as of today.

The leading players in this fast growing online dating and marriage industry are transnational companies who are predominantly based in USA and these companies provide dating and marriage services for millions of users worldwide while deepening the market by commissioning various websites for web users with particular ethnic origins, different religious beliefs and socio-cultural backgrounds and special dating interests. Lardellier interprets the segregation in online dating and marriage market that gathered pace especially after 2006 as "the implementation of endogamy by the economic actors of the market" (Lardellier, 2015:91). In line with Lardellier's interpretation, it can be argued that this economic endeavor which gave

[109] http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/29/5-facts-about-online-dating
[110] http://www.nasdaq.com/article/of-love-and-money-the-rise-of-the-online-dating-industry-cm579616
[111] http://theweek.com/article/index/256506/how-online-dating-became-a-2-billion-dollarindustry#axzz34cTWJ0do 6
[112] http://www.datingsitesreviews.com/staticpages/index.php?page=Online-Dating-Industry-Facts-Statistics

rise to the enlargement of online dating and marriage market separates internet users coming from different origins, social spheres and holding different social, cultural and economic capital while transforming the online dating and marriage platforms into semipermeable sites that encourage the relations between people with similar backgrounds.

> The biggest dating websites claim that their matchmaking systems make them unique and incomparable. *OkCupid* states that they offer math-based matching system and that makes them different from websites using subjective matching systems. *E-Harmony* also positions itself as a website that has a bold, scientific approach to matching and by these means they offer more quality dates with deeply compatible singles that truly understands the users. Cupid Media operates over 35 niche dating websites based on ethnicity, lifestyle preferences, religion and location. These sites compass a range from dating sites for women who prefer men doing military services to marriage websites for Muslim people.[113]Spark Networks owns and operates more than 30 niche-focused websites, including more than 20 online dating sites such as JDate.com, ChristianMingle.com, SilverSingles.com and BlackSingles.com.[114]
>
> Religious dating and marriage websites are one of the pillars that deepen this global online dating and marriage sector. The leading companies that have the highest revenue heavily invest in this area. Some examples include *LoveandSeek*[115], *ChristianCafe*[116], *EquallyYoked*[117] and *Reformed Singles*[118] for Christians; *Shaadi.com*[119], *Bouddhamarriage.com*[120] for Budists and *Nikah.com, Muslima.com* and *HalfOurDeen*[121], *SingleMuslim*[122], *SalaamLove*[123], *Qiran*[124] for Muslims. Regarding the websites for Muslim web users, *Nikah.com* established in 1999 gives service to Muslim people in Canada, USA, UK, Australia, Middle East, India, Singapore and Malaysia. Cupid's *Muslima.com* gives service to Muslim people in USA, Europe, Asia and Middle East. Other than the Islamic marriage websites, serving people worldwide, there are websites for Muslims who are serving to minorities in different countries; *Muslim-Marriages.co.uk*[125] and *Mektoube.fr*[126] are some of the examples of these websites.

There are two main business models in online dating and marriage websites. The first one is "matchmaking business model" which uses on the information that takes place in the self-presentation forms of site's members. This model implements "a matching algorithm

[113] http://www.cupidmedia.com/en/services
[114] http://www.spark.net/about-us/company-overview/
[115] http://www.loveandseek.com/
[116] http://www.christiancafe.com/
[117] http://www.equallyyoked.com/
[118] http://www.reformedsingles.com/
[119] http://www.shaadi.com/
[120] http://www. bouddhamarriage.com /
[121] https://www.halfourdeen.com/
[122] http://www.singlemuslim.com/
[123] http://salaamlove.com/?affiliateID=mml
[124] http://www.qiran.com/reg/
[125] http://muslim-marriages.co.uk/
[126] http://www.mektoube.fr/

calculates a factor based on which a list of potentially suitable partners will be suggested" (Schmitz, 2017:18). The second model emphasize on "the individual search for a potential partner on one's own initiative". Users of these types dating or marriage sites "can participate actively and passively on the platform" and make use of the filters available to be able to select the partners they find suitable (Schmitz, 2017:18). On the other hand, depending on the business model, the online relationships in these websites generally develops as follows:

> In accordance with the operation scheme, out-coming from the nethnographic observation of online dating and marriage websites in Turkey, the first step for subscribing to online dating and marriage websites is paying membership fee for male users while most of the online marriage websites do not ask for a subscription fee for female members. Principally, all these websites require their members to create their profile pages, thus members have to fill questionnaires including multiple-choice questions (age, occupation, ethnicity, religion, physical qualities, civil status, number of kids, etc.) and they have to respond to open-ended questions to define themselves and their future partners. In addition to these, websites encourage their users to upload their photographs to give their prospective partners a clue about their visual appearance. Subsequent to these initial steps, dating and marriage website users are allowed to choose their spouse candidates by use of ready made filtering options (age, height, occupation, habits, religion, ethnicity, etc.). Users who have followed through these steps start communicating with other users. Online dating and marriage websites provide several options for their users to initiate the first contact including "online winking", "sending virtual gifts", "messaging" and so forth. The communication mediated by these websites proceeds on the same medium for a brief period of time. Optionally, the users who prefer to keep touch with the other might continue their communication through different media tools (facebook, skype, telephone call, SMS, whatsapp, etc.) for a while, usually ranging from a few days to a few months and ultimately, those who choose to meet face to face get together for their first date.

These practices and business models have awakened the interest of the academicians' and researchers' for quite some time and a broad range of literature related to online dating and marriage has been ingenerated during the recent years. Academicians working in this field of study have investigated many topics related with online dating and marriage websites including, how online dating practices differentiate from traditional dating and spouse selection practices (Manning, 2013; Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012), the way women and men users of these websites realize their self-presentations (Bullingham & Vasconcelos, 2013; Rosen, Cheever, Cummings, & Felt, 2008), the accuracy and authenticity of these self presentations (Whitty, 2008) and their relations with gender norms (Hall, Park, Song & Cody, 2010 ; Fullick, 2013; Turner, 2012; Hancock & Toma, 2009) and so on. In addition to these, academicians and researchers have examined the online dating and marriage practices of people belonging to different religions (Bajnaid, 2016; Ahmed, 2013; Mishra, Monippally & Jayakar,

2013; Piela, 2011; Zwick, Cristian, 2006), and ethnicities (Wang, 2011) together with the effect of actual geographical proximity and age groups (Mcwilliams, Barrett, 2014) on online spouse selection and the offline relationships formed upon meeting on these dating and marriage websites.

Online Dating and Marriage Websites in Turkey

Dating and marriage websites have also gained popularity in Turkey since the beginning of the last decade. In this day and time, marriage websites who define themselves "Islamic" and "Scientific" are the main players of Turkish market. These so called "scientific" marriage websites -which will be referred in this article as "liberal" players[127] - claim to provide "scientific matching services"[128] to their clients. Other factors that differentiate Islamic marriage websites from the liberal ones are about their positioning and their Islamic discourse.[129] In addition to these, their visual language, the content of their user profile forms and the filtering options they provide for spouse selection differentiate from each other. Apart from these main players, there are several large and small marriage websites that provide services for people with variant ethnic groups, different ideological positions, multiple profession groups and so forth.[130] The main players composed of online Islamic and liberal marriage websites offering "scientific" matchmaking solutions have also the biggest number of users. eCift[131] is the biggest player in this market in terms of the total number of users (5 million) and it is followed by another online liberal marriage website called Pembe Panjur[132], who claims to have 4,130,000 subscribers. One of the oldest players of this market, an online Islamic marriage website founded in 2007 is called Gönülden Sevenler[133] and they claimed to have around 2 million users by 2014. Lastly, Nasipse[134] website has announced that they have 300.000 users in 2014 and according to 2014 public release of Evlilik Merkezi[135], this website

[127] These descriptive adjectives are, so to say, corporate "self-presentations" of these websites. As "scientific" attribute is an exaggerated way of defining the matchmaking services of these websites, it can cause misapprehension. Thus, instead of defining them as "scientific", they will be referred in this thesis dissertation as "liberal" marriage websites.
[128] http://www.pembepanjur.com/npp.php
[129] "http://www.gonuldensevenler.com/whygs
[130] BervinİzdivaÇ (For Kurdish People), AleviDünyası (For Alewits), DoktorunDünyası (For Doctors), AnnemEvlenecek (For Mothers), SolcuOlsun (For leftwingers) are some of the examples of these types of websites
[131] www.ecift.com
[132] http://www.pembepanjur.com
[133] www.gonuldensevenler.com
[134] www.nasipse.com
[135] http://www.evlilikmerkezi.com

means “Marriage Center” in Turkish language and it has 100.000 users. All these websites are sites established by Turkish entrepreneurs receiving local and international investment to pursue their growth, thus they are not localized versions of transnational online dating and marriage companies. Finally, it is worthwhile to share that the biggest Islamic and liberal marriage websites of Turkey are designed for heterosexual users and these sites do not allow their members to see same sex members.

The international literature on Islamic marriage websites demonstrate that Islam has an effect on the user practices of Islamic marriage websites as their users feature their religious duties and pious look in their self-presentation (Mishra et al., 2013, 40). Scholars investigating the Indian Muslim marriage websites also state that these websites “reflect how Muslim men and women are using a new medium to adhere to traditional cultural and religious values” as most of the female profiles are posted by the parents or relatives of the websites and these self-presentations “conformed to the gender stereotypes prevalent in Indian society conform” (Mishra et al., 2013, 47). On the other side, academicians highlight the fact that the design of these Islamic marriage websites includes “specific semiotic resources that allow Muslims to construct communally acceptable virtual identities and negotiate Islamic directives with modem rationalities” as it was observed in Shia marriage websites (Zwick & Chelariu, 2006: 351-352). As a final remark, some scholars claim that these Islamic websites are mostly beneficial for Arab women as their culture do not allow them to “initiate relationship”, thus they argue that “on-line dating empowers and frees women, as it frees them of the social inhibitions associated with their initiation of such relationships” (Hardey, 2002, p.580 in Galal, 2004) without harming their social reputation.

The academic studies investigating online dating and marriage practices are still very limited in Turkey. Tütüncü, regards “Islamic” marriage websites as a product of the “second period of Islamism when the public visibility of Islam starts to escalate” (Tütüncü, 2007: 304). Tütüncü’s descriptive analysis of these sites gives indication of the possible outcomes of this new trend and she states that while these Islamic marriage websites have the potency to be the new vehicles for the emancipation of women in terms of mate selection, she also notes that these websites carry the potential for turning virtual spaces into spaces where gender inequality is reproduced (Tütüncü, 2007: 304).

Kaymas (2010) investigates the segregation of marriage websites in a similar vein with Lardellier's argument regarding online marriage websites as vehicles popularizing endogamy. Addressing Islamic marriage websites as "new places for Islamic elites and new Islamic discourse", Kaymas argues that these sites are "impenetrable virtual spaces for individuals who do not live in accordance with Islamic values" and he purports that these online marriage websites "exclude both the other and the values of others".

In addition to Tütüncü's and Kaymas's studies, there are a few other researches that refer to marriage websites partially with different academic perspectives (Karaboğa, F., 2008; Yıldız, Ö. E., Deneçli, C., Deneçli, S., 2011; Özüstün, E. 2015). Even though the number and the depth of researches on marriage websites are still limited in Turkey compared to European and American literature, they point to an increasing academic interest on marriage websites that have more than 10 million subscribers.

CHAPTER 2: ANALYSIS OF MARRIAGE WEBSITES IN TURKEY

1. The Analysis of Online Marriage Websites in Turkey with a Bourdieusian framework

In this section, I will refer to Bourdieu's conceptual framework to investigate the Islamic and liberal marriage websites in Turkey. In order to define these marriage websites, I will try to analyze them with reference to "field theory" to understand the internal (autonomous) principles and external (heteronomous principles) that shape these websites and I will try to evaluate the autonomy and competition of these sites. In the second place, I will present the social acceptance of online dating and marriage practices in Turkey to understand collective understanding of online partnership formation in the country and to see the different positions of internal and external actors who contribute to the discourses about legitimacy or acceptability of online dating and spouse selection practices.

Following the social acceptance of online dating and marriage practices in Turkey, in the third place I will try to provide an account on the main actors of this field including the users of these marriage websites and owners / managers of these websites - who are assumed as the "play makers" or "strategic actors" - whose actions correlate with their "habitus" and their available resources in the Bourdieusian approach,

In the fourth place, I will investigate the content analysis of these websites together with the architecture of these websites. Concordantly, I will implement the architectural characteristics defined by Papacharissi (2009) to examine the design, positioning and cultural differentiation of these websites. In this chapter, I will also give place to self-presentation infrastructure provided by marriage websites in Turkey and the social media reflections of these websites. I assume that these series of analysis will be beneficial to present the symbolic differences of these marriage websites.

In this context, before sharing my findings on Turkish marriage websites, I would like to present the accounts of academicians on "field theory" and digital practices as several academicians that take part in the growing body of literature about online partner formation practices refer to Bourdieu's field theory to explain online dating and marriage practices (Schmitz, 2012; Illouz, 2013; Green, 2015) in the recent years. Thus, I will share the findings

and main arguments of these studies in order to illustrate the relationship of field theory and online dating and marriage websites in the first place and following that I will try to account for the reasons why I prefer to refer to Bourdieu's field theory to study marriage websites in Turkey.

1.1. Field and Digital Practices Including Online Relationship Formation

As Bourdieu (1984) notes "habitus, field and capital all work together to generate practice, or social action" and accordingly an agent's "neither imposed nor chosen" strategy is based on his/her habitus and the "objective structure of relational positions that constitute a field" (Wood, Bunn, 2009:290).

Herzig, states that "field and habitus reveal the importance of historical processes, both collective and individual, for revealing the underlying order shaping digital practices" (Herzig, 2016: 121). Besides, she argues that habitus concept helps researchers to reconsider and question "the levels of reflexivity in users' digital practices", "the precise nature of their dispositions "as well as "their phenomenological experiences of this practice". (Herzig, 2016: 121). In this regard, first of all I would like to give accounts or researchers and academicians who claim or question the recognition of online social spaces as "field" and explain their reasons that support their point of view.

Maton states that "the notion of autonomy" provides the basis to define a social space as a field (Maton, 2006:701). In a similar vein, Herzig takes a critical stance at "field" concept. She examines the appropriateness of "field" concept to refer to online spaces and questions whether if "online spaces assert sufficient autonomy to form fields" (Herzig, 2012). I would like to cite Maton's explanation of this notion to define what is meant by the autonomy of a field;

"The question of autonomy is central to understanding the structuring principles of a field in two principal ways. First, each field as a whole is relatively autonomous from the fields of economic and political power which dominate society; each field both exhibits homologous features to the wider social structure and has its own specific structure and logic. A field's autonomy is illustrated by the way it generates its own values and markers of achievement, but the relative nature of this autonomy means these values are not alone in shaping the field; economic and political power also play a role, albeit in a form specific to each field."
(Maton, 2006:689 -690)

Thus in order to acknowledge a social space as field, each field has to engender its own rules and values or their "internal or autonomous principle" while they are subject to "external or heteronomous principle of hierarchization" as well (Mounier, 2001: 7l). When this is the case, the interrelation between these internal and external principles together define the level of autonomy of any field. Other scholars argue that a social space starts to become or work as a field when "one cannot succeed in it without a minimum level of practical or reflexive knowledge of its internal rules and logics" (Willig, Waltorp, Hartley, 2015:58). In other saying, one can assume that fields are social spaces that require an understanding and knowledge of the specific internal mechanisms, rules and values.

"A field is a structure of relative positions within which the actors and groups think, act and take positions. These relative positions are defined by the volume and structure of their capital. In their position-takings, persons and groups - sometimes unconsciously - pursue interests linked to their relative positions in the field, which may consist in preserving or transforming the position they occupy and the resources associated with it. The position of an actor or a group depends not only on the way in which it manages to renew itself but also on the ways in which all the other actors in the field evolve or seek to evolve" (Vandenberghe 1999 cited in Hilgers & Mangez, 2015 :10).

Schmitz proposes to observe mating practices "utilizing the analytical power of the habitus-field theory" (Schmitz, 2012:4). Furthermore, he refers to relational system of fields with reference to Bourdieu and he states that "the producer's power and perspective are grounded" in a field and he points to the importance of "the positions of actors and their relations of practices" in each field (Schmitz, 2009:7). From this point of view, Schmitz claims that a field perspective is an appropriate sociological apparatus to comprehend online dating websites as they carry the necessary specifications of a field and as these websites "consider the differentials in power and the networks between market participants" (Schmitz, 2009:7). Besides, as it was shared in the accounts of Mounier (2001) and Willig, Waltorp, Hartley (2015) before, each field holds internal principles and mechanisms that cooperate together with external rules and principles. Schmitz assumes that Bourdieu's field concept is relevant to discuss online dating sites for one more reason; as these sites require their participants to have "knowledge of the field-specific and general rules of partnership formation and apply them in a profitable way" (Schmitz, 2009:7). In his article, "Virtual relationships between the sexes in the context of relational methodology", Schmitz argues that "the field of online dating can thus be understood" from "which form of relationship (flirt, marriage, etc.) an actor can justifiably expect from interaction" (2009:9). He further states that the competition for receiving

"attention"; understanding the "trustworthiness" of partner candidates and the type of relationship to expect from this candidate require a field specific capital relevant for success (2009:11).

Another scholar who refer to Bourdieu's field concept is analyze online dating practices is Adam Isaiah Green. As distinct from Schmitz, Green uses "sexual field" concept to explain the dynamics and strategies of online users and the social spaces where these agents take place.

"A sexual field materializes as actors orient themselves toward one another with the effect of producing a system of stratification around the process of intimate partnership. Sexual fields, then, represent a configuration of social spaces, anchored to physical and virtual sites, that are inhabited by actors who strive to obtain the rewards of the field." (Bourdieu 1977; Martin and George 2006 cited in Green, 2015:27).

Green states that in order to become an actor in these sexual fields, certain actions are required according to the internal principles of each field. The set of examples Green refers in his article include "self- presentation", "the cultivation of a particular body type", "social practices related to how to approach", "sexual repertoires", "nightlife" and "lifestyle preference" and so forth. In addition to these examples cited, he refers to individual characteristics – age, income, religion, occupation, ethnicity, etc.- as it is required in online dating and marriage websites (Green, 2015:27) in this dissertation. In his article, Green compares religious and gay dating websites to refer to the differences between the dispositions and practical repertoires of actors, their value systems and "distinct ways of experiencing and understanding sexual value—one's own and that of others". In this perspective, sexual fields can be described as social spaces consisting of actors who are "positioned in relation to one another on the basis of differential capital portfolios" (Green, 2015:30) and the requirements of each field in terms of certain types of capitals demanded by different actors in each specific field show variations accordingly.

As a final remark about sexual fields, Green underlines the "homogeneity around partner preferences" in different dating platforms as he claims that "sexual field acts as a field of force, like a field of gravity". Furthermore, he concludes that these fields contain actors with similar dispositions due to this distinctive (Green, 2015:27).

Illouz is yet another scholar who embraces sexual field concept. Even though Illouz does not directly link sexual fields and online dating practices; she gives account of both concepts in her book, “Why Love Hurts”.

“…Sexual fields: that is, social arenas in which sexual desire is autonomized, sexual competition is generalized, sexual appeal is made into an autonomous criterion for selection of a mate, and sexual attractiveness is made into an independent criterion by which to classify and hierarchize people.” (Illouz, 2013:54-55)

In her account, she gives place to “the autonomization of sexual desire” and she states that this incident gives rise to create “social spaces” such as online sex-partner search services, online dating sites and match-making services. Illouz states that “these sites are designed for the organization of romantic/sexual encounters and stratified according to the logic of consumer tastes and niches”. However, Illouz does not directly refer to marriage websites.

1.2. Field and Digital Practices Including Online Relationship Formation in Turkey

Having presented the way several authors approach digital practices including online relationship formation with Bourdieu’s field concept, at this point I would like to refer to Turkish marriage websites and explain their autonomy and the competition between the actors that take place in this field in brief as they will be analyzed in detail in this chapter and in the following chapters.

In their description of the autonomy of a field, while Maton states that “a field’s autonomy is illustrated by the way it generates its own values and markers of achievement” (Maton, 2006:689 -690), Benson claims that “semi-autonomous fields are governed by their own rules of the game” and “they offer their own particular economy of exchange and reward” (Benson, 1998:464). When the relationship formation flow generated by online marriage websites in Turkey and elsewhere (subscription, membership fee for males, providing a self-presentation of oneself - with profile forms including multiple-choice questions and uploading photographs, providing the definition of a desired future partner, filtering partner candidates among millions of users) is assessed and compared with offline relationship formation flow, one can assume that these websites bring their own “rules of the game" in terms of relationship formation flow.

In the second place, as it was shared in the beginning of this section, Willig, Waltorp and Hartley remind that in order to be counted as a field, at least "a minimum level of practical or reflexive knowledge of its internal rules and logics" is required for the ones who take place in this field to succeed (Willig, Waltorp, Hartley, 2015:58). In the fourth section of this chapter, I will try to present the explicit rules of Turkish marriage websites in detail. However, on that note, I would like to bring some findings of the personal interviews to refer to the implicit rules of this field and the level of knowledge needed in marriage websites briefly. During the field research of this dissertation, several interviewees mentioned not being able to initiate a communication with the opposite sex as they did not know how to prepare their self presentation in these online platforms when they had started using these platforms. Some of them mentioned subscribing to these websites with fake profiles to be able check the profile forms of their male or female competitors to be able to learn how to present themselves on these websites. These implicit rules will also be discussed in detail in the fourth chapter of this dissertation study.

On the other hand, as the nethnographic observation of online dating and marriage websites in Turkey also brings forward, these websites offer "their own particular economy of exchange and reward" (Benson, 1998:464). Male and female users whose self-presentations are appreciated by the other users not only get more messages from the prospective future partner candidates but they also receive other symbolic cues or gifts like "online winking", "sending virtual gifts". Female or male users who have a significant number of "virtual gifts" or "winks" are regarded as "popular candidates" by other members. As different from offline relationship formation practices, female users are not allowed to see other female candidates and male users are not allowed to see other male candidates in this social space. Besides, as it will be presented in detail in this chapter, marriage websites have their specific norms and regulations for the self-presentation of their users and their usage practices.

Another point worth mentioning, as it is revealed in Maton's account, even though "each field has its own specific structure and logic", the field "also exhibits homologous features to the wider social structure". In this direction, one can assume that the values specific to each field "are not alone in shaping the field as economic and political power also play a role in a form specific to each field" (Maton, 2006:689 -690). Within this realm of thinking, we can claim that the way users present themselves, their expectations from their future partners and their usage practices expose the relationship between this field and the wider social structure.

Together with the norms of regulations of marriage websites, this issue will also be investigated in detail throughout this study.

As a final remark (even though I will be explaining the socio-demographic qualities of the users in detail in the third chapter of this thesis study), it is worthwhile to refer to the characteristics of the users in terms of average age, gender ratio, level of education as these qualities differ significantly from the qualities required for arranged marriage practices which constitute sixty percent of marriage practices in Turkey. In these marriage websites, the average age of men and especially women is over 30 years old and it is higher than the average marriage age in Turkey, the level of education is relatively higher than the average education of partners in arranged marriages and the percentage of men compared to women is much higher in these marriage websites.

In the light of all the information presented above and that will be presented throughout the next chapters, Turkish marriage websites will be regarded as semi-autonomous fields in this dissertation.

2. Social Acceptance of Online Partner Search Practices in Turkey

In order to account for the social acceptance of online partner search practices in Turkey, I will refer to the accounts of different actors holding symbolic capitals different from each other with the aim of understanding the legitimacy or acceptability of these online marriage field in Turkey within their frames of thinking. The accounts of these actors also show how their relative positions contribute to the configuration of the discourses around these newly emerging practices.

American scholars argue that as “the acceptance of internet dating becomes more widespread, stigma decreases as internet dating enjoy the benefits of word-of-mouth referrals” and as more website users experience ‘success stories’ (Sautter, Tippett, Morgan, 2010: 8). However, the accounts of owners/founders of dating and marriage websites in Turkey, the users of these websites and a limited number of research findings manifest that online relationship formation practices are still stigmatized by a clear majority in Turkey.

The social acceptance of online partner search practices in Turkey is not an issue studied in depth by a sufficient number of researchers. Even though Costa's research investigates "field of premarital romance" (Costa, 2016:103), the findings of this recent research conducted in the southeast region of Turkey refers to online dating and partner search practices which are realized through the instruments of social media sites. The results of Costa's research points to a generation gap and it indicates that elders criticize young people who engage in these kinds of practices as they do not find it appropriate in terms of religious principles and local customs (Costa, 2016:105).

"Words such as *günah* (sin) and *ayıp* (shameful) were often used indiscriminately by almost every inhabitant of the town to condemn those practices that contradicted accepted norms, among which were premarital romance and premarital sex… Adult women's comments were: 'Social media is shameful' or 'Social media is not shameful', 'Internet is moral' or 'Internet is not immoral" (Costa, 2016:105).

In response to the reactions of elderly, young people who take part in Costa's research also criticize elderly and describe them as "outmoded, backward and conservative (antika, geri kafalı)" (Costa, 2016:105). As the findings of Costa's ethnographical research reveal, pre-marital relationships and online mate search practices continue to be domains that create tension between traditional, conservative people and liberal young people who embrace modern technologies and adapt new patterns of mating practices. However, as Costa highlights not all young people embracing these practices are open about their use of internet and social media platforms to find partners and to continue their relationships with the special other; some of them "commonly lie" about their online practices "to conform to public discourses" about honor and modesty (Costa, 2016:105).

The accounts of owners or co-owners of these online dating and marriage also mark the social prejudice against online dating practices and they refer to users' reluctance to talk openly about their online practices.

"*There is a negative perception about finding your partner online, and couples usually end up lying about it if they end up in a working, long lasting relationship potentially and hopefully ending with a marriage.*" [136] (Haluk Akın, Co-owner of Pembe Panjur website)

"*… people's perception about online dating is so negative. They either consider it a sign of desperation, or simply a lowly act to do. So, when they're asked, don't expect people to tell you*

[136] from http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2014/01/turks-date-online.html

the truth about it."[137] (Ersan Ozer, Owner of Istanbul.net, Ankara.net and Izmir.net dating websites)

As it was discussed in the face-to-face interviews conducted with the co-owner of Pembe Panjur, Haluk Akın argues that searching for a date or spouse on these online platforms is not regarded as a proper practice in Turkey especially due to "the negative discourses about dating and marriage websites in Turkish media". These negative news about online dating and marriage websites mostly cover fraud cases that take place on these sites and frequently married men committing adultery with female members of these sites.[138]

Besides, almost all the interviewees using liberal and Islamic marriage websites agree on the notoriety of online relationship formation practices in Turkish society. In their accounts, most of them explain that they refrain from sharing their online search for a partner with their families due to the reasons in line with Costa's ethnographic research; generation gap and traditional and religious beliefs against it and they also mention that these kinds of practices are not openly shared between friend circles as well. Thus, the accounts of founders / managers and users of these websites manifest that concealment practices are not limited with a specific region in the country.

"*My mother is a very conservative woman; I would never tell her that I use these marriage websites even if they are "Islamic" marriage websites. She is an old woman and if she hears that I use these websites, she would tell me 'If you really want to find a girl, I will find for you'."* (Male, 33, Istanbul, Conservative, Journalist, Undergraduate)

"*I assume that some of my friends are also members of these websites but they would never tell me*". (Female, 39, Istanbul, Conservative, Self Employed, Higschool)

In this regard, the accounts of Turkish religious authorities who share their views about online partner search practices in Islamic marriage websites is worthwhile to mention. Grounding my argument on the capital theories of Bourdieu and the "spiritual capital" [139]

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[137] ibid.

[138] The way dating and marriage websites are described in the news that take place in the following two websites can be regarded as examples of the way media handles Turkish dating and marriage websites: http://globalinvestigations.blogspot.com/2013/03/turkey-background-checks-prevent.html; http://www.medyafaresi.com/haber/aldatmanin-tadina-varinca/613401

[139] Bradford Verter, in his article "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu" resorts Bourdieu's definition of capital forms including his "religious capital" concept and he criticizes the way Bourdieu defines "religious capital" by means of Bourdieu's methodology.[139] In order to explain three states of capital, Verter refers to Bourdieu's "embodied state", "objectified state" and "institutionalized state" concepts. Accordingly, in the embodied state, spiritual capital is a measure of not only position, but also disposition; "it is the knowledge, abilities, tastes, and credentials an individual has accumulated in the field of religion, and is the

concept of Verter, I suggest that their knowledge of Islam religion and their appellation as "religious authorities" (embodied state of the spiritual capital) distinguish them from other social actors who do not hold these symbolic differentiation values; therefore one can assume that their accounts or discourses about online dating and marriage practices (objectified state of the spiritual capital) have an effect upon social actors who also share similar value systems and who hold similar views about Islam religion.

When we assess the views of Turkish religious authorities (who are also professors in the faculties of theology in Turkey) about online partner search practices in Islamic marriage websites, we see their emphasis on the "proper use" of these websites which I interpret as usage practices that avoid close encounters with prospective candidate and especially sexual encounters as pre-marital or extra-marital sex is not approved by current interpretations of Islam religion in Turkey. However, while most of the religious authorities deprecate pre-marital or extra-marital encounters, the views of these authorities regarding the appropriateness of Islamic marriage sites for marriage partner search are conflicting. While some of them approve the usage of these new technologies and online practices for finding marriage partners; others act with suspicion towards these Islamic marriage websites as they do not find these sites "trustworthy".[140]

As it was discussed in the introduction chapter, conservative interpretations of Islamic school of thoughts advocate for "regulating the sexuality in the society and they bring about an imposed self control" for women and support "larger social control imposed on women from outside" (Bargach, 2006: 52-53) to prevent adultery (*zina*). In this regard, as the accounts of another religious figure on premarital relationships reveal, flirting is conceived as a dangerous practice that might lead girls to lower oneself or to choose the wrong way by several

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outcome of explicit education or unconscious processes of socialization" (Verter, 2003:159). Secondly, in the objectified state, "spiritual capital takes the form of material and symbolic commodities - votive objects, exegetical texts, and ritual vestments, as well as theologies, ideologies, and theodicies" (Verter, 2003:159). Just as "cultural capital is measured by acts of consumption, objectified capital is measured by the goods consumed" according to Verter (2003:159). Finally, in terms of religious "institutions", he proposes to incorporate extrainstitutionalized spiritual beliefs like New Age in his definition of religious capital. For more information, see: Bradforth Verter, "Spiritual Capital: Theorizing Religion with Bourdieu against Bourdieu", **Sociological Theory**, Vol:21(2), 2003, pp. 150-174

[140] "Some religious scholars like Turkey's first woman theologist Prof. Dr. Beyza Bilgin proposes to bring these websites under control while she underlines the importance of self-control and recommends users to act "responsibly" in these sites as well. Finally, Prof. Dr. Abdülaziz Bayındır expresses his disapproval of marriage websites that use "Islamic" title as he claims that these sites exploit Islam religion to attract people". For more information, see: https://www.frmtr.com/islam-ve-insan/2957655-hayirli-nasip-mi-tuzak-mi-islami-evlilik-siteleri.html

conservative religious figures and it is considered synonymous with an idiom *"kötü yola düşmek"*[141] by these conservative religious figures (Laleli, 2014) in Turkey.[142] On that note, it is worthwhile to mention the accounts of interviewees who refer to remarks of their social circles on people who use online dating and marriage websites to scorn their online mate search activities. As some interviewees addressed in the personal interviews, their social circles make use of a current saying *"internete düşmek"* stemming from other the Turkish idiom mentioned above *"kötü yola düşmek"*. I claim that this saying *(internete düşmek)* not only highlights the conflicting tensions and stigma against online dating practices but also shows the roots of this stigma derived from the conservative interpretations of Islam.

On the other hand, dominant western ideologies about "love" and especially "romantic love" also critiques online mate search practices. In her book, "Love, Heterosexuality and Society", Johnson underlines the common understanding of love as "natural, universal and ahistorical" (Johnson, 2005 :4) and she states that this way of handling love is "constructed", "reproduced" and related with "normative modes of heterosexuality" (Johnson, 2005 :4).

"…I am arguing that the social construction of love serves a legitimating purpose for heterosexuality because it connects the modern construction of sexuality to historical ideas of innateness and essentialism which are then experienced as a unique set of 'feelings'. What concerns me is the way that we situate ourselves within these discourses of love and how, in doing so, we produce ourselves in particular ways." (Johnson, 2005: 45-46)

When we evaluate the influence of dominant ideologies of "romantic love" on online dating and partner search practices, it is seen that they underline the spontaneity of love and they claim that love naturally happens while they stress upon the understanding that "it can not be bought or found through a search engine" (Sautter, Tippett, Morgan, 2010:8).

Accordingly, individuals who physically meet and 'fall in love' with each other is considered as an appropriate and "natural" way of finding a partner in contrast to online relationship formation processes that take place in dating and marriage websites (Hardey, 2002:574).

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[141] The English equivalent of the latter sayings "*kötü yola düşmek"* can be translated as to go wrong" or "to become a prostitute". *"Düşmek"* means to "fall" and /or "lower oneself".

[142] http://www.cubukhaber.com/flortten-kotu-yola-dusmek-17-1602yy.htm

Besides, Turkish individuals who adopt a more liberal or "western" life style look down on online dating and marriage practices as they also do not find them in line with dominant ideologies about spontaneous romantic love, they regard it as a practice that causes one to "lower oneself". At the same time a great majority of the population is still skeptical about the accuracy of the information people share on these websites and their real motivations for being members of these sites as the co-owner of *Pembe Panjur*, Haluk Akın mentioned in his account.

"*When, I tell people that I use these sites, I received many negative comments from my social circle. They critiqued me saying 'don't you have any other choices, could not you find someone in other places, you are a social person...They also told me that you can never be sure of the men using these websites they can cheat, they can be fraudsters..."* (Female, 39, Istanbul, Not Religious, Officer, Undergraduate)

In sum, the analysis of various internal and external actors of the field demonstrate that online dating and marriage services is still accepted as a kind of "improper practice" by a big part of Turkish population. Dating or marriage website users abstain from speaking up about their online partner search practices as it took place in the accounts of owners of these sites and interviewees. While one can assume that one of the motivations behind this concealment can be as Waltorp state keeping "family's honor intact through the display of virtuous behavior" (Waltorp, 2015 cited in Willig, Waltorp, Hartley, 2015:7); both liberal and conservative users also act with the motivation to keep themselves away from the negative comments of their social circle.

3. The Actors of Online Relationship Formation Field in Turkey

In their explanation of field theory, Bourdieu and Wacquant state that "different actors with relation to the capital(s) they hold shape the field entirely by their distinct position-takings" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992:97). The continuous struggles of these actors who act with the necessary strategies to improve their position and to secure their interestsin the field, the field does not stay stable and "its shape and boundary change constantly" (Herzig, 2016). However, the position of an actor or a group does not only depend on the way in which it manages to renew itself but also on the ways in which all the other actors in the field evolve or seek to evolve" (Vandenberghe 1999 cited in Hilgers & Mangez, 2015 :10). Besides, as Bourdieu explains a social-field is a "multi-dimensional space of positions" and when considered from this point of view, as Bourdieu states "every actual position can be defined in terms of a multi-dimensional system of coordinates whose values correspond to the values of the different

pertinent variables" (Bourdieu, 1985: 724). Thus, the agents and their positions being distributed within these two dimensions (with the level of capital they possess and the composition of their capital) are affected by the external and internal principles of these two dimensions continuously.

In this point of view, I claim that it is important to figure out the historical processes in this multi-dimensional system of positions and to understand the underlying order in this semi-autonomous online relationship formation field. Hence, I would like to give place to the information about the emergence of online partnership field in Turkey and define the development of this field briefly in order to explain the different positions actors have to take in this field since its beginning.

First of all, it is important to define the main players of this online relationship formation field and demonstrate the transformation in this field with the arrival of new actors and agents. For this reason, in this section I would like share my findings about the main play makers (owners and founders of dating and marriage websites in Turkey) in this field together with other agents (users of marriage websites in Turkey) who participate and act with strategies to improve their position and to secure their interests in this field.

3.1. From Homogeneity to Heterogeneity: The Changing Profile of Dating and Marriage Websites' Users

Current literature on digital divide research points to the unequal relationship between individual social position and online behavior. Researchers state that offline social inequalities-SES, gender and age being at the forefront – are reproduced online together with "structural disadvantages limiting user access to as well as advantages from using the Internet" (Van Deursen, Van Dijk, & Helsper, 2014; Van Dijk, 2006 cited in Lutz, 2016:2).
Lutz (2016) states that the "vertical dimensions of social inequality"; income and education are indicative of one's access to internet and using it in an advantageous manner; individuals with high SES can more easily take advantage of the Internet, "as they command the necessary resources in terms of human, cultural, social, and economic capital" (Bourdieu, 1986) which give them easier access to modern technology (DiMaggio, Hargittai, Celeste, & Shafer, 2004 cited in Lutz, 2016:2).

Turkey is ranked 70th in the world and 38th in Europe ICT development index (IDI) in 2016[143] and the country is on the decline in this ranking in the last years. However, when we compare the current internet access percentage with the earlier years; we can see a graph moving upwards. Having said that, Turkey is one of the countries that have experienced significant digital divide since the beginning according to ICT development index (IDI). Turkish users met internet in the late 1990s with dial-up connections; cable internet was introduced in 1998 and ADSL is in use since 2001.

As it was seen in the accounts of Lutz (2016) and other scholars observing digital divide, Turkish statistics also demonstrates the influence of age, education, income level together with gender and rural/urban factors on internet access. Currently, the percentage of computer usage is 54,9 %, internet access is 61,2 % and the percentage of households with access to the Internet is 76,3 %. In terms of computer usage, there is % 18 percent difference between men and women; along similar lines, the percentage of men who have internet access is 15 % more than women. In the early years of internet, this percentage was much more limited for both sexes; while every one in five individuals was using computer in 2004 and 2005, the percentage of individuals having access to internet was even lower and was around % 18 percent. However, gender gap was even bigger in these early years and the number of male users who use computer and who can access internet was twice the number of female users. (See Appendix, Table C.1, Table C.2, Table C.3 and Table C.4 for the full statistics between the years 2004 -2016)

In the second place, education has a determining role on internet access. While the percentage of high school graduates (86,4 %) and undergraduates / postgraduates (95,6 %) is quite high at the moment; the percentage of internet access goes down correspondingly for individuals who have lower levels of education. Only 7,4 % literate individuals without a diploma and 34,7 % of primary school graduates have internet access as of 2016. A remarkable outcome of TurkStat's statistics is about the early days of internet in Turkey. In 2004 and 2005, while every 3 out of 5 individuals holding university or post-graduate diploma had access to internet, this percentage drops to 0,7 % for literate individuals without a diploma and 1,3 % for primary school graduates and the percentage of high school graduates who had access to internet was less then half of individuals who had accomplished higher education in 2004 and

[143] http://www.itu.int/net4/ITU-D/idi/2016/

2005. (See Appendix, Table C.1, Table C.2, Table C.3 and Table C.4 for the full statistics between the years 2004 -2016)

While Turkstat statistics does not include a study that shows the relationship between income level and internet access, the results of the study demonstrating the influence of job status and internet access indicates the advantaged and disadvantaged groups in terms of income. Accordingly, employees receiving regular income and employers are the groups that have had higher percentage of internet access since 2004 till 2016. On the other side, retired people, unpaid family workers, house workers and unemployed individuals are the groups that have lesser percentage of internet access. As distinct from the job categories pointing to income level, the results of this study also shows that students have always had high percentage of internet access since the earlier days of internet in Turkey. The facilities universities and educational institutions provide might be influential on these results (See Appendix, Table C.1, Table C.2, Table C.3 and Table C.4 for the full statistics between the years 2004 -2016)

According to TurkStat survey, internet and computer usage have increased among in rural and urban residents in the years between 2004 and 2010. However, as Acılar states, the digital divide between rural and urban residents in terms of computer and Internet usage have not been closed and the gap rested consistent despite the gradual increase in this period. In 2010, while the percentage of computer and Internet use among rural residents are 25.6% and 23.7% respectively, these percentages for urban residents were 50.6% and 49.2% (Acılar, 2011: 239). (See Appendix, Table C.1, Table C.2, Table C.3 and Table C.4 for the full statistics between the years 2004 -2016)

As a final remark, in accordance with the results of Lutz's study, age is an important determinant for internet age. The individuals who are between 16-24 years old have the highest percentage of internet access. This percentage drops gradually as age increases. Currently 84,3 % of individuals who are between 16-24 age range and 78,8 % of individuals who are between 25-34 age range have internet access while only 8,8 % of people who are between 65-74 years old and 21 % of people who are between 55-64 years old have internet access in Turkey.

When the socio-economic variables that influence internet access is considered, the results of Turkstat's statistics demonstrate that the digital divide was much bigger in the early 2000s in Turkey and the biggest percentage of Turkish population that could access to internet

were composed of two main groups in those years; urban young university students or urban young employees /employers holding undergraduate or post graduate diplomas. Despite the absence of studies showing the socio-demographic qualities of online dating and marriage websites' users; the accounts of the owners of these sites and the interviewees who had been members of dating sites in early 2000s correspond to the qualities of individuals who could access internet during that early period. Thus, together with the arrival of new play makers, the increase of the internet access (for all SES groups), infrastructure developments and so forth, one can assume that online relationship formation field in Turkey has enlarged to a certain extent since its beginning and became more heterogeneous in time.

However, as the results of the large-scaled quantitative analysis undertaken in this dissertation study to define the socio-demographical qualities of marriage website users in Turkey reveals, the biggest percentage of marriage website members in Turkey are male users, the average age of site users is over thirty and the total number of users coming from 10 biggest metropolitan regions of Turkey constitute 50 percent of the members of these marriage websites. Lastly, the education level of marriage site users is above the average level of education in Turkey, the female and male users of these sites usually hold high school or undergraduate diplomas. (The results of the socio-demographical qualities of marriage website users in Turkey will be discussed in detail in the third chapter of this thesis.)

3.2. The Transformation of Online Relationship Formation Field in the Last Decade

The emergence of local online dating services occurred soon after the launch of cable internet. *Siberalem*[144] dating site was launched in late 1990's and it was one the first online dating services and the first local one available in Turkey. According to the account of Ayşe Gözde Ekmekçi who had worked as the CEO of Siberalem and Evlilik Merkezi websites, Siberalem have reached more than a total number of 23 million customers since its departure in the last 17 years.[145]

[144] Siberalem means "Cyber World" in english.

[145] The CEO of Siberalem and EvlilikMerkezi websites, Ekmekçi describe the current target audience of Turkey's website as follows; "In Siberalem, the biggest part of the female users is aged over 25 years old. Young people can find other means to get in touch with each other and they do not need these sites as much as people over 25. After they finish their university studies, some women find themselves in an office context most probably and if they do not find someone interesting in these social spaces, they start searching other means to meet people and they start using dating websites like Siberalem. I described such a profile because most of the

Mid 2000s gave rise to segmentation of online partnership formation field not only in Turkey but also in elsewhere. Lardellier interprets the segregation in online dating and marriage market that gathered pace especially after 2006 as "the implementation of endogamy by the economic actors of the market" (Lardellier, 2015:91).

"With regard to the second period, from around 2006 on, endogamy has been implemented by the economic actors of the market, i.e. "downstream" industrial managers and their marketing staff, in charge of the positioning of the websites. They simply answered a demand for dates "shortlisted" within cultural frameworks, which are thus still ethnic, sociocultural and religious. Cultural dating sites developed especially in the mid-Nineties, mostly denominational in nature. Examples include Mektoub, Inch Allah (for Muslim people), Theotokos (for Catholics), and J Dream (for Jews). Their growing success corresponds to a return to – or a retreat into – values related to one's ancestry and/or education. People openly admit the segregation process, and the argument for this is that the members gather and meet around "common values", which are meant to facilitate the formation of new couples." (Lardellier, 2015:91)

In line with Lardellier's interpretation, it can be argued that this economic endeavor which played a possible important role for the development of online dating and marriage market; also gave rise to segmenting internet users coming from different origins and social spheres while transforming the online dating and marriage platforms into a kind of semipermeable sites that encourage endogamy and homogamy.

As it was revealed in the account of Ayşe Gözde Ekmekçi, the former CEO of *Siberalem* and *EvlilikMerkezi* websites; *Siberalem* dating website had laid the foundation of dating and marriage market in the country[146] as most of entrepreneurs who had established local dating and marriage websites in the following years were former employees of *Siberalem* dating website. While, in the primary example of local dating website, *Siberalem*, there was not any segmentation in terms of gender, religious belief or place of residence, actors succeeding it started to employ strategies of differentiation.

"We have never been a website that promotes marriage or encourages any particular kind of relationship. We have a gender selection section in our questionnaire and it is open to all sexes...our site is being used by gay people as well. We want everyone to use this site as they wish to use. Our political stance also requires this kind of behavior." (Gözde Ekmekçi, A, 2014 - CEO of Siberalem and EvlilikMerkezi)

female members of Siberalem reside in big cities like İstanbul and Ankara." Ayşe Gözde Ekmekçi (CEO of Siberalem and Evlilik Merkezi websites), personal communication, June 6, 2014

[146] Ayşe Gözde Ekmekçi (CEO of Siberalem and Evlilik Merkezi websites), personal communication, June 6, 2014

One of the first examples of this segmentation strategy was implemented by Levent Gültan, a former *Siberalem* employee and the CEO of *Istanbul.net*.[147] Gültan had launched a city-based dating website model in 2006 which was established with the intention of bringing people living in the same cities and neighborhoods together. After the initial success of *Istanbul.net,* Gültan established several other websites for the residents of other big cities in Turkey, like İzmir and Ankara. Some of the other significant major dating websites in Turkey were *gayet.net*[148] and *Yonja*[149]. Besides some of the interviewees mentioned using facebook dating pages like B kulüp[150] before their subscription to the marriage websites.

The arrival of marriage websites did not occur till mid 2000s. These marriage websites differentiate from major dating websites cited here with the type of service they provide. *Gönülden Sevenler* website was founded in 2006 and it was not only one of the first marriage websites in online partner search field in Turkey, but it was also one of the first Islamic marriage websites. All the other significant marriage websites analyzed in this dissertation and several small sized marriage websites that implement multiple strategies of differentiation appeared in the later years after the establishment of *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website. In this day and time, marriage websites who define themselves "Islamic" and "Scientific" are the main players of Turkish market.

These so called "scientific" marriage websites -which will be referred in this article as "liberal" players - claim to provide "scientific matching services"[151] to their clients. The reasons behind my proposition to refer them as "liberal" marriage websites stem from two reasons. First of all, these websites position themselves as "dating for marriage websites" and they adopt a more open approach in terms of dating and premarital relationships compared to Islamic marriage websites. In the second place, "scientific" attribute is an exaggerated way to define the matchmaking services of these websites and it can cause misapprehension of these websites. As it was revealed in the accounts of founders of marriage websites founders and owners, these sites have adapted the matching algorithm based models of world's biggest and oldest dating

[147] http://www.onlinepersonalswatch.com/news/2011/11/ceo-interview-levent-gultan-ceo-of-turkeys-top-dating-site-network-istanbulnet.html
[148] http://www.gayet.net/
[149] https://www.yonja.com/
[150] https://www.facebook.com/games/buyukklup/?fbs=-1
[151] http://www.pembepanjur.com/npp.php

and serious relationship sites like *match.com* and *eHarmony* and they reproduced this model in Turkey with adding minor local touches.

eCift[152] is the biggest player in this market in terms of the total number of users (5 million) and it is followed by another online liberal marriage website called *Pembe Panjur*[153], who claims to have 4,130,000 subscribers. *Gönülden Sevenler*[154] claimed to have around 2 million users by 2014. *Nasipse*[155] website has announced that they have 300.000 users in 2014 and according to 2014 public release of *Evlilik Merkezi*[156], this website has 100.000 users.

In the last five years, apart from the main players of online marriage market, several small marriage websites that provide services for people with variant ethnic groups, different ideological positions, multiple profession groups, etc. also emerged in online partnership formation field in Turkey.[157] As an illustration of this new trend, *BervinİzdivaÇ* website can be pointed. This website was established by an investor from İzmir for Kurdish people looking for a spouse on internet. The same investor has also established 21 other websites for people with different spouse needs such as *AleviDünyası* for Alevi people, *DoktorunDünyası* for doctors, *AnnemEvlenecek* for mothers, *Dedem Evlenecek* for granddads and so forth. As an example of websites for people with different ideological views, SolcuOlsun can be pointed out. This website is established for people who are looking for leftwinger partners. However, these websites did not achieve growth for two possible reasons. First of all, the founders of these websites probably did not invest in these sites as the four main marriage websites in Turkey and secondly as they target very niche audiences as it is in the case of *Dedem Evlenecek* or *AnnemEvlenecek*, they remained as rather small players in online relationship formation field.

Having portrayed the development and current status of online dating and marriage field in Turkey, in the next section I would like to elaborate on the emergence of Islamic marriage websites in Turkey.

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[152] www.ecift.com. eCift means "eCouple" in Turkish language.
[153] http://www.pembepanjur.com. PembePanjur means "PinkShade" in Turkish language.
[154] www.gonuldensevenler.com. GonuldenSevenler means "Those who love by heart" in Turkish language.
[155] www.nasipse.com. Nasipse means "If it is written in the destiny" in Turkish language.
[156] http://www.evlilikmerkezi.com/. EvlilikMerkezi means "Marriage Center" in Turkish language.
[157] *BervinİzdivaÇ (For Kurdish People), AleviDünyası (For Alewits)*, *DoktorunDünyası (For Doctors)*, *AnnemEvlenecek (For Mothers)*, *SolcuOlsun (For leftwingers)* are some of the examples of these types of websites.

3.3. The Emergence of Islamic Marriage Websites in Turkey

In the decade following 1990s, public visibility of Islam started to escalate in Turkey together with the religious television channels and religious television programs that are becoming widely distributed together with the liberalization policies putting an end to state monopoly in television broadcasting. And as a final remark on the transformation that took place in Turkey, it is worthwhile to mention the "Islamic Bourgeoisie" who have gained significant political and economic power especially in the decades following the military intervention (Demir et al. 2004; Göle 2000 cited in Sandıkcı, Ger, 2007: 192). Yankaya defines these Islamic actors who gained considerable political and economic power as follows;

"Starting in the 1990s in Turkey, the media and markets alike have borne witness to the presence of a new social group that is flourishing and well-integrated into the economic and political power structures: An Islamic bourgeoisie. This group is classified as bourgeoisie because it is made up of liberal professionals, managers and intellectuals living a stable urban life and whose revenue comes not from labor work. This bourgeoisie is 'Islamic' because it publicly affirms and manifests its belonging to Islam in its discourses, actions and lifestyle." (Yankaya, 2015:45-46)

In parallel with these developments, several academicians have observed the newly emerging Islamic consumption practices of the urban, relatively well educated, Islamic middle class together with the introduction of significant number of goods and services designed for this segment of the society in the last years. In this context, many scholars studied a wide range of goods and activities (Göle, 2000; Navaro-Yashin 2002; Kilicbay and Mutlu 2002; Gökarıksel and Secor 2010 cited in Özyeğin:12; Genel and Karaosmanoğlu, 2006; Sandıkçı and Ger cited in Sandıkçı and Rice, 2013:131-132) including veiling and Islamic fashion brands and magazines; leisure time activities such as restaurants, entertainment centers, hotels and so forth and Islamist media (newspapers, radios, TV stations, media outlets and so forth) (Sandıkçı & Ger: 2013: 131). Consequently, all these practices provided Islamic middle class new ways of differentiation from the other segments of the society and enabled them to express themselves with these symbolic goods and services.

Besides, especially in the last ten years, marriage discourses and conservative interpretations of Islam did not always operate separately in mainstream media but have leagued together several times as it is in the discourses of politicians of the ruling party. These "neo-

conservative" discourses[158] which stress upon the traditional gender roles and "biopolitics of the population" (Deveaux, 1994 :224) have become widespread through television, radio channels and newspapers belonging to media outlets regulated by the political field (Korkman, 2016:1). Another issue that created controversy around marriage concept in the last ten years was "marriage guide books". These guide books were written with a conservative and patriarchal interpretation of Islam and they were delivered by several JDP municipalities to promote marriage and to guide newly married couples.[159] These guidebooks and the discussions around these new services of JDP municipalities also received great media attention.

In this context, Tütüncü, regards the emergence of "Islamic" marriage websites as a product of the second period of Islamism when the public visibility of Islam has started to escalate. (Tütüncü, 2007: 304) in Turkey. When the developments of online relationship formation field and the emergence of Islamic marriage websites are assessed, one can claim that several indicators mentioned in this section including the emergence of Islamic consumption market for urban, Islamic middle class along with the segmentation strategies implemented by the play makers of online relationship formation field have given way to the arrival of Islamic marriage websites in Turkey.

3.4. Dating Applications and International Dating / Marriage Websites in Turkey

In the last years, a new dating format has become available for people who want to find partners[160]. Online dating applications have gained a significant market share and a significant number of subscribers all around the world.[161] The analysis of these dating applications gaining wide currency is yet another issue that needs further investigation even though they are not the main competitors of marriage websites in Turkey. In the personal interview with Haluk Akın

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[158] In her article, "Politics of Intimacy in Turkey: Just a Distraction from 'Real' Politics?", Korkman gives place to some of the statements of Turkish politicians on marriage and gender roles which she names as "neo-conservative" statements and accordingly the statements she referred in her article include the political discourses that have taken place in the last ten years such as; "Do not delay marriage, do not be too picky in choosing a spouse!". "Have at least three children!"; "Abortion is murder!". For more information, see: Zeynep K. Korkman, "Politics of Intimacy in Turkey: A Distraction from 'Real' Politics?", **Journal of Middle East Women's Studies**, Vol: 12(1), 2016, pp.1

[159] http://www.cnnturk.com/turkiye/belediyenin-dagittigi-evlilik-kitabina-isyan-etti-kadini-kole-gibi-gosteriyor

[160] https://www.bloomberg.com/news/videos/2016-08-29/the-new-app-shaking-up-the-online-dating-industry; http://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2014/02/24/business/tech/mobile-apps-shake-up-world-of-dating/#.WPuC5FOGOu4; http://www.mercurynews.com/2014/05/20/love-me-tinder-mobile-apps-change-online-dating/

[161] http://www.datingsitesreviews.com/staticpages/index.php?page=Tinder-Statistics-Facts-History

(founder of *Pembe Panjur* website), Akın referred to these new dating applications as new players of online relationship formation field that contribute to the enlargement of the field.

"New dating applications like Tinder put dating websites into a difficult position. I do not think it affects us much as we continue to increase the number of users regularly. These new applications do not change the demand for marriage websites. On the opposite side, I believe that these websites are serving marriage websites in a way as they enlarge the market. Many women who have not used marriage websites before meet with this concept by using these applications in the first place. However, these applications do not provide the necessary information women look for in male candidates like education level, income or height. It is not possible for women to understand these qualities just by looking at the photographs on men on Tinder. Thus, as we provide the qualities women look for in males and we provide marriage oriented services, I believe some women who experience these applications might visit our website in the future" (Haluk Akın, personal interview, 20 May 2016).

On the other side, some of the male interviewees had also mentioned checking or using these applications together with marriage websites mentioned in this dissertation study. From all reasons above, I would like to refer to these applications briefly in this section.

While *match.com*'s new brand *Tinder* is one of the most popular dating applications in the world; there are many other mobile applications that give service with similar principles. Some of the applications that are available in Turkey other than *Tinder* are *Happn, Couplinked, Badoo, Social Match, LinkedUp, Skoot, Bumble* and *Down*.[162] The principal difference between online dating websites and dating applications is the location based services these applications provide. As it was discussed in detail in the first chapter; contrary to the arguments of early theories of digital media who argue that cyberspace "operates free from the constraints imposed by offline social order" (Nakamura, 1995: 1; Cavanagh, 2007:120); these applications are "deeply intertwined with offline places and relationships" and promote "close-range" relationships (Blacwell, Birnholtz, Abbott, 2015). Besides most of them require their members to link their accounts to their *Facebook* accounts and thus provide a significant amount of information about the users, in terms of their self representations on *Facebook* which might be analyzed as a procedure that compels users to present themselves coherently in different online realms. Other than that, some of these applications engage in giving services that create further segmentation in online relationship formation field as it is in the case of Turkish dating application *Couplinked* which provides educational homogamy in dating and enables

[162] http://www.webtekno.com/mobil/tinder-benzeri-4-farkli-ucretsiz-arkadaslik-uygulamasi-h7277.html; http://www.elele.com.tr/iliski-seks/ask/kavustur-bizi-vinton-cerf?sayfa=2

individuals with high levels of education match with each other. According to information released by this dating application producers, seventy thousand people have subscribed to this application by 2016 (Kara, 2016).

However, as dating applications other than *Couplinked* have not shared the information regarding their Turkish users, it is hard to estimate the size of the population who use these applications as well as the characteristics of their users. On the other hand, when the findings of the recent studies that refer to the international target population of dating applications and the account of Haluk Akın (founder of *Pembe Panjur* website) on these applications are taken into account, one can assume that these dating applications target a relatively younger population compared to marriage websites and *Tinder* is the most popular application in Turkey[163]. Besides, as most of these applications (with the exception of *Couplinked* and *Badoo*) do not have Turkish interfaces, it is supposed that the size of the Turkish population using these applications is a lot fewer than marriage websites due to the possible language barrier[164] On the other hand, there is also no available information which demonstrates the number and characteristics of Turkish people using international dating and marriage websites. As it is the case in dating applications, many of the leading international dating websites like *eHarmony* or Islamic marriage websites like *Muslima* do not have Turkish interfaces. Thus, one can also

[163] As the percentage of smart phone sales in Turkey (Mobile Phones in Turkey, 2016), the percentage of users who can access to these kinds of applications also increase. Unfortunately, as it is in the case of online dating websites, there is no study that have investigated the penetration of online dating applications in Turkey. According to the recent studies that refer to the international target population of dating applications "73% of college students ranked *Tinder* as their favorite dating app, followed by *Bumble* at 13% and *OkCupid* at 10%"; "50% of Tinder users are in the college age group" in global terms. (Tinder Information, Statistics, Facts and History, 2017). In our face to face personal communication, Haluk Akın also claimed that the user profile of dating applications is younger than marriage websites' users. Thus, in the absence of a research that gives information about dating application users in Turkey, we can take the general statistics of Tinder as an indicator and assume that these applications are used by a relatively younger population compared to marriage websites.

[164] According to research results of European Union's "Europeans and Their Languages" report only 33 % of Turkish people can speak a language other than their native one. According to this report, these people are "young", "well-educated" people who are in a managerial position or students. Having said that, the results of the same report indicate that only 17 % of people in Turkey can speak English and 6 % of them can speak German. Besides, the results of another research show that the level of English in Turkey is very low in general. Turkey's six big cities rank in the first orders but when we observe the level of English of the residents of these cities; the level of English of Istanbul, Ankara and İzmir residents are ranked as "low" and Adana-Mersin, Bursa and Antalya are classified as "very low" according to the results of Education First's research (EF English Profiency Index-Turkey, n.a.). In terms of Arabic, there is no recent study available, however *ethnologue.com*'s results show that less than % 0,5 (Türkiye'nin Dilleri, 2008) of people living in Turkey speak Arabic and these people reside in the southeast region of Turkey. However, a further research is needed to understand the current number of Arabic speakers in Turkey. Besides, in *Imam-Hatip* schools, students take Arabic courses to read and understand Quran (Özgür, 2012:70) but the number of students who can speak daily Arabic is not available. For more information, see:

assume that the percentage of Turkish people who use international dating and marriage websites is not as high as Turkish dating and marriage websites users.

4. The Company Structures and Founding Members of Turkish Marriage Websites

Bourdieu states that "the position of a given agent within the social space can thus be defined by the positions s/he occupies in the different fields, that is, in the distribution of the powers that are active within each of them" (Bourdieu, 1985: 724).

With this regard, the analysis of different positions of actors who act like play makers in online partner formation field in Turkey; in other words, the analysis of owners or founding members of these marriage websites in terms of different capitals they hold will be helpful to conceive these websites better.

The co-owner of *Pembe Panjur* website, Haluk Akın[165] is a well educated entrepreneur who is a graduate of one of the most prestigious public universities of Turkey, holding a master and a phd degree from industrial engineering department of a well established university in USA. In 2010, he founded this marriage website with a female entrepreneur Seda Berber[166] who is also a graduate of a long-established university in Turkey and who continued her education in advertising field, in USA just like Mr. Akın.

eCift is an investment of a company called 'Elit Teknoloji Hizmetleri" founded in 2009 by three entrepreneurs of Turkish origin living in Germany.[167] , It was established by serial entrepreneurs Tamer and Akgün Kulmaç and Janset Çelik. In 2010 the business received equity financing from business angels; participants included b-to-v Partners, Parship.de co-founder Konstantin Urban and Hotel.de founder Stefan Morschheuser. The board of management of this company includes well-recognized businessman who are also graduated in prestigious schools in Europe, USA and Turkey. Both of these websites gained social recognition among Turkish e-commerce entrepreneurs with their success as they took investment from major local and international investors. The office of *eCift* is located in a central and prestigious business

[165] Haluk Akın completed his undergraduate studies in Yıldız Teknik University. Furthermore, he continued his graduate education in Boğaziçi University and University of Central Florida. For more information, see: https://www.linkedin.com/in/halukakin/
[166] https://www.etohum.com/tr/person/3953/seda-berber
[167] Köseoğlu, N. eCift, Customer Relations Director. Personal Interview, June, 29, 2015

district of Istanbul and 20 employees work in their office which is designed in a modern minimalist style. This site has a professional company structure with a strict company culture operating with well-defined rules; they hold regular board meetings to assess their operations and take business decisions.

Different from *eCift*, *Pembe Panjur* is a rather small-sized company, who does not have a strict corporate culture and employs 6 people. This company does not have a board and the co-owners take decision together. Their office is located in a popular district of Istanbul and they have a modest, small office. However, it is a well recognized company in the online relationship formation field and it received financial aid from investors such as Etohum A.Ş.[168]

"The history of Pembe Panjur dates back to date 2003. At that time, I was living in Florida as a master student and I came across to popular eHarmony website. I thought of establishing a similar website in Turkey working with similar principles; a site that makes character analysis and recommends their members candidates that correspond to the result of their analysis. In 2009, I came back to Turkey and started working on this website with my friend, Seda Berber and with her, we founded the website in 2010." (Akın, H., co-owner of *Pembe Panjur*, June, 06, 2015)

Thus, in terms of Bourdieu's understanding of capital; the owners and the management team of these sites not only possess a certain economic capital but also hold certain social capital with the connections they hold and cultural capital which is a result of their education and other factors stemming from their habitus. These qualities gave them the possibility to receive funding from the liberal economic organizations and pave the way for them to become Turkey's biggest marriage websites and name the service they provide as "scientific" matchmaking services.

As distinct from *eCift* and *Pembe Panjur*, *Nasipse* is a marriage website founded by two entrepreneurs from Bursa and they manage their operations from this city located in northwestern Anatolia. The co-founder of *Nasipse* does not have any available information about his personal background on business networking sites and he did not mention his level of education in our personal interview. Both co-owners were active users of dating websites before they established this company. Gülfırat was a member of one of the biggest American dating websites and he decided to establish his own website not only as he anticipated that online

[168] http://webrazzi.com/2014/06/12/pembepanjur-coma-da-erisim-engeli-geldi/

marriage formation will be a profitable sector in Turkey but also he mentioned in his account that he continues his search for a spouse candidate on his own website. In our interview, he also explained that his business partner got married with an Azerbaijani woman that he met on *Nasipse* marriage website. Gülfırat was previously engaged in textile business and he established his office in an industrial center where many textile companies take place. Currently, they have two other employees other than the co-owners. They did not get any local or international investment and they are not connected with the other members of online marriage sector.[169]

Gönülden Sevenler Islamic marriage website is an enterprise founded by Mint Bilişim Co. Ltd.[170] Their company website only includes the links of their websites. They do not have information on their website about the founders of this company or managers of *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website. Besides, neither on their website nor on *Gönülden Sevenler,* they do not share any contact information.[171] For these reasons, the content analysis of their websites will be used to understand their social positioning.

In sum, the information revealed in this section gives indication of the current status of online partnership field in Turkey. In the first place, despite the prevalence of digital gap in the country, in the last years, various other groups have started to gain access to internet even though male users constitute the highest percentage in the marriage websites. However, despite this relative digital inclusion in bigger terms, online partnership formation field in Turkey has experienced a significant segmentation as play makers in this field provide differentiating mating services that encourage endogamy and homogamy.

While these marriage websites are used by mostly male, urban, relatively well-educated individuals in Turkey whose average age is over thirty, it is assumed that emergent dating applications appeal to a relatively limited target audience consisting of younger, urban and well-educated individuals (who has knowledge of foreign languages as most of these applications do not have Turkish interface) in Turkey. On the other side, different from dating applications and dating websites, online marriage websites split in half definitively as Islamic and liberal

[169] Fatih Gülfırat, personal communication, June 6, 2014

[170] http://www.kariyer.net/mint-bilgi-teknolojieri-tic-a-s-is-ilanlari-c21944-p43347/;

[171] Even though I succeeded in obtaining their contact number by favor of a marriage website owner, they refused to make an interview with me. Consequentially, we can state that this enterprise does not give an impression of a transparent and accountable company as they prefer to keep their company hidden and they do not disclose information that can be necessary for users who want to make a claim in a probable conflicting situation

marriage websites. In terms of the main play makers in this field, one can assume that their social and cultural capital have influence on the mate selection services they provide.

5. Institutional Identities of Marriage Websites

Erving Goffman asserts that "every individual or organization has to create, maintain, and often enhance their social identities" with the intent of ensuring "the perceptions they want to display to their publics" (Goffman, 1959). Just like individuals, companies and organizations invest in impression management and present themselves to their customers, stakeholders and so forth in order to gain "material or symbolic profit" (Bourdieu, 1984:202).

In the first place, in corporate communications literature the social identity of a company is called as "corporate identity" and basically this concept "refers to the way the organisation presents itself to an audience" (Hooghiemstra, 2000:57). While some scholars define it as "strategically planned and operationally applied internal and external self-presentation" (Birkigt, Stadler, 1986 cited in Van Riel 1995:30); others stress upon the determining role of "organizational members" and they describe corporate identity as "what organizational members believe to be the organization's central, enduring, and distinctive character" (Albert, Whetten, 1985 cited in Hooghiemstra, 2000: 57). However, not all the companies invest in their corporate identity and many companies are known by their brands (Varadaranjan et al., 2006 cited in Maurya, Mishra, 2012: 124).

A brand is defined as a "unique design, sign, symbol, words, or a combination of these, employed in creating an image that identifies a product and differentiates it from its competitors".[172] Kapferer (1992) states that brand identity has multiple facets and he introduces six integrated facets of brand identity including, "culture, personality, self-projection, physique, reflection, and relationship". In this sense, "physical facet" stands for "product facet" features, symbols & attributes"; "personality facet" represents "character & attitude"; "relationship facet" speaks for "beliefs & association"; culture facet" represents
"a set of values"; "reflection facet" represents customer's view of the brand and "self-image" stands for "internal mirror of customer as user of brand" (Maurya, Mishra, 2012: 125).

[172] http://www.businessdictionary.com/definition/brand.html

In this regard, with the aim of understanding the brand identities; in other saying how companies present their brands through the architecture of these marriage websites, various design elements these online social spaces include and different discourses about online marriage practices that take place in these websites will be observed as "self-presentation" or "impression management" practices of these companies who provide online marriage partner search / selection services in Turkey. On that note, the content analysis of these websites will be realized by discussing the positioning, brand names, titles of Turkish marriage websites to understand what these names, titles and their symbolic differences mean in the first place.

Table 3.1: Positioning of Marriage Websites in Turkey

Brand Name	**Gönülden Sevenler***	**Nasipse****	**Pembe Panjur*****	**eCift********
Company Name	Mint Information Technologies Trade Incorporated Company	Evimdeko Marketing Sales Research Supply Services Limited Company	Panjur Informatics and Consultancy Services Hizmetleri Trade Incorporated Company	Elit Technology Services Internet Incorporated Company
Symbolic Differences	Spiritual		Liberal / Serious	
Title / Service	Islamic Marriage Website		Dating for Marriage Website	
Client definition	None of the sites except *Gönülden Sevenler* define their target audience. *Gönülden Sevenler* website states that it gives service to conservative people.			

* "Those who love by heart", ** "God willing", *** "Pink Shutter", **** "eCouple"

5.1. Name Analysis of Marriage Websites in Turkey

Hilgers and Mangez argue that "in a field, symbolic ordering consists in a declarative activity in which agents participate through statements, practices, labelling, naming, interrelating (of actors, actions, qualities, 'seminal works', means, objects, values, etc.)" (Hilgers, Mangez, 2015:20) and they state that "naming and classifying operations" play an important role "to impose the legitimate definition of the symbolic order" (2015:20).

When we approach Turkish marriage websites, the results of personal communications with the owners / managers of these sites and the analysis of the information that take place in their company descriptions in these websites reveal the fact that the names of these companies and their brands are different. While we can refer their company names as an element of their

"corporate identity", the names of their websites are considered as their brand names and these brand names are integral part of their "brand identity". In this context, I would like to explain brand name concept briefly.

"Gardner and Levy's (1955) describes brand as "A brand name is more than the label employed to differentiate among the manufacturers of a product; It is a complex symbol that represents a variety of ideas and attributes. It tells the consumers many thing, not only by the way it sounds (and the literal meaning if it has one) but, more important, via the body of associations it has built up and acquired as a public object over a period of time." (Maurya & Mishra, 2012:125)

When we approach naming and classifying operations of brands, we see the importance of names as symbols one more time; as it is stated in Gardner and Levy's account, brand names are important carriers of meanings and related with body of associations created around these names. In this context, where brands convey symbols, some authors argue that "what are traded in the marketplace today are not only the products themselves but also their meanings and lifestyle connotations" (Sandıkcı, Ger, 2007:191). Hence, it is worthwhile to observe the names of these marriage websites in Turkey and mention their connotations in order to understand their positioning in online relationship formation field.

Primarily, I would like to analyze marriage websites that bring their spiritual capital to forefront. In Turkish "gönül" have more than one meaning; while it signifies "heart" in current use, it also means "soul" and "desire". In this context, "gönülden sevmek" can be read as "to love with heart and/or soul" or "to love sincerely". It does not address to a type of love that connotes sexual desires. However, the name does not also carry an implicit religious meaning. On the other side, "nasipse" word carries religious connotations and it means "god-willing" or "if god allows this to be so". The meaning of this word suggests a long debated topic among various Islamic schools of thought on "free will and faith". However, in Turkish lay terminology, it has two different meanings. The first one is in line with the religious connotation means "the life conditions God bestows upon human beings" and the latter means "spouse candidate.[173] In his account, the co-owner of this website also mentioned that he took the decision to name their marriage website as "nasipse" as the word carries these two meanings related with online partnership formation field and god's willing.

[173] http://www.sozce.com/nedir/234690-nasip

In the second place, I would like to explain the meanings of liberal marriage sites' names included in this dissertation. In his account, the co-owner of Pembe Panjur website, Haluk Akın explained the reasons why they preferred to name their website as Pembe Panjur meaning "Pink Shutter" in Turkish. Akın stated that the name was chosen as it was a popular line from 60s Turkish melodrama films associated with marriage concept and he further stated that even though this line is quite old; it is still in circulation as some furniture and construction companies choose to give place to this phrase in their advertisements and it became a part of the collective Turkish memory. Even though Akın's analysis gives some cues about the meaning about this popular line, a further analysis is needed. In this regard,

I would like to explain the genre of Turkish melodrama briefly to describe the context this line takes place and share the connotation of the line in this context in the first place. Turkish melodrama was a genre in Turkish cinema in 60s targeting middle and lower class women inspired by popular American, Indian, Egyptian, Iranian cinema (Noyan, 2009: 233). Noyan states that the narrative structure of these films was gathered from "popular Turkish novels of M. Berkant and K. Nadir, historical love stories and American films with overloaded melodramatic, ornamented, attractive structure" and they convey simple and non-realistic and facile love stories (Noyan, 2009: 234). Most importantly, the presentation of women in these films are considerably stereotypical; they are presented "along the lines of stereotypes such as rich/bad/seductress, good/poor/innocent child-like woman throughout the 1960s" and "family, marriage, housework and loyalty have been presented as primary duties of women" (Akser, 2013:2). In these melodramas, "pink shutter" lines refer to the dreams of "good" young girls who would like to get married with a decent and working men with whom they have a romantic love relationship within the limits of conservative social norms. Finally, *eCift* means "eCouple" and the name is redolent of one of the biggest dating websites in the world, eHarmony[174]. This name selection also points at the relationship between online relationship formation field in Turkey and elsewhere.

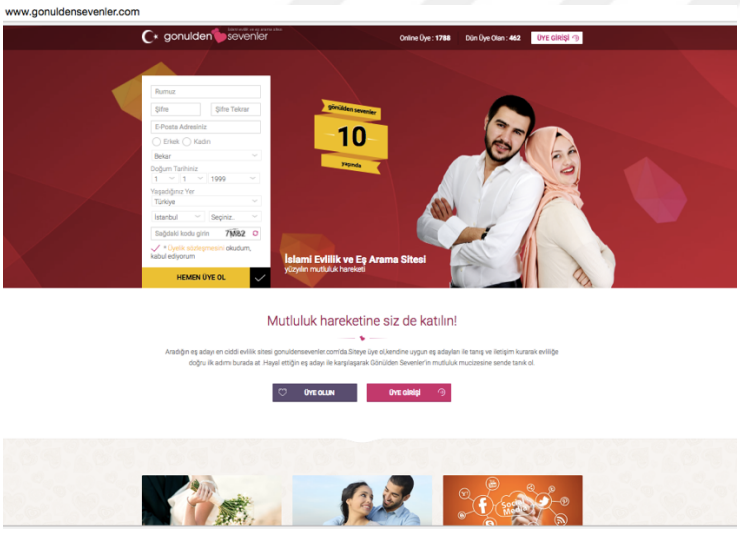
[174] www.eharmony.com

5.2. Design of Marriage Websites in Turkey

In her analysis of "serious" heterosexual online dating services like *eHarmony* or *match.com*, DeMasi argues that these kinds of services have the aim of presenting themselves as safe places one can "seek and find intimate relationships that embody the ideals of love and romance" (DeMasi, 2011:210).

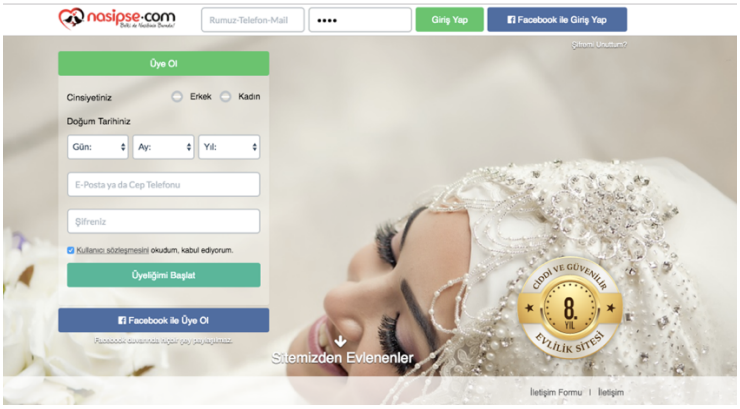
All of the marriage websites in Turkey give place to a couple in their cover page. The most prominent difference between the design language of Islamic marriage websites and liberal marriage websites is the representation of female figure in this couple. The headscarf of the female figure is the main visual element used for symbolic differentiation in Islamic marriage websites. The visual presented on the main page of *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website reveals a women dressed in light pink with a light pink headscarf and a man wearing a white shirt.

Figure 3.1: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website - Cover Page



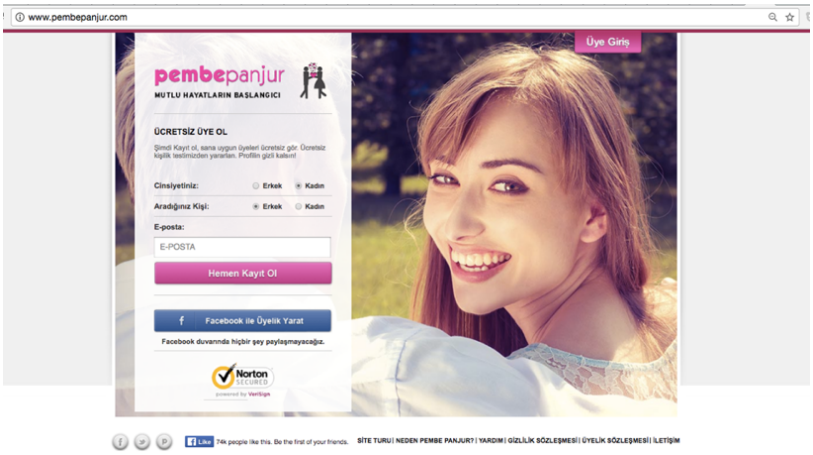
All the websites other than *Nasipse* give place to a single representative image even though in the previous years *eCift* was also using several images to present different customer profiles. *Nasipse* uses young, middle-aged couples and icons representing marriage ceremony like bouquet, rings and two different brides; one with a bridal dress with a veil and the other one is a bride without a cover.

Figure 3.2: Nasipse Marriage Website - Cover Page



Besides, the number of female figures are more than male figures in *Nasipse*. In this context, as the percentage of male users are more than the percentage of women in these sites, one can assume that the managers or owners choose to present more women images in order to appeal to their male clients who are the main source of revenue in these websites. In a similar vein, on the cover page of *Pembe Panjur* website, we see the representation of a couple, a man hugging a woman. In this image, the female figure turns her face towards the viewer with a big smile on her face where as the male figure's face is not visible.

Figure 3.3: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website - Cover Page



The images representing men and women in these liberal websites are mostly stock images that are used in advertising sector. In *eCift* marriage website, there were two female images and a male image previously. In terms of male user representation, the site owners preferred to use a good-looking blonde man with blue eyes with a big smile on his face. In terms of female representation, they preferred to use dark haired women wearing a shirt and a jacket, which give them a serious look. In 2017, they changed their cover page and they use a dark

haired woman and a man in casual outfits hugging each other with a big smile and looking at the camera. All these good-looking couples, dressed in pale covers with big smiles on their faces that are published on the cover pages of these websites are presented in order to create the perception among users that online partner search practice in their website is a safe activity. Besides, the presentation of these good-looking couples are useful as they "induce confidence in the belief that placing or responding to an advertisement online is not a stigmatized activity undertaken by sexual deviants and losers" (DeMasi, 2011:210).

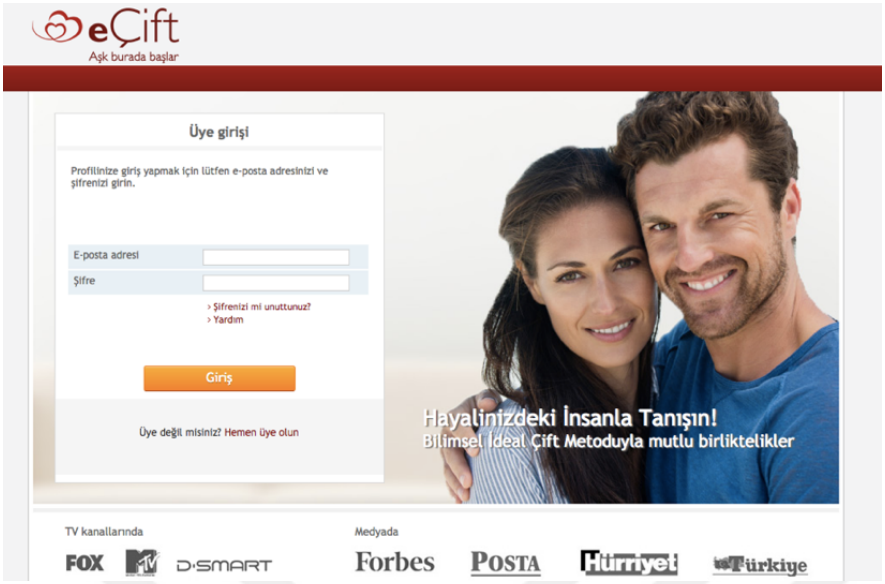
In the light of the information shared above regarding the gender display in Turkish marriage websites[175], one can assume that in similar to Julliard's account of French dating site called Quintonic[176], the representation of male and female figures in the main pages of these websites reproduce the "binary conception of gender" in a way that "reinforces heteronormativity without questioning it (Julliard, 2013: 66).

In this research, the keywords used in online marriage websites in Turkey were also studied and the results reveal that 'marriage' is the most frequently used word in the sites analyzed. Liberal marriage websites *Pembe Panjur* and *eCift* includes keywords such as 'friendship' and 'long term relationship' where as 'Islamic' marriage websites do not include these keywords. *Gönülden Sevenler* website uses 'Islamic friendship' but do not give place to 'long term relationship' keyword and *Nasipse* website does not have any of these keywords. These 'Islamic' marriage websites also included 'Islamic', 'Serious' and 'Marriage Contract' as keywords.

[175] The "gender display" categories of Goffman (1987) will be shared in detail in the third chapter of this study. However, it is worthwhile to note that the representation of female figures on the main pages of these websites are taken into account, these images recall "licensed withdrawal", "tilted head", "facial expressions" gender display categories of Goffman. In the second place, the visual codes regarding marriage also refer to heteronormative gender roles. Besides one can also assume that the soft colors of the attires of female figures (e.g. Gönülden Sevenler) are used in a fashion to connote "femininity". For more information, see: Erving Goffman,**Gender Advertisements**, Newyork: Harper Torchbooks, 1987.

[176] https://www.quintonic.fr/

Figure 3.4: eCift Marriage Website - Cover Page



The mottoes used in liberal marriage websites reveal the use of a romantic discourse. 'Love starts here' is used as the motto of *eCift* marriage website and 'Beginning of happy lives' is the motto of *Pembe Panjur* marriage website. In Islamic marriage websites, the word 'love' does not take place. However, it is observed that all websites give place to "heart" icon in their cover pages.[177] In terms of color preference, liberal marriage websites and Nasipse use white and pale colors associated with 'objectivity' and 'seriousness', together with pink and red, the colors of romantic heart icon. Different from other site, the dominant color on the cover page of *Gönülden Sevenler* is red. Additionaly, it is observed that the site added the elements of Turkish Flag, a crescent and a star after the attempted military intervention in Turkey in 2016.

[177] The first implementation of heart icon dates back to 13th century and it was used as a part of Christian iconography for a long period. Martin Kemp, in his book called 'Christ to Coke: How Image Becomes Icon' states that this icon is heavily associated with Saint Valentine day, which is celebrated under the name of 'Lovers Day' in Turkey. Kemp put forwards the idea that even though the heart icon is today associated with a special day named after a religious figure 'Saint Valentine', it had lost all its ties with 'Sacred heart' used in Christian iconography in time and he defines this heart icon commonly used for expressing 'Romantic Love' and 'Love' as a 'Secular Heart'. For more information, see: Kemp, Martin, **Christ to Cake: How Image Becomes Icon**, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. Even though Islamic marriage websites do not reveal textual codes associated with 'Romantic Love', they give place to heart icon associated with 'Romantic Love' in their interface design.

Table 3.2: Content Analysis of Marriage Websites in Turkey

Symbolic Differences	**Spiritual**		**Liberal / Serious**	
Field	**Islamic Marriage / Marriage Website**		**Dating for Marriage Website**	
	Gönülden Sevenler	**Nasipse**	**eCift**	**Pembe Panjur**
Discourse	Religious, Romantic (Happiness, Nest, Family, Right Person, Morals, Islamic Values, Success, Miracle)	Romantic (Serious, Trustworthy, Destiny)	Romantic, Scientific (Person Of Your Dreams, Serious, Ideal Couple)	Romantic, Scientific (Beginning of Happy Lives, Serious)
Colors	Claret red, red, yellow, pink, purple, white	White, red, green, black	Red, white, beige	Pink, white, grey
Motto	"Happiness Movement of the Century" *(Yüzyılın Mutluluk Hareketi)*	"Maybe Your Destiny Is Here" *(Belki De Nasibiniz Burada)*	"Love Starts Here" *(Aşk Burada Başlar)*	"The Beginning of Happy Lives" *(Mutlu Hayatların Başlangıcı)*
Visuals	Real Photo Shoot (1) A man and a woman standing back to back, with arms crossed, smiling Woman with brown eyes and light make up, wearing a light pink top, her head is covered with a light pink scarf, Full beard man with brown eyes, wearing a white shirt a big black, golden watch A yellow ribbon image on which "Gönülden Sevenler is 10 years old" is written Turkish Flag Icon (Crescent & Star)	Stock Photos (1) Blonde woman, blue eyes with a bridal giving her hands to a man dressed in groom's suit in a garden; (2) Middle aged, blonde woman with facial wrinkles, dressed in casual clothes putting her arm on a middle aged, grey haired man with a blue shirt (3) Brown eyed woman with a bridal, religious headscarf with pearls attached, smiling A golden stamp image on which "8 years of experience" is written	Stock Photos (1) A dark haired, light brown eyed woman with casual outfits hugging a man wearing a blue shirt.	Stock Photos (1) Hugging Couple, Woman with light brown long hair looking at the viewer with a smile, man not visible (2) A counter showing the number of users with 2016 written with colored numbers.
Functions	Message, Favorites, Visitors Notice, Smiling, Gifting, Personal Advertising	Message, Favorites, Profile Visitors, Greeting, SMS Service, Click & Talk	Message, Scientific Matching, Warm up Tour, Smiling, Favorites, Mobile Application	Message, Scientific Matching, Character Analysis, Twinkling, Favorites, Chat, Mobile Application

Within the limitations of this section, the functions Turkish marriage websites offer to their clients like filtering options and other content materials available on these marriage websites are not analyzed in this section as they will be investigated together with the user

practices in the following chapter. (See Appendix, Table C.5 for the detailed content analysis table)

5.3. Architectures of Online Marriage Websites in Turkey

Recent studies on Internet use show that the architecture of Internet sites influences and largely frames user behavior (Bergström 2011; Chaulet 2009; Ellison et al. 2006). More specifically, Dominique Cardon claims that, far from being a neutral mediating tool, the interface design of online platforms has a "performative effect" on usage (Cardon 2008: 104 in Bergstörm, 2011:321). Papacharissi defines the architecture of social networking sites as "composite result of structure, design and organization" that suggest and enable "particular modes of interaction" and show variations "depending of course on the culture and orientation of the online social network" (Papacharissi, 2009 :200-2005).

Previous studies on the architecture of online spaces have observed "how structural features of online spaces influence self-presentation and expression" (e.g. Dominick, 1999; Papacharissi, 2002, 2007; Stutzman, 2006; Walker, 2000 cited in Papacharissi, 2009:200-202) and how they "foster connection-sharing, social capital generation and effective communication" and "promote the development of a specific culture" (e.g. boyd and Ellison, 2007; Donath, 2007; Ellison et al., 2007 cited in Papacharissi, 2009:200 -2002). In Papacharissi's analysis where she investigated Facebook, LinkedIn and ASmallWorld social networking sites, Papacharissi implemented the the qualitative discourse analytic procedures described by Fairclough (1995, 2000) and van Dijk (1997) and examined "texts as sites of sociocultural practices" (Papacharissi, 2009:206).

As a result of her research, Papacharissi suggests four characteristics that define the architecture of social networking sites. First of all, she analyzes the sites that are included in her research in terms of private / public distinction and she categorizes these sites depending on their gradual level of openness and closeness to public; consisting of their different criteria of membership, their access to member profiles and the visibility of their members in search engines (Papacharissi, 2009:206 - 209). In the second place, with reference to Goffman (1963),

she analyzes social networking sites in terms of their tightness/ looseness[178] and she examines how behavioral norms develop organically in response to these characteristics. As an example of "tight" sites, she refers to *ASmallWorld* as this site "employs a site structure that restricts interaction among its members", "improper conduct is specified and members are penalized" and users have different privileges depending on the length of their presence. Besides, she adds that the two-dimensional design" of the site does not allow "interactivity or loose interaction for the users". In response, she refers to Facebook as an illustration of "loose" social networking site as the site does not give privileges to common users, flâneuring between pages and profiles is more easy and as the site has less strict rules compared to *ASmallWorld* (Papacharissi, 2009:213- 215).

Thirdly, she examines how social network profiles enable their users to "situate themselves within a particular taste culture, adopt a specific taste ethos and separate themselves from those with differences in matters of taste". She makes a significant contribution in online architecture literature with her observation about the relationship between questions referring to cultural identity/taste culture and the positioning of social networking sites (Papacharissi, 2009:212- 213).

"…a medium heralded as the great social equalizer gains meaning and relevance as it enables its users to construct not just mere self-performances, but performances structured around offline spheres of taste and culture." (Papacharissi, 2009:213)

Finally, she mentions the affordances of social networking sites in terms of self-presentation in privately public and publicly private spaces and she states that due to "the level of control over verbal and non-verbal cues in a variety of online contexts, individuals may put together controlled performances that 'give off' exactly the 'face' that they intend" (Papacharissi, 2009:209- 212).

[178] "Goffman (1963) chose to use the terms 'tight' and 'loose', rather than formal and informal, and used the example of public streets in different countries to explain how situational properties influence behavior on the same social setting across different communities. Making the Tight and loose networks have their advantages and drawbacks. On the one hand, tightly defined social occasions, Goffman argued, provide 'extreme situational orientation', thus allowing the individual to adapt behaviorally, leaving the mind 'wonderfully free to wander' (1963: 208). Loose situations, on the other hand, may require individuals to be constantly alert for cues that will help them to determine and modify their behavior. For example, Goffman (1963) explains, the looseness of a cocktail party may require that guests be kept on their toes mentally throughout." Cited in Zizi Papacharissi, "The Virtual Geographies of Social Networks: A Comparative Analysis of Facebook, Linkedin and Asmallworld", **New Media & Society**, Vol: 11(1-2), 2009, pp. 213-214.

Private / Public

In the beginning, when we analyze the architecture of Turkish marriage websites with the lenses Papacharissi proposes, we see that all Turkish marriage websites analyzed in this section (*Gönülden Sevenler*, *Nasipse*, *eCift* and *Pembe Panjur*) require membership and the content of these websites can not be accessed without subscription. As the managers and owners of these websites reveal in their accounts, the percentage of women is much lower than the percentage of men in Turkish marriage websites and these websites do not ask for a subscription fee from the female users to make use of the features these sites propose. In constrast with female users, male users can only use the features of these sites that are necessary to be able to meet with candidates by paying monthly, trimester, semiannual or annual fees. Otherwise male users can only become a member without a paid-subscription but they can not see the profiles of female users, the messages female users send them and they can not make a search to find candidates. Besides, the content of these websites and the profiles of their users are not visible in google search engines. There are two reasons behind this decision, first of all this implementation protects the privacy of their users and secondly the profiles of the members are the principal assets of these websites and they do not want to share it openly. Additionally, not all the marriage websites allow their users to see the profile pictures and nicknames of their users even if they pay their subscription fee. In *eCift* marriage website, the users need to ask the consent of the person they are interested in and unless the latter does not want to share these information, the other does not have the chance to see the profile picture and the nickname of the person s/he is interested in. Finally, in all these marriage websites, a binary gender division exists and these sites do not allow non-heterosexual members to become members or at least to openly declare their gender identity. Thus, users can only declare their sexual orientations as female or male. This architectural feature which can also be investigated under the looseness or tightness of websites is very definitive in terms of privacy/public characteristics of these websites. The female users do not have permission to see other female users and can not access to their self-presentation and in a similar vein, male users can not see other male users and their profiles. For all these reasons, I suggest to call Turkish marriage websites as “substantially private” online social networks.

Looseness / Tightness

In her research, Papacharissi refers to certain qualities of social networking sites that allow them to be classified under "loose" or "tight" categories. Papacharissi mainly refers to rules, penalties of these sites and she also appeals to the design of the sites as the design of the site conditions the possible interactions in online contexts. In this section, in addition to the categories Papacharissi referred, I will also analyze "raison d'être" of websites as these texts convey information about the limitations and possibilities sites offer to their users.

Raison d'être:

The home page of the *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic Marriage Website includes three hyperlinks[179]; "Why *Gönülden Sevenler?*", "The Miracle of *Gönülden Sevenler*" and "Follow us on Social Media". In "Why *Gönülden Sevenler?*", the website defines its raison d'être and give place to some of their rules and penalties in general terms. (Their rules and penalties take place in detail in *User Contract* page.)

The spatial language they use in this account manifests how this website is constructed architecturally and shows what type of interactions are allowed or not allowed on this platform.

"We only give approval to new people who would like to subscribe to our website to get married and we ban users who have other intentions. Our doors are open to honest, sincere people who wants to get married. It is forbidden to use our website with other intentions. We respond to the complaints of our users almost immediately and take the necessary action."[180]

To make it clear, *Gönülden Sevenler* as an Islamic marriage website does not approve individuals who use these kinds of websites for a "one-night stand" or short-term relationships in principal. As interviewees declared in their accounts, the site allows users to complain about other members who do not follow the rules and many users appeal to this call and they complain about other members when they notice that they have deceptive self-presentations, they insult other members or they engage in fraud. As a result of these complaints, some users can lose their membership.[181]

[179] A hyperlink is a word, phrase, or image that is used to jump to a new document or a new section within the current document. Hyperlinks are found in nearly all web pages, allowing users to navigate from page to page. For more information, see: http://techterms.com/definition/hyperlink

[180] http://www.gonuldensevenler.com/page/whygs

[181] However, during my nethnographic observations on this website, I registered to this website as a "female" and "male" user and I clearly defined my personal reasons to be there. I experienced my female account getting

Pembe Panjur website also defines its raison d'être as "dating for marriage" and highlights their "scientific" matchmaking system in their presentation. Different from *Gönülden Sevenler,* who stress upon that the exclusion of users who have intentions other than getting married, they do not make emphasize on the "possible" intentions of their users but they underline the precautions they take to avoid married users to avoid extra marital relationships.

"Pembe Panjur is a serious relationship and marriage website that keeps all user profiles confidential and uses scientific character analysis to match their members. As, Pembe Panjur is designed as a site for people who want serious relationships with the motivation to get married, we take several precautions to prohibit married individuals to become members."[182] (Pembe Panjur)

eCift also defines itself spatially and claims providing a "secure" and a "comfortable" setting for dating and marriage partnership search and uses a rather "professional" language highlighting its team and customer satisfaction. Their use of the language, choice of words like "high quality", "customer satisfaction", "customer services" and so on; their emphasis on their services presents "online relationship formation" as a professional business activity.
In spite of this fact, in their tagline, *eCift* uses a motto following the dominant discourse on romantic love. (See table x. for *eCift*'s motto)

"eCift is an innovative dating and relationship site that puts special emphasis on trust and high quality. Our experienced customer services control all profiles in terms of accuracy and suitability and provides a high quality service…and we cancel the memberships of users on members' requests if necessary. Customer satisfaction is our principal goal. As a website experienced in this field, we provide a secure and comfortable setting for our members looking for a serious relationship or a marriage partner." [183] (eCift)

Nasipse website does not have an explicit account manifesting their reason for giving these services. However, they give a special place to explain why they removed "Islamic" emphasis from their tagline.

"When we were developing this site, we decided to define our website as an "Islamic Marriage Website" and after our launch, we continued to use this emphasis on religion in our tagline.

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erased by the website several times due to the complaints of the users who did not believe that I am a real researcher conducting a field research on this website. Per contra, my paid male account was never erased by the site even though my personal profile and the information I share was the same.

[182] http://www.pembepanjur.com/guideline_general.php

[183] http://www.ecift.com/editorial/magazin/ecift-rehberi/ecift-gueven-ve-kalite-garantisi.html

However, we realized that we are not capable of analyzing the members in terms of their religious beliefs and practices and finally we decided that it was beyond our capacity to see whether our members are religious or not. Even though the profile of our users are not different from other Islamic marriages websites in Turkey, in order to prevent any disappointments, we removed "Islamic" emphasis from our tagline. However, we developed our site taking the needs of people who want to find a spouse candidate that are in line with their religious beliefs…We respect all religions, sects, ethnicities, education levels and any human qualities."[184] (Fatih Gülfırat, personal communication, June 6, 2014)

Rules and Penalties:

All of these sites share specific rules involving several features of membership from the number of photographs user can share to use of language and so forth. These rules take place either in user contracts or in user manuals of these sites. As the rules of self-presentation will be analyzed in detail in the next chapter, I would like to refer briefly to the range of rules included in different sites briefly and I want to share some examples.

Accuracy of the information: Both in their rules and recommendations, the sites request their members to share accurate information about themselves. (This emphasis will be analyzed in detail in the chapter about self-presentation together with the reasons behind deception in self-presentation in online relationship formation field.)

Profile Pictures: Other than *Nasipse*, all marriage websites referred in this dissertation share specific rules about the profile pictures. In addition to the technical properties of these photos (size, out of focus, distance shot, etc.), the remaining three sites urge users not to share photographs with official uniforms. *Pembe Panjur* asks their users not to publish "immoral" photographs; while *eCift* explicitly defines the poses not to be published. Interestingly, *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website does not include any recommendations or rules about the public decency or immorality of photographs that can / not be published.

"Nude or half nude poses, pornographic symbols and photographs that include physical or sexual violence are strictly forbidden. Additionally, racist, humiliating photographs and photographs that include insults and that are "immoral" are not allowed. Besides, any photographs that display advertising or logo can not be used."[185] (eCift)

[184] https://www.nasipse.com/sss
[185] http://www.ecift.com/editorial/davranis-kurallari.html

Use of language / the content shared: *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website has a limited range of rules regarding the use of language and the content shared. There are two main rules mentioned in terms of language and textual content. First of all, the site does not allow their members to use a language other than Turkish, secondly users are not allowed to propagate any political views. *Pembe Panjur* only restricts the use of "improper" words but the site does not elaborate on what they mean with "improper" words. As in the case of profile pictures, *eCift* presents a relatively detailed explanation about the use of language and the content shared.

"Discriminatory, racist, sexist messages; publication of contents that include violence, radical political views, swearing and vulgar language are strictly forbidden. In the second place, any kind of sharing or publications that insult, threaten or humiliate other users, communities and religious beliefs are not allowed."[186] (eCift)

Privacy: All the websites ask their members not to share contact information (mobile number, address, email, etc.) and confidential information (credit card number, id number, etc.) in the early phases of the relationship with written or oral communication until they form close relationships with the members.

As mentioned before, the design of the website is also crucial to determine the looseness / tightness of the sites. As the design of the websites require a further investigation, it will be analyzed separately. However, in the light of the information depicted here, I claim that marriage websites in general have a tight architecture as users enter into several obligations with the user contracts they approve, together with the rules and penalties of these sites. Conspicuously, even though the way Islamic marriage website demark their reason for being sharply and define precisely the type of interactions allowed in this website, it is observed that their rules and regulations are looser than liberal websites. Users are not restricted from sharing "improper" content as it is not clearly defined or mentioned in their regulations. While *Nasipse* has the loosest architecture in terms of rules and regulations; the architectural analysis shows that *eCift* is the tightest marriage website in these terms. However, as all these sites work with an additional control mechanism based on the complaints of users, the type of complaints users report is not clear in the rules. As a final note, both *Pembe Panjur* and *Nasipse* warn their users against "Romanian" and "Bulgarian" members on their rules and suggestions. In their accounts,

[186] http://www.ecift.com/editorial/davranis-kurallari.html

the owners of these websites have argued that they had received many complaints about fraud cases by Romanian and Bulgarian users who personate and deceive other users.

6. The Connections of Marriage Websites On Virtual Network

The architecture of the website also determines the limits of the space a user can wander about. In order to understand the connections of marriage websites, search engine optimization (SEO) analysis was implemented.[187] The definition of the term 'hyperlink' is necessary to be able to understand the internal and external links and the connections created via 'hyperlink'. A hyperlink is a word, phrase, or image that is used to jump to a new document or a new section within the current document. Hyperlinks are found in nearly all web pages, allowing users to navigate from page to page.[188] Internal links are hyperlinks that points to another page on the same website[189] and external links are hyperlinks on a web page that points to a page on a different web site.[190] In terms of internal links, *eCift* and *Pembe Panjur* are the sites with the highest number of connections and in terms of external links, again the liberal websites have more connections than the remaining sites. SEO analysis results put down the fact that these external links include links related with membership, terms of site usage and customer services. Social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Google Plus are the other external links marriage websites in Turkey are linked.

On the other hand, all websites except *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website also reveal company information and detailed contact information but *Gönülden Sevenler* does not reveal its company name and prefers to keep the organization managing this website in the background as already mentioned. Thus, when Papacharissi's frameword about tightness / looseness of social networking websites is considered in terms of the limits of the space a user can navigate, *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website is the tightest website among others

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[187] "Since most people use search engines and the corresponding user numbers are increasing and these users concentrate their attention on the first results on the result pages, it has become important for website owners to appear on high ranks in order to be found by their addressees. The process of improving the volume and the quality of visitors on a website coming via search engines is called *Search Engine Optimization* (SEO). Most SEO activities aim for high positions on the result pages because click rates are usually higher on top positions." For more information, see: Sönke Lieberam-Schmidt, **Analyzing and Influencing Search Engine Results Business and Technology Impacts on Web Information Retrieval**, Wiesbaden: Gabler, 2010 pp.163. The SEO analysis of the marriage websites are done by using a free online software program called "seoptimer" (www.seoptimer.com)

[188] http://techterms.com/definition/hyperlink

[189] http://moz.com/learn/seo/internal-link

[190] http://www.yourdictionary.com/external-link#computer

as the site does not allow its users to navigate as the other sites do and this website prefers to keep a distant relationship between its management organization and its users.

7. Self-presentation Infrastructure Provided by Marriage Websites in Turkey

In his analysis of the researches investigating online relationship formation field in terms of structure and agency, Schmitz asserts that "the majority of researchers share a clear tendency towards a generalizing, individualistic perspective" (Schmitz, 2017: 22) and according to Schmitz, these theoreticians of online couple formation regard structure as "the medium faced by the individual external to him or her" (Schmitz, 2017: 21).

"The specific research context of online dating tends to suggest and legitimize an individualistic interpretation of the empirical findings. The idea of a structure external to the choosing actor may be seen as particularly plausible in the light of the modern narrative of romantic selection. With recourse to Giddens (1992), Chambers (2013: 44) argues, for example, that "in late modernity, intimacy is based on pleasure, autonomy and freedom from constraints." In most research on online dating it is emphasized that dating sites are "much less structured by objective barriers to access or institutional circumstances than locations for meeting a partner, such as the education system or neighborhoods" (Schulz 2010: 228, o.t.). Hitsch et al. (2005: 9) state that "compared to traditional marriage markets, online dating is characterized by only small search frictions, and the resulting matches are therefore largely driven by preferences and the equilibrium mechanism that brings partners together" (cp. Fiore and Donath 2005; Lee 2008). Wang and Lu (2007:12) even assume that the "lack of spatial confinement makes the cyberspace a free market" (Schmitz, 2017: 23).

Within this realm of thinking, where "online dating sites are seen as less structured by conditions external to the subject, than in the offline world", Schmitz argues that most of the researches investigating online relationship formation field interpret "questionnaire items as (revealed or stated) preferential realizations" (Schmitz, 2017: 23).

In the second place, if the Bourdieusian perspective on choice is taken into account, one can assume that the choices people make - including the mate selection criteria they include in their services are "products of their habitus" (Danahay, 2005:2). In this context, the questionnaires that take place in Islamic and liberal marriage websites can be referred as the products of the habitus of playmakers of online relationship formation field. In other saying, I claim that these questionnaires are structured and they are the products of the habitus of owners and managers of marriage websites in Turkey.

In the light of the theories mentioned above, in this section, I will investigate the questionnaire items that takes place in Islamic and liberal marriage websites to see how they shape and enable their users to reveal their self-presentations in these websites. However, as the third chapter of this dissertation covers the self-presentation theories and self-presentation of marriage websites users in detail, in this analysis I will only cover this self-presentation infrastructure provided by the websites. Accordingly, the first aim of this section will be to present the questionnaire items of Islamic and Liberal websites in Turkey.[191] In the second place, this analysis will also enable us to compare the content of these questions in order to understand the relevancy of these questions in terms the mate selection criteria of Turkish people in general and to see the strategies of differentiation employed by these websites.[192] Lastly, the content of the self-presentation structure of these Turkish marriage websites will be compared with the leading international Islamic and 'dating for a serious relationship' websites; *Muslima*[193] and *eHarmony*.

7.1. The Comparison of the Mate Selection Criteria of Marriage Websites and Turkish Society

As it was stated in the first chapter where mediated mate selection practices area analyzed, there are two main business models in online dating and marriage websites. The first one is "matchmaking business model" which uses the information that takes place in the self-presentation forms of site's members and this model offers "a matching algorithm calculates a factor based on which a list of potentially suitable partners will be suggested" (Schmitz, 2017:18). The second model does not propose a matching algorithm and it allows its customers to "search for a potential partner on their own initiative" (Schmitz, 2017:18). In this regard, liberal marriage websites referred in this study provide these matching algorithms and name it as "scientific matchmaking" services and Islamic marriage websites adopt the second business

[191] See Table x: *Pembe Panjur* Marriage Website – Questionnaire / Personal and Table x: *Gönülden Sevenler* Marriage Website – Questionnaire / Personal

[192] As *eCift* website does not allow users to see some self-presentation features like nicknames and profile pictures without the permission of the other user, this website's self-presentation infrastructure will not be analyzed; the self presentation of users of *Pembe Panjur* will be analyzed in the third chapter together with *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website as both sites allow users to see all qualifications included in their profile forms. The reason for the preference of *Gönülden Sevenler* stems from the number of the users this site has; *Gönülden Sevenler* is the biggest Islamic marriage website and it has more than 2 million more users where as *Nasipse* website has nearly 300.000 users. Thus, along with similar lines, the self-presentation questions of *Pembe Panjur* and *Gönülden Sevenler* websites will be investigated in this section. However, the question categories and the type of questions all marriage websites include can be found in the Appendix (Table C.12 to Table C.20).

[193] See: Table 3.10: Muslima marriage website questions

model where their users have to refer to the self-presentation of other members and judge their suitability according to their own criteria. In this regard, Haluk Akın explains *Pembe Panjur*'s model as follows:

"This model gives place to two main parameters including character analysis and socio-demographic qualities like education, income, marital status and so forth. The algorithm matches the users who have 70 % or more similarities when these two parameters are assessed. Besides users have the chance to use filters to limit the candidates that the system proposes. To give an example, one can choose to limit all the users who are not university graduates or who have smoking habit, etc." (Haluk Akın, personal interview, 05 June 2015).

As the guiding principle behind these match-making services is "the similarity of the two participants" (Schmitz, 2017: 18), one can claim that websites like *Pembe Panjur* or *eCift* reproduce the "endogamous pressures" (Knox & Schacht, 2016:175) and the belief that "we tend to be attracted to and become involved with those who are similar to ourselves" (Knox & Schacht, 2016:176) by matching people who are similar in terms of their socio-demographic qualities. On the other hand, as the it was discussed in the first chapter, regardless of such a technological mechanism matching people with ones that are similar to them, the principles of endogamy and homogamy have been functional in the mate selection practices of Turkish people.

If we analyze questionnaires that take place in Turkish marriage websites in the light of the information above, it is seen that both *Gönülden Sevenler* and *Pembe Panjur* websites give place to some of the social qualifications sought by Turkish men and women in future spouse in their self presentation including; civil status - which also demonstrates whether or not if the spouse candidate "will be married for the first time" together with "education level", "income level" and "religiousness" of the members (TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey, 2013). As the latter three qualities will be analyzed in detail in the following pages, I would like to elaborate on the civil status in the first place. In her analysis of the attitudes of university students towards sexuality and virginity, Özyeğin gives place to her findings study she has conducted with the students of Boğaziçi University which is known as one of the most competitive and prestigious university in Turkey (Özyeğin, 2015: 38-39). Even though the participants of this study are selected among the students of one of the most liberal educational institution in the country, the results of this study indicate that "sexual purity" is regarded as an important criterion for spouse selection in Turkey (Özyeğin, 2015: 40).

"Men showed a stronger preference for sexual purity than women, though they were essentially divided on its importance. Forty-two percent of men placed significant import on marrying a virgin, and 51 percent agreed with the statement, "I want to marry a virgin," while a third of men wanted a sexually experienced partner. Slightly more than half of the women wanted their future partner to have had some sexual experience but not to have had sexual intercourse. Only a small minority (15 percent) preferred a spouse who was a virgin". (Özyeğin, 2015: 40)

In this direction, when the patriarchal and religious restrictions about pre-marital practices are also taken into account, one can assume the information that indicates whether if the candidate "will be married for the first time" may also connote the virginity of the candidate. On the other hand, for the relatively elderly interviewees that participated this dissertation study, the same question gives clues about the marital experience of the prospective partner and lead them to question whether the person has kids or not.

In the second place, while *Pembe Panjur* includes a question about "ethnicity", *Gönülden Sevenler* website does not include any question regarding it. Besides this Islamic marriage website does not include any questions on "hometown" as well. However, "ethnicity", and "hometown" are regarded as very important qualities for the mate selection practices in Turkey. As the findings of Gunduz-Hosgor & Smits point, the preference for "ethnic homogamy" is very significant in the country as mixed marriage between two biggest ethnic groups in Turkey is very low and "only 2.4 per cent, or one in about 40 marriages is mixed according to the ethnic group of the partners" (Gunduz-Hosgor, Smits, 2002: 429-430). On the other hand, "coming from the same town" (*hemşehrilik*) is also a very influential mate selection criterion in Turkey and 70 % of marriages are realized between partners coming from the same town (TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey, 2013:167).

In the analysis of the questions regarding social circles, it is seen that the question form of in *Gönülden Sevenler* includes a question that investigates the *cemaat* (religious brotherhood) connections of their users - which can be interpreted as a kind of social capital that one can gain with their religious social circles. In this respect it can be claimed that while the questionnaire form of *Gönülden Sevenler* neglects some of the prevalent and traditional mate selection criteria in Turkey, the owners of this website stress more upon the religious social connections as selection criteria rather than ethnicity or being fellow townsmen. In this context, it is important to mention that *Pembe Panjur* does not include a direct question about religious or non-religious social circles but as it will be discussed in detail in this section, their wider range of questions about tastes and lifestyle implicate their users' social milieu.

In terms of "religiousness", *Pembe Panjur* also *gives* place to questions asking the religious belief of the user and their preference for the religion of the user. Different from *Gönülden Sevenler,* this website gives place to sects and religions that are not included in *Gönülden Sevenler* questionnaire. Accordingly, "Alewism", "Atheism", "Christianity", "Judaism" and "other" choices are included in the list of this website; together with the question asking the importance of partner candidate's religion.

Table 3.3: Summary of Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Self Presentation Questions

<table>
<tr><td colspan="9">Photograph
Optional. Maximum x photographs are allowed</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="3">Socio-demographic Information</td><td colspan="6">Other information</td></tr>
<tr><td>Basic Info.</td><td>Education/ Professional Status</td><td>Family Relationship Status</td><td>Character Values & Expectations</td><td>Religious Life Style</td><td>Physical Appearance</td><td>Life Style</td><td>Tastes</td><td>Candidate</td></tr>
<tr><td>Sex
Age
Place of residence (Country /City)
Nationality
Religious affiliation
Ethnic origin</td><td>Level of education
Profession
Current employment status
Income level (monthly)
Languages spoken</td><td>Civil status
Number of kids
Habitation (Alone, With Kids / Family / Friends)</td><td>Character properties
Astrological sign
Desire to have kids</td><td>Sects
Religious network
Religious beliefs
Moral qualities
Namaz
Quran
Fasting</td><td>Height
Weight
Physical appearance
Eye color
Hair color
Disabilities</td><td>Hobbies
Interests
Sports
Alcohol
Smoking
Pets</td><td>Music
Cinema
Books
Holiday</td><td>Age
Civil status
Eye color
Hair color
Kids
Alcohol
Smoking
Level of education
Income
Moral qualities
Religious Network
Namaz
Disability</td></tr>
<tr><td colspan="9">Open-ended question
Describe yourself and your expectations from your partner</td></tr>
</table>

In terms of religion, *Gönülden Sevenler* website allocates a wider space for this subject in their profile questions. In the first place, this site does not ask questions regarding the importance of candidate's religion as the site accepts that their users become members as they value the spiritual capital of this website and subscribe to it as it is an Islamic marriage website beyond all question. In the second place, the response choices in terms of religion only include Sunni sects and it does not give place to Alewits which constitute nearly one fifth of Turkish population (Shankland, 2003:20). Besides, *Gönülden Sevenler* gives place to questions about religious practices (namaaz, reading Quran and fasting); Islamic values (performing prayer,

fasting, loyalty, honesty) and as it is stated before, the site includes a question about the religious circles connections of their users.

Table 3.4: Summary of Pembe Panjur Marriage Website – Self-presentation Questions

Socio-demographic Information			**Other information**				
Basic Information	**Education/ Professional Status**	**Family Relationship Status**	**Character Values & Expectations**	**Religious Life Style**	**Physical Appearance** *(Including personal information and partner preferences)*	**Life Style**	**Tastes**
Sex Age Place of residence (Country /City) Nationality Religious affiliation Ethnic origin	Level of education Profession Current employment status House ownership Income level (monthly) Languages spoken	Marital status Number of kids Habitation (Alone, With Kids / Family / Friends)	Character properties Family ties Astrological sign Desire to have kids Character Analysis (32 questions)	-	Height Weight Physical appearance Eye color Hair color Style	Hobbies Interests Sports Habits (Alcohol, Smoking) Pets	Music Cinema Books Holiday Food / Drink Television Games
Open-ended question							
Describe yourself *If you describe yourself... (What are your expectations from a relationship? How do you spend your time?)*			**Describe the person in your dreams** *Can you describe the man / women of your dreams? (Occupation, Physical qualities, education)* *3 qualities you look for in your spouse candidate* *3 qualities you do not want to see in your spouse candidate*				

When we consider the questions about education, the number of the questions in *Gönülden Sevenler* is rather limited compared to *Pembe Panjur* marriage website. Pembe Panjur not only asks questions about the education level of the user and the desired education level of the prospective partner but also includes a question to specify the name of the last institution the user is graduated from where as *Gönülden Sevenler* just asks the level of user's education in the user form and in the second part of the question form which includes question about prospective partner the site asks the importance of candidate's level of education.

In order to convey the level of income, both sites include questions regarding that. Having said that, the sites give place to other questions that also indicate the income level. First of all, both sites include questions about occupation and the place of residency. The respondent's choice range can include responses "with my family", "with my flatmate", "alone", "with my kids" and "other". Besides *Pembe Panjur* asks their users whether if they own a house.

In terms of personal qualities, both sites include rather detailed questions about the physical appearance (height, weight, body type, eye color, hair color) of the user and the candidate. Besides, both sites allocate space for their users to upload their profile pictures. Different from *Gönülden Sevenler* website, *Pembe Panjur* asks about the user's attire style and importance of his/her prospective partner's style. While *Gönülden Sevenler* website does not include a question regarding the style, female users are obliged to mention whether they are veiled or not in the initial subscription process before the user can access to profile form to describe herself. If a female user does not upload a profile picture, male users can see a veiled or not veiled icon depending on the response of the female user. In contrast with the findings of Turkish Family Research (2013) which is referred as the least important criteria for mate selection, both the accounts of owners / managers of these marriage websites and the accounts interviewees with whom I conducted in-depth personal interviews manifest that the physical appearance of the mate candidate is one of the most important criteria for screening mate candidates. I claim that the discrepancy between the findings of Turkish Family Research (2013) and the results of the interviews stem from two reasons including the difference between the number of candidates (which are present in online and offline marriage market) and the absence of family in online setting (even though as a part of users' habitus, one can assume that the expectations of the family still influence the selection criteria).[194]

According to the findings of Turkish Family Research (2013) in terms of the qualities Turkish men and women search for in mate selection, family relations are revealed as an important criterion. 96,1% of men and 96,9 % of women value "enjoying to spend time with the family" and 96,7 % of men and 98,0 % of women underline the importance of "protecting partner against her/his family". When we analyze the questions of *Gönülden Sevenler* and *Pembe Panjur* in terms of family relationships*,* it is seen that *Gönülden Sevenler* does not include any questions regarding family relationships, whereas *Pembe Panjur* gives place to "family ties" and ask their users to mention if they have strong or weak family ties.

At this point before I present the items in the questionnaire regarding cultural tastes, I would like to refer to two questions that take place in *Gönülden Sevenler*'s questionnaire on two personal qualities / behaviors. First of all, I would like to analyze the values and practices cited in the response choices of questions referring to personal qualities. When handled

[194] The analysis of profile pictures together with Goffman's "gender display" categories will be shared in the third chapter.

together, I claim that the values and practices indicated in 27th and 28th questions' response choices refer to a habitus shaped by traditional and religious values, patriarchal ideology and conservative Sunni beliefs.

Table 3.5: Gönülden Sevenler / Questions regarding personal qualities sought in partner 1

Question no: 27	**Response**
What are the qualities you will not compromise?	Performing prayer, fasting, loyalty, honesty

Table 3.6: Gönülden Sevenler / Questions regarding personal qualities sought in partner 2

Question no : 28	**Response**
What are the qualities you find intolerable in a spouse candidate?	Cheating, physical violence, swearing, lying, coming home late, friend circles, visiting *kahvehane* (coffee houses) often, extravagantness, laziness, too much talking, too much laughing, too much interaction with the opposite sex, wasting time

While the response choices regarding religious practices like "performing prayer" and "fasting" in the 27th question ("qualities you will not compromise *for a spouse candidate*") are clear indicators of the influence of Islamic religious culture, I claim that the response choices given for the 28th question - *"What are the qualities you find intolerable in a spouse candidate?"* refer to more culture specific practices. In this regard, I think that especially response choices like "visiting *kahvehane"* (coffee houses) or "too much laughing" need a further analysis as these practices also point out the immanent elements of patriarchal and traditional Turkish culture.[195]

In order to clarify my statement, I want to observe two of these response choices that I find significant. First of all, these two response choices do not refer to gender-neutral practices. *Kahvehane* is regarded as a space for male-only socialization in Middle East and Mediterranean cultures (Arık, 2009:169).

> In Turkey, *kahvehanes* are mostly found in traditional and mostly underdeveloped neighborhoods of the cities, as well as in the traditional villages. Unemployed young, middle aged men; male retirees or other men who want to spend their free time are the regulars of these spaces. Basically, they play backgammon, watch TV, smoke, drink coffee or tea with other men who share similar habitus values. Different from the local

[195] These two examples are also interesting ones as they do not connote practices that are relevant for both genders but interestingly they exist in the profile forms for both male and female users.

cafeterias or international / local coffeehouse chains like Starbucks or *Kahve Dünyası*[196]; women are not allowed in these *kahvehanes.*

In sum, one can assume that "spending time at kahvehane" is an activity undertaken by individuals who are related with a traditional and patriarchal habitus.

Like *kahvehane* practice, "too much laughing" is not regarded as a gender-neutral practice in Turkish society. Even though in the response choices of 28th question, there is no indicator of the space; indeed, it refers to "too much laughing in public space" or "too much laughing in private space where men other than the relatives of one exist". As the definition of this space reveals, laughing is not found suitable for women in the public space. In this context, one can assume that the given response choice of *Gönülden Sevenler* can be associated with the conservative interpretations of Islam requiring women to regulate their sexuality in the society (Bargach, 2006: 52-53).[197] On that note, it is worthwhile to mention the vice prime minister's declaration about "laughing in public space" in 2014.[198] In this speech which created a great controversy among Turkish society[199], Arınç explained his views as follows:

"A woman has to keep her chastity. She should know what is mahrem (forbidden) and namahrem (not forbidden). She should not laugh too much among others; she should refrain from attracting others". [200](CNNTurk, 2014)

In conclusion, as it was exemplified by these two statements, these values and practices refers to the value system of a specific habitus; a kind of habitus that is shaped by traditional and religious values, patriarchal ideology and conservative Sunni beliefs. While these types of response choices can find place in *Gönülden Sevenler* website, they do not take place in liberal

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[196] Turkish coffee chain brand

[197] The public visibility of women has not only been an issue for only conservative religious groups in Turkey but also as Göle states "women's corporal visibility and citizenship rights constitute the political stakes around which the public sphere is defined". For more information, see: Nilüfer Göle, **The Forbidden Modern: Civilization and Veiling**, Ann Arbor, Michigan: The University of Michigan Press, 1997a., pp.6
As it was discussed in the introduction chapter of the dissertation, while the state reforms brought several possibilities for "urban", "modern" and "unveiled" women to join the public space with education, political participation and "certain" job opportunities; in order to take advantage of these opportunities women had to suspend their sexuality in the public life. For more information, see: Sibel Bozdoğan and Reşat Kasaba, **Rethinking Modernity and National Identity in Turkey**, Seattle, WA: Univ. of Washington Press, 1997.

[198] I have to mention that *Gönülden Sevenler* website did not include this response choice only recently; when I had visited *Gönülden Sevenler* website for the first time in 2013, this response choice was already available there and the connotations it brought became more clear for me after the statement of vice prime minister in 2014.

[199] While his statement was protested by various groups including feminists, LBGT groups and by social media users in large scale; his discourse defining the limits of public behavior for women; including the limits of "laughing" which refers to a conservative interpretation of Islam, became known by a big part of the population.

[200] http://www.cnnturk.com/haber/turkiye/bulent-arinc-kadin-herkesin-icinde-kahkaha-atmayacak

marriage websites. In addition to the questions about personal and social qualities, the questions about cultural tastes and practices that take place in the questionnaires of Islamic and liberal marriage websites are different from each other. In the second part of this section, I would like to observe them briefly.

7.2. Mate Selection Criteria and Strategies of Differentiation in Turkish Marriage Websites

The relationship between cultural identity and consumption habits has been an issue much discussed and researched by academicians (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg- Halton, 1981; Gans, 1999; McCracken, 2006; Veblen, 1899 cited in Papacharissi, 2009: 212). While many of these studies refer to offline practices, recently academicians studying online practices have also investigated the influence of tastes and strategies of differentiation in online platforms (Liu, 2007; Papacharissi, 2009). Many online platforms give place to tastes and preferences to enable their users to present themselves with these elements.

In "Culture & Power: Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu", David Swartz refers to Bourdieu's social distinction concept and explains it accordingly;

> "All cultural symbols and practices, from artistic tastes, style in dress, and eating habits to religion, science and philosophy even language itself embody interests and function to enhance social distinctions. The struggle for social distinction, whatever its symbolic form, is for Bourdieu a fundamental dimension of all social life. The larger issue, then, is one of power relations among individuals, groups, and institutions (particularly the educational system). Indeed, for Bourdieu power is not a separate domain of study but stands at the heart of all social life." (Swartz, 1997:6)

When this definition is taken into account, not only the questions about tastes and habits; but also the questions referring to other ways of presenting oneself in online marriage websites, including religion and religious practices function as strategies of differentiation in the continuous struggle for power in social life. Swartz reads Bourdieu's work as a study which investigates "how groups pursue strategies to produce and reproduce the conditions of their collective existence and how culture is constitutive of this reproductive process" (Swartz, 1997:7). Thus, in one sense, Islamic and liberal marriage websites in the online relationship formation field also contribute to the ongoing political struggle for producing and reproducing the conditions for the collective existence of the social groups they represent.

When online marriage websites are analyzed, we see that not only the design, architecture of these websites but also the infrastructure they provide for their users to present themselves, which are brought by the play makers in this field (founders, owners, managers) are the products of these agents' habitus. Thus, if we reconsider Bourdieu's famous quote about taste in this context, the play makers which are classified by their tastes provide their users to present themselves which will also lead them to be classified by their tastes.

"Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier. Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed." (Bourdieu, 1984:6)

In this regard, first of all I would like to give place to studies that account for the prevailing cultural capital types in Turkey. Hazır's article is an important study as it gives place to the long-continued dichotomy in the cultural tastes in Turkish society. In her article, "Boundaries of middle-class identities in Turkey", Hazır states that "from the beginning of the Westernization/modernization of the Ottomans, the habits and tastes labelled as *Alafranga* (the European style) were perceived as superior to those that were considered *Alaturka* (the Turkish style)" (Hazır, 2014:682). Hazır also refers to Karadağ's study (2009) which demonstrates the transformation in the cultural tastes and current reflections of this dichotomy in Turkish society. Accordingly, the results reveal the fact that "the degree of adaptation
to Western taste and lifestyle were tools in cultural struggles held by 'new wealth' and 'old wealth' families, and they became instrumental in the formation of conflicting and diverse middle-class identities" (Karadağ, 2009 cited in Hazır, 2014:682:683).

Another significant study researching the cultural capital in Turkey is called "A Cultural Map of Turkey" and the results of this study point out "three broad clusters in the cultural space" of the country (Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014: 171).

Table 3.7: The Summary of "A Cultural Map of Turkey" (Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014)

	Cluster 1	**Cluster 2**	**Cluster 3**
Name	*Engaged Cosmopolitans*	*Engaged Provincialists*	*Culturally Disengaged*
Properties	- Embraces a more urban and globalized culture, both in taste, particularly in music, literature, and cuisine, but also in	- Takes a more critical stance toward this emerging culture, particularly in a general dislike of its literary	- Expressing neutrality towards, disinterest in, or lack of knowledge of a broad array of literary,

	participation preferences. They are also active users of new media, including the internet and its social networking websites.	forms, but also some cuisine types, preferring more established (i.e. traditional) ones.	cuisine and musical taste genres. - Cultural participation is also low for this cluster, a group more likely to say they never go to the cinema, performances or shopping malls, and do not use the internet or social networking sites.
% / SES	- This taste cluster may fit as many as a quarter of the adult population and is strongly linked to privileged social position, that is, located closest to the highest income and education categories and the most secular identity	- This cluster may loosely apply to 30 or 40 percent of the population and is closest to older adults of middle income and education, and who are more likely to support an active role for religion in public life.	- As much as half of the adult population, mostly those with the least income and education, but also older people and women, are associated with this cultural milieu

Rankin, Ergin & Gökşen's study demonstrate that "cultural communities in Turkey are largely differentiated by 'their preferences for', 'dislike of', or 'indifference to' Western culture" and "these distinctions that are frequently deployed in the construction of cultural boundaries in Turkey" (Öncü, 1999; Üstüner and Holt, 2009 cited in Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014: 172). These results also correspond with the results Karadağ's study (2009) and demonstrate the determining character of preference for Western culture. However, this preference for Western culture does not mean that more urban and educated segment of Turkish society (*Engaged Cosmopolitans)* does not prefer local cultural products. The academicians state that while in the Turkish context, *Engaged Cosmopolitans*'s "defining feature" may be the preference for Western culture, they appreciate "high and popular forms of local and foreign culture" together (Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014: 172).

In the light of the information revealed above, when we analyze the self-presentation questions of *Gönülden Sevenler* and *Pembe Panjur* according to these 3 clusters, we see that marriage website's stance to occidental cultures plays a role in their positioning together with traditional and religious values. Having said that, these websites also differ in the number of questions allocated to "occidental vs. more traditional/ religious" life style and tastes. *Pembe Panjur* includes a wider range of questions referring to high brow / low brow cultural tastes from visiting art galleries, holiday preferences to favorite television programs. Even though the

questions referring to cultural tastes *Pembe Panjur* website include in their profile form are open ended questions; the categories they correlate with the categories *Engaged Cosmopolitans* embrace. On the other side, self-presentation infrastructure of *Gönülden Sevenler* and the questions included in this structure are limited.

Table 3.8: Gönülden Sevenler / Questions regarding cultural tastes

Question no: 19	**Response**
What kind of music do you listen?	Religious Chants, Arabesque, Classical, Turkish Pop, Turkish Rock, Turkish Classical Music, Foreign Pop, Foreign Rock, Turkish Folk Music

Table 3.9: Gönülden Sevenler / Questions regarding cultural tastes

Question no: 20	**Response**
What kind of books do you read?	Risale-i Nur, Fiqh, Hadiths, Religious Stories, Exegesis, Novel, Science-Fiction, Short Stories, Psychology, Religious, Self-Help

Even though *Gönülden Sevenler* gives place to some of the cultural taste categories like book or music tastes which are also included *Pembe Panjur* website, *Gönülden Sevenler*'s multiple choice response format and the given response choices indicate the embodied states of religious / spiritual capital, local & traditional tastes and they include only a limited number of cultural categories referring to Western Culture which can be seen in "Foreign Pop, Foreign Rock" response choices. In this realm, we can state that the type of the cultural capital presented in the questions of *Gönülden Sevenler* is different from *Pembe Panjur* and it associates more with the cultural tastes of *Engaged Provincialists.*

7.3. Mate Selection Criteria and Strategies of Differentiation in International Marriage Websites

When we compare the self-presentation infrastructure of *Gönülden Sevenler* with one of the biggest international Islamic marriage sites of the world, *Muslima;* it seen that the number of questions they give place in these websites differ and *Muslima* includes a wider range of questions for physical appearance (complexion, facial hair, body mass index, etc.). In the second place, while both of these two websites include several questions about religion and religious practices, *Muslima* website which belongs to an American corporation *match.com*[201]

[201] *match.com* is one of the biggest online dating group in the world.

gives place to marriage practices like "polygamy" which is not accepted legal in Turkey. (See Table x: Muslima Marriage Website – Questionnaire / Personal)

Mittelstaedt claims that religion has an affect on marketplace activities, including; "rules of trade", "prohibit or obligate the trade of certain products" "and affect the time and place of markets" (Mittelstaedt 2002 cited in Sandıkcı & Ger, 2007: 191). Besides, the demands of religious or spiritual groups affect the available goods and services in the market (Sandıkcı & Ger, 2007: 191). On that note, it is worthwhile to share that while Muslima includes questions about food consumption practices, there are no questions asking food preferences (Halal / Not Halal) in the profile form of *Gönülden Sevenler*. [202]

As a final remark on *Muslima* website, Turkish marriage websites observed in this dissertation, both Islamic and liberal sites only give the authorship to the user; the parents, relatives or friends of these users are not recognized by the websites. However, as it was seen in Indian Islamic matrimonial websites (Mishra et al., 2013, 48); *Muslima* includes a question about the profile creator. In this regard, we can state that in contrast with the prevalence of arranged marriage practices in Turkish society, Turkish marriage websites provide space for Muslim men and women to choose their spouse candidates without the direct influence of their parents.

Table 3.10: Muslima marriage website questions

Photograph Optional. Maximum x photographs are allowed			
Socio-demographic Information	**Candidate information**		
Basic Information	**Physical Appearance**	**Life Style**	**Background / Cultural Values**
Sex Age Place of residence (*Single Country or Multiple Country*) *No question about nationality*	Hair color Hair length Hair type Eye color Eye wear	Alcohol Smoking Eating habits (Halal / Not Halal) Marital Status	Nationality Education Languages Religion (Not Religious, Religious, Very Religious)

[202] One can assume that Muslims living in multicultural cities or occidental states differentiate from other social groups with their food consumption. Even though there is no reliable statistics concerning the religious affiliations of people, all Turkish citizens whose parents are not of any other officially recognized religion have been automatically registered by the state as Muslim. In this realm, regardless of their affiliations or belief systems, the majority of Turkish citizens are considered as Muslim and in such a country, there is no halal / not halal categorization. These categories are only visible in restaurants or hotels giving service to Arab or Middle Eastern tourists in Turkey.

No question about religious affiliation *No question about ethnic origin*	Height Weight Body Mass Index Body type Ethnicity Complexion Facial hair Physical / Health status	Children Number of children Age of youngest child Age of oldest child Desire to have new children Occupation Employment Status Annual Income Home type Living situation Residency Status Willing to relocate	Born / Reverted Religious values Attend religious services Read Quran Polygamy Family Values Profile creator (Self, Friend, Family Members)

In the second place, when we compare the self-presentation infrastructure of *Pembe Panjur* with one of the biggest international dating for marriage sites of the world, *eHarmony;* the categories they include and the response choices they have give place have more similarities in comparison with the Islamic websites mentioned above. Besides occidental tastes, questions regarding life style are more emphasized in these liberal dating for marriage websites.

Table 3.11: eHarmony marriage website questions

Photograph						
Optional. Maximum 12 photographs are allowed						
Socio-demographic Information						
Basic Information	**Education/ Professional Status**	**Family & Friends Relationship Status**	**Physical Appearance**	**Character Values & Expectations**	**Life Style**	**Tastes**
Sex Age Place of residence Relationship status Children Religious affiliation Ethnic origin	Level of education Profession Current employment status Income level (monthly) Languages spoken	Marital status Number of kids Habitation (Alone, With Kids / Family / Friends)	Height Weight Physical appearance Eye color Hair color	Character properties (Warmth, Intelligence, etc.) Astrological sign Desire to have kids	Family Friends Religious community	Music Cinema TV Reading Parties Dining out Traveling Shopping

8. Social Media Reflections of Dating and Marriage Websites in Turkey

In order to understand the social media reflections of online marriage websites, a software program Quicksprout[203] was utilized and this analysis exhibits the social media

[203] http://www.quicksprout.com/

reflections of 4 marriage websites including Pembe Panjur, eCift, Gonulden Sevenler and Nasipse between the dates 07, December, 2014 and 07, January, 2015.

According to the analysis results, eCift is the website that has the highest percentage of website link share on social media, where as Nasipse has the least percentage of link share. Google+, Facebook and Twitter are the platforms online marriage websites have the densest presence. eCift website has the highest percentage of website link share on Google+, whereas other websites have the highest percentage of website link share on Facebook.

Table 3.12: Social Media Reflections of Online Marriage Websites

Social Media Shares (2015)						
Website Name	**Total**	**Facebook**	**Twitter**	**Linkedin**	**Pinterest**	**Google+**
Pembe Panjur	20,698	12,542	197	31	0	7,928
eCift	275,924	463	601	20	0	274,840
GonuldenSevenler	8,727	4,158	4,067	14	0	488
Nasipse	1,492	1,289	190	4	0	9

Facebook Reflections of Online Marriage Websites

The marriage website that has the highest percentage of Facebook 'likes' is *Gönülden Sevenler* website. This website has 2 million members and it has 181.678 likes. *Pembe Panjur* has 40.011, *eCift.de* has 11.112 and *Nasipse* has 5.029 likes. The online individuals who like the Facebook pages of these websites can see the visual and textual messages site manager and other users share on these pages, they can also share their messages, pictures, videos and they can click the 'like' button if they appreciate any comments or messages.

Islamic marriage websites and liberal marriage websites are platforms that present symbolic distinction properties and their social media reflections also carry these symbolic distinction properties as well.

The cover picture of *Pembe Panjur* marriage site has visual elements that bring to mind exoteric new year celebration postcards. In this visual, we see 2,0,1,5 numbers with an illustration of a couple with a bicycle surrounded by red heart icons. The profile picture of this page consists of an illustrated couple sitting on a heart icon and again surrounded by red heart icons.

Gönülden Sevenler 'Islamic' marriage website does not convey any messages to celebrate the New Year. New Year celebrations are regarded as an infidel custom by some Islamist sects and it is assumed that this website does not want to deliver any messages that transmit Non-Muslim symbolic distinction properties. The cover picture of the page includes a bride wearing a wedding dress with a headscarf and a man in groom suit. The way this couple is photographed brings to mind the 'wedding photography' studio images that have gained popularity in Turkey since last two decades. The portrayal of the couple is a classical scene that is used in wedding photography; the bride and the groom are in front of a kitsch nature scene focusing their eyes to a further point in the scene. The profile picture of this page includes the logo of the web site and two red heart icons in front a grey background.

The cover picture used on the Facebook page of *Nasipse* marriage site is the same visual that is used in *Nasipse* website. In this visual we see a bride in a white wedding dress with a groom dressed in white. The profile picture of the page is a blonde bride with a bride's veil. The manager of *Nasipse* website had addressed that the members of this site are mainly male users, thus the choice of using a blonde bride in the profile picture indicates that this page is platform targeting male users looking for female spouses.

The facebook page analysis of the websites was realized with likealyzer[204] software program between the dates 07, December 2014 and 07, January 2015. The analysis demonstrates the fact that the numbers of individuals who participate in these pages consist of only a small percentage[205] (1.09 %) of the people who like these pages. *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage site has 1980 active users and it has increased its like percentage by 2% in one month. However, the statistics show that a Facebook page has to have at least 7 % of active users to be counted as a successful page. In this period, weekly share rate on this page is only 1 and the mean like percentage of these shares is 1300.

Between the dates 07, December 2014 and 07, January 2015, 4 colored and 1 black and white photographs was shared by the page administrator. Two of these colored photographs are hyperlinks to promote the website. Remaining 3 photos include the maxims of Islam thinkers on marriage, love and morality. The black and white photo demonstrates an old couple, an old

[204] http://likealyzer.com
[205] http://likealyzer.com/facebook/gonuldensevenlercom

woman with a headscarf and an old man with a grey beard. One of the maxims, a quote from Islam thinker Imam Rabbani shared in this page is as follows;

"A person becomes morally justified with the morality of the loved one; this is inevitable. Love requires this!" [206]

Another quote shared in this page is an anonymous maxim;

"Obeying woman's word is not a signal of man's weakness, it shows the value he gives to his fiduciary." [207]

These visuals accompanied with maxims receive over 1000 comments from the page users. These comments can be seen as an extension of the spouse search practices in the websites. While some of these commenters prefer to give details of the spouse they look for, other users share their mail addresses and phone numbers.

The analysis results show that between the same dates, like percentage of *Pembe Panjur* Facebook page has increased 3.58 %. Similar to *Gönülden Sevenler* page, the percentage of active users is only 0.84 % and the number of active users is 336. Like percentage of each sharing on this page are only 67 and the average weekly sharing number show an alteration between 2 and 4. [208]

Between the dates 07, December 2014 and 07, January 2015, 16 items were shared on the Facebook page of *Pembe Panjur*. 5 of these are maxims belonging to famous Western writers and thinkers like Goethe, Stendhal. One of the maxims shared on this page is a quotation from John Berger's 'Ways of Seeing'[209] book where Berger criticizes the representation of women as an object of vision or sight for the male gaze.

"A woman must continually watch herself...Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at"[210]

[206] https://www.facebook.com/gonuldensevenlercom?fref=ts
[207] https://www.facebook.com/gonuldensevenlercom?fref=ts
[208] http://likealyzer.com/facebook/pembepanjur
[209] John Berger, **Görme Biçimleri**, Metis Yayınları, İstanbul, 2014
[210] https://www.facebook.com/pembepanjur?fref=ts

The page administrator shares most of the quotes and visuals that take place in this page as well. We can assume that the administrator of this page is not aware of Berger's criticism and it is observed that female Facebook users who like this quote are unaware of Berger's criticism and some of the users commenting under this quote stated that Berger's words represent themselves.

As distinct from *Gönülden Sevenler* Facebook page, we can see single woman visuals in this page where as we can only see couple visuals in *Gönülden Sevenler's* page. The visual that accompanies Berger's quote is such a visual. The administrator chooses to utilize a chic and stylish woman photograph resembling the female images presented in fashion magazines and such an image calling into mind Berger's criticism one more time.

Other images that are presented here consist of the wedded couples who met each other via this marriage website. The logo of the website accompanies all the wedded couple pictures.

During the same period, it is observed that there was 1.64 % increase in the percentage of Facebook users who like *Nasipse*'s Facebook page. The number of active users during this period was rather less than *Gönülden Sevenler* and *Pembe Panjur* and they were only 14 users. The percentage of active users is only 0.28 % and it is observed that each sharing on this page receives 13 like in average. Average weekly sharing number show an alteration between 3 and 5.

The items shared on *Nasipse* Facebook page are similar to the ones on *Gönülden Sevenler's* Facebook page. In terms of visuals, the page administrator prefers to use visuals depicting Islamic life style and marriage such as praying couples, fingers with wedding rings, old couples and all these visuals are accompanied with religious quotations.

eCift does not have a Facebook page for people living in Turkey. They have a special page for Turks living in Germany where German and Turkish are used synchronously.

CHAPTER 3: SELF PRESENTATION OF MARRIAGE WEBSITES USERS IN TURKEY

Online self-presentation of users in dating and marriage websites has been a very popular subject in digital media studies in the recent years. Several researches have investigated various topics including self presentation in online and dating marriage websites including "self presentation of the look" (Toma, Hancock, 2010) and "the personality" (Counts, Stecher, 2009); "deception, misrepresentation and presentation of ideal versions of the self" (Ellison, Heino, Gibbs, 2006; Hancock, Toma, 2009); "discourse analysis" of users through their self presentation information (Turner, 2012; Manning, J. (2013); the practice of "filtering" through self presentation information (Best, Delmege, 2012); the relationship between self-presentations and "market mentality" (Heino, Ellison, Gibbs, 2010; Illouz, 2007); the effects of gender on self-presentation and gender differences in mispresentation (Hall, Park, Song et al, 2010; Whitty, M. T. 2008; Schmitz, Zillman, Blossfeld 2013; Hancock & Toma, 2009; Fullick, 2013; Zheng, W., Yuan, C., Chang, W., & Wu, Y. J. (2016); "traditional media's effect on online self presentation" (Kapidzic, S., & Martins, N., 2015) and "gender stereotypes" (Döring, N., Reif, A., & Poeschl, S., 2016).

In his assessment of the researches covering several of the issues briefly mentioned above, Schmitz makes an analogy between MAS theoreticians and researches investigating online dating and marriage practices including online self presentation and he states that despite their "ideological, methodical, and theoretical" differences, most of them present "clear tendency toward a generalizing, individualistic perspective" (Schmitz, 2017: 22-23). Schmitz argues that in this framework, structure is generally conceived as "a market structure" which is "external to the individual" (Schmitz, 2017: 24). From a Bourdieusian perspective, one can assume that not only the way how individuals choose their mates but also their self presentation practices to attract the attention of their potential mates in online relationship formation field are closely connected with their habitus. In this direction, Loïc Wacquant propose that "the representations" of agents can only enjoy "a definite autonomy" as these representations are also the products of one's habitus:

"…Even as representations enjoy a definite autonomy with respect to distributions of material: the representation that agents form of their position in social space (as well as the representation of it that they perform – in the theatrical sense, as with Goffman) is the product of a system of schemata of perception and appreciation (habitus) which is itself the embodied product of a

condition defined by a definite position in distributions of material properties (objectivity I) and of symbolic capital (objectivity II), and which takes into account, not only the representations (which obey the same laws) that others have of this position and whose aggregation defines symbolic capital (commonly designated as prestige, authority, and so on), but also the position in distributions symbolically retranslated as lifestyle" (Wacquant, 2013: 297).

However, not only the habitus but also the specific conditions one is faced with affect the way an individual present himself or herself. First of all, as it was presented in the second chapter of this dissertation study, the self-presentation infrastructure provided by marriage websites (as well as the dating websites) introduce restrictions to the way individuals can present themselves in these websites. These infrastructures that are embraced as the products of the online relationship formation field's play-makers' habitus in this study provide certain formats that shape one's self presentation.

Thus, in addition to the influence of habitus, the distinctive qualities of computer-mediated communications also have an effect upon how people present themselves in online contexts. These distinctive qualities not only introduce novelties that differentiate online self presentation from the offline presentation of the self but also bring certain limitations. In this context, despite their reductionist approach (which embrace online mate selection practices typically from an "individualistic perspective" that present "structure" as "an external market structure"), the findings of the studies regarding online self presentation mentioned in the beginning of this section are rewarding for researchers that investigate online self presentation as they introduce the peculiarities of computer-mediated communications and their effects on how individuals present themselves.

In the third place, the investigation of the interaction between different agents in online relationship formation field and they way they present themselves in these marriage websites also necessitate a micro perspective together with the Bourdieusian macro perspective to be able to conceive the strategies, interactions and self presentations of agents who take place in this field.

In this chapter, in the light of the theoretical necessities presented above, I will refer to the findings of the researchers that investigate online self presentation and clarify the distinctive qualities of online dating and marriage websites together with the theories that will enable us to understand the interactions between users of these marriage websites. From this point of view, together with these theories, I will present the self presentation of Islamic and liberal

marriage websites users which cover the analysis of users' socio-demographic information, physical and character attributes, profile pictures, nicknames as well the analysis of their expectations from their spouse candidates with a gender-oriented approach. In this context, in the first place, I would like to present the theories of Erving Goffman which will be referred in this chapter to be able to analyze the interactions and the self presentations of users together with other theoreticians.

1. Gender, symbolic interactionism[211] and the presentation of the self

Erving Goffman is considered as "one of the most important theorists" of symbolic interactionism (Carter & Fuller, 2015:6) due to his extensive analysis on social interaction. However, it is hard to claim that there is a widely acclaimed consensus among academicians on this recognition as some scholars (Fine & Manning, 2003:34) find it inadequate to state that his theories belong to only one school of thought as Goffman's work comprises diverse research interests. In his own categorization of his works, Goffman defines himself as "a symbolic interactionist" and "a structural functionalist in the traditional sense" (Goffman in Verhoeven 1993:318, 324 in Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 2010: 74).

> "I guess I'm as much what you call a symbolic interactionist as anyone else. But I'm also a structural functionalist in the traditional sense . . . Where I differ from social constructionists is that I don't think the individual himself or herself does much of the constructing. He rather comes to a world, already in some sense or other, established. So there I would differ from persons who use in their writings the notion of social construction of reality. I am therefore on that side closer to the structural functionalists, like Parsons and Merton. Just as they were closer to initial functionalist anthropology" (Goffman in Verhoeven 1993:318- 324 in Jacobsen & Kristiansen, 2010: 74)

[211] Symbolic interactionism is a micro sociological perspective (Lindsey, 2016: 10) that is developed around mid twentieth century that investigates "micro-level processes" including "face-to-face encounters", "repeated interactions" among the members of a society to understand how these individuals make sense of their world (Carter & Fuller, 2015: 1). The academicians who adopt this sociological perspective pay "attention to people's behavior in face-to-face social settings" and they explain "social interaction as a dynamic process in which people continually modify their behavior as a result of the interaction itself" (Lindsey, 2016: 10). In her account of symbolic interactionism, Lindsey addresses Herbert Blumer (1900–1987) as the theoretician who "originated the term symbolic interaction" and who "asserted that people do not respond directly to the world around them, but to the meaning they bring to it" (Lindsey, 2016: 10). According to Blumer's theory of symbolic interactionism, "society, its institutions, and its social structure exist only through human interaction". For more information, see: Linda L. Lindsey, **Gender Roles: A Sociological Perspective**, London: Routledge, 2016, pp.10

Despite, his account of how his work should be categorized, scholars still continue to interpret his theoretical perspective based on his texts. Baran & Davis propose that Goffman presents a theoretical perspective which can be considered as "a combination of symbolic interactionism and social constructionism" which "allows for a certain amount of individual agency, while it also grants a fair amount of power to institutions" (Baran & Davis, 2015:316).

Apart from all the discussions in the academic world on the theoretical perspectives Goffman proposes, Goffman is quite known for his studies, "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life", "Stigma" and "Gender Advertisements". Goffman's work, especially "the presentation of the self in the everyday life" (1956) is a fundamental work many academicians belonging to different schools of thought and disciplines have referred to investigate "face to face social interaction" practices in everyday life (Jacobsen, 2012:64). Goffman's work addresses the problem of self-presentation which is a critical component of his theories on interactive social relations and his ideas on self-presentation are still applicable to analyze face to face interaction in current societies. Further to that, academicians observing the self presentation practices in online communities (Toma & Hancock, 2010; Bullingham& Vasconcelos, 2013) continue to appeal to his concepts about self-presentation to explain newly-emerging online practices.

Goffman is a theorist interested in understanding social interaction in public places and he developed and used the "drama" metaphor to explain these interactions (Goffman, 1959: 240). He states that individuals interacting in a social context act with the motivation to impress others and control other's impressions about themselves (Goffman, 1956:8). As part of his dramaturgical approach, he associates social contexts with "theatre stage". Accordingly, individuals who act to create the impression they want are called as "actors" and these actors "perform" in social surroundings or "downstage" to "produce a show" acceptable to the taste of their social audience" (Pilario, 2006:79); while they do not need to perform at the "backstage" where there is no social interaction (Goffman cited in Bullingham& Vasconcelos, 2013: 1). Goffman argues that the principal purpose of self-presentation is to present an "idealized image" of oneself that coincides with cultural expectations (Goffman, 1959). Hence, in order to introduce their self presentation, the actors strategically have to disclose and/or conceal information they possess to portray themselves self in a socially desirable way (Goffman, 1959).

Goffman's theoretical perspective is also important to understand the gender differences in everyday interactions and self presentations. His article, "The arrangement between the sexes" is an important study to portrait the power of institutions for reproducing gender stereotypes. In this article, Goffman gives place to five types of social organization including "the sex-class division of labor, siblings as socializers, toilet practices, looks and job selection, our identification system" and argues that these types of arrangements are based on assumed "physical differences between the sexes". Goffman refers to them as examples of "institutional reflexivity" and he states that these social organizations in the society "confirm our gender stereotypes" (Goffman, 1977:319).

Likewise, in his account on interactional fields and face-to-face interaction, he demonstrates that these everyday interactions do not reflect "natural differences between the sexes" but they rather reflect the socially constructed sex differences (Goffman, 1977:324).

"An interactional field, then, provides a considerable expressive resource, and it is, of course, upon this field that there is projected the training and beliefs of the participants. It is here that sex-class makes itself felt, here in the organization of face-to-face interaction, for here understandings about sex-based dominance can be employed as a means of deciding who decides, who leads, and who follows. Again, these scenes do not so much allow for the expression of natural differences between the sexes as for the production of that difference itself" (Goffman, 1977:324).

Another important work of Goffman on gender is his study on gender display and gender advertisements. Goffman explains gender display as follows:

"If gender be defined as the culturally established correlates of sex (whether in consequence of biology or learning), then gender display refers to conventionalized portrayals of these correlates" (Goffman, 1976: 9 in West & Zimmerman, 1987:130).

In this study, Goffman analyzes the way women are portrayed in advertisements (Smith, 2010: 178). Smith & Jacobsen argue that in Gender Advertisements (1979), "Goffman ironizes women, they are routinely portrayed in absent-minded states, cuddly situations or inferior postures in consumer society" (Smith & Jacobsen, 2010: 136). Smith claims that in this work, Goffman proposes "a novel argument about the character of gender identity and gender relations in late modernity" and he makes "an original contribution to a sociological understanding of the status of the photograph" and brings "an innovative way of doing visual

sociology that has stimulated further inquiries into mediatized depictions of gendered persons and their conduct" (Smith, 2010: 168).

In another analysis, Deegan underlines the use of irony in Goffman's works and in her examination of Goffman's portrayal of gender, she argues that Goffman's texts reproduce and expose the patriarchal order at the same time (Deegan, 2014:81).

> "Goffman's texts have performed a dual function of replicating the patriarchal world and exposing its power structures through the ironic use of language. But the ironic attitude is not enough and it is ambiguous in the context of implicit sexism. Feminist praxis calls for liberating knowledge from its patriarchal language, metaphor, and theory that takes for granted, and thus helps perpetuate, women's unequal role in everyday life (Deegan 1989, 1998; Feagin and Vera 2008). The feminist dramaturgy outlined here lays the groundwork for releasing the liberating potential of Goffman's texts" (Deegan, 2014:81).

Recent researchers analyzing the appropriateness of Goffman's theories for online setting demonstrate that Goffman's original framework is still applicable and "provides of great usefulness as an explanatory framework for comprehending self-presentation" in online context (Bullingham& Vasconcelos, 2013: 110). When one thinks about the contemporary social relationships, online marriage websites set a good example of Goffman's "downstage" concept. In dating and marriage websites, members use online profiles to introduce themselves to their future dating and spouse candidates. These profiles typically consist of textual descriptions and photographs. The members are evaluated by other users based on the quick perusal of the information and photographs shared on their profile and as a consequence of this initial assessment, they can be "pursued or ignored" by their potential partners (Heino et al. cited in Ellison et al., 2012:46). It is expected that individuals subscribed to these websites present the "idealized" versions of themselves that align with cultural norms in order to accomplish their goal to constitute an emotional relationship with the same /opposite sex and to find a partner within the affordances of online relationship formation contexts. Besides, Goffman's findings on gender display is substantially useful to understand the relationship between media and gendered online self presentations of internet users (Döring, N., Reif, A., & Poeschl, S., 2016; Kapidzic, S., & Martins, N., 2015).

In this regard, within the Bourdieusian framework of this thesis study, where I give place to Bourdieu's relational epistemology, and his theoretical concepts (field, habitus, capital

and so forth) to explain the online relationship formation field, the strategies of actors in their self presentation and usage practices, I will also be referring to Goffman's notions about self presentation and gender display to be able to explain how online marriage website users present themselves and interact with each other in deference to the theoretical differences of Bourdieu and Goffman in this section.

2. Distinctive qualities of computer-mediated communications, online relationship formation & their effect on online self presentation

The findings of recent researches (Bozon, Héran, 2006; Deschamps, Gaissad, 2008; Léobon, Frigault, 2007 cited in Bergström, 2011:321) reveal the fact that each context has a specific spatial and social organization that frames practices, interactions and the relationship. Thus, in the interest of understanding the difference between online and offline self presentation and to see how people act to present "idealized" versions of themselves in their online self-presentations, in addition to the self presentation infrastructure marriage websites in Turkey propose, the distinctive qualities of computer-mediated communications will be addressed briefly in this section.

In the first place, it is seen that as different from face-to-face communication, individuals who are at a distance communicate with each other through screens "by means of a graphic, sound and textual representation of their identity" in computer mediated communication (Georges, 2009: 170-171). In this context, Ellison, Hancock and Toma state that there are three key factors associated with computer-mediated communication including "reduced cues", "asynchronicity" and "shared contextual expectations" that makes this type of communication unique. According to these authors, these three qualities are crucial to understand the nature of online communication and they become more of an issue to see how they influence the behaviors of online daters who would like to portray positive self-presentations of themselves (Ellison et al., 2012:47).

Goffman claims that in offline communication processes, individuals convey asymmetrical information as "the auditory perceives aspects that cannot be controlled by the actor" in addition to the actor's staging (Goffman cited in Schmitz, 2009:4). However, in contradistinction to offline self-presentation, uncontrollable personal qualities communicated through the instrument of body in "face to face interaction"; including gender, body type,

ethnicity, attractiveness, personality, tone of voice and so forth are absent in online contexts and they are communicated with verbal and visual cues in the nonexistence of real body in dating and marriage websites. Walther calls this particular characteristic of online communication as “reduced cues” and he defines this concept as “the absence of one’s physical being in computer mediated communication” (Walther, 1996:20).

In the second place, asynchronicity of communication is a particular character of computer-mediated communication. Unlike face to face interaction, in asynchronous interaction online users have “unlimited time for editing, composing, sending and receiving messages” (Hesse, Werner and Altman cited in Walther, 1996: 24). In face to face relationship formation, individuals present themselves synchronously over the course of interaction with their prospective partners. In contrast, online dating and marriage website users not only have an abundant amount of time to create their self-presentation through the instrument of profile forms and pictures but they also have time to edit the way they present themselves when they are not satisfied with their existing self-presentation. Additionally, throughout their communication with the candidates on dating and marriage platforms, they have time to refresh and edit messages they transmit to their prospective partners. Hence, these distinctive qualities of the online communication platforms; asynchronicity and editability enable users to present themselves selectively and carefully (Toma & Hancock, 2010:338).

Finally, as it can be seen in all “communal common grounds” (Clark cited in Ellison et al., 2012:48), the online groups also rely on the communal common grounds consisting of “facts, norms, procedures and lexicons that can be assumed to be known to any member of a community” (Ellison et al., 2012:48) and thereby users of these online communities hold shared expectations about online dating and marriage services according to academicians.

Thus, along with these distinctive qualities of online settings, other qualities such as the multitude of partner candidates, the absence of third parties, the requirement for member fee, the amplitude of information users are asked to reveal in their personal profiles and so forth bring with them peculiarities that make the communication between potentials partners in these online marriage websites unique and affect the self-presentation of the members of these websites. Besides, authors suggest that in online self-presentation, “computer mediated communication software gives shape to what has no form in reality, such as interests or thoughts” (Georges, 2009: 170).

Some of the distinctive features of online dating and marriage websites generate context specific strategies and behavior practices. To set an example of these newly emerging strategies and behavior patterns, we can talk about the absence of a third person in online dating and marriage services. In the absence of a third person who might normally give an opinion about the prospective partner candidate in offline partnership formation grounds, the users do not have friends to discuss about the candidate in online dating and marriage services (Schmitz, 2009:4); however, users adopting to these contexts and features of this online platforms make use of other available online cues (e.g. the number of virtual presents users receive in *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website) which Georges refers as "acting identity" (Georges, 2009: 168) to get information about the available partner candidates.

On the other hand, when some other features of online partnership formation, as in the multitude of partner candidates, membership fee, the amplitude of information website members are required to share online and so on are taken into account, it is seen that users not only develop new behavior patterns but also configure their offline partner formation mentality to adopt to these new platforms.

These distinctive qualities of online settings, peculiarities of online partner formation plus the relationship between social norms and user practices in these websites have generated an immense literature on self-presentation in online dating and marriage websites where users aim to present the "idealized" versions of themselves as briefly stated in the beginning of this chapter. In this context, first of all, I would like to give a brief account of the researches and theories investigating deception, misrepresentation in online self presentation and I will try to clarify how these concepts are related with the presentation of idealized version of the self. Then, I will refer to theories explaining the relationship between gender norms and self presentation to be able to present how gender affect the self-presentation practices of women and men subscribed to these websites through the instruments of textual information in personal profiles and profile pictures.

Presenting the idealized version of oneself in online relationship formation

As stated in the first chapter, scholars observing the early phases of online communication came up with technologically determined explanations about the role of internet

in the society and in this perspective, "online self-representations" were seen as "a self realization which is seen to operate free from the constraints imposed by offline social order" (Nakamura, 1995: 1; Cavanagh, 2007:120).

When we consider the distinctive qualities of online communication like reduced cues and anonymous nature of computer mediated relationships and self-disclosure or asynchronicity of the communication, one can assume that online relationship formation field might allow for a self-presentation which is "disengaged from gender, ethnicity and other problematic constructions" and "float free of biological and sociocultural determinant" (Dery, 1993 cited in Hardey, 2002:581). In addition to that, it is seen that the researches conducted in this field indicate the existence of users exercising misrepresentative and sometimes deceptive self presentations to a certain extent. However as Hardey claims, as users of these sites act with the motivation to enter into relations with other users, "dating and marriage sites rarely facilitate the construction of fantasy selves" (Hardey, 2002:58) despite their "quasi" anonymous nature. In the next pages, I will try to clarify Hardey's argument in reference to the online mating strategies of dating and marriage websites users together with the structures of online marriage websites provide.

Quasi anonymous nature of computer mediated relationships and self-disclosure in online relationship formation

Altman and Taylor argue that in offline contexts "relationships move from less intimate to more intimate involvement over time" (Altman & Taylor cited in Whitty, 2008: 1720). The academicians describe this process using an "onion analogy" and they claim that individuals reveal more and deeper information about themselves as the relationship progresses. Hence, it is argued that in the early phases of offline relationship, people do not share intimate information until they feel safe to disclose themselves more and gradually they reveal more information about themselves (Whitty, 2008: 1720).

In contrast with the way offline relationship progress, the results of an early qualitative research by Wysocki (1996, 1998) investigating the difference between the nature of online and offline disclosure introduces the fact that "internet users come to personally know one another more quickly and intimately than in face-to-face relationships" (Whitty, 2008: 1720). Researchers account for this situation with the anonymity of online platforms and they claim

that due to the anonymous nature of computer mediated relationships, users feel more comfortable to share more information on themselves at a faster pace (Merkle, Richardson, 2000:189). On the contrary, even though online marriage websites allow their members to use nicknames in order for them to conceal their identity on these platforms, it is hard to claim that these websites are completely anonymous sites as users are asked to share a considerable amount of information about themselves including their photographs. Thus, rather than being totally anonymous platforms, I claim that referring them as "quasi-anonymous" sites as Wang suggests is a more correct way of calling these types of online platforms (Wang, 2011: 486).

Thereby, even though the users do not necessarily have to feel at ease like they are supposed to feel in completely anonymous sites, the amplitude of they are asked to reveal on the profile forms of dating and marriage websites cause users to disclose more information about themselves than the initial phases of offline relationship formation. Besides, on internet dating and marriage sites, the profiles are set-up in a way to reveal both "depth and breadth" (Whitty, 2008:1721) unlike the gradual relationship formation process in social penetration theory of Altman and Taylor.

In the case of Turkish marriage websites analyzed in this dissertation, it is seen that users have to respond a considerable number of profile questions about themselves; not only about surface level aspects of themselves like their physical qualities (eye color, weight, height, etc.) but also questions that require deeper self-disclosure including their personality, interests, preferences, religious beliefs and so forth (See Appendix, from Table C.12 to Table C.20 for the questionnaires of *Gönülden Sevenler* and *Pembe Panjur* marriage websites). Many marriage site users in Turkey fill these required profile questions and publish information about themselves on their profile forms.[212] In relation to the vast amount of information users have to disclose in these platforms, it is observed that Turkish marriage site users do not always feel at ease to share personal information. Different from Wysocki's proposition about Internet users, many users of marriage websites in Turkey question the anonymity of these platforms and the analysis of semi-structured interviews reveal that female users are more hesitant to share their photographs particularly due to their fear of being recognized by their acquaintances.

[212] While the total number of questions users are asked to respond in *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website is 50, this number reaches to 104 in *Pembe Panjur* marriage website. Accordingly, users of *Pembe Panjur* marriage website have the potential to disclose a more inclusive presentation of themselves than users of *Gönülden Sevenler*.

Misrepresentation and deception in online dating and marriage websites

Researchers investigating online dating and marriage services state that "deception is the main perceived disadvantage of online dating" (Brym & Lenton, 2001:3), even though "the majority of online dating participants claim they are honest about their self-presentation" (Gibbs et al., 2006; Brym & Lenton, 2001).

The analysis of semi structured interviews with the users of online marriage site users in Turkey reveal that trust is a common problem among marriage website users. The female and male interviewees of both Islamic and liberal online marriage services in Turkey mistrust the self-presentations of other members and they complain about the false representations of the opposite sex.

"I am a very careful user. I examine the self presentations of users closely. However, I realize that people misrepresent themselves in these websites. Recently, I met a man. On his profile form, it was written that he does not have a kid. When we started talking, he told me that he has a 4 years old daughter who is living with his mother in İzmir and he stated that he did not share this information on his profile form as women do not prefer men with kids." (Gönülden Sevenler, Female, 36, Conservative, Teacher, Undergraduate)

On the contrary, most of the interviewees of using marriage websites in Turkey also declare sharing truthful descriptions of themselves. However, it is observed that while some of the interviewees claim to be honest in the way they present themselves, the verbal information published in the profile forms sometimes contradict with their claims. As an illustration of this fact, the account of a male interviewee from a southeastern province of Turkey can be given. This user gave misinformation about his location and declared his city as İstanbul on his profile form even though in his account he was defending the importance of sharing the truths about oneself in marriage websites.[213]

"I never intend to lie when I talk about myself. When somebody has to lie, he becomes anxious. As I tell the truth, it was easy for me. However, questions are not enough for people to know each other and to trust each other" (Gönülden Sevenler, Male, Devout, Police Academy Graduate, 26, Ağrı)

Recent surveys observing the misrepresentation in dating services confirm Turkish users' perception and practices about online deception and they elaborate on the way people

[213] In our semi structured telephone interview, this user mentioned that he was living in Ağrı. Following our interview, I had to chance to look over his personal profile on the website once more and I realized that his declaration on his profile form did not match with his account.

share deceptive information. The findings of one of the researches conducted by Gibbs, Ellison and Heino (2006) indicate that "86% felt others misrepresented their physical appearance" (Gibbs et al. cited in Ellison, Heino, Gibbs, 2006: 419) and a 2001 research study shows that "over a quarter of online dating participants reported misrepresenting some aspect of their identity, most commonly "age" (14%), "marital status" (10%), and "appearance" (10%)" (Brym & Lenton cited in Ellison, Heino, Gibbs, 2006: 419). Besides other researches show that male users are more deceptive when it comes to declaration of their relationship status (Whitty, 2008) and relationship goals (Hall et al., 2010) compared to women.

Misrepresentation of marital status was also a common problem expressed by female users of Turkish marriage sites, accordingly, female interviewees of Turkish marriage websites mentioned several times that they met many married men on these websites who gave misinformation about civil status.

"I met many men who state that they are single but when I start talking I learn that they are not. They tell me things like 'I am planning to get divorced or I do not live together with my wife anymore'..." (Pembe Panjur, Female, 28, Liberal, Unemployed, High school)

As it was discussed above, the distinctive qualities of the online communication platforms "asynchronicity" and "editability" allow online dating and marriage site users to present themselves selectively and carefully to portrait an idealized version of themselves in order not to be ignored by their prospective partners. In addition to false written declaration of age, marital status, researchers claim that both the photographs and verbal self descriptions of users of dating and marriage websites are "malleable" and "subjective" as users can select the photographs they look the best among numerous others; publish older photos of themselves when they were younger and more attractive or edit their photographs; besides textual descriptions of users are also written with the intention to portrait an idealized version of the self which convey a mispresentation of actual physical appearance (Toma & Hancock, 2010:338).

On the other hand, as Hardey claims many users subscribe to these websites with the motivation to meet with prospective candidates and to find partners (Hardey, 2002:58). Thus, researchers claim that due to the anticipation of a face-to-face meeting, users have to create a balance between presenting the idealized versions of themselves and being accurate (Mascaro, Magee, Goggins, 2012). A recent study investigating self-disclosure on online dating websites

demonstrate that participants who anticipate face-to- face interaction more are also more open the way they disclose themselves and they are also open to share negative aspects of themselves (Gibbs et al., 2006). In addition to users' motivation to establish real world relationships, the norms of the websites governing relationship practices seem to be influential in the rareness of fantasy selves in online dating and marriage services. In the first place, dating and marriage websites users are encouraged and recommended to be 'realistic' and 'truthful' about their self presentation and they are asked to indicate clearly their expectations about their future partners (Hardey, 2002:573). In a similar fashion, when the suggestions of Turkish marriage websites are evaluated, it is seen that both in *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website and *Pembe Panjur* marriage website, similar recommendations exist.

> *"The personal qualities should be described clearly, in a detailed way and should reflect the truth about the person"*[214] (Gönülden Sevenler)
>
> On the homepage of *Pembe Panjur*, there is a part called "general recommendations" and it includes suggestions about membership, photographs, security and messaging with other users. It is observed that both the user contract of *Gönülden Sevenler* website and *Pembe Panjur*'s recommendations are written to encourage members to present themselves in a correct and truthful manner.
>
> - *"Why is it important to publish accurate information about yourself on personal profile form?"* (Pembe Panjur)
>
> - *"As the accuracy of the information you publish on your profile form will affect your communication with the people you meet on this website, we invite you to respond the questions about character analysis carefully and to fill the self presentation part with caution"* [215](Pembe Panjur)

In sum, many researchers investigating the online relationship formation in Western dating websites argue that users have to make strategic decisions to equilibrate the motivation to portrait an idealized version of themselves that are compatible with social norms and being truthful to actual selves in these websites. In addition to these, the rules of websites also encourage people to reveal themselves in a truthful way.

[214] http://www.gonuldensevenler.com/usercontract

[215] http://www.pembepanjur.com/guideline_general.php

The effect of symbolic differences of marriage websites on the expectations of users

In his description of face to face self presentation, Goffman underlines the importance of social rules in social interaction. In this context, one can claim that individuals acting with the motivation to present the "idealized image of themselves" have to conceal some of the aspects of themselves while they emphasize other qualities of themselves in accordance with the accepted norms of the society. Scholars state that this strategic expression of oneself creates "a tension between what is accepted socially and what is desired personally (Ajzen and Fishbein cited in Uski & Lampinen, 2014:450). In this respect, Goffman's work on "stigma" and "stigmatised social groups" (1963) are useful to to manifest the sources of these tensions and to exemplify the type of qualities or conditions individuals have and feel the need to conceal in certain social interactions.

> When Goffman's study is taken into consideration, it is seen that these stigmas are the qualities of individuals that can prevent them to be accepted as a "normal" individual in a given society. Social stigmas are categorized in three main groups according to Goffman. Thus, the stigmas that take place in the first group are related with "physical qualities" including disabilities, sicknesses, beauty and so on; the second group is related with "personal traits" covering low income level, mental disorder, unemployment, alcoholism and so forth and the stigmas in Goffman's third group are connected with "imagined tribal stigmas" containing nationality, race and religion (Goffman, 1963).

Hence, one can argue that individuals carrying one or more social stigmas fail to comply with the existing social norms of that society if they present these qualities in their self presentations. Starting from Goffman's point of view on self presentation and stigma, it can be argued that individuals feel the need to appeal to social norms and socially accepted "repertoire of available self presentations" (Cavanagh, 2007:130) to be able to present idealized versions of themselves in face to face social interaction. On the other hand, Goffman also states that individuals can form an idea about the individuals they meet depending on the type of social context they come across others as "individuals of a particular kind are likely to be found in a given social setting" (Goffman, 1959:1). Recent researches also manifest that "the context of the social interaction" and online dating website users' perceptions about "target audience" of that specific context influence the ways online users present themselves (Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008). Thus, one can argue that the way users disclose themselves might show differences depending on the type of website they use (Jiang, Bazarova, & Hancock 2010). Besides, the findings of Perea's study reveal that users in these online settings observe the

strategies of other users in the online community to be able to survive in these communities (Perea, 2010: 3).

As it was examined in the second chapter of this dissertation, the self-presentation infrastructures Turkish marriage websites offer, their positioning and their institutional identities are not similar. In this regard, one can assume that the symbolic differences between these social settings where online relationship formation commence influence users' perception about the others in these settings. As it was discussed in the second chapter of this thesis study, *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website earns a a degree of social recognition or prestige as this website possess "spiritual capital", as Verter defines this term (Verter, 2003).[216] As a consequence of this recognition among individuals, it can be claimed that conservative Turkish internet users who act with the motivation to find pious or conservative spouse candidates prefer to subscribe to this website instead of being members of liberal marriage websites. On the other hand, together with the findings of the semi-structures interviews, one can assume that less conservative or liberal Turkish internet users who embrace the cultural tastes of *Engaged Cosmopolitans* (Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014: 172) prefer liberal marriage websites as they expect to find individuals like themselves in these online platforms.

As an illustration of these two arguments the symbolic differences of these websites and the stigmas associated with what is socially accepted in Islamic and liberal social settings, I would like to refer to some accounts of interviewees who are members of these websites.

As one of the young pious female interviewee explains in her account, users make an inference about the personal qualities of other members of the marriage sites depending on the symbolic differences of these sites. In this case, the spiritual capital of *Gönülden Sevenler* lead some of their users to assume that religious and "decent" individuals appear in Islamic marriage websites and these marriage websites are comprised of people who would not deceive them.

"I am not a devout person but I consider myself a conservative…For this reason, I decided to subscribe to Gönülden Sevenler marriage website. I think other marriage websites are used for

[216] In parallel with their positioning, their "repertoire" of the questions for users' self presentations differ significantly. In *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website, one fifth of the questions are about the embodied state of spiritual capital; the religious beliefs, religious practices and religious connections of the users and their potential partners. Besides, the response choices in the multiple choice format of this website also carry responses that connote a social capital, belonging to an Islamist or conservative milieu or participating in practices that are suggested and approved by this milieu.

flirting and finding sexual partners. I also subscribed to eCift but I did not feel comfortable there so I gave up. Gönülden Sevenler defines itself as an "Islamic" marriage website and their emphasis on Islam convinced me to become a member of this site. I assume that the number of decent people on this website is more than others…I mean I guess there are more people subscribed to this website with the real intention to get married." (Gönülden Sevenler, Female, Religious, Post graduate, 27, Istanbul)

On the other hand, the findings of the interviews demonstrate that while some the users of Islamic marriage websites know and use liberal marriage websites as well, several liberal marriage website users do not know *Gönülden Sevenler* or other Islamic marriage websites as during their search for a suitable dating for marriage or marriage websites for themselves, they did not include "Islam" as a criterion.

In the second place, as it will be revealed in the analysis of socio-demographic qualities of Turkish marriage websites' users, one can assume that the extremely low percentage of users with disabilities in both liberal and Islamic marriage websites are related with the stigmas around physical qualities. Besides, it is seen that only 2 % of Islamic marriage website users declare consuming alcohol. In this context one might argue that Islamic marriage website users present themselves in a manner that appeals to socially accepted "repertoire of available self presentations" in Islamic marriage websites.

3. Gender and Online Self Presentation in Dating and Marriage Websites

Gender is an important paradigm for online self-presentation practices. In this context, several researches analyzing the effect of gender in online self-presentation practices in social media refer to the differences between male and female users. On the other hand, the representation of gender in online dating and marriage websites is also investigated by several researchers (DeMasi, 2011; Hancock & Toma, 2009; Hall, Park et al., 2010; Ellison et al., 2006) in the last decade. While some researchers present these differences between the self presentation of men and women as individual choices, others refer to social norms and the influence of media in the self-portrayal of men and women.

In the first place, according to the findings of these researchers investigating the representation of gender in online dating and marriage websites, it is seen that women tend to misrepresent their physical qualities more than men. In their analysis of male and female users photographs in online dating websites, Hancock & Toma found that "almost half (48.1%) of female photographs were rated below the midpoint of the accuracy scale, while only 14.8% of

male photographs were rated below the midpoint" (Hancock & Toma, 2009: 380-381). In this regard, scholars also demonstrate that especially female users of dating and marriage website act with the aim of "presenting a flawless version of themselves" and publish their photographs in these platforms with "manipulating the visual codes strategically" (Ellison, Heino ve Gibbs, 2006: 415-441) to realize this aim. Several researches confirm that women misrepresent their weight (Ellison et al., 2006 in Hall, Park et al., 2010:120) and the findings indicate that women give place to photographs in which they suppose to have "more attractive and slimmer" looks, while they "manipulate their photos" to be able to present the ideal versions of themselves (Whitty; 2008: 1707-1723).

"Female photographs contained more physical discrepancies related to age, hair style, and skin, and more photographic process discrepancies involving retouching and professional photography. These observations fall in line with claims that youthfulness and fertility are signaled by clear skin and lustrous hair for females, and that men attend to these cues when considering potential partners (Scheib, Gangestad & Thornhill, 1999). The tendency of women (but not of men) to hire professional photographers to take their profile photographs further highlights the importance of physical attractiveness for women in the dating arena" (Hancock & Toma, 2009: 381).

Besides, women's representation of their age is a much debated issue. Researchers found that women tend to publish older photographs of themselves in which they look younger compared to men. Accordingly, the findings of Hancock & Toma manifest that women's photographs being taken "an average of 17 months earlier, and men's photographs taken only an average of 6 months earlier" (Hancock & Toma, 2009: 381) in order to "match men's desired age range for a partner"[217] (Hall, Park et al., 2010: 121).

On the other hand, other research findings demonstrate that male users of online dating websites misrepresent their personal goals about the expected relationships and the

[217] "Gender differences in misrepresentation of age are complicated. What men desire is not youth per se but rather features of fertility (Kenrick, Keefe, Gabrielidis, & Cornelius, 1996). As men age, they prefer increasingly younger mates. For example, men in their thirties prefer women who are roughly five years younger, but men in their fifties prefer women who are ten to twenty years younger (Kenrick & Keefe, 1992). Although men consider younger women as more desirable and attractive, this is not true for women (Haselton et al., 2005). Women seek men who are typically the same age or older than they are (de Backer, Braeckman, & Farinpour, 2008). In order to match men's desired age range for a partner, older women will be more likely to strategically misrepresent their age than younger women." For more information, see: Jeffrey A. Hall, Namkee Park, Hayeon Song Et al. Strategic misrepresentation in online dating: The effects of gender, self-monitoring, and personality traits. **Journal of Social and Personal Relationships**, Vol: 27(1), 2010, pp. 121; Keefe, Susi Krehbiel, "Marriage" In Stange, Mary Zeiss, Carol K. Oyster, C. K., & Jane Sloan (Eds.), **Encyclopedia of Women in Todays World**, Los Angeles, CA: SAGE, 2011.

characteristics of the partner they look for in a potential long-term relationship:

"Men were more willing than women to misrepresent…personal interests and personal attributes, for the purpose of getting a date. During courtship men are more willing to, and are perceived to, lie more than women to achieve short-term mating goals (Haselton et al., 2005; O'Sullivan, 2008). The present study's results suggest that men are more likely to misrepresent both characteristics that demonstrate long-term mating value (e.g., personal assets) and personal characteristics relevant to screening potential partners in online dating (e.g., personal interests, personal attributes, and age)" (Hall, Park et al., 2010: 129).

In her account where she embraces gay and lesbian individuals' online self presentations together with heterosexual individuals, DeMasi underlines the similarities between them and she states that "online personal profiles solidify rather than expand conventionally understood meanings of gender" (DeMasi, 2011:213).

"Online profiles of heterosexual and lesbian females routinely make references to a desire for love and romance. In contrast, both gay and straight male profiles tend to describe the physical attributes of the partner(s) they are interested in. If online personal profiles…are unlikely to offer possibilities for creating relationships outside of conventionally established frameworks" (DeMasi, 2011:213).

As a final remark, DeMasi highlights the infrastructure and architecture of online dating websites and claims that these websites "compel users to identify with established gender and sexual categories, they may also encourage writers of personal profiles to rearticulate rather than transform the boundaries of gender" (DeMasi, 2011:213).

In the second place, academicians studying online self presentation also question the influence of media on the self presentations of men and women. The researches indicate that 20 % of women prefer to upload photographs of themselves with attires revealing their body on MySpace (Hall, West, Joshua, et al., 2012) due to the "the great exposure of thin and sexualized female body types" in mainstream media (Grabe, Ward, & Hyde, 2008; Lin, & Reid, 2009; Monro, & Huon, 2005; Owen & Laurel-Seller, 2000; Tylka & Subich, 2004 cited in Ruckel, 2012). On that note Döring, Reif and Poeschl claim that "media and advertising not only reflect, but also provide guidance for gender roles which can lead to distorted views" (Döring, Reif, Poeschl, 2016: 956) and Kim and Lowry (2005) state that, "as viewers see more and more images, they gradually come to cultivate or adopt attitudes and expectations about the world that coincide with the images they see" (Kim & Lowry, 2005: 902). In this regard, the findings of Döring, Reif and Poeschl's research on Instagram selfies demonstrate that the self presentations of "men and women reproduce traditional gender stereotypes" and in comparison to the representation men and women in magazine adverts, the researchers claim

that the self presentations of men and women on Instagram are even more stereotypical than the representation of gender in magazine adverts (Döring, Reif, Poeschl, 2016: 961).

When the studies investigating the online self presentation of Turkish women (Uğurlu, 2015; Bilis, 2014) are taken into account, it is seen that the results of these researches share similarities with the findings of the researches mentioned above. Accordingly, the results manifest that Turkish women not only reproduce the "ideal beauty norms" in advertisements (Uğurlu, 2015) but also socially accepted gender roles (Bilis, 2014:14) in their online self presentations. On the other hand, Turkish scholars have also analyzed the self presentation strategies of pious women in Turkey. Recent researches regarding this issue reveal that the self presentation of individuals who bring their Muslim identity into the forefront display evidences that the online self presentations of Muslim individuals are affected not only by the gender stereotypes in media but also by the articulation of religious discourses with the gender representations in media. As an illustration of these outcomes, Aslanoğlu's research related with the Instagram usage practices of young, conservative, Turkish women can be reviewed. Aslanoğlu's study points out to the fact that the ambiguities between "modern" and "private" explained in Göle's study (1997) are still relevant in this day. Accordingly, as the findings of Aslanoğlu's research points, young, conservative female Instagram users who publish their photographs on this medium question their practices when they publish private photographs (close up face pictures, domestic space, practices that take place in the house, photographs of their fiancé or spouses) in this public platform. These women who attach importance to contemporary values like "popularity", "number of followers" judge themselves from time to time on the appropriateness of sharing photographs belonging to private realm (Aslanoğlu, 2016). Aslanoğlu prefers to share a moral account of this case situation and she concludes that these young, conservative, Turkish women question their online practices of publishing the photographs of private realms and delete them in some instances as they suffer a "twinge of conscience". However, it can be argued that "social surveillance" mechanisms (Marwick, 2012: 379) might also be related with the re- organization and self-evaluation of these self presentation practices of young, Muslim women. Such findings make way for the presupposition that Muslim users who are defining themselves with the religious communities they belong or those who want to highlight their religious identity in their online self presentations might employ differentiating strategies compared to less conservative and pious individuals.

In sum as Enguix and Ardévol claim, the various studies mentioned above which refer to the online representation of gender in social media, dating and marriage websites manifest that "online profiles are spaces of negotiation between users, their audiences, and the sociotechnological design" (Enguix, Ardévol, 2014:502).

4. Self Presentation of Turkish Marriage Websites' Users

As Fanny Georges state in her article, "Représentation de soi et identité numérique: Une approche sémiotique et quantitative de l'emprise culturelle du web 2.0", digital identity is compromised of "three sets of signs" including "declarative identity, acting identity and calculated identity". (Georges, 2009: 168). In this regard, Georges defines these three digital identities as below:

> "The "declarative identity" consists of data entered by the user (example: name, date of birth, photograph). The "acting identity" consists of an explicit statement of the user's activities by the System (eg "x and y are now friends"); The "calculated identity" is manifested by quantified variables produced by a calculation of the System (example: number of friends, number of groups)" (Georges, 2009: 168).

On that note, it is worthwhile to remark that the identity cues available in marriage websites are quite less than the identity cues in social media platforms[218] as the marriage websites limit the amount and type of information a user can share on these platforms. To set an example, other than the limitation of the number of profile pictures one can share, users can not publish videos or share information that takes place in other websites whereas in social media platforms like Facebook, the various groups one joins or the texts, pictures, comments one likes give other users cues about the person's identity, tastes and social position. This difference between social media platforms and marriage websites also stems from the tight architectures (Papacharissi, 2009) of marriage websites which only provide a very limited connection on virtual network (e.g. some internal hyperlinks that connect their users to these marriage websites' internal pages like profile pictures or users' profiles and a few external hyperlinks that connect users with social media accounts of these websites).

[218] For a detailed analysis of virtual identity cues and the design of online visibility, see: Dominique Cardon, "Le Design de la Visibilité: Un Essai de Cartographie du Web 2.0", **Réseaux**, Vol:152 (6), 2008, pp. 93-137

As a result of this architectural quality, these sites do not allow their users to connect to other virtual networks through their websites. In addition to that, the simple forums they comprise in their main pages only allow for a limited interaction between users. The members of these websites can only post profile pictures or share short texts (which refer to the updates to the open-ended questions regarding the self presentation of users) in these forums in comparison to vast amount of information (e.g. online news, group memberships, music clips, short videos and so forth) shared by users of social media platforms who can access to other virtual networks and who share the information revealed in these networks on their social media accounts.[219]

Figure 4.1: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website – Forum Updates[220]

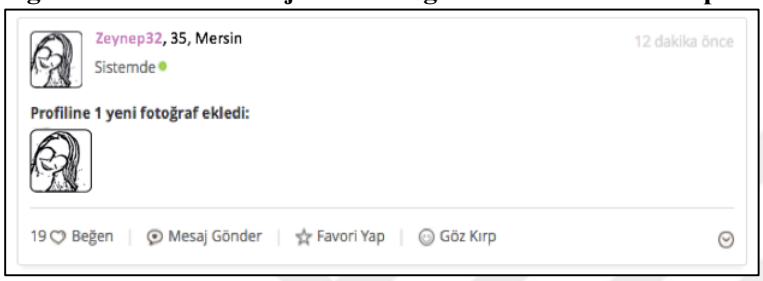


Figure 4.2: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Forum Updates[221]



Besides, other than liking comments, making them favorites, winking or sending a personal message that can only be seen by the recipient, users can not interact in other ways on these forums. (Also, as members of marriage websites use nicknames and do not share their

[219] Pembe Panjur recently introduced an option for its users to verify their membership by their social media accounts and added a button that manifests the common "likes" of their users on Facebook. However, within the limitations of this dissertation study, this newly added feature was not taken into account in this analysis.
[220] In order to protect the privacy rights of the user, the socio-demographic information and the profile picture of the user is transformed.
[221] In order to protect the privacy rights of the user, the socio-demographic information and the profile picture of the user is transformed.

real names on these platforms in general, members can not have an access to the other virtual representations of each other on internet unless they establish a relationship and share information regarding their offline or other online identities.)

In the light of the information shared above and within the limitations of this thesis study, in my analysis of self presentation of marriage website users, I will refer to the "declarative identities" of marriage website users and the account of the interviewees to be able to present their self presentation. In the second place, as the netnographic observations (Kozinets, 2010) put forth, only *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website's infrastructure enables users to see the mate selection criteria related with socio-demographic qualities of their users. Even though liberal marriage websites include these questions in their questionnaires as well, they use this type of information to match their users but they do not share it on the profiles of their users. For this reason, mate selection criteria of marriage website users will be discussed in reference to the findings of semi-structured interviews. However, the findings of *Gönülden Sevenler* will be shared briefly in this analysis.

4.1. Socio-demographic qualities of marriage websites users

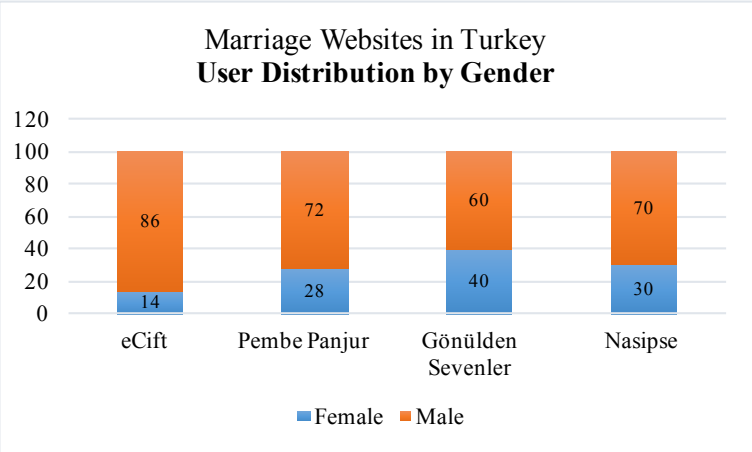
4.1.1. Gender Distribution in Marriage Websites in Turkey

In order to make a comparison of the gender distribution of people in Turkish Republic with the percentage of male and female users in marriage websites, Turkish Statistical Institute's *address-based population registration system* results of 31.12.2014 is taken into account. The results reveal that the percentage of male population in Turkey is 50,2 % (38 984 302), while the percentage for females is 49.8 % (38 711 602).[222]

As it is indicated at Table x, top 4 marriage websites in Turkey are male-dominated websites and the percentage of their male and female users do not reflect the sex ratio of people in Turkish Republic.[223]

[222] http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=18616
[223] Male-domination is also visible in Turkey's leading dating site, *Siberalem*.

Figure 4.3: User Distribution by Gender –Marriage Websites in Turkey



In the first place, when the sex ratio of liberal websites is taken into account, it is seen that the sex ratio of website users is not mentioned in the homepage of *Pembe Panjur*. The findings referring to the percentage of men and women demonstrate that 28 % of *Pembe Panjur* users are female and 72 % of users are male.[224] In the second place, it is observed that the sex ratio of *eCift* website members is mentioned in the homepage of the site as 51 % women and 49 % men. However, this ratio does not correspond to the statistical results referring to percentage of male and female users shared by the administrators of this website. According to the statistical analysis of the raw data provided by this website, only 14 % *eCift* users are female and 86 % of *eCift* users are male. On the other hand, the results of the statistics based the information shared by the owner of Nasipse demonstrate that 30 % of *Nasipse* members are female and 70 % of them are male. The sex ratio of website users is not mentioned in the homepage of *Nasipse*. Finally, it is observed that 60 % *Gönülden Sevenler* members are male and 40 % of *Gönülden Sevenler* users are female users.

The co-owner of *Pembe Panjur* website argues that there are two reasons for the under representation of women in marriage websites. First of all, Akın refers to gender gap in digital media usage in Turkey.[225] Turkish Statistical Institute's latest report on Internet usage[226] confirms Akın's claim about this digital divide in internet usage in Turkey (46,1% of women and 65,8 % of men are Internet users in Turkey). In the second place, Akın refers to the stigma about using dating and marriage websites in Turkey and he states that "even though marriage

[224] These numbers differ slightly by the sex ratio stated in 2014 press kit of *Pembe Panjur* website. According to this source, 30 % of website users are female and 70 % them are male.
[225] Haluk Akın, Personal Communication, June 28, 2015
[226] http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=18660

demand is appreciated in the society, using marriage websites to find a spouse is still a taboo in the Turkish society and the negative perception of online dating and marriage websites prevents potential female users' usage". On that note, one can assume that other than the stigma attached to online marriage websites, the fact that a high percentage of Turkish women come from traditional families where women do not initiate relationships[227] and pre-marital relationships of women are not well received. In this context, one can argue that the limited representation of women in these marriage websites is also related with Turkish women's hesitations about the appropriateness of these websites due to the social and religious norms governing gender relationships.

On the other hand, the unequal distribution of male and female users on these websites have an effect on usage practices as well. As the percentage of men are much higher compared to women, women receive superabundant number of messages from male users and they eliminate several male candidates quite easily without starting any communication. Thus, one can state that this unequal gender distribution on marriage websites lead women to be more selective than men.

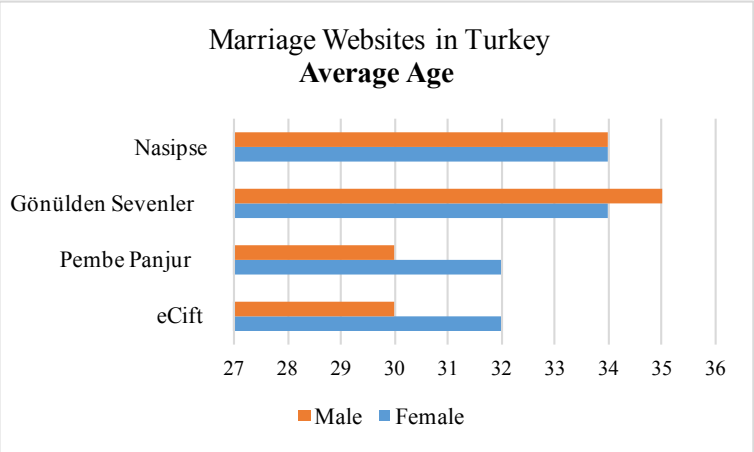
4.1.2. Age Distribution in Marriage Websites in Turkey

Turkish Statistical Institute's *Marriage And Divorce Statistics* reveal the fact that the average marriage age for both genders has been increasing since 2001. In 2001, the average marriage age was 22.2 for women and 25.5 for men.[228] *Marriage And Divorce Statistics* of 2014 indicate that average marriage age for females has increased to 23.7 for women and 26.9 for men in 2014. As it is demonstrated at Table x, the average age of users who are subscribed to Turkey's leading marriage websites are older than the average marriage age for both genders.

[227] 75 % of marriages were arranged marriages between 1959-1968 marriage cohort (Nauck & Klaus, 2008:296) and several women did not grow up in families where their parents

[228] http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=13662

Figure 4.4: Average Age for Female and Male Users –Marriage Websites in Turkey

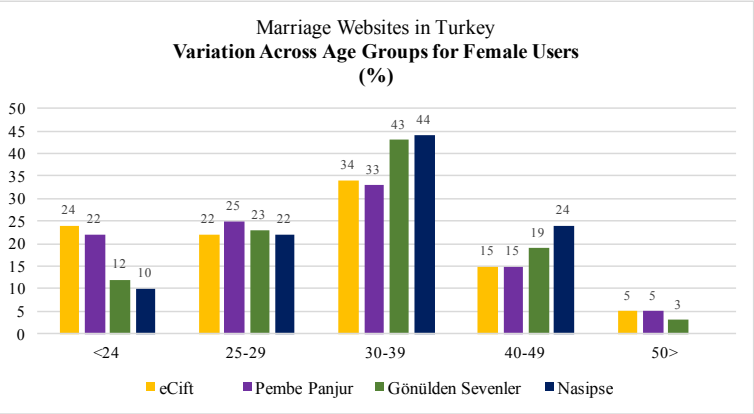


According to Turkish Civil Code (article 124), the legal marriage age is 18 for both genders. The women and the men who are at the age of 18 do not have to get their parent's approval for civil marriage. However, in special circumstances, the laws allow men and women who have completed the age of 16 to get married if all conditions (court decision and parental approval) are met.[229] In parallel with the legal age defined for marriage, the search engines of *Pembe Panjur*, *eCift* and *Nasipse* websites do not allow users to search for men and women under 18 years old. In *Gönülden Sevenler*, there is no age limitation for search engine and the users are allowed to search for men and women under 18 years old. However, during my netnographic observations (Kozinets, 2010) in these marriage websites, I did not encounter any users who are under 18 years old.

In parallel with the average age of females who are subscribed to marriage websites in Turkey (Table x), '30 to 39 years old' is the age group that has the highest percentage for women who were subscribed to Islamic Marriage websites. However, it should be noted that 46 % of female users of *eCift*, 47 % of female users of *Pembe Panjur* are less than 30 years old, where as only 35 % of female users for *Gönülden Sevenler* and 32.32 % for *Nasipse* fall into this category (Table x). When it comes to the average age for male users, a parallel trend can be observed and the findings indicate that '30 to 39 years old' is also the age group that has the highest percentage for male users as well.

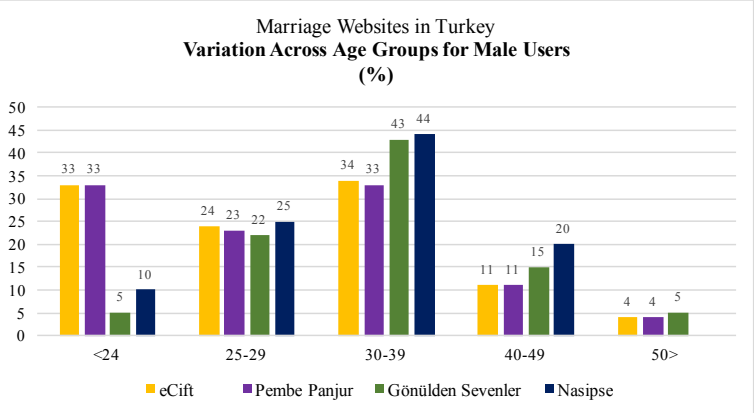
[229] http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=16056

Figure 4.5: Variation Across Age Groups for Female Users –Marriage Websites in Turkey



On the other hand, 57 % of male users of *eCift*, 56 % of male users of *Pembe Panjur* are less than 30 years old. In addition to this, the results present that "Less than 24 years old" age group that has quite high percentage for male users of *eCift* and *Pembe Panjur* (Table x). However, the percentage of users who belong to 'Less than 24 years old' age group is only 5 % for male users of *Gönülden Sevenler* and it is 10 % for males using *Nasipse* website. In the light of this information, it is seen that liberal marriage websites include a high percentage of male users who are below the average marriage of men (26,9, 2014 statistics). On that note, it is worthwhile to refer to the accounts of some male interviewees that indicate that not all the men using these marriage websites have the aim of getting married. It is assumed that several male users subscribe to marriage websites to establish short-term relationships or to find sexual partners. The aims and motivations of marriage website users will be discussed in detail in the fourth chapter.

Figure 4.6: Variation Across Age Groups for Male Users –Marriage Websites in Turkey



In both Islamic and Liberal marriage websites, it is observed that the percentage of

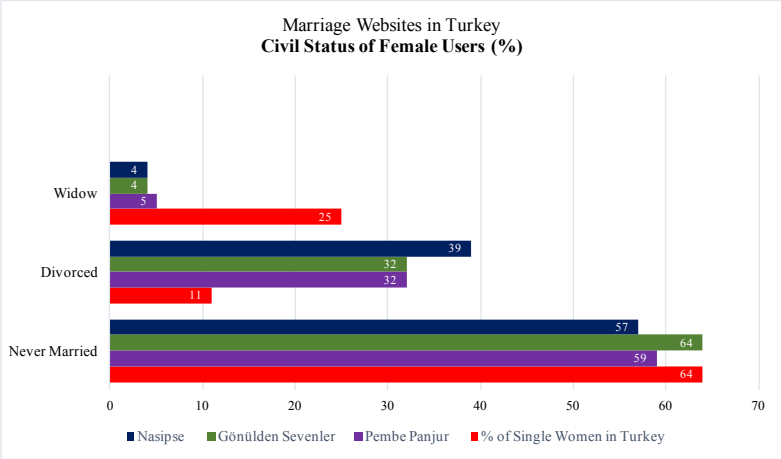
members decreases after the age of 40 and less than 5 % of men and women over 50 years old are members of these marriage websites. (Table x, Table x)

4.1.3. Civil Status of Users in Marriage Websites in Turkey

In Turkey, the civil status of 37 million 228 thousand 272 people (64 %) who are over the age of fifteen is married and there are 21 million 095 thousand 968 people (36 %) who are not married. *(23 % of women and 31 % of men are never married; 4 % of women and 3 % of men are divorced and 9% of women and 2 % of men are widowed.)*[230] *"Never married"* women constitute 63.8 %, "*divorced women"* constitute 11.1% and "*widowed women"* constitute 25 % of 'not married women' in Turkey. As it is demonstrated at Table x, the average percentage of *never married* women for marriage websites (60 %) corresponds to the percentage of never married women in Turkey. However, divorced women constitute nearly 34 % of female marriage website users and widowed women constitute only 4 %.

On the other side, never married men constitute the biggest percentage of male marriage website users, followed by divorced men constitute and widowed men.

Figure 4.7: Civil Status of Female Marriage Website Users

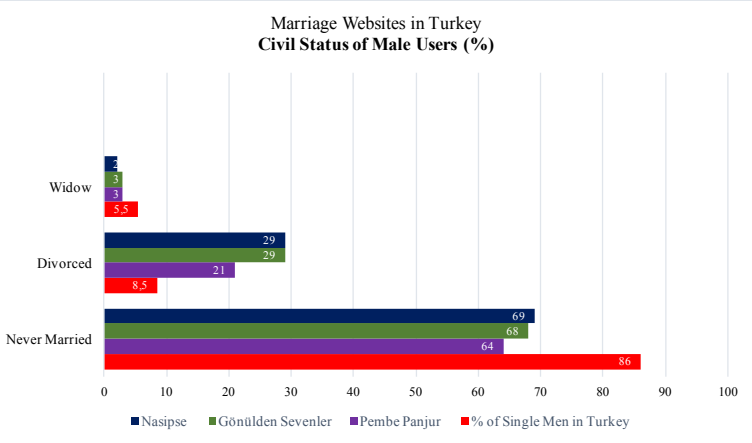


eCift administrators did not provide gender specific information regarding the civil status of their users. However, according to the analysis of the data obtained from the managers

[230] Turkey in Statistics 2014, Turkish Statistical Institute, Printing Division, Ankara, 2014

of this website, it is seen that 70 % of *eCift* users are single, 14 % divorced, 11 % lives part from his/her spouse and 5 % are widowed.

Figure 4.8: Civil Status of Male Marriage Website Users



When the civil status and age statistics of online marriage websites' users are taken into account, the results indicate that these websites include a significant percentage of women and men who do not meet some of the general mate selection criteria of Turkish citizens. While the findings of TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey (2011) demonstrate that 84,7 % of men prefer a female spouse candidate who is "getting married for the first time", more than 30 percent of women in *Pembe Panjur*, *Gönülden Sevenler* and *Nasipse* websites are divorced women. Besides, the results of TAYA (2011) indicate that 83,4 % of women prefer never married male candidates as well. Thus, in this context, one can argue that a significant percentage of users of these websites are "ones who can not be involved in the marriage market" in normal circumstances and it is seen that these websites allow men and women who do not meet some of the general mate selection criteria of Turkish citizens to initiate relationships online.

A second important finding of this analysis is also related with general mate selection practices of Turkish people. When mate selection preferences of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website users are compared with the findings of TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey (2011) presented above, it is seen that only less than half of the members prefer "never-married" spouse candidates. Thus, in parallel with the findings above, not only the self-presentations of users but also their mate selection preferences differentiate from general Turkish marriage market criteria where men and women prefer "never married" and relatively younger spouse

candidates. On the other hand, the results demonstrate that especially female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* do not prefer a male candidate with a kid, whereas more than 40 % of male users do not attribute importance to this quality. In this regard, one can assume that while the female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website do not attach too much importance to the civil status of male users, they prefer childless men. [231]

Figure 4.9: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Mate Selection Preferences (Civil Status)

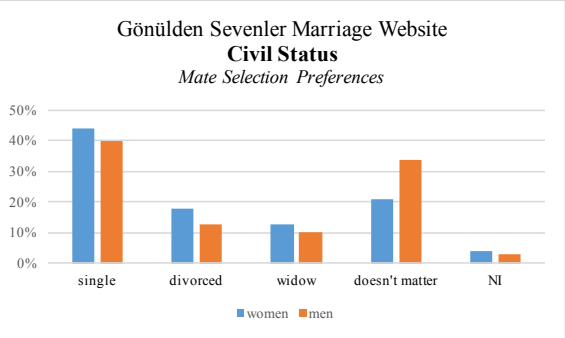
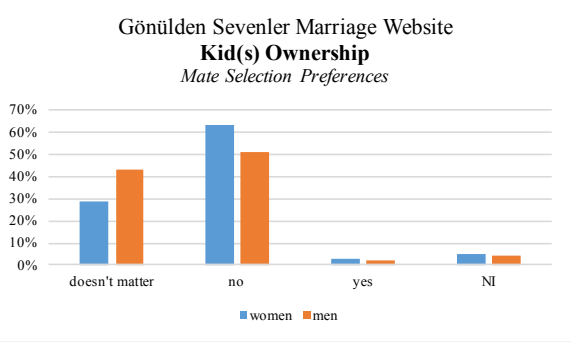


Figure 4.10: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Mate Selection Preferences (Kids)

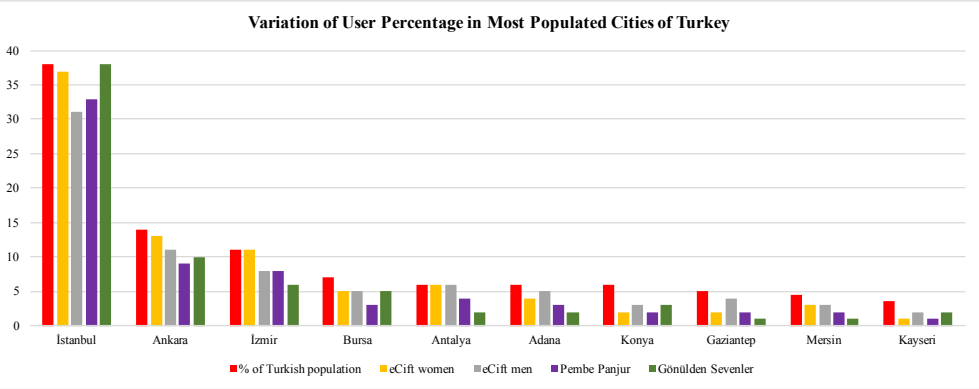


[231] As the netnographic observations (Kozinets, 2010) put forth, only *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website's infrastructure enables users to see the mate selection criteria related with socio-demographic qualities of their users. Even though liberal marriage websites include these questions in their questionnaires as well, they use this type of information to match their users but they do not share it on the profiles of their users. For this reason, mate selection criteria of marriage website users will be discussed in reference to the findings of semi-structured interviews. However, the findings of *Gönülden Sevenler* will be shared briefly in this analysis. For more information, see: Kozinets, Robert V. **Netnography: Doing Ethnographic Research Online**, Sage Publications, 2010.

4.1.4. Distribution of Marriage Websites' Users according to the Area of Residence

There are 81 cities in Turkey and the results indicate these cities are not distributed evenly in these marriage websites. The sum of the percentage of users in Turkey's most populated 10 cities is much more than the sum of the percentage of users in the remaining 71 cities in Turkey. As Table x indicates, the sum of percentages of users in Turkey's most populated 10 cities for female users of eCift is 84 % and male users of the same site is 76 %, while 70 % of *Gönülden Sevenler* users and 67 % *Pembe Panjur* users are coming from these most populated cities in Turkey. (Table x demonstrates the top 10 most populated cities of Turkey and the percentage of marriage website users in each city)

Figure 4.11: Variation of User Percentage in Most Populated Cities of Turkey (%)



İstanbul, the most populated city of Turkey has also the highest percentage of marriage website users. Turkey's capital city Ankara, İzmir, Bursa, Antalya and Adana are the cities that follow İstanbul in terms of percentage of marriage website users. We can state that there is a kind of correlation between the population of the city and marriage site user percentage in that city. However, it should be noted that in the conservative cities (Konya and Kayseri) who take part in the top 10 most populated cities of Turkey, the percentage of marriage site users, especially female users do not necessarily correlate with the population of these cities.

As it was revealed in the first chapter of this dissertation study, nearly 70 % of Turkish population get married with their *hemşehri* (people coming from the city or region). It is seen that while marriage websites give place to "place of residence", they do not include a question about original "hometown". In the second place, the findings clearly demonstrate that online marriage website users are residents of the most developed cities of Turkey.

4.1.5. Education Level of Marriage Websites Users in Turkey

When the general education level[232][233] in Turkey is evaluated, it is seen that the education level of women is below the education level of men. 7.48 % of women are illiterate and 16.17 % of women do not have any school diplomas where as only 1.48 % of men are illiterate and 5.32 % of men do not have any school diplomas. (Table x). 24.98% of men and 18.21% of women have high school diplomas; 15.72 % of men and 12.30 % of women have higher education levels. (Table x)

In the view of information demonstrated in Table x, we can state that women holding associate or graduate school diplomas constitute the biggest group among women using marriage websites in Turkey and women holding high school diplomas follow them. It is worthwhile to note that he percentage of women holding only primary education diplomas is slightly higher for women using 'Islamic' marriage websites compared to women using 'Liberal' marriage websites. The education level of men using marriage websites in Turkey is quite similar to the education level of women subscribed to these sites. Men holding associate or graduate school diplomas constitute the biggest group among men using marriage websites in Turkey and men holding high school diplomas follow them. The percentage of men using 'Islamic' marriage websites and holding only primary education diplomas is slightly less for men compared to women.

Education level is a significant criterion in mate selection practices of Turkish individuals and according to the findings of TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey (2011), 67,5 percent of women and 58,5 percent of men prefer a mate with a "good education level". Besides the results of the same research demonstrate a clear relationship between education level and choice marriages (more than 80 percent of university graduates and 60 percent of high school graduates get married with "choice marriage" in Turkey). In respect to

[232] http://rapory.tuik.gov.tr/18-10-2015-01:23:44-96334542847567559950187174.html

[233] "Primary (basic) education lasts eight years, is compulsory and provided free in public schools to children in the age group 6 to 14. The last three years of primary education (grades 6 to 8) were not compulsory and considered as a lower secondary education until 1997/98. The transition from five-year primary schools and three-year junior high schools into eight-year primary (basic) schools was implemented starting from the school year 1997/98.' http://www.ibe.unesco.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Publications/WDE/2010/pdf-versions/Turkey.pdf

education level, the statistical analysis of users' declarations indicates that the users of these websites have similar education levels with Turkish people who choose their partners themselves in marriages (TAYA, 2011) and almost 80 percent of male and female users are at least high school graduates.

Figure 4.12: Education level of women using marriage websites in Turkey

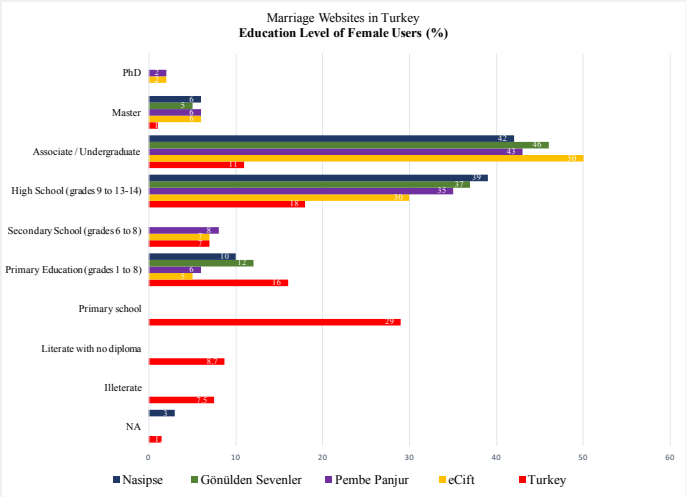
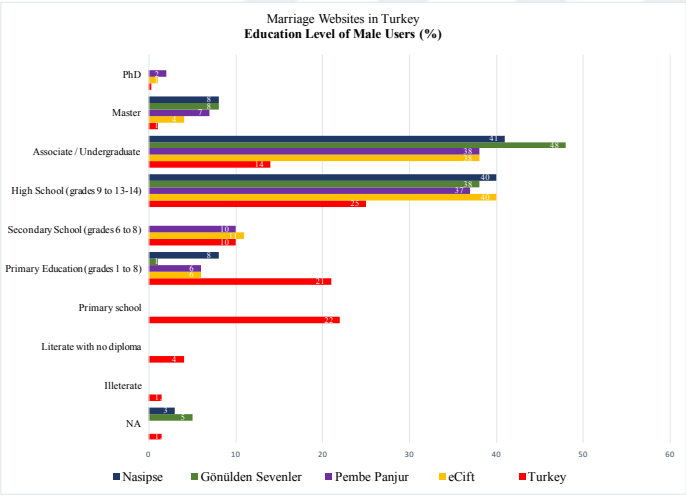
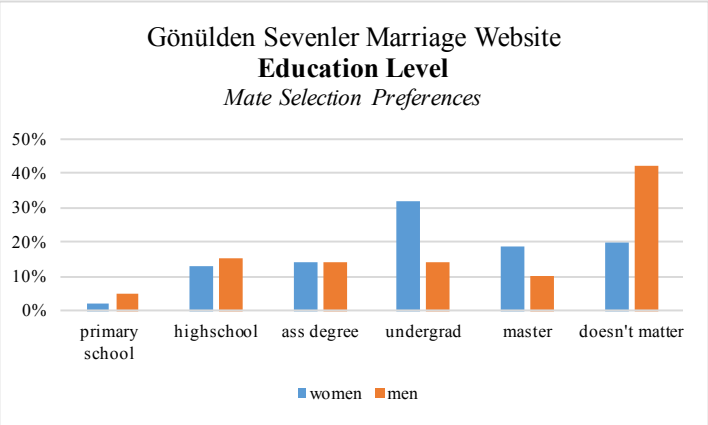


Figure 4.13: Education level of women using marriage websites in Turkey



As a third remark, according the findings that reveal the importance of education level in the mate selection criteria of *Gönülden Sevenler* members, the results manifest that while women attribute more importance to education level of male candidates and show preference for men with undergraduate degree, it is seen that nearly 40 % of male users of this website state that the education level of female users is not important for them. This result will be evaluated in detail together with the income levels of marriage website users.

Figure 4.14: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Mate Selection Preferences (Education)



4.1.6. Income Level of Marriage Websites Users in Turkey

In Turkish culture, individuals do not openly talk about income levels and they prefer to keep it to themselves. In *Pembe Panjur* website, users have to submit their income level but in the other three websites (*Gönülden Sevenler*, *eCift* and *Nasipse*), users have the option not to declare their income levels. Consequently, 81 % of women and 52 % men did not declare their income level in their profiles in *Gönülden Sevenler* website and 49.95% of women and 21.87 % men did not declare their income level in their profiles in *eCift*. One can assume that the low percentage of users who declare their income levels is related with Turkish customs about income declaration and money in general despite its importance in women's mate selection. In a similar fashion, it is seen that some male users do not want to share their income level as they also do not want to be discriminated for their relatively low income level.

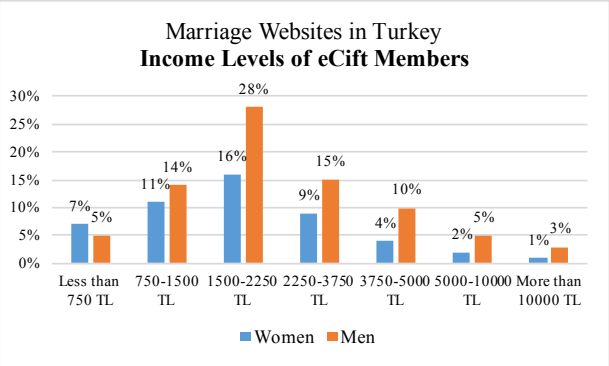
"I think income level should not be highlighted in profile forms. I am a civil servant and I have a definite budget. I might have other savings or financial sources. For example, I have real estate investments. I do not want to share these on my profile as some users might only contact with me for these financial reasons." (eCift, Male, Not religious, secondary school graduate, 33, Ankara)

According to the August 2015 report of *Turkish Labor Syndicates Confederation*, the minimum income level per person is 1.628 Turkish Lira in Turkey and the poverty line for the household income in Turkey is 4.379 TL.[234] In the light of the statics of users who declared their income level in marriage websites, it is seen that 18.44 % of men and 17.85 % of women

[234] TÜRK-İŞ Haber Bülteni (333), 26 Ağustos 2015

in *eCift* submitted that their income is below the minimum income level and 46.23 % of males and 34.06 % of females responded to this question as below 2250 TL.[235]

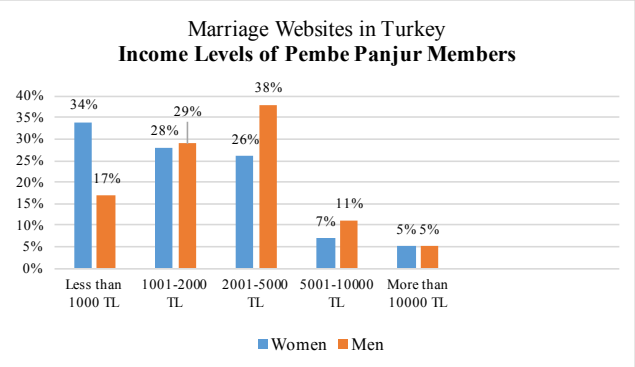
Figure 4.15: Income level of eCift members



* *50 % of women and 22 % men did not declare their income level in their profiles.*

The findings indicate that 46 % of men and 62% of women subscribed to *Pembe Panjur* have income levels below 2.000 TL. The response rate to income level question was also considerably low in *Gönülden Sevenler* website. 13 % of women and 15 % of men subscribed to *Gönülden Sevenler* website stated that their income level is below 2000 TL.

Figure 4.16: Income level of Pembe Panjur members



* *In Pembe Panjur, the users have to choose one of the income options mentioned above. There is not an option for users who prefer not to declare their income levels.*

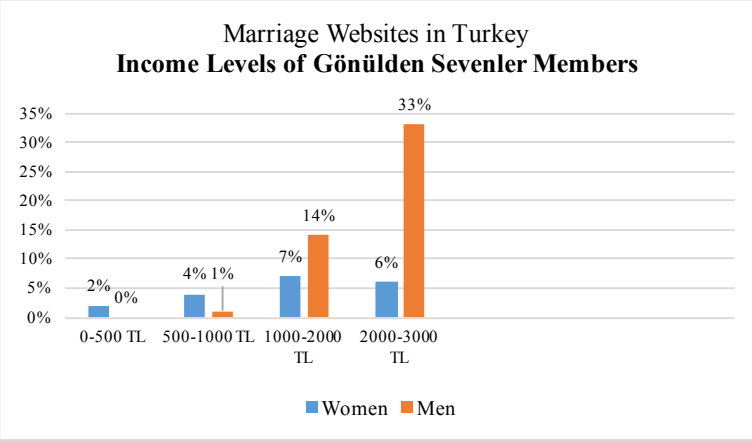
Despite the limited number of users who respond to this question and the low representation rate of these responses, relatively higher response rate of men corresponds with the mate selection criteria of Turkish women. As mentioned above, income level of a male spouse candidate is one of the most major selection criterion for Turkish women. Despite the

[235] The value of Turkish lira to Euro has changed significantly in the last two years. In January 2015, 1 Euro was around 2,6 Turkish Liras while in January 2017, 1 Euro was around 4 Turkish Liras.

fact that only 44,8 % of women state that “high income level” is an important criterion for them in mate selection (TAYA, 2011), it is seen that “good occupation” (which refers to a good income level) is the most important personal qualification of a male spouse candidate for Turkish women and 91,7 percent of women state that they prefer a man who “have a good job” (TAYA, 2011). On the contrary, the results of TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey (2011) show that only 52,7 % of men attach importance to the occupation of the female candidate and merely 29,3 % of men prefer a spouse with “high income level”.

In this regard, one can argue that the expectations of Turkish men from female candidates also reflect the social acceptance of “the husband as the head of marriage union” as men do not seek women with good income level and they give less importance to the education and occupation of women then females value these qualities.

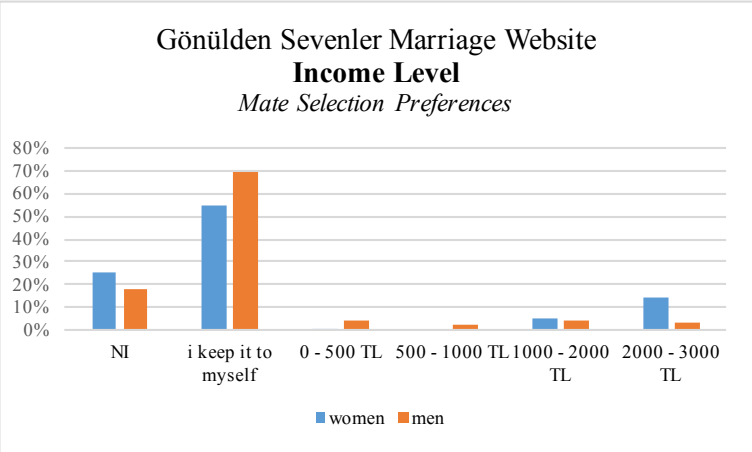
Figure 4.17: Income level of Gönülden Sevenler members



* *81 % of women and 52 % men did not declare their income level in their profiles. In this marriage website, there is no option for members to declare income over 3000 TL*

Thus, even with the “belated” reform of Turkish Civil Code that took place in 2001 “the assignment of the husband as the head of marriage union” (İlkkaracan, 2007:4) is abolished; in the light of the mate selection criteria of Turkish men and Turkish women presented above, one can claim that patriarchal gender role expectations are still prevalent in these preferences. However, as Turkish people refrain people talking about income levels or issues related with money openly, they also prefer to not to mention the desired income level of a spouse candidate as it is revealed in the mate selection preferences of Islamic marriage website users.

Figure 4.18: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Mate Selection Preferences (Income Level)



4.1.7. Religious affiliation of marriage websites users in Turkey

While census studies have been conducted in Turkey regularly every ten years, "information regarding the religious affiliation of people has not been requested before 2014 and researchers have had long to rely on estimates that vary according to a person's personal orientation" (Shankland, 2003:20).[236] Turkish Statistical Institute recently published a report called 'Religious Life Research in Turkey'[237] at the request of Religious Affairs Administration of Turkey in 2014. The report have received several reactions as it had carried some controversial points.[238] First of all, even though the title refers to religious life in general in Turkey, the research conducted by Turkish Statistical Institute covers only the religious lives and beliefs of people who define themselves as Muslims in Turkey. Secondly, the research results state that 99.2 % people in Turkey declare as Muslims.[239]

According to Pew Forum results, 98 % of the population is Muslim and Islam is the largest religion in Turkey according to the state. [240] However, it is worthwhile to note that Turkish citizens whose parents are not of any other officially recognized religion are automatically registered by the state as Muslims. For this reason, there is still no reliable statistics concerning the religious affiliations of people in Turkey. In the second place, second

[236] For more information, see: David Shankland, **The Alevis in Turkey, The Emergence of a Secular Islamic Tradition**, Routledge, 2003, p.20
[237] **Türkiye'de Dini Hayat Araştırması**, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, Ankara, 2014
[238] http://m.bianet.org/bianet/siyaset/157275-turkiye-de-her-1000-kisiden-992-si-musluman-mi
[239] **Türkiye'de Dini Hayat Araştırması**, Diyanet İşleri Başkanlığı, Ankara, 2014, p. 29
[240] http://www.pewforum.org/2012/12/18/table-religious-composition-by-country-in-percentages/

biggest religious identity is *Alevism*[241] in Turkey. Shankland asserts that approximately 20 percent of the Turkish population is Alevi people (Shankland, 2003). According to Pew Forum results, 0.4% of Turkish population is Christians, less than 0.1 % is Jewish, less than 0.2 % state that they believe in other religions and 1.2 % defines themselves as unaffiliated. On the other hand, the results of KONDA Research and Consultancy's survey carried out throughout Turkey in 2007 indicate that 52.8% of the population defines themselves as *'Religious'*, 34.3 % define themselves as *' Not Religious'*, 2.3% define himself or herself as *'Not believer'* and 9.7 % define themselves as *'Fully devout'*.[242]

When the questionnaires of marriage websites are analyzed according to religion, it is seen that in the profile form of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website, there is no question to portray the belief systems and religions of users who do not define themselves as Muslims. Probably this choice stems from the administrators' assumption that all users who will be subscribed to this site will be Muslims. In the second place, the question form is designed in a manner so that the users will just have to specify the Islamic religious sect they belong to (Hanefi, Şafii, Hanbeli, Maliki).

> Accordingly, 88 % of male users and 90 % of female users in *Gönülden Sevenler* stated that they are Hanefi; 4 % of both male and female users stated that they are Şafii. Only 8 % of men and 6 % women did not state the religious sect they belong to.

> In *Nasipse* website, the question form includes choices referring to Abrahamic religions (Islam, Christianity, Judaism). According to the data, the administrator of this website shared with me, 98.4 % of men and 98.3 % of women define themselves as Muslim, 0.15 % of men and 0.41 % of women define themselves as Christian, 0.05 % of men and 0.04 % of women define themselves as Jewish, 0.36 % of men and 0.23 % define themselves as 'Not believer' and 1.04 % of the male users and 1.28 % of female users define their belief system as 'Other'. Users who chose to define themselves as Muslim have to specify their sect among Alevi, Şii, Sunni and other.

[241] The Alevis are a heterodox Islamic group that especially venerates the fourth caliph, Ali, son-in-law of the Prophet Muhammed. The followers of Ali, or Ali's party, Shi'at Ali, emerged out of the controversy over the legitimate leadership of the newly formed Muslim community. Even though Turkish Alevis share their reverence for Ali with different S hi'a groups, their rituals and beliefs are distinctly different from other forms of Shi'ism, such as that predominant in Iran, which is more sharia-minded and more focused on the role of the religious leadership—the imamate. See; Elisabeth Özdalga, "The Alevis—a "New" Religious Minority? Identity Politics" in Dietrich Jung and Catharina Raudvere, **Religion, Politics, and Turkeys EU Accession**, New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008, pp.177

[242] http://konda.com.tr/wpcontent/uploads/2017/03/2007_09_KONDA_Religion_Secularism_and_the_Veil_in_Daily_Life_Survey.pdf

As distinct from *Gönülden Sevenler*, *Pembe Panjur* and *eCift* websites also give place to Abrahamic religions and Atheism in their response choices like *Nasipse* marriage website and they include a question which interrogates the importance of religion for the user.

The level of religiousness

According to KONDA Research and Consultancy's survey[243] carried out throughout Turkey on 2007, the worship habits of the population defining themselves as *'Religious'* (52.8 %), '*Not Religious/Believer'* (34.3 %) and *'Fully devout'* (9.7 %) were as follows;

> "97.6 % of "fully devout" people, 93.8 % of "religious" people, 65.3 % of "not religious/believer" in Turkey fast regularly; % 85.4 % of "fully devout" people, 60.1 % of 'religious' people, 9.4 % of 'not religious/believer' in Turkey perform five times Namaz (salaat); 64,6 % of 'fully devout' people, 32,9 % of "religious" people, 7,1 % of 'not religious/believer' in Turkey read Quran regularly." [244]

There are no questions to depict the level of religiousness in liberal marriage websites. On the contrary, it is seen that Islamic marriage websites are designed in a manner to portrait the level of religiousness of site users. Both websites include several questions about religion. However, the number of questions *Nasipse* marriage website gives place are less than the number of questions in *Gönülden Sevenler* website. In *Nasipse* website, users who choose to define themselves as Muslim are only given to option to share their namaz (salaat) habits and their understanding of religion.

In order to make a comparison with level of religiousness in the society and the responses of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage websites users, I will focus on the questions about worship habits (Salaat, Fasting and Reading Quran), which were also included in KONDA's research (2007). In addition to this I will be highlighting the declared alcohol consumption habits of marriage website users.

[243] As it was already mentioned, the latest research regarding the religion in Turkey and religious practices of Turkish people was the report published a report called 'Religious Life Research in Turkey' at the request of Religious Affairs Administration of Turkey in 2014. As this report have received several reactions as it had carried some controversial points, I preferred to give place the findings of KONDA Research and Consultancy's survey to provide insight about the religious attitudes and practices of Turkish people even though this survey was conducted 10 years ago.

[244] http://konda.com.tr/wpcontent/uploads/2017/03/2007_09_KONDA_Religion_Secularism_and_the_Veil_in_Daily_Life_Survey.pdf, p.32

Religious duties and worship practices of marriage website users

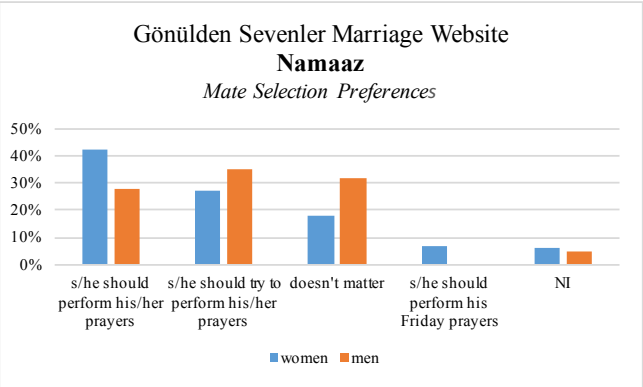
According the analysis of demographic data obtained from *Gönülden Sevenler* website, 41 % of male users and 41 % of female users chose the option '*I perform namaaz (salaat) five times a day'*; 30 % of men and 36 % of women chose the option *'I try to perform perform namaaz (salaat) five times a day.'* 3 % of men and 8 % of women chose the option *'I can not perform namaaz (salaat) five times a day'* and 2 % of men and 9 % of women chose the option *'I do not perform namaaz (salaat) five times a day'*. 4 % of male users and 6 % of female users in *Gönülden Sevenler* did not specify their *namaaz (salaat)* habits.

> The percentage of users who chose the option '*I perform namaz (salaat) five times a day'* is less than percentage of 'religious' people (60.1 %) in Turkey. However, if we count the percentage of users who choose the option '*I try to perform perform namaz (salaat) five times a day,* we can state that the namaaz (salaat) habits of *Gönülden Sevenler* users are quite similar to namaaz (salaat) habits of Turkish people who define themselves 'Religious'.

On the other hand, it is seen that Islamic marriage website users attribute importance to the worship habits of their mate candidates, while the declarations of male users demonstrate that they are less strict about namaaz practices of their mate candidates.

73 % of men and 65 % of women users chose the option *'I fast at all the required days'*; 19 % of men and women chose the option *'I try to fast', 2* % of men and 5 % of women chose the option *'I can not fast due to my health problems'* and 2 % of men and women chose the option *'I do not fast'*. 4 % of male users and 9 % of female users in *Gönülden Sevenler* did not specify their *fasting* habits.

Figure 4.19: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Mate Selection Preferences (Namaaz)

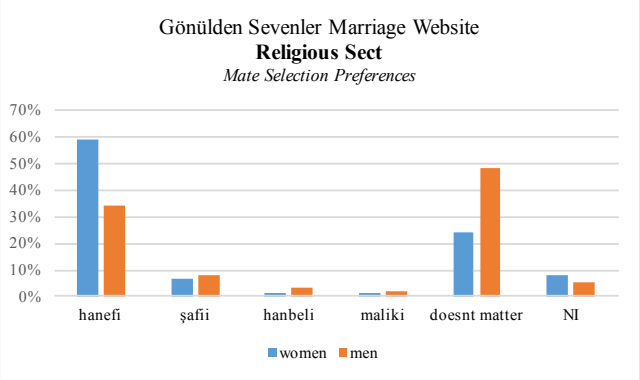


The percentage of users who chose the option '*I fast at all the required days'* is less than percentage of 'religious' people (93.8 %) in the country. However, if we count the percentage of users who chose the option *'I try to fast',* we can state that the fasting habits of *Gönülden Sevenler* users are quite similar to fasting habits of people who define themselves 'Religious' in Turkey.

35 % of men and 55 % of women users chose the option *'I know how to read Kuran and I read'*; 28 % of men and 18 % of women chose the option '*I do not know how to read Kuran but I want to learn / I learn'; 21* % of men and 11 % of women chose the option 'I do not know how to read Kuran' and 8 % of men and women chose the option *'I know how to read but I can not find time to read'*. 8 % of male and female users in *Gönülden Sevenler* did not specify their *Quran reading* habits. The percentage of users who chose the option *'I know how to read Kuran and I read'*is more than percentage of 'religious' people (32.9 %) in Turkey.

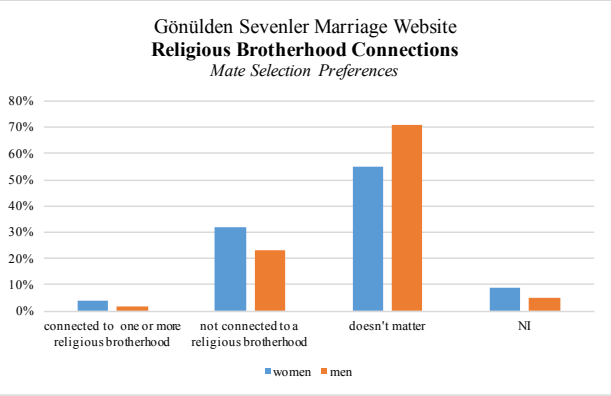
In this context, when the importance of religion in mate selection criteria is examined, the results manifest that "being religious" (women: 79,3 %; men: 73,3 %) and "coming from a similar religious sect" (women: 67,8 %; men: 57,6 %) are the qualities Turkish people attribute importance in general (TAYA, 2011), even though the relationship between religiosity and marriage depends also on the level of education, socio-economic status, the area of residence. On that note, it is worthwhile to recall the mate selection criteria in conservative interpretation of Islamic sources (Quran and hadits). In this regard, tradition rejects women to marry with men who are not Muslims, while men are allowed to get married with women belonging to Abrahamic religions (Barlas, 2002:155). In a similar vein, the results of mate selection preferences of *Gönülden Sevenler* users manifest that female users give preference to male candidates who belong to the same religious sect, while the findings of male users indicate that men do not attribute too much importance to the religious sect of the female candidates.

Figure 4.20: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Mate Selection Preferences (Religious Sect)



As a final remark, the declarations of *Gönülden Sevenler* users suggest that a big percentage of users of this marriage websites do not share a clear preference for candidate's relationship with religious brotherhoods. On the other hand, in view of the relatively higher percentage of female users who do not want a mate related with a religious brotherhood, one can assume that female users are more reluctant to get married with males connected with religious brotherhoods. This situation might be explained with the gender apartheid and gender inequalities in some religious brotherhoods.

Figure 4.21: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Mate Selection Preferences (Religious Brotherhood)



On the other hand, in contrast with the declarations of male users and conservative teachings about mate selection criteria in Islam, it is seen that even the male users of liberal marriage websites attribute significant importance to religion. Besides the interviews reveal the fact that, some users are not open to "marrying outside their religious group" (Knox & Schacht, 2016:175 -176).

"One can not have a wife who believes in another religion. One can have friends who are Christians, Jews but people can not get married. Traditions and customs are very important. How can I get along with a Russian? I think religion and language are both very important. Someone who does not believe in your religion can not speak your language as well. Can you imagine being with a foreigner? If you have a spouse who does not belong to the same religion, you can have marital conflicts" (eCift, Male, Not religious, secondary school graduate, 33, Ankara)

4.1.8. Alcohol consumption practices of marriage website users

Alcohol consumption has a significant symbolic importance in Turkey. Accordingly, "civilized alcohol consumption" has been regarded "as a signifier of a wealthy, secular lifestyle" until recently (Knudsen, 2009:22). However, JDP has taken several measures to regulate and reduce alcohol consumption such as "banning alcohol on university campuses" (Kaya, 2015:64) or "banning alcohol retail sales after 10pm" (Kömürcüler, 2015) in the last years. These regulations have been interpreted by scholars and secular population as the signs of religious revivalism and interference in secular lifestyles.

According to public opinion surveys conducted by the Pew Research Center between 2008 and 2012 in a total of 39 countries covering more than 10 million Muslims around the world, Muslims overwhelmingly view the consumption of alcohol as immoral[245] and the findings of the same research indicate that 66 % of Turkish population finds alcohol consumption as morally wrong.[246] World Health Organization's report on alcohol consumption and KONDA Research and Consultancy's survey on the same subject highlight the declared alcohol consumption of Turkish people. According to World Health Organization's report on alcohol consumption in Turkey (2009), 78.4 % of Turkish society is abstainers[247]. This percentage is slightly different according to KONDA Research and Consultancy's survey on alcohol consumption (2011). The results demonstrate that 68.5 % of the population in Turkey is abstainers.[248][249] Thus the percentage of Turkish population who consume alcohol is slightly lesser than the percentage of the Turkish population who define themselves "not religious" or "not believers".

47.13 % of male *eCift* users and 53.98 % of female *eCift* users state that 'they do not consume alcohol' in their profile forms. The percentage of users who state that 'they do not consume alcohol' is 50 % for *Pembe Panjur*. The percentage of users who consume alcohol occasionally is 48 % for *Pembe Panjur* users and 2 % of them state that they consume alcohol regularly. While 30.7 % of men and 29.48 % women who are subscribed to *eCift* website state

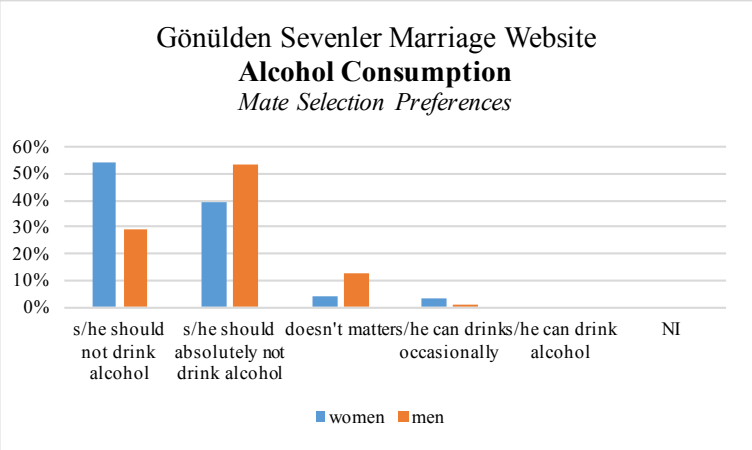
[245] Pew Research Center, The World's Muslims: Religion, Politics and Society, April, 30, 2013, p. 11 See in: http://www.pewforum.org/files/2013/04/worlds-muslims-religion-politics-society-full-report.pdf,
[246] ibid.,76
[247] http://ec.europa.eu/health/alcohol/policy/country_profiles/turkey_country_profile.pdf
[248] http://kadehimekarisma.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/icki_sigara.pdf
[249] Same research findings reveal that 8.4 % states that 'I do not consume anymore' and 9.2 % states 'I drink rarely', 7 % states that 'I consume alcohol once in a month', 5.7 % states that 'I consume alcohol on a weekly basis' and 1.2 % states that 'I drink alcohol everyday'

that they use alcohol occasionally, 14.67 % of men and 10.96 % women state that they consume alcohol regularly. 7.07 % of men and 4.04 % state that they use alcohol everyday.

The percentage of *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website's users who state that they consume alcohol is rather small compared to the percentage of users who are subscribed to liberal marriage websites. Only 1 % of users state that they drink alcohol occasionally and 1 % state that they consume alcohol regularly. The 46 % of remaining users state that they never drank alcohol and 48 % state that they do not consume alcohol. 4 % of users did not specify their alcohol consumption habits.

Thus, one can argue that alcohol consumption manifests the level of religiosity and while half the liberal websites mention consuming alcohol, only a very small percentage of Islamic marriage websites users mention drinking alcohol. On the other hand, one can also assume that users are aware of the social pressure among Muslim community about religious duties and accordingly some Islamic marriage website users who consume alcohol might have preferred not to share their consumption practices due to these reasons. The declarations of Islamic marriage websites' users referring to the relationship between alcohol consumption and mate selection preferences demonstrate clearly that Islamic marriage websites users do not prefer mate candidates consuming alcohol.

Figure 4.22: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Mate Selection Preferences (Alcohol)



4.1.9. Occupation analysis of marriage website users

Turkish Statistical Institute's research on '*labor force participation rate'* exposes the gender gap in labor force. While the rate of women - over the age of fifteen - who participate the labor force in Turkey is 25.9 %; the rate of men - over the age of fifteen –participating the labor force in Turkey is 69.2 %.[250][251]

In *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website, occupation is a multiple choice question and the users have to choose one of the fourty-four options which are listed on the online form to declare their occupation. However, while some of the options listed are occupations, some of them just indicate the sector, not the profession. Secondly, there are no 'unemployed' or 'student' options among the occupation list, thus the percentage of users who do not participate in the labour force is not clear in the data.

The percentage of occupation options are unevenly distributed among the male and female users in *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website. The most popular occupations for male *Gönülden Sevenler* users were as follow; Public servants 9 %, Teacher: 5 %, Trade: 5 %, Management 5 %, Engineer 4 %, Technician 4 %, Informatics 3 %, Automotive 3 %, Finance 2 %. 16 % of male users in *Gönülden Sevenler* did not specify their occupations and 17 % of users chose the 'other' option.

Regarding the occupations declared by female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website, it is observed that the number of occupation options chosen by female users were 30 were as it was 44 for male users. As this number indicates, women in *Gönülden Sevenler* do not participate in all labor sectors. Secondly, the number of users who did not specify their occupation rises drastically when it comes to female users. It is observed that 40 % of female users did not specify their occupation and 16 % of female users chose the 'other' option in this marriage website. Besides, when the occupations of female users are observed, it is seen that in both *Gönülden Sevenler* and *eCift* websites, "being housewife" is the most popular occupation among women.[252]

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[250] http://www.tuik.gov.tr/PreHaberBultenleri.do?id=16056

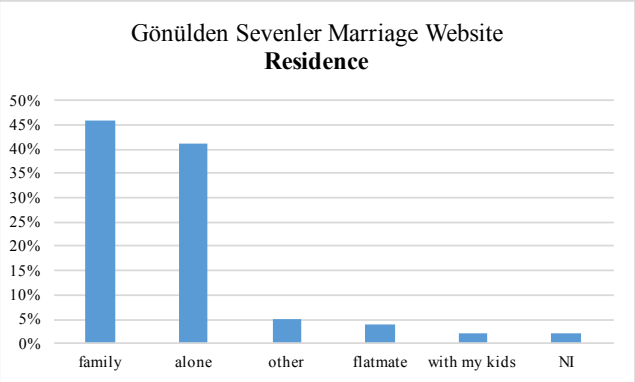
[251] Latest statistics demonstrate that the percentage of undeclared work in the country is also very high and it is around 34.97 %. (2014). For more information, see: http://www.sgk.gov.tr/wps/portal/tr/sigortalilik/kayitdisi_istihdam/kayitdisi_istihdam_oranlari/

[252] When the remaining 44 % of female *Gönülden Sevenler* users are observed, it is seen that the biggest percentage of the female users who declared their occupation were 'housewives' (9 %). Teachers (9 %), public

4.1.10. The differences between male and female users in terms of the place of residence

Despite the relatively high average age of marriage website users in Turkey, the findings indicate that both female and male users of *Gönülden Sevenler* and the female users of *Pembe Panjur* marriage websites reside with their families. To set an example, when we examine closely women living with their families, it is seen that the average of female users of *Pembe Panjur* who live with their families is 32,12 %.

Figure 4.23: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Residence (Male)



However, there is a significant difference between female users of *Pembe Panjur* who declare that they do not live with their families in comparison with female users of *Gönülden Sevenler*. While 33 % of female users of *Pembe Panjur* claim that they live alone or with a flatmate, this percentage decreases to less than 10 % for female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website.

In the light of these information, one can assume that the low percentage of female labor force in Turkey and low level of incomes of Turkish women lie behind the reason that many female users of Islamic and liberal marriage websites live with their families despite their average age which is over 30.

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servants (3 %), health care services (3 %) and textile (2%) were among the most popular occupations for female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* website. The most popular 10 occupations for male users of *eCift* are as follow; Self-employed: 10.5 %, Student: 7.4 %, Civil servant: 2.9 %, Tradesman: 2.7 %, Retired: 2.3 %, Trade: 2.2 %, Engineer: 2.0 %, Teacher: 2.0 %, Accountant: 1.4 %, Tourism: 1.3 %. The most popular 10 occupations for female users of *eCift* are as follow; Housewife: 10.7 %, Teacher: 6.3 %, Student: 5.4 %, Accountant: 3.5 %, Self-employed: 2.7 %, Civil servant: 2.5 %, Retired: 2.1 %, Clerk: 2.1 %, Nurse: 2.0 %, Engineer: 1.3 %.

Figure 4.24: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Residence (Female)

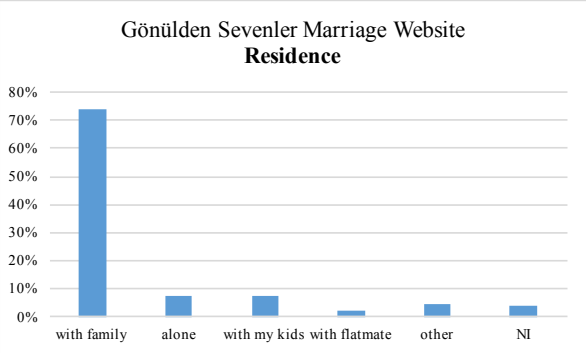
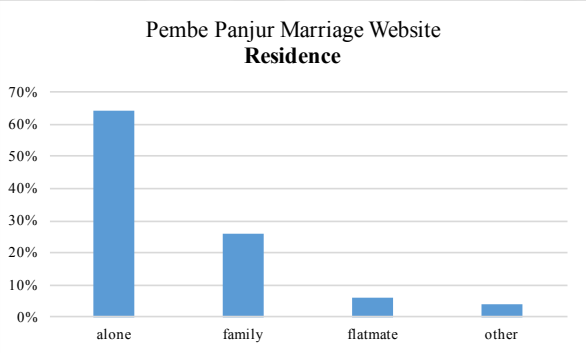
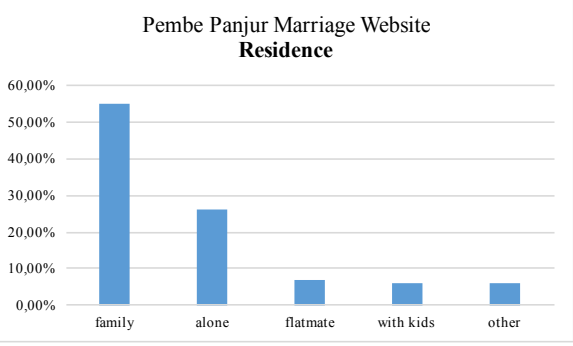


Figure 4.25: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website – Residence (Male)



On the other hand, when the conservative interpretation of Islam is taken into account, one can also claim that parental control on women's sexuality can be another reason that generates this finding. Despite the similarities of their education level, the relative high percentage of female users of *Pembe Panjur* who live without their families can be explained within this framework.

Figure 4.26: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website – Residence (Female)



4.2. Cultural tastes of marriage website users in Turkey

Bourdieu's understanding of "distinction" and "taste" concepts are crucial to understand how social agents that are situated in physical and social spaces are defined by "exclusions or distinctions" (Reed-Danahay, 2004: 20). Bourdieu analyzes "taste" among different social groups including "working class", "artists", "the bourgeoisie" and "petit-bourgeoisie" and observes their differences in terms of their judgments of tastes. He argues that these judgments have social and cultural origins and they function as habitus "below the level of consciousness and language" (Bourdieu, 1984 cited in Reed-Danahay, 2004: 110).

"In fact, through the economic and social conditions which they presuppose, the different ways of relating to realities and fictions, of believing in fictions and the realities they simulate, with more or less distance and detachment, are very closely linked to the different possible positions in social space and, consequently, bound up with the systems of dispositions (habitus) characteristic of the different classes and class fractions. Taste classifies, and it classifies the classifier." (Bourdieu, 1984:5-6)

Furthermore, he denaturalizes the myth of free or autonomous taste understanding and states that "an agent has what he likes because he likes what he has, that is, the properties actually given to him in the distributions and legitimately assigned to him in the classifications". (Bourdieu, 1984:175). These judgments of taste each individual holds also function as a strategy of distinction in Bourdieu's way of thinking;

"Social subjects, classified by their classifications, distinguish themselves by the distinctions they make, between the beautiful and the ugly, the distinguished and the vulgar, in which their position in the objective classifications is expressed or betrayed. And statistical analysis does indeed show that oppositions similar in structure to those found in cultural practices also appear in eating habits." (Bourdieu, 1984:5-6)

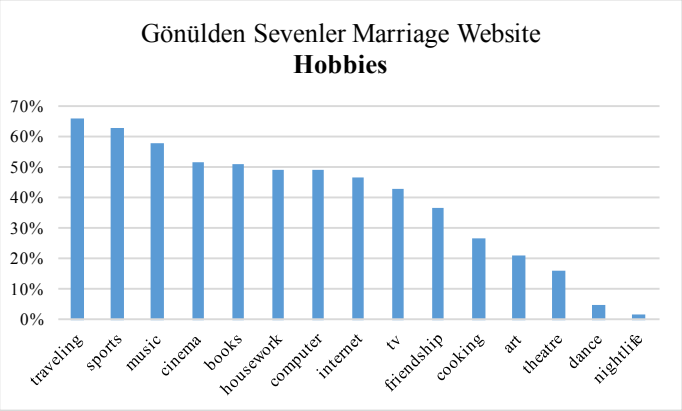
The findings of this thesis study as revealed in the second chapter demonstrate that Islamic and liberal marriage websites provide self presentation infrastructures which are different from each other. Islamic marriage websites include questionnaires that associate with the cultural tastes of *Engaged Provincialists* (Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014: 172) which indicate the embodied states of religious / spiritual capital, local & traditional tastes, whereas liberal marriage websites give place to questionnaires which are linked to the cultural tastes of *Engaged Cosmopolitans* and their self presentation infrastructure "embrace more "urban and globalized" tastes together with "high and popular forms of local and foreign culture" (Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014: 172).

In this regard, before sharing the self presentations of marriage website users in terms of their cultural tastes, I would like to remind some of the qualities of the self presentation infrastructures of *Pembe Panjur* and *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage websites. In the first place, when *Pembe Panjur* is taken into account, it is seen that in addition to several multiple choice items questioning the frequency of attending cultural events (cinema, art galleries / art exhibitions, concerts, etc.), *Pembe Panjur* also allows their users to present the time allocated for hobbies (reading, listening to music, watching television, etc.). In the second place, it is observed that the questions regarding the cultural tastes in *Pembe Panjur* marriage website are open ended questions and it allows its users to present a more comprehensive account of their cultural tastes compared to *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website. *Pembe Panjur* gives place to open ended questions regarding "music taste" (preferred music genre and preferred musicians), "film taste" (preferred film genre and preferred actors and actresses), "literature taste" (preferred type of books and the frequency of reading books), "sports taste" (preferred type of physical exercises and sports genres followed), "vacation taste" (cultural tours, sea vacations, winter holidays, etc.), "palatal delight" (food and beverage preferences), "television" (preferred TV series and programs) and "game preferences". In addition to these questions, the site includes a question to interrogate their experience of foreign countries (The countries one has visited as a tourist or lived, the countries one plans to go visit in the future and the reasons for choosing this country). On the other hand, *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website does not give place to questions interrogating the frequency of attending cultural events or the time allocated for hobbies. Besides it is observed that the questions regarding the cultural tastes of this marriage website users are limited with the hobbies, book and music preferences. Within the limitations of thesis study, I will present a comparison of *Pembe Panjur* and *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage site users' self presentation regarding their cultural tastes about music and books in this section. In addition to that I will present briefly the hobbies of male and female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage site (*Pembe Panjur* does not offer its users a single item referring to hobbies only).

In this direction, when the response choices included in hobbies are handled, it is seen that *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage site includes hobby categories which are not included in *Pembe Panjur*'s questionnaire. To set an example, this website embraces "housework", "internet", "computer" and "friendship" under the "hobby" title. Secondly, the comparison between male and female users' responds to this item introduces striking differences.

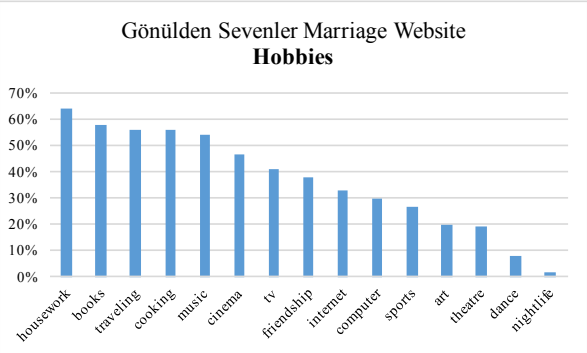
When the most popular five hobbies among male and female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website are taken into account, it is seen that the hobbies male users mention refer to outdoor activities like traveling, sports and cinema in addition to listening to music and reading. On the other hand, the results indicate that two of the hobbies among the most popular five hobbies mentioned in the self presentations of female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* refer to indoor activities. It is seen that the most popular response for female users regarding their hobbies is "housework", while the third most popular response for female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website is "cooking". When the self presentation infrastructure of *Gönülden Sevenler* and responses of male and female users regarding this item are investigated, one can assume that both the way this question taking place in this Islamic marriage website is prepared and the declarations of female users regarding this question reproduce traditional gender stereotypes rather than challenging them.

Figure 4.27: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Hobbies (Male Users)



On the other side, despite the different responses men and women give referring the their most preferred hobbies, it is observed that the least popular activities for male and female users of this website are quite similar. Accordingly, one can state that users of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website are not interested in cultural and social activities like art, theatre, dance and nightlife. On that note, as dance and nightlife refer to activities for mixed gender socialization and nightlife can be associated with alcohol consumption, one can assume that the unpopularity of these last two items are related with the traditional and conservative habitus of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website users.

Figure 4.28: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Hobbies (Female Users)



In the second place, when the book preferences of male and female users in liberal and Islamic marriage websites are taken into account, it is necessary to highlight the response choices *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website include for the self presentation of their users regarding their book tastes.

In this regard, it is seen that half of the items that take place in book preferences of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website are religious books and remaining five options include novels, self-help books, short stories, psychology and science-fiction. When these options *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website provide for the self presentation of their users regarding their book tastes are compared with the responses *Pembe Panjur* users declare in their self presentations, one can assume that the options *Gönülden Sevenler* make available to their users for their self presentation are quite limiting. According to the declarations of female and male users of *Gönülden Sevenler,* novels, self-help books, short stories and religious stories constitute the most popular book preferences.

Figure 4.29: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Book Preferences (Female Users)

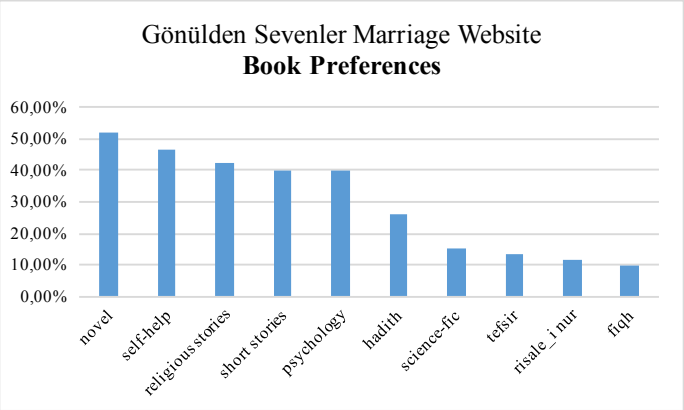
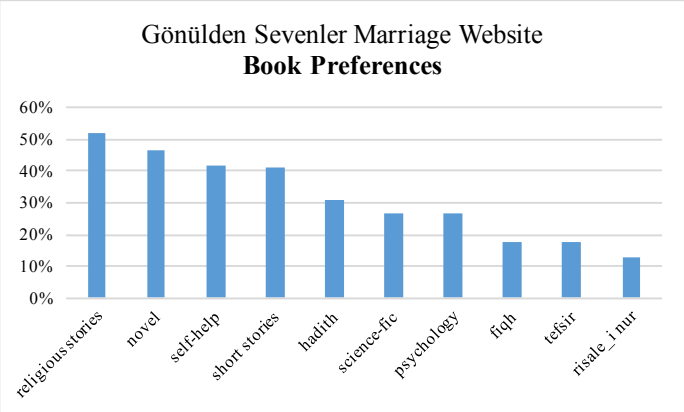


Figure 4.30: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Book Preferences (Male Users)



* hadith[253] ** tefsir[254] ***risale-i nur[255] **** fiqh[256]

On the other hand, when the responses of *Pembe Panjur* users regarding this item is examined, it is seen that the declarations of *Pembe Panjur* users constitute a wider range of book preferences including several genres and subjects. Some of the book types that are popular among the male users of *Pembe Panjur* and not included in *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website are history / historical novels, detective stories, political books, biographies, science and technology books and philosophy books.

Despite the low response of female users who respond to this question in *Pembe Panjur* marriage website, it is seen that several female users also refer to some of these categories in their book preferences while it is observed that the percentage of women who prefer books on Sufism and poems are more then male users.

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[253] The reports of the teachings, deeds and sayings of Muhammad and his companions in this period are granted as the second important source of Islam and they form the basis of Islamic law. In religious language, Muslims use the term sunna to refer to Prophet Mohammad's exemplary biography. The reports of the Sunna – "that is, what the Prophet had done or said, or even tacitly approved – took the form of specific narratives that became known as hadith." (Hallaq, 2009: 16). For further information, see: Gordon D. Newby, **A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam**, Oxford: Oneworld, 2002 and Wael B. Hallaq, **An Introduction to Islamic Law**, Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

[254] "Tafsīr**,** (Arabic: "explanation") the science of explanation of the Qurʾān, the sacred scripture of Islam, or of Qurʾānic commentary. For more information, see: https://www.britannica.com/topic/tafsir

[255] "The Risale-i Nur (The Treatise of Light) is the collection of writings of Bediüzzaman Said Nursi (1876–1960) who is the spiritual leader of the religious Nur movement. For more more information, see: Zeki Saritoprak, **Islam and Politics in the Light of Said Nursi's Writings, Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations**, Vol: 19:1, 2008, pp.113-126

[256] The practice of discovering God's law in its divine and revealed sense (*shariah*), writing treatises about it, and relating the practice of law to revelation' (Newby,2002: 193) is called *fiqh* in Islam and historically, it has its source in Quran and hadith combined with analogic reasoning, *qiyas.* For further information, see: Gordon D. Newby, **A Concise Encyclopedia of Islam**, Oxford: Oneworld, 2002.

Figure 4.31: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website – Book Preferences (Male Users, n.500)

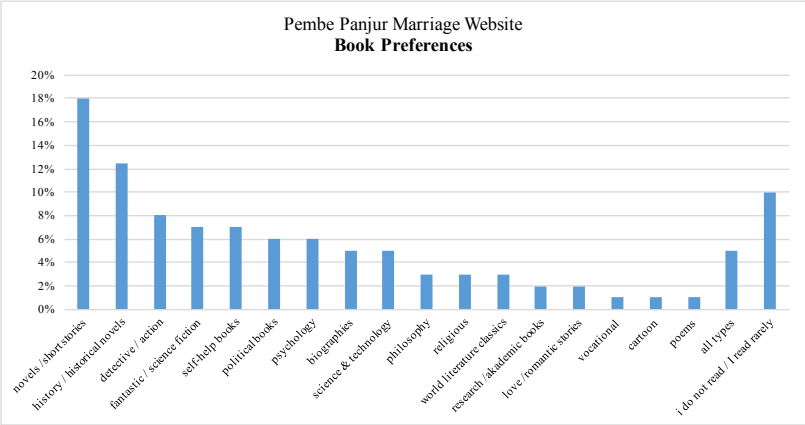
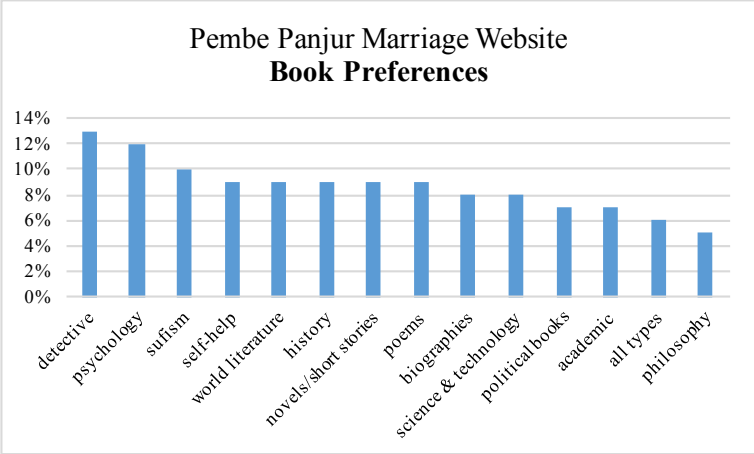


Figure 4.32: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website – Book Preferences (Female Users, n.90)



Analogically, the response choices *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website includes for music tastes are also limited and include religious elements. In this connection, when the declarations of male and female users of this Islamic marriage website is examined, the findings indicate that "Turkish pop music", "Turkish folk music", "Turkish classical music" and religious chants constitute the most popular music genres among *Gönülden Sevenler* users.

Figure 4.33: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Music Preferences (Male Users)

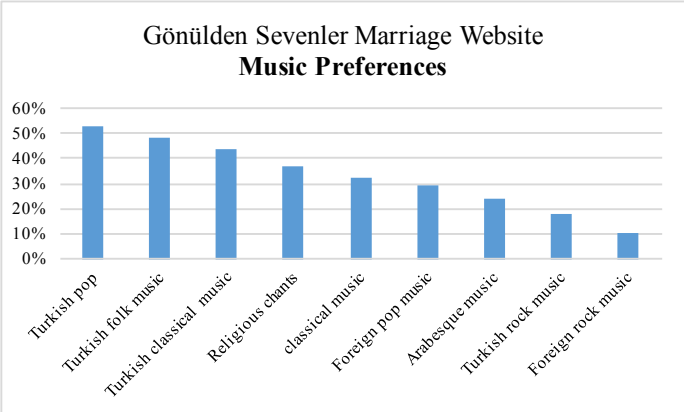
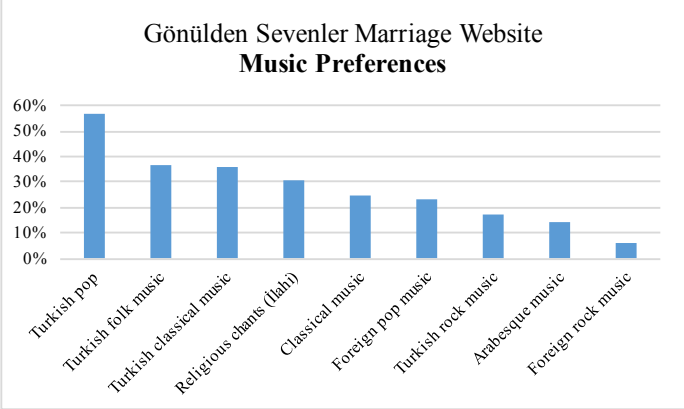
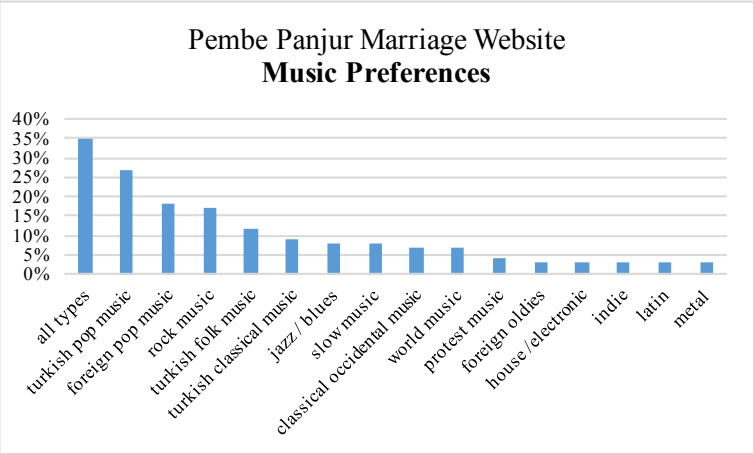


Figure 4.34: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Music Preferences (Female Users)



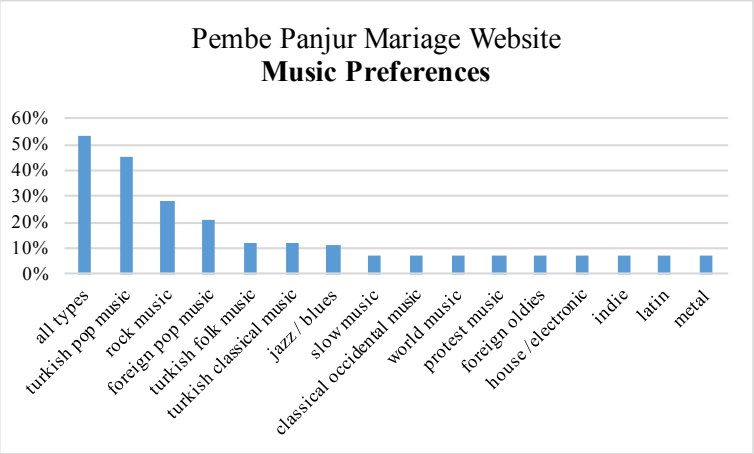
As distinct from *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website users, the declarations of *Pembe Panjur* manifest a music taste embracing local and global music genres. While the most popular response choice among users of this liberal website is "all genres", it is seen that local and foreign pop music constitute the most popular categories. On the other hand, there are several genres *Pembe Panjur* users refer in their responses but not indicated in *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website. To set an example, the declarations of *Pembe Panjur* users include music genres such as "jazz/blues", "world music", "protest music", "house/electronic" and so forth.

Figure 4.35: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website – Music Preferences (Male Users, n.390)



All in all, it can be stated that the findings regarding how users present themselves in Islamic and liberal marriage websites in terms of their cultural tastes correlates with the self presentation infrastructures and institutional identities of these marriage websites.

Figure 3.36: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website – Music Preferences (Female Users, n.76)



4.3. The presentation of physical attributes of marriage websites users

According to Hull's interpretation of Bourdieu's work, the mechanisms reproducing gendered social order are "at work in modernized societies" as "the objective structures of the social space shape individual dispositions" (Hull, 2002: 351) and "people act and choose on the basis of these dispositions in turn reinforce the gendered social order" (Hull, 2002: 352).

In our day, together with the expansion of "technologies for self-monitoring and surveillance" and "the growth in the ubiquity of media and advertising images" (Twigg, 2004: 61) oppressing women to present themselves with "feminine image" and "beauty ideals" put the female body in the center of conflicting discourses. Feminist media theorists clarify this situation with their own words as follows;

"Women with the help of feminism got rid of oppressive feminine roles, but they could not rid themselves of 'feminine image' which oppresses women as consumers as well as workers of consumer culture. (Killborne 1999; Berberick 2010; Jacobson and Mazur 1995 cited in Malik, 2014: 89).

In this context, Bourdieu claims that women (more than men) who are "continuously under the gaze of others are condemned constantly to experience the discrepancy between the real body to which they are bound and the ideal body towards which they endlessly strive" (Bourdieu, 2002: 66 -67).

> "Masculine domination, which constitutes women as symbolic objects whose being (esse) is a being-perceived (percipi), has the effect of keeping them in a permanent state of bodily insecurity, or more precisely of symbolic dependence. They exist first through and for the gaze of others, that is, as welcoming, attractive and available objects. They are expected to be 'feminine', that is to say, smiling, friendly, attentive, submissive, demure, restrained, self-effacing. And what is called 'femininity' is often nothing other than a form of indulgence towards real or supposed male expectations, particularly as regards the aggrandizement of the ego. As a consequence, dependence on others (and not only men) tends to become constitutive of their being" (Bourdieu, 2002: 66).

When the self-presentation questionnaires of dating and marriage websites are taken into account in this context, in the first place, it is seen that these websites provide self-presentation infrastructures that "fragment bodies (by description of eyes, hair, chest, and so on)" and attribute "importance to measurements" in a manner "objectifying the body and relate bodies as a collection of measured attributes" (Enguix, Ardévol, 2014: 504). In a similar way, Turkish marriage websites require their users to describe their physical qualities in a fragmented manner which also attributes importance to measurements.

In the second place, it is worthwhile to recall the findings of these researchers investigating the representation of gender in online dating and marriage websites. As it was revealed in the beginning of this chapter, the findings indicate seen that women tend to misrepresent their physical qualities more than men (Hancock & Toma, 2009: 380-381) to be able to present themselves in line with "feminine image" and "beauty ideals" of the societies.

In this regard, I will give place to the declarations of *Gönülden Sevenler* and *Pembe Panjur* marriage website users and I will present a comparison of these qualities (height, weight, body shape, eye color, hair color, attire style, veiling, etc.) with the physical qualities of Turkish individuals in general to be able to highlight the differences and similarities between them.[257]

First of all, the statistical analysis of marriage website users' declarations about their height indicates a deviation from the average height of Turkish men and women slightly. According to the declarations of men and women using marriage websites, women in Islamic and liberal marriage websites present themselves as slightly taller than the average height of Turkish women. In this regard, the results indicate male users of *Pembe Panjur* also introduce themselves taller than average height of Turkish men.

Table 4.1: Average Height - Marriage Website Users

	Gönülden Sevenler (Women)	Pembe Panjur (Women)	Turkey[258] (Women)	Gönülden Sevenler (Men)	Pembe Panjur Men)	Turkey[259] (Men)
Average Height	164 cm	165 cm	161.4 cm	173 cm	178,4 cm	172.6 cm

In the second place, the findings referring to physical shape of marriage websites users are quite different from the qualities of Turkish population. In terms of women, it is seen that female users tend to present themselves slimmer compared to the average physical shape of Turkish women in general while the findings indicate a discrepancy between the results of male users and Turkish male population as well. In the second place, it is seen that "being athletic" is a masculine quality among marriage website users in Turkish society and there is a big percentage gap between men and women referring to this quality.

Besides, the outcomes of this analysis based on declarations of users published in their profile forms correlate with the findings of researchers (Ellison et al., 2006 in Hall, Park et al., 2010; Whitty; 2008) which indicate that female users of dating websites "misrepresent their weight" in their self presentations (Ellison et al., 2006 in Hall, Park et al., 2010:120) to some

[257] As it was revealed in the introduction chapter, in the absence of a previous research demonstrating the declarative or actual identities of marriage website users in Turkey, in order to be able to present how these declarations show similarities or discrepancies from Turkish citizens, I referred to the statistical findings of TUIK (Turkish Statistical Institute) to be able to present the similar and discrepant trends in the declarations of marriage website users in Turkey.
[258] http://www.milliyet.com.tr/boyumuz-1-67-kilomuz-71-5-gundem-1460052/
[259] ibid.

extent. In this context, it is seen that the percentage of male users who define themselves as "slim" are quite less than the percentage of women and the percentage of male users who present themselves as "athletic" are quite high. On that note, while it is generally assumed that "physical appearance is generally less important" for men (Kuipers, 2009:4), Turkish male users tend to represent themselves as "strong", "sportive" and "healthy" (e.g. not overweight). This results can also be read in the light of masculinity studies which refer to the growing importance of "bodily regimes for men" (Luciano 2002 in Kuipers, 2009:5) together with the increasing representation of "ideal male bodies" in mainstream media.

Table 4.2: Average Weight - Marriage Website Users[260]

	Gönülden Sevenler (Women)	Turkey[261] (Women)	Gönülden Sevenler (Men)	Turkey[262] (Men)
Average Weight	62,3 kg	66.9	74.42 kg	75.8

Table 4.3: Marriage Website Users – Physical Shape

	Gönülden Sevenler (% of Women)	Pembe Panjur (% of Women)	Turkey (% of Total Pop.)	Gönülden Sevenler (% of Men)	Pembe Panjur (% of Men)	Turkey (% of Total Pop.)
normal	51	56	43,6	61,3	55	44,7
fully figured	27,5	22,5	30,4	5,6	4	39
slim	11,7	13	5,1	3,9	2	2,7
overweight	3,2	2	20,9	0,3	1	13,7
athletic	2,3	6,5	N/I	27,8	38	N/I
N/I	3,9		-	0,9		-

In the third place, as Kuipers, Chow et al. highlight in their study, "the fashion and beauty industry has often been critiqued for its racial politics" (Kuipers, Chow et al., 2014: 2162) as the women represented in media as the "ideals of beauty" have generally been "white, often blue-eyed and blonde (Frith et al. 2005), embodying Western middle-class ideals of slim, pale beauty (Mears 2011)" (Kuipers, Chow et al., 2014: 2162). In this regard, the researchers analyzing the representation of gender in Turkish advertisements (Morris, 2014; Tobin, 2011) also highlight the prevalence of western ideals of beauty in Turkish media. While Morris

[260] *Pembe Panjur* marriage website does not include a question regarding the weight of their users.
[261] http://www.milliyet.com.tr/boyumuz-1-67-kilomuz-71-5-gundem-1460052/
[262] ibid.

underlines the fact that “white women” are “featured primarily” in Turkish advertisements” (Morris, 2014:257), Tobin points to the “photo manipulations” in Turkish advertisements and she states that “the changing of skin tones and body shapes through photo manipulation are impressing ideals of the western women's physical appearance” (Tobin, 2011). While these findings are important to explain the discrepancy between the declarations of female users of Turkish marriage websites’ and Turkish standards in terms of body shape and weight, they are also beneficial to explain the declarations of users regarding eye and hair color.

In this context, while a significant percentage of female and male users tend to describe their eye color and hair color in harmony with the qualities of Turkish population, the results also indicate that a certain percentage of female *Pembe Panjur marriage* website users - who are assumed to embrace the cultural tastes of *Engaged Cosmopolitans* (Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014: 172) tend to describe themselves in reference to Western ideals of beauty in their declarations in comparison to female users of Islamic marriage website. On that note it is seen that more women in *Pembe Panjur* describe their hair color as blonde and red compared to *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website users. Besides, both the percentage of women declaring that their hair color as “blonde” or “red” and the percentage of women declaring that their eye color as “blue” or “green” are more than the percentage of Turkish women owning these physical qualities.

Table 4.4: Marriage Website Users – Eye Color

	Gönülden Sevenler (% of Women)	Pembe Panjur (% of Women)	Turkey (% of Total Pop.)	Gönülden Sevenler (% of Men)	Pembe Panjur (% of Men)	Turkey (% of Total Pop.)
brown /black	68,5	63	70	65,9	61	70
hazel brown	15	23	17	20	26	17
green	6,5	9	8	8,75	9	8
blue	2,5	5	4	2,9	4	4
other	3,75	-	1	1,5	-	1
N/I	3,6	-	-	0,9	-	-

Table 4.5: Marriage Website Users – Hair Color

	Gönülden Sevenler (% of Women)	Pembe Panjur (% of Women)	Turkey (% of Total Pop.)	Gönülden Sevenler (% of Men)	Pembe Panjur (% of Men)	Turkey (% of Total Pop.)
light brown / brown /black	67,6	68	94	65,9	90,5	
blonde	10,1	24,5	4	20	6	
red	3,5	7	1	8,75	0,5	
grey	0,8	0,5	-	2,9	3	
other	10,7	-	1	1,5	-	
N/I	7	-	-	0,9	-	

In this regard, it is worthwhile to examine the quite low percentage of women declaring to have grey hair as well. Despite the prevalence of women over 30 years old in Islamic and liberal marriage websites (*while 43 % of female users in Gönülden Sevenler marriage website are between 30 and 39 years old and 22 % of female users in this website are over 40 years old and in a similar vein, 33 % of female users in Pembe Panjur marriage website are between 30 and 39 years old and 20 % of female users in this website are over 40 years' old*), the percentage of women declaring to have "grey hair" is only 0,8 % for female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* and 0,5 % for female users of *Pembe Panjur*. In this direction, Woodward (1991) argues that "we are not judged by how old we are, but how young we are not" (Twigg, 2004:61). Twigg also argues that "dominant culture teaches us to feel bad about aging and to start this early, reading our bodies anxiously for signs of decay and decline" (Twigg, 2004:61).

"It is reflected also in the expanding industry of cosmetic surgery, a major part of which is concerned with the denial of age (though significantly the debate so far has largely turned around interventions on younger bodies" (Davis, 1995, 2002; Negrin, 2002 in Twigg, 2004:61)

In this regard, one can assume that the quite low percentage of women with grey hair reflects the cultural pressure about youth and "the denial of age". Besides, the findings indicate that the mate preferences of male users also correlate with this finding. Only 1 % of male users of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website users prefer a woman with grey hair. Also, the results regarding the mate selection criteria of male users in *Gönülden Sevenler* indicate that while men do not have a specific preference for "eye color" or "hair color" when they are presented singularly as choice options, "grey hair" remains as an exception as men clearly declare that they do not prefer a female spouse candidate with grey hair.

Figure 4.37: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Mate Selection Preferences (Eye Color)

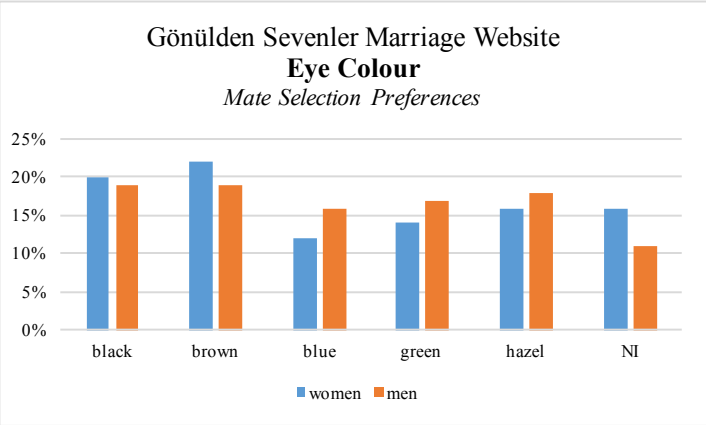
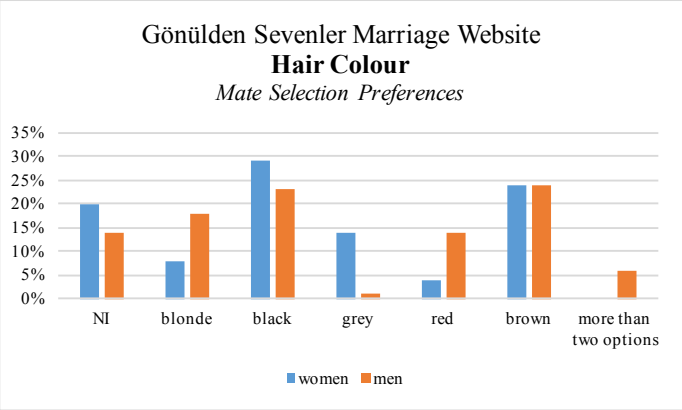


Figure 4.38: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Mate Selection Preferences (Hair Colour)



In the forth place, I would like to present the veiling and attire preferences of Islamic and liberal marriage website users. While Islamic feminist[263] scholars have highlighted the various possible different interpretations of hadiths and verses referring to veiling practice in Islam[264], conservative and traditional schools of Islam have accepted veiling as an obligation

[263] A significant body of literature and discussion concerned with women's issues in the Middle East and other Muslim societies emerged in the last decades (Tohidi, 2003: 136), notably women scholars of Muslim background or Islamic faith challenged the unquestioned cultural ideas or "discourses" in different Muslim societies about widely acclaimed female roles and conduct. Islamic Feminism bases "its methodology and epistemology on both post colonial feminism and Islamic theology" (Tomac, 2011:4). As Leila Ahmed calls "the core discourses of Islam", Qur'an, Sunna, Hadith and other sacred writings are the main sources Islamic feminists base their work on. For more information, see: Asma Barlas, **"Believing women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'ān**, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002; Leila Ahmed, **Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate**. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992 and Fatima Mernissi, **The Veil and The Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam**, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1991.

[264] Islamic Feminists and other scholars state that veiling was not a practice introduced by Islam but it was used in Pre-Islamic society to differentiate the free women from the slave. (Salman, Naz, Khan, Daraz, Hussain: 2013: 32; Ahmed, 1992: 55) and Mernissi interprets it as an "expression of the persistence of the pre-Islamic mentality, the jahiliyya mentality that Islam was supposed to annihilate" (Mernissi, 81). Other than this verse, where readers of Quran encounter an instructing women to protect their private parts and throw a scarf over their bosoms (Ahmed:55), there is no other verse about women's clothing. While Barlas reads this verse only as a

for women. In addition to this, several academicians have also manifested "the diversity of veiling practices among women based on their membership in different social and economic classes, their regional origin, and their religious commitments" in Turkey and elsewhere (Vojdik, 2010: 664).

As several scholars emphasize, "Islamic veiling is not merely a religious practice, but a highly contested political symbol within Muslim societies and the global political arena" (Vojdik, 2010: 661). In Turkish case, one can argue that both the "secularists and Islamists in Turkey have similarly used the female body and the headscarf to construct and embody competing national and political identities" (Vojdik, 2010: 667). Until recently, academicians (Göle, 1997; Özyeğin, 2015) have interpreted the increasing visibility of young, urban and veiled women sharing urban, political and educational spaces in Turkey together with men as a challenge to both traditional gender roles and gender roles defined by Westernist modernism in Turkey (Göle, 1997:22).

> "While many Western and indeed some Kemalist feminist scholars portray Turkish women as passive victims compelled to cover by a patriarchal religion or political movement, Göle's and other Turkish scholars' research suggests that a certain group of women—young, urban, and typically the daughters of migrants from rural areas—deliberately embraced the choice to cover, challenging the secular elites as a political matter. These women challenged both the secular construction of the headscarf as a means of Islamic male oppression, as well as the Islamist masculinist construction of the veil as protector of women's modesty and place in the mahrem, or domestic sphere" (Vojdik, 2010: 664-665).

In the light of this information depicting the significance of veiling practices in Turkey, I would like to interpret the findings of veiling practices of marriage website users (even though

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mandate for both sexes urging them to dress modestly and argues that this verse does not suggest the confinement of women in the houses (Barlas: 159-160); Mernissi reminds us yet another verse in Quran [264] "that is regarded by the founders of religious knowledge as the basis of the institution of the hijab" that is about a specific moment in Prophet's life (Mernissi, 92). She states that a careful reading of this verse shows us that the hijab "- literally 'curtain' – 'descended,' not to put a barrier between a man and a woman, but between two men" (Mernissi:85) in Prophet's wedding night. Thus, she claims that it is a verse about courtesy to intimidate the companions entering his residence without permission during his wedding night. (Mernissi: 92). For more information, see: Asma Barlas, "**Believing women" in Islam: Unreading Patriarchal Interpretations of the Qur'ān**, Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2002; Leila Ahmed, **Women and Gender in Islam: Historical Roots of a Modern Debate**. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992 and Fatima Mernissi, **The Veil and The Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam**, Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Pub. Co., 1991.

they will be further investigated in the next sections where the profile pictures of marriage website users are analyzed). According to the results of Turkish Statistical Institute's report, 'Religious Life Research in Turkey', 42 % of single women and 79 % of married women cover their head in public space (DİB, 2014; 104-105). While the percentage of single women correlates with the percentage of veiled female users in *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website, this finding of 'Religious Life Research in Turkey' (2014) also underline the relationship between marriage and veiling. In this regard, one can assume that other than the educated, urban women who challenge the traditional and secular understandings of gender, a significant percentage of women start covering their head when they enter the marriage institution. On that note, I would like to share the veiling preferences of a male user of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website;

"I am a jealous man. As I will think about the person I love more than I will think about myself, I will intervene the way she dresses. For this reason, I will ask my wife to cover herself. Not a normal veil, I prefer a chador." (Gönülden Sevenler, Male, Devout, Police Academy Graduate, 26, Ağrı)

On the other hand, the results indicating the percentage of *Gönülden Sevenler* female users with veil also contrast with the conventional portrayal of Muslim women as a veiled woman and the rough assumptions one can have regarding the female users of Islamic marriage websites. In the second place, despite the findings of netnographic observations pointing at the existence of a considerable number of veiled women in liberal marriage websites[265], it is seen that liberal marriage websites do not include a question that interrogates veiling practices.

Table 4.6: Gönülden Sevenler Islamic Marriage Website User – Veiling Preferences

	Marriage Website (% of Women)	Turkey[266] (% of Women)
veiling	44	68
no veiling	45,3	32
N/I	10,6	-

However, liberal marriage websites give place to attire preferences in general and the response choices in these questions as presented below do not indicate much information about the attire tastes of *Pembe Panjur* users.

[265] This issue will be discussed in detail in the next section where the profile pictures of women are analyzed.
[266] http://politikaakademisi.org/2016/09/21/islam-dunyasinda-ortunme

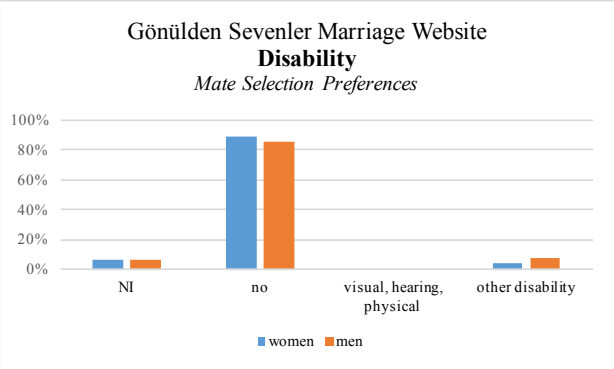
Table 4.7: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website User – Attire Preferences

	Pembe Panjur (% of Women)	Pembe Panjur (% of Men)
I pay attention to to my clothes occasionally	60	68,5
I am chic all the time	31	26,5
I do not care about my clothes / I wear whatever I find	9	5

Fifthly, I would like discuss the concept of "disability" in online mate selection. As discussed in the beginning of this chapter, Goffman embraces disability among other stigmas regarding "physical qualities" (Goffman, 1963). Accordingly, 99 % of female users and 99,6 % of male users of *Pembe Panjur* marriage website state that they do not have any physical disabilities in their declarations. In a similar vein, 99,4 % of female users and 99,7 % of male users of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website declare not having any physical disabilities.

In this context, one can assume that as individuals feel the need to appeal to social norms and socially accepted "repertoire of available self presentations" (Cavanagh, 2007:130), the declaration of physical disabilities are extremely low in the self presentations of marriage website users. On that note the mate selection criteria of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website also indicate that the users of this Islamic marriage website clearly do not prefer a spouse with a physical disability.

Figure 4.39: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Mate Selection Preferences (Disability)



As a final remark on the physical qualities of Islamic and liberal marriage website users, I would like to give place to the content analysis of the physical qualities *Pembe Panjur* users emphasize in their description of preferred spouse candidates. Unlike *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website, *Pembe Panjur* does not give place to multiple choice questions where users can indicate the physical qualities they attribute importance to in mate selection. However, the

netnographic observations of this marriage website reveal that the 6th part of the questionnaire of *Pembe Panjur* includes an open-ended question interrogating "three qualities users look for in their spouse candidate" (see Table x: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website - Questionnaire (Personal – Part 6). While the percentage of users who respond to open ended questions are lower than multiple choice questions in general in marriage websites, it is seen that less than one third of male users responded this question. On the other hand, it is also observed that male users of *Pembe Panjur* who have responded to this question include several different attributes in their responses other than merely physical qualities. Accordingly, 27 % of male users gave place to physical qualities of mate candidates as a response to "three qualities they look for in their spouse candidate". The content analysis of the responses given to this question demonstrate that male users of *Pembe Panjur* marriage website prefer women who are "beautiful", "well-groomed", "clean", "attractive" and "physically-fit".[267]

4.4. The analysis of profile pictures of marriage websites users

In this visual content analysis, together with analysis of shooting angle categories of Kress and van Leeuwen, spatial analysis of the profile pictures and gender display categories of Goffman (1987) and Kang (1997) are implemented to examine the visual content of marriage website users' profile pictures. Additionally, the visual content of users' profile pictures is investigated with other categories that refer to gender roles such as attire choices and make up.

As a final comment, in order to convey the visual codes that are referred in the visual content analysis of the profile pictures of marriage website users, 12 photographs are redrawn with illustrator and Photoshop programs. In consideration of research ethics, the user rights and copyrights of marriage websites, these photographs are edited in order to hide identities of marriage website users. In this respect, several features of the users (facial features, accessories, colors, attire and background) are transformed while their postures are preserved with the intention to reflect the gender representation categories of Goffman (1987) and Kang (1997). In the explanatory information stated under the pictures, the names of these sites are abbreviated as "GS" and "PP".

[267] The response rate of female users regarding this question was very low (7 %). So the responses of female users are not taken into account in this analysis.

4.4.1. Guidance and regulations about the profile pictures in marriage websites

Gönülden Sevenler website did not provide any guidance regarding profile pictures of its users but informed users in the general rules subpage of the website[268] that "the site can monitor any kind of content shared including profile pictures to check if the content violates the membership contract". Thus, according to site rules, any content without excepting profile pictures that includes profane languages, illegal, immoral, pornographic, insulting, disruptive content can not be shared or conveyed in the marriage website. Pembe Panjur website gives detailed guidance about profile pictures for its users and encourages subscribers to upload their photos. They advice people to share clear photographs of themselves and urges users not to use sunglasses in these pictures. Their definition of ideal profile picture is as follows;

"We suggest you to use profile pictures taken from a close distance, with an appropriate background. It is recommended to use photographs where you look chic and especially with a smiling face."[269]

Both websites prohibit immoral profile pictures but they do not mention in their description what makes a profile picture immoral.[270]

4.4.2. Gendered spaces: Identities in public / private realms

Gender studies give account of the ongoing inequality of women and men in social life along with dominant gender categories which are built in line with principles that underline the contrasts and differences between sexes. In this respect, it is seen that space is split in half in accordance with principles point out the differences between men and women, thus private realms and home are associated with women (Farris, 2014; Kaufman, 1999), and public spaces and work places (Davis, 2003; Nassif & Gunter, 2008) are identified with men.

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[268] http://www.gonuldensevenler.com/usercontract

[269] http://www.pembepanjur.com/guideline_photo.php

[270] Other restrictions on profile pictures on *Pembe Panjur* are as follows; "picture of a celebrity"; "baby, flower, landscape photos and photographs that include symbols and logo"; "photographs taken from a distance", "photographs with military or public servant uniform", "retouched photographs", "photographs that were already uploaded", "photographs that were taken from other websites", "photographs including personal information like email address, phone number", "small-sized photographs", "group photographs as it does not allow other users to see the profile owner"

In this context, Bourdieu also addresses the identification of women with indoors and men with outdoors in his analysis of the organization of social space[271] (Miller, 2016:10).

"The social order functions as an immense symbolic machine tending to ratify the masculine domination on which it is founded: it is the sexual division of labor, a very strict distribution of the activities assigned to each sex, of their place, time and instruments, it is the structure of space, with the opposition between the place of assembly or the market, reserved for men, and the house, reserved for women…" (Bourdieu, 2002: 9-11)

The findings of this study investigating the use of space in users' profile picture demonstrates that the conventional understanding and stereotyped behavior patterns related with space are adopted by users of online marriage sites in Turkey.

Table 4.8: Gönülden Sevenler Islamic Marriage Website – Use of Space in Profile Pictures

Gender		Indoor	Outdoor	Car	Total
Women	%	63	34	3	100
Men	%	51	42	7	100

Table 4.9: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website - Use of Space in Profile Pictures

Gender		Indoor	Outdoor	Car	Total
Women	%	69	27	4	100
Men	%	44	45	11	100

It is observed that the female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* website (63 %) more than male users of the same site (51 %) prefer to publish photographs taken in indoor realms. Additionally, poses taken in / on the car (which is a symbol of status in Turkey) are practices adopted mostly by men. In a similar vein, it is seen that female users of *Pembe Panjur* website (69 %) prefer indoor photographs more than male users (44 %).

When the indoor categories that take place in the photographs are investigated, the outcomes reveal the fact that photographs taken in unidentified indoor spaces like "front of the wall / window" are the photographs that are used most frequently by female and male users of

[271] "Bourdieu notes that the Kabyle world is structured around multiple pairs of opposites, such as light/dark, fertilizing/fertile, high/low, outdoors/indoors, male/female, and Eastern/Western (Bourdieu 1979). These pairs are connected to each other; men are associated with light, fertilizing, and high places, while women are associated with darkness, fertility, and low spaces (Bourdieu 1979)." For more information, see: Daniel Miller, Elizabeth Costa & Nell Haynes et al., **How the World Changed Social Media**, 2016, pp.10

Gönülden Sevenler website. In the second place, men prefer to publish photographs taken in "office / work place" (36 %), where as more women share photographs taken at "home". Besides, the percentage of women who publish photographs taken in "office / work place" is very low (3 %). Lastly, according to the results, male users of *Gönülden Sevenler* website give more place to outdoor photographs compared to female users of *Gönülden Sevenler*.

Table 4.10: Gönülden Sevenler Islamic Marriage Website - Use of Indoor Space in Profile Pictures

Gender		Front of the Wall / Window	Home	Cafe / Restaurant	Office / Workplace	Total
Women	%	49	38	10	3	100
Men	%	40	16	9	36	100

Table 4.11: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website - Use of Indoor Space in Profile Pictures

Gender		Front of the Wall / Window	Home	Cafe / Restaurant	Office / Workplace	Total
Women	%	47	33	11	9	100
Men	%	36	17	18	29	100

When the profile pictures of *Pembe Panjur* website users are taken into account, it is observed that female users of *Pembe Panjur* website also share photographs taken at "home" frequently. Despite the fact that the percentage of male users publishing "office / work place" (29 %) is three times higher than the percentage of female users (9 %), it is worthwhile to mention that the percentage of women in this liberal marriage website is also three times higher than the the percentage of female users of Islamic marriage website.



Figure 4.40: Car, Low A.(GS)



Figure 4.41: Erect Pos, Eye L. (GS)



Figure 4.42: Workplace (GS)



Figure 4.43: Erect Pos., Eye L. (PP)



Figure 4.44: Car (PP)



Figure 4.45: Workplace (PP)

As distinct from Islamic marriage website users, *Pembe Panjur* website users also give places to photographs taken in non-conservative contexts like bars in order to reflect their life style preferences.

When the outdoor contexts presented in the photographs of marriage websites users are investigated in depth, the results reveal that both genders in Islamic and liberal websites prefer to publish photographs in natural environments like "park, sea, lake, forest" and so on.
Once more, *Pembe Panjur* website users give more place to photographs taken in non-conservative, mixed sex socialization contexts like outdoor bars and beaches.

Table 4.12: Gönülden Sevenler Islamic Marriage Website - Use of Outdoor Space in Profile Pictures

Gender		Park, Sea, Lake, Forest	Cafe / Restaurant	Historical / Urban Area	Other	Total
Women	%	55	19	18	8	100
Men	%	62	10	22	6	100

Table 4.13: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website - Use of Outdoor Space in Profile Pictures

Gender		Park, Sea, Lake, Forest	Cafe / Restaurant	Historical / Urban Area	Other[272]	Total
Women	%	43	15	17	25	100
Men	%	39	24	19	17	100

4.4.3. Posture: The Indicator of Gender

Researchers examining photographs published in different mediums and contexts have found out that the postures in the photographs are interrelated with gender represented in these

[272] In the analysis of *Pembe Panjur* users' profile pictures taken in outdoor spaces, the other category includes "beach" photographs that are not relevant to Islamic marriage website's outdoor photograph practices.

visual materials. In another saying, in photographs, the postures of women are different then men and these postures also inform viewers about their hierarchical and social positions in terms of their gender.

The gender display categories of Goffman (1987) and Kang (1997) establish the framework in this visual content analysis for the investigation of postures of women and men in their profile pictures.[273] The posture denominated as "feminine touch" by Goffman refers to way women touch objects and themselves. Instead of grasping like males do in advertisements, Goffman describes the way females touch objects and themselves (face, hair, breast, lips, etc.) as the touch "using their fingers and hands to trace the outlines of an object or …to caress its surface" (Goffmann, 1987: 29-31).

Table 4.14: Online Marriage Websites – Gender Display Categories 1

	Feminine Touch / Self touching (face, hair, breast, lips, belly, shoulders)		
Gender	Gönülden Sevenler Islamic Marriage website	Gender	Pembe Panjur Marriage Website
Women %	16	Women %	20

The results of the analysis of "feminine touch" postures in Islamic and liberal marriage websites reveal the fact that women using marriage websites in Turkey do not publish photographs referring to these kinds of postures. While 20 % of female users of *Pembe Panjur* publish profile pictures which are evocative of "feminine touch", 16 % of female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* share these types of photographs. Both the difference between liberal and Islamic websites and the low ratio of these types of photographs in both sites in general might be explained with "sex object" connotation of feminine touches. Thus, it can be argued that women in marriage websites do not prefer to present themselves in a manner featuring their sexuality.

Licensed withdrawal refers to the poses where women are represented in a state of "withdrawal" or "introversion", "unable to control their feelings (regret, fear, joy)" and "unable to keep a level head". Some of the examples of this posture, Goffman referred are "covering

[273] As the majority of photographs in this sample included only one person, "the relative size" and "function ranking" (Goffman, 1987: 32-34) categories and are excluded from the analysis. Besides, in addition to gender display categories of Goffman pointing to subordination, "sitting position" is also included as a sub-category in this research. For more information, see:

the mouth with hand", "sucking or biting fingers", "turning one's gaze away from the other" (Goffman, 1987: 46-47).

Table 4.15: Online Marriage websites - Gender Display Categories 2

	Licensed Withdrawal		
Gender	Gönülden Sevenler Islamic Marriage Website	Gender	Pembe Panjur Marriage Website
Women %	17	Women %	17

All in all, when the profile photographs of Islamic and liberal sites users are analyzed, it is seen that one in every six female marriage site users publish photographs corresponding to "licensed withdrawal category", especially with the poses depicting women as "turning their gaze away from the other".

Goffman identifies some of the unique poses that are partaking in advertisement photographs under the title of "ritualization of subordination". While Goffman interprets poses where the body is erect and the head high as "stereotypical marks of ashamedness, superiority and disdain"; according to him poses displaying "tilted body and/or tilted head" can be read as postures that refer to "acceptance of subordination, an expression of ingratiation and submissiveness" (Goffman, 1987: 46-47). According to the outcomes of this research, strikingly one in every two women in Islamic and liberal marriage websites publish photographs where their head / neck is tilted.



Figure 4.46: Fem. T., Imbalance (GS)



Figure 4.47: Fem. T., Tilted Head, H. Angle (GS)



Figure 4.48: H. Angle (GS)



Figure 4.49: Feminine T., Imbalance (PP)



Figure 4.50: Tilted Head, H. Angle (PP)



Figure 4.51: H. Angle (PP)

In response to this, male users of both marriage websites prefer to publish photographs revealing their full body, where their bodies are erect and their heads are high positions, where as women generally present themselves with pictures that do not reveal their full body frequently in sitting positions. Goffman draws attention to "lying postures" and he further states that in advertisements, mostly women and children are depicted as "lying on the floor, sofa or on bed" and he states that these poses connote "subordination" and they express "sexual availability" (Goffman, 1987: 40-43). In similar to the the results of "feminine touch", "lying postures" are also not very common among marriage site users in Turkey. This finding confirms the assumption that Turkish women using marriage websites do not prefer to present themselves in a manner featuring their sexuality in general. Besides, only a very limited number of women prefer sharing postures in these websites with "head back" which belongs to Goffman's "ritualization of subordination".

Table 4.16: Online Marriage websites - Gender Display Categories 3

Gönülden Sevenler Islamic Marriage Website - Subordination*							
Gender	Lying posture	Bashful Knee Bend	Tilted Head	Tilted Body	Head back	Sitting Posture	Total
Women %	6	5	45	8	3	33	100
Pembe Panjur - Marriage Website - Subordination*							
Gender	Lying posture	Bashful Knee Bend	Tilted Head	Tilted Body	Head back	Sitting Posture	Total
Women %	5	5	45	11	2	32	100

* It is observed that some of the photographes published by female users include properties that belong to more than one gender display criteria.

According to Goffman, women are presented more often than in poses where they smile, Goffman proposes that these smiles in advertising carry signs of "approval" and "consent" and they refer to inferior position of women (Goffman, 1987: 48-49). Correspondingly, 59 % of

women in Islamic marriage website and 80 % of women in liberal marriage website publish poses where they are smiling. On the other side, it is observed that men present themselves less often than women with smiling poses and it can be argued that especially the low percentage of male users of *Gönülden Sevenler* website correlates with solemnity recommended for men by Turkish Islamic Culture.

Table 4.17: Online Marriage Websites – Facial Expression in Profile Pictures

Gender	Gönülden Sevenler Islamic Marriage Website	Gender	Pembe Panjur Marriage Website
Women %	59	Women	80
Men %	30	Men	45

4.4.4. Camera Angles and Selfies

Apart from Goffman's gender display categories, the preliminary observations of marriage websites reveal the fact that camera angles used in the photographs of female and male users of marriage websites differed significantly. Academicians studying the theory of photography and investigating the structural analysis of photographs point to the importance of camera angles in photographs.

"If a represented participant is seen from a high vertical angle then the relationship between the viewer and the viewed participant(s) is one in which the viewer has power over the viewed participant(s). If the viewed participant is seen from a low angle, then the relation between the viewer and the viewed participant is one in which the latter has power over the former. At eye level, 'a relationship of symbolic equality" (Van Leeuwen & Jewitt, 2004 cited in Adham, 2012:24).

For these reasons, the selfies published by marriage website users are analyzed with taking into account the camera angles as a criterion and accordingly the significations of "high vertical angle", "low angle" and "eye level" angles are interpreted. Alongside with these angles, the selfies that present the mirror images of users are also counted in this analysis.

Table 4.18: Online Marriage Websites – Shooting Style in Profile Pictures

Gönülden Sevenler Islamic Marriage Website				Pembe Panjur Marriage Website			
Gender	Selfie	Regular	Total	Gender	Selfie	Regular	Total
Women %	48	52	100	Women %	62	38	100
Men %	26	74	100	Men %	33	67	100

Eventually, the outcomes of shooting styles and camera angles demonstrate that women in both Islamic and liberal marriage websites prefer to present themselves via selfies. In contrast to this, only one in every four men in *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website published their selfies on these platforms. In the second place, it is observed that female users of Islamic marriage website utilized "high vertical angle" (41 %) more than men, where as men subscribed to this website (58 %) give preference to photographs taken from "low angle".

The percentage of women presenting themselves with selfies are higher in the liberal marriage website and it is seen that every 3 women out of 5 prefer selfies. Additionally, the results reveal the fact that 56 % of *Pembe Panjur* female users give place to photographs taken from "high vertical angle" in their online profile and 37 % of *Pembe Panjur* male users present themselves with photographs taken with "eye level" angle.

Table 4.19: Online Marriage Websites – Selfie / Shooting Angle

Gönülden Sevenler Islamic Marriage Website					
Gender	Mirror	High vertical angle	Low angle	Eye Level	Total
Women %	6	41	17	36	100
Men %	4	22	58	16	100
Pembe Panjur Marriage Website					
Gender	Mirror	High vertical angle	Low angle	Eye Level	Total
Women %	3	56	19	22	100
Men %	8	32	18	37	100

In line with the traditional and widely accepted interpretation of Islam, in order to protect the private sphere (women and private space), women are asked to maintain an attitude that displays corporal and behavioral modesty (Göle, 1997:22). On the contrary, as it was discussed in the first chapter of this thesis, the representations of women in both mainstream media and Islamic women magazines reflect images conveying "ideal women" and "feminine look". Hence, in accordance with the reasons above indicating the co-existence of pressures on women about modesty and feminine look, veiling, make up and attire preferences of users will be discussed as well.

In consideration of these criteria, it is observed that women subscribed to Islamic marriage websites prefer veiling (40 %) more than female users of liberal marriage website (12 %).

Whether they prefer veiling or not, women in both Islamic and liberal marriage websites, in accordance with the "feminine look" imposed upon them by media publish photographs where they appear with make-up. On the other hand, when the attire preferences of users are considered, it is seen that both women and men in both marriage websites prefer "casual / sports" clothes. In comparison to women, the results of male users reveal that men opt for formal clothes (suit and tie) more than female users. This finding can be read together with men's preference for publishing their photographs taken in office or workplaces as a symbol of their social status. In contrast with *Gönülden Sevenler* website, it is seen that female users of *Pembe Panjur* published more photographs of themselves with sexy attires. Lastly, it is observed that both women and men use sun glasses in their profile pictures. Based on the findings of the field research and semi-structured interviews with website users, it can be argued that sunglasses are used by users as means to hide their identities as marriage websites are still regarded as taboo in Turkish society.

Table 4.20: Online Marriage Websites – Use of Attire in Profile Picture

Gönülden Sevenler Islamic Marriage Website							
Gender	Casual / sports	Formal	Chic	Sexy	Uniform	N/A	Total
Women %	63	6	11	1	-	19	100
Men %	78	18	-	-	4	-	100
Pembe Panjur Marriage website							
Gender	Casual / sports	Formal	Chic	Sexy	Uniform	N/A	Total
Women %	73	7	4	10	-	6	100
Men %	77	19	-	1	2	1	100

Despite the relative changes in the ways women are represented in the mainstream media (Gauntlett, 2008: 287-288), recent researches convey the information that the oppression for "feminine look" have continued up to this time. The findings of this analysis regarding the self presentation of marriage websites users in Turkey also confirm the prevalence of "feminine look" in the ways women present themselves with their profile pictures.

As a result of this visual content analysis examining the visual aspects of self presentation in Islamic and liberal marriage websites in Turkey, it can be argued that the photographs, female and male users of these sites utilize as their profile pictures not only reflect the gender representations in mainstream media but also reproduces the inequality in the ways women and men are portrayed in the media. When Goffman's and Kang's categories of gender display are taken into account together with camera angles and other criteria implying gender display; the photographs produced and published by female users reveal the fact that female users of marriage websites present themselves as submissive, defenseless and as of approving the other, hierarchically in a lower position (than men), in private spaces (usually in a home context), avoiding "wanton" look by refraining from poses that connote sexual availability. In return, men present themselves as powerful, professional, having control of their actions, patronizing, hierarchically in a higher position (than women) and as car owners (which is a symbol of status in Turkey). Thus it can be claimed that women and men present themselves in these websites, in line with the norms of gender representation of mainstream media with the assumption that they can attract the attention of their spouse candidates with these stereotypical images they present. When the representation of gender exhibited in the profile forms of current marriage websites are compared with some of the examples of post 90s Turkish advertisements (Çık, 2017) and some recent Turkish movies (Elmacı, 2011: 201), it can be argued that the representation of gender in these new Turkish marriage websites denotes an even more traditional gender display than some of the recent exemplary products that take place in Turkish media.

Another important outcome of this research is the similarity between Islamic and liberal marriage websites which are established to provide services for users with different social and symbolic capitals. As an illustration of this outcome, the self presentation practices of women can be given; despite the difference among Islamic and liberal site users in terms of their veiling preferences, women in both websites act as if they have internalized the gender stereotypes of media and they present themselves in line with the ongoing gender representation norms of Turkish and Western media. Concurrently, the profile pictures of women in both types of marriage websites share similarities when investigated in terms of Goffman's and Kang's gender display categories. Unlike the outcomes of western literature on gender representation of women in social media websites (Döring, Reif, Poeschl, 2016: 961; Kapidzic & Martins, 2015:279), it is seen that Kang's "body display" is not a relevant category for online marriage sites' users in Turkey. The results exhibit that only a very limited percentage of women prefer

to publish photographs with attires displaying their bodies. In a similar vein, postures like "lying posture" connoting sexual availability are rarely used in the profile pictures of Turkish users.

4.5. The Nickname Analysis of Marriage Websites Users

As the findings of this thesis dissertation revealed in this chapter demonstrate, the way users of marriage website present themselves are strongly correlated with their habitus. In the second place, the self presentation infrastructure of these websites and the unwritten norms of these social spaces that users observe and adopt have an effect on their self presentation. While one can assume that nicknames are choices one makes to present themselves as unique and distinct from others, this analysis regarding the nicknames of website users demonstrate nicknames' relation with the habitus of users, gender roles and "the social construction of the bodies" in Bourdieusian sense (Bourdieu, 2002:7).

"Texts are worldly, to some degree they are events, and, even when they appear to deny it, they are nevertheless a part of the social world, human life and of course the historical moments in which they are located and interpreted" (Said, 1983:4).

In the first place, it is observed that one common theme among *Gönülden Sevenler* users (35 % of male users and 32 % of female users) was reference to residential city or hometown of the user. As distinct from *Gönülden Sevenler* users, the residential city or hometown is not a common theme for *Pembe Panjur* users' nicknames (15 % male users and 14% of female users) where as many *Gönülden Sevenler* users often prefer to mention where they live or where they come from either by referring to the number of their cities together with their name such as "Ayse34" or "Erkan21" or writing the name of their city singularly as "İstanbul" or together with agglutination to be able to show that they are from that city as "İstanbullu"[274]. This finding correlates with the current mate selection practices of Turkish individuals as 70 % of marriages take place between individuals coming from the same residential cities.

On the other hand, one of the most common theme for male users of *Pembe Panjur* marriage website was "occupation". While 26 % of male users of *Pembe Panjur* marriage website introduce themselves with nicknames referring to occupation, 22% of male users of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website present themselves with nicknames referring to their

[274] istanbullu means "from istanbul" or "istanbulite" in Turkish.

occupation. First of all, this finding also shares similarities with analysis of male users' profile pictures as several male users prefer to present themselves with the photographs taken in their offices or workplaces. In addition to this, it correlates with the mate selection criteria of Turkish women (TAYA, 2013) which demonstrates that the most important quality of the male spouse candidate is observed as "having a good job". To exemplify, users utilize nicknames such as "Doctor22" or "Engineer1985" in these websites. In the third place, Football is a very popular sports in Turkey and it is observed that more men than women prefer defining themselves by the teams and the symbols related with the teams that they support as it is observed in the nicknames such as "Fenerbahçeli83", "Çarşı34", "Karakartal", "Cimbom35" and so forth.

Fourthly, it is observed that several male (13 %) and female (12%) *Pembe Panjur* users refer to Turkish words and English equivalent of the words that connote character qualities such as "Smooth", "Cool", "Relax", "Soft", "Marginal", "Brave", "Respectful" and so forth. In addition to this, reference to popular Turkish and American films or the heroes in these films are also common especially among male users. Besides, several users also refer to Turkish and foreign TV series in their nicknames.

> Main characters or heroes of popular American and Turkish films like *'Joker'* of *Batman*[275] or *'Komutan Logar'* of A.R.O.G[276] and the names of strong male characters in popular Turkish TV series like *'Kuzey'* of "*Kuzey Güney*"[277] are some of the names taken as nicknames in these websites.

Nicknames putting emphasis on love, imagined prospective lover, feelings related to "longing", "missing" and so forth are also quite common. One can also assume that some of the nicknames referring to love might refer to popular Turkish TV series or popular songs as these nicknames include the exact names of these songs or TV series titles such as "acı aşk" meaning "bitter love" in Turkish[278]. Even though it was not as common as it was in *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website, "loneliness" is another subject male users choose to refer in their nicknames. Some of the examples of nicknames referring to loneliness are *"the lonely",* "*kadınsız hayat"* (life without a woman) or *'alone35'*.

[275] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0096895/
[276] http://www.imdb.com/title/tt1286126/
[277] http://www.ayyapim.com/kuzey-guney/
[278] https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=szORsFjP2_o

Table 4.21: Online Marriage Websites – Nickname Analysis

		Home town	Occupation	Cinema /TV	Music	Football	Love /Feelings	Nature Animal	Character	Other
GS	Female %	32	7	2	4	1	15	24	12	3
	Male %	35	22	3	5	7	11	6	9	2
PP	Female %	14	15	4	7	0,5	16	23	13	7,5
	Male %	15	26	5	8	8	9	10	12	7

In "Masculine Domination", Bourdieu states that "sexual attributes and acts are heavily charged with anthropological and cosmological determinations" (Bourdieu, 2002:7).:

"The division of (sexual and other) things and activities according to the opposition between the male and the female, while arbitrary when taken in isolation, receives its objective and subjective necessity from its insertion into a system of homologous oppositions - up/down, above/below, in front/ behind, right/left, straight/curved (and twisted), dry/wet, spicy/bland, light/dark, outside (public)/inside (private), etc. which in some cases correspond to movements of the body (up/down // go up/go down // inside/outside // go in/come out)…" (Bourdieu, 2002:7).

On that note, one can claim that one of the most common themes in the female users' nicknames can be clarified in reference to Bourdieu's analysis of social construction of the female bodies. As different from male users, a significant number of female users in *Pembe Panjur* and *Gönülden Sevenler* refer to nature, small sized animals, fruits, physical qualities and soft colors in their nicknames.

> Many women use nicknames referring to nature in their nicknames; while many of them choose to include flower names like *'papatya'* (camomile), *'gül'* (rose) like *'yabani gül'* (wild rose), some of them refer to *'wind'* or *'earth',* others give place to the colors of nature like '*green'*, *'blue'* or pets, insects like 'kedicik'(pussy), 'butterfly'and a few of them use fruit names like *'kiraz'* (cherry).

However, as different from *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website, it is observed that female users of *Pembe Panjur* refer to several other themes that do not take place often in the nicknames female users refer in Islamic marriage website. Turkish poetry, painters, foreign rock bands, political uprisings, philosophers or philosophical concepts constitute some of these different themes:

> Popular rock music bands like *'Nirvana'* or '*Pinkfloyd'*, female painters like *'Frida'*, Turkish poems and sometimes the ancient Greek philosophers like *Homeros* or *Sokrates* take place in the nicknames of female users of Pembe Panjur. Finally, some of the nicknames contain the overtones of Gezi Parkı Movement and these women prefer to

present themselves as 'Çapulcu'[279] (loother) in their nicknames to make a reference to *Gezi Parkı Resistance* that took place in 2013, in Turkey.[280]

On the other hand, it is seen that several users in *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website refer to religious figures, dates and locations and well as the symbols, figures of Ottoman Empire to present themselves. Some of the examples referring to these themes are "negüzelşeyiman35" meaning "how beautiful is faith" or "Ahmet1453" which refers to the date Istanbul was conquered by Ottomans.

[279] http://www.urbandictionary.com/author.php?author=%C3%A7apulcu

CHAPTER 4: USAGE PRACTICES OF MARRIAGE WEBSITES USERS IN TURKEY

This aim of this chapter is to describe the habitus-based qualities of marriage website users in a more detailed manner, to understand their perceptions about marriage websites, to explore their usage practices including their online self presentations, mate selection criteria, online relationship formation sequence and online / offline interactions with other members as well as to discover their motivations for being members of marriage websites in Turkey. In addition to these, this chapter also introduces a detailed presentation of how online marriage website users negotiate with the expectations of other users depending on their relationship goals and strategies, their gender, dispositions and capital(s).

1. Users Narratives About Themselves

As it was discussed in the introduction chapter of this dissertation study, Bourdieu defines habitus as "the way in which the culture of a particular social group is embodied (internalized) in the individual, during the socialization process beginning in early childhood" (Bourdieu 1990: 53). Bourdieu also claims that habitus is "inherently historical" (Steinmetz, 2011:51) and it "organizes practices and the perception of practices" (Bourdieu, 1984 :170). In this regard, I would like to elaborate on the habitus-based qualities of marriage website users in reference to the thematic analysis of semi structured interviewees realized by 30 users of marriage websites in Turkey in this section to be able identify the ways how they deploy these qualities to realize their strategies and to negotiate with the expectations of other users.

In the first place, the principal socio-demographic qualities of the 30 interviewees (15 males and 15 females) are similar to the declarations of marriage website users in general. The average age of the participants is 34,1. Most of them (25 in 30) reside in the biggest cities of Turkey, İstanbul, İzmir and Ankara, 3 of them come from cities in Marmara Region, one comes from Southeast Turkey and the other user comes from Eastern Turkey. The education level of participants is slightly higher than the declarations of marriage website users in terms of their education level. (See Appendix, Table E.1 for the detailed description of participants). In terms of education level, 20 of them are university graduates, 7 of them are master graduates and 2 of them are high school graduates while one of the users have PhD. Most of the male interviewees

have jobs (14 in 15) and one of them is studying in a university while 10 of the female interviewees have jobs, two of them are students and three of them are unemployed.

In this part of the thesis study, I would like to explore the qualities of marriage website users which are not questioned in the online self presentations of users as marriage websites do not include items interrogating these qualities. In this direction, I would like to explore their family backgrounds, their hometown and the mate selection practices of their parents and present a comparison with the mate selection practices of users. In the second place I would like to elaborate on their previous relationship practices, previous online dating and marriage websites and applications usage practices together with their attitudes towards premarital relationships, sexuality and marriage.

Family background and differences between mate selection practices of users' parents and the users of marriage websites

As it was revealed in the first chapter in this study where Kemalist reforms were discussed together with their criticisms, the reforms regarding the regulations of gender relationships, marriage practices and women rights were not implemented levelly in all parts of Turkey due to the differences between developed and underdeveloped regions of the country in the early years of the Turkish republic. Especially in the underdeveloped regions of Turkey, women experienced difficulties more than men to access to education and work in these parts of the country where traditional gender norms prevailed (İlkkaracan, 1998:67). Another important point that was shared in this discussion was related with internal immigration. The demographical studies manifest that the gap between socio-economic conditions of different regions of Turkey had given rise to a significant internal migration in the country after 1950s and especially after 1980s. According to the 2000 population census, "nearly 28% percent of the population was born in a different province that they now reside in and this ratio goes up to 62% for Istanbul" (Gökhan & Filiztekin, 2008:1).

When the family backgrounds of the participants are taken into account, the reflections of the internal immigration trend are quite visible in the personal narratives of marriage website users and it is seen that conspicuously all of the interviewees living in big cities (25 in 30) are either coming from families that have immigrated to big cities in the last decades or they have immigrated to these big cities in the last years themselves for education or business purposes.

As it will be demonstrated in the accounts of users, their parents are from small cities or villages of Turkey, they are not well educated and the mothers of most users are either housewives (26 in 30). As different from these interviewees who appeal to marriage websites for mate selection, it is seen that the parents of most of the users got married (28 in 30) with arranged marriage. Only one of the users' parents got married with choice marriage and the other user's parents were step siblings.

"I am from Burdur. My mother is a primary school graduate and my father is graduated from a secondary school. They are from Afyon. My father worked as a public worker and now he is retired. My mother is a housewife. They are both believers. My father was not practicing his religious duties before but in the last years he started visiting the mosque…They come from the same village of Afyon, they were neighbors. As you know there are not many people in these villages and my grandparents arranged their marriage." (Barbaİst, M, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

"My hometown is Mersin. I have been living in İstanbul since 2009. We are four siblings in the family. My father is a university graduate and my mother finished teacher's training school. They are not working now. All our investments are in Mersin. We have fields and gardens. My parents are conservative but they are not devout. For example, my mother does not cover her head everywhere, she behaves according to the norms of the context she is in…My parents were step siblings, they were living in the same house when they were kids and they got married when they were quite young." (ErkStu, M, 38, PembePanjur, İst, Muslim /Religious)

Despite the differences between their marriage website choices, their cultural capitals and tastes, male and female interviewees of Islamic and liberal marriage websites share similarities with each other in terms of their family backgrounds and the way their parents got married.

"I am 41 years old. My family is coming from a village near Ankara but I have been living in İzmir for the last 16 years. I worked in the media industry but I do not work anymore. My father was a teacher and he was a strong Kemalist while my mother is a religious person and she never had work experience outside home…Their parents had arranged their marriage in the village." (Emineizm, F, 41, eCift, İzmir, Not religious)

"I am from a small town near Bursa but I live in Ankara. I define myself as a Muslim but I am not very religious. I am a university graduate. My parents are primary school graduates. My mother was a housewife and my father was a tradesman. They are originally from a village in Balıkesir. They define themselves as religious... Their marriage was an arranged marriage." (Rabi38, F, 38, PembePanjur, Ankara, Muslim / Not Conservative)

"I am 27 years old phd student. I am from Adana and I have been living in İstanbul for the last 5 years. I am a conservative person even if I do not cover my head. I have 8 siblings. My mother is a housewife and my father is a retired worker. My parents are also religious but they are not devout. They trust in me and they let me live in İstanbul alone. Their marriage is an arranged marriage. My father had seen my mother in the village center and he liked her. Then he had asked his parents to arrange their marriage." (Flowera, F, 28, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

In addition to the differences between users and their parents in terms education level, residential area and occupations, it is worthwhile to recall the difference between traditional habitus of users' parents and new Islamist practices emerging in urban contexts. As Göle argues "contemporary Islamism[281] differs significantly from "traditional interpretations of Islam and modernism" (Göle, 1997:54) and Göle defines it both as "a critique of traditions" and "a challenge to modernism" (Göle, 1997:54). Furthermore, she states that "new visibilities of Islamism are not materialized versions of traditional 'Muslim habitus' but they rather stand for a separation from this tradition" (Göle, 2012:106). In this regard, she claims that the emergence of Islamism in Turkey corresponds with the "integral migration of masses from periphery to urban centers" (Göle, 1997: 53). As it was discussed briefly in the beginning if this thesis study, Göle argues that the arrival of new well educated and religious actors in urban contexts creates "new hybridizations between tradition and modernity, religion and secularism, community and religion" (Göle, 1997: 54).

When we embrace the new dating and marriage practices of Islamic marriage website users with reference to Göle's framework that explores the difference between urban Islam and traditional "Muslim habitus", one can argue that mate selection practices of these new urban, educated Muslim actors are quite different from the traditional habitus based practices of their parents. These individuals live in big cities, embrace modern technologies and engage in practices for choosing their mates themselves, thus they break from the traditional marriage practices in which parents engage in findings spouse candidates for their children. On the other hand, while the usage practices of some of the Islamic actors differ from the usage practices of

[281] "Islamism" indicates the reappropriation of a Muslim identity and values as a basis for an alternative social and political agenda (to that of the state). "Muslim" is not synonymous with "Islamist," in the sense that the first expresses a religious identity and the latter implies a political consciousness and social action. Accordingly, Islamist counter-elites can be both actors in the Islamist movements and professionals and intellectuals aspiring for political power. Islamism, however, does not only denote membership in an Islamist political organization, but also suggests a sense of belonging and a group identity". For more information, see: Göle, N. (1997). Secularism and Islamism in Turkey: The Making of Elites and Counter-Elites. *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 51, No. 1 (Winter, 1997), pp.47

liberal marriage websites users at some extent as it will be revealed in the next sections of this chapter, many of them share similarities in their attitude towards traditional mate selection practices. On that note, I have to remark that most of the interviewees oppose arranged marriage practices and only three users in Islamic marriage websites stated that they could try arranged marriage practices. In this direction, I would like to present the accounts of some users which demonstrate their stance and resistance against arranged marriage practices in the first place.

"I do not think arranged marriage practices are good. 6 or 7 years ago my mother insisted in bringing me together with a pious girl that she met in her circle. I met with her and it was really a weird experience for me. I understood that these types of practices are not for someone like me. I have to choose my wife, I have to spend time with her, I have to know her. Families should not intervene, especially mothers. I understood it with this experience. Other than that, I felt that my mother might find the right to intervene our relationship in the future as she had met the girl before me. I felt that I will have to experience a big family pressure on me if I marry someone with the arrangement of my family. The best is to stay away from that." (Cihangir02, M, 33, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

Even though they break the tradition with taking initiative in choosing their mates, one can assume that due to their "longing to remain loyal and organically connected to social relations, identities, and histories…" (Özyeğin, 2015:5), they do not want to totally exclude their parents from the decision making process. Most of the Islamic marriage website users (11 in 13) and more than half of the liberal marriage website users (9 in 17) stated that they would ask the opinion of their parents if they decide to get married with someone.

"A few years ago, one of our relatives wanted to arrange a marriage for me and he asked me to meet with a girl from our circles. I told him that it is not for me but in the end I could not refuse his offer and I met with her. It was the most stressful moment of my life. I wanted to leave the place but I could not do it as I did not want to be rude to this girl. It lasted one hour but for me it was like 10 hours at least. I think families should not intervene. How can I like the character of a woman that my mother likes for me. I am ok to take their opinions, their ideas. Their comments are very important for my decision but I should be the one who chooses my mate." (Barbaİst, M, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

On the other hand, while none of the female users of liberal marriage websites agree with arranged marriage practices, two female users and one male user of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website stated that they could try arranged marriage. The male user from the Eastern Turkey who defines himself conservative and very religious states that he prefers arranged marriage practices as it corresponds to religious norms and customs more than meeting through marriage websites. However, as it is revealed in the accounts of the female users below, the

social pressure on women to get married is also one of the factors in their consideration of arranged marriages together with marriage websites.

"I do not think that arranged marriages are totally wrong. If I have the chance, I might try it as well. My family wants me to get married soon and my father is praying for that. I am getting old, my age for getting married is passing. If my family finds someone suitable for me and if we can get along, I can get married with him." (Flowera, F, 28, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

On the other hand, another female user states that she had been using this marriage website for the last three years but she could not find a spouse candidate that she can trust. For these reasons, in her account she claimed that she could resort to the aid of her family or friends for getting married.

"After using this website for a long period of time, I start to think that I am more open to arranged marriage then before. I had met so many people but I could not find anyone. Friends, acquaintances that suggest you a spouse candidate will know about the person they suggest...This website is like a closed box, it is virtual, you can not trust people." (Saskin39, F, 39, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

In addition to these issues presented above, as it was discussed in the second chapter of this dissertation study, using dating and marriage websites is still a taboo in the country and as the accounts of interviewees reveal, none of these users share their online practices openly with their parents. To conclude, one can state that even though marriage website users break with the traditions of arranged marriage practices via engaging in online mate selection practices, they resort to "façade" mechanisms (Özyeğin, 2015) strategically to cope with the tensions arising from the conflicting aspects of their modern mate selection practices and the expectations of their parents related with their traditional habitus based practices.

"Of course I do not share it with anyone. If I meet someone from this website, I will never tell anyone that I met him online. Everybody has a different point of view, as this is a virtual context, I understand their concerns" (Kocae37, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, Kocaeli, Muslim / Conservative)

"My mother is a bit conservative. She would not understand it. She would suggest to find a girl for me herself if I say that I am a member of this website." (Cihangir02, M, 33, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

"I met with my husband on Pembe Panjur but we did not tell it to anyone. We told our families and friends that we met in friends' circle." (Çiğ34, F, 34, PembePanjur, Istanbul, Muslim/ Believer)

2. Pre-marital relationships and previous sexual experience of marriage website users in Turkey

As the attitudes of interviewees towards arranged marriage practices manifest most of the interviewees prefer spending some time with the spouse candidates before taking a decision to get married and most of them do not prefer arranged marriages. However, Islamic and liberal marriage website users' attitudes and more importantly the attitudes of female users and male users towards premarital relationships, the length of these relationships and the limits of physical intimacy that can be experienced in these relations differentiate significantly. In the second place, previous relationship experiences of males and females as well as Islamic and liberal site users are different. In this context, first of all, I would like to remind the regulation of sexuality and the control of women's sexuality in Turkish society to be able to explore users' attitudes towards premarital relationships.

In her analysis of Turkish modernism and state feminism, Toprak puts forward the idea that "the legal reforms which were launched with the Westernization movement in 1923 emancipated women but could not liberate even the urban and educated ones" (Toprak, 1982 in Tepe, 2014: 299). In this regard, Kadıoğlu states that "women of twentieth century Turkish history became "*modernes de robe"*, who wore modern clothes and adopted certain Western codes of conduct, but nevertheless remained traditional, especially regarding relations with men and their self-perceptions within the confines of the family" (Kadıoğlu, 1994:652 -653).

"The early republican reforms constituted an onslaught on existing cultural practices. They created an image of a modern Turkish woman who was honorable, chaste, enlightened, and modest. These virtues suppressed her sexuality while highlighting her modern outlook. The women who became products of the early republican reforms were similar to the "noblesse de robe" (nobility by virtue of dress) of pre-revolutionary France, who joined the ranks of the nobility by purchasing offices and putting on aristocratic clothes." (Kadıoğlu, 1994:652)

In this context, according to many scholars, one of the main obstacles before the liberation of women in Turkish society since the establishment of Turkish Republic have been "the corporate control over female sexuality" (Kandiyoti, 1987:325). As Kandiyoti clarifies in her analysis, "parents, siblings, near and distant relatives, and even neighbors closely monitor the movements of the post-pubescent girl" in a way that highlights the common understanding that "female sexuality is not hers to give or withhold" (Kandiyoti, 1987:325). In this direction, Svalastog (1998) states that "conservative ideas regarding sexuality" necessitate the "women to be sexual only within the male control" (Wikström, 2014:6). Otherwise, women that are

regarded as “sexual and non-reproductive” are “stigmatized” and considered as a “bad woman” (Wikström, 2014:39). Thus, in the conservative understanding of female sexuality, women are divided into two categories, “those almost totally devoid of sexuality” like mothers and “those that are nothing but sexuality” (Saktanber, 1995, p. 155).

As it was discussed in the first chapter, these corporate control practices over women’s sexuality are interrelated with the Islamic customs that have prevailed in Turkish society since the Ottoman era. In the traditional interpretation of Islam “women were associated with *fitna*, the destructive force of seduction” (Demant, 2006:82) and in this regard not only the society but also the women had to “impose self control” and regulate their sexuality (Bargach, 2006: 52-53). On the contrary, “Turkish men” have always been “encouraged to be sexually active” and according to the mainstream understanding of sexuality, men can be “libertine and husband material at the same time” (Wikström, 2014:39). On that note, it is worthwhile to recall the fact that “heterosexual male adultery (provided that it happens outside of home) is not sanctioned juridically in most Muslim countries” (Demant, 2006: 82) whereas female adultery can be punished by honor killings in Muslim countries as well as in conservative circles in Turkey (İlkkaracan, 1998).

In these conditions, apart from well educated, urban and liberal circles, most groups in Turkish society regard “an unmarried, independent woman living on her own as an anomaly” (Müftüler-Bac, 1999:310). Besides, recent studies investigating the pre-marital relationship practices of women who define themselves as “sexually liberated” individuals also present how these urban, well educated women impose self control on their sexualities despite their relative freedom. In this context, Ellialtı argues that these women set boundaries between free or random sexual relationships and love relationships and her study demonstrates that even though these women practice physical intimacy before marriage, they develop a moralizing discourse for their practices. In this context, Ellialtı claims that these urban well educated women who define themselves as “sexually liberated” ones only approve physical intimacy before marriage on the condition that these practices take place in love relationships. Furthermore, the researcher states that the discourses of these women reflect the fact that even these Turkish women define themselves as “sexually liberated”, they criticize the free or random sexual practices of women which do not take place in an established couple relationship based on love and they find it immoral (Ellialtı, 2012:395).

In the light of the information stated above, I would like to examine the interviewees' attitudes towards flirting, premarital relationships and premarital sexuality. In this regard, I will be sharing the accounts of female and male users together as the readings of these discourses together disclose the interviewees' understanding and perceptions regarding these issues more clearly. In the first place, it is worthwhile to state that the premarital relationship experiences of male and female users in both Islamic and liberal marriage websites differed considerably. The female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website who define themselves as "religious" and "not religious" state that they do not approve premarital sexual relationships while they approve courtship period. The accounts of some of these women demonstrate clearly that they have internalized the self control required by Turkish society. While one these interviewees explains her attitude towards premarital physical intimacy in a self reflexive manner with the norms of Turkish society, her account demonstrates that this reflexivity does not lead her to challenge the norms of the society. On the other hand, another female respondent reflects her negative attitude towards premarital sexuality as a personal choice.

"I do not think premarital sexuality is appropriate. Our society…if I had lived in another society maybe I would think differently from this. In our society, people do not regard it in a positive manner, it is not the right thing to do for us. I never wanted it before marriage. If I feel that the man wants more physical intimacy, I become distant. There is a time and a place for everything. Men think different than women. All the men I met were like this, they wanted physical intimacy. For these reasons, I stayed away and I did not have long relationships." (Kocae37, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, Kocaeli, Muslim / Conservative)

"I had long relationships before, one for 5 years and the other one lasted 3 years but I did not have a real sexual experience. Yes, you can be lovers. Couples can experience physical intimacy before getting married as well, I understand it but I do not want that. I know sexuality is a big part of marriage. I want to experience it when I get married." (Pink34, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Not religious)

In the second place, the accounts of some of the divorced female users of liberal and Islamic marriage websites manifest that their conservative habitus have led them to get married at an early age before engaging in any kind of premarital relationships.

"I did not have any experience with a man other than my ex husband. I just knew him. I did not meet with any other men in my life even for a coffee. My husband saw me in the neighborhood. He told me that he liked me and he came to our house with his family to ask the permission of my parents for getting married. I was trusting him and I liked his physical appearance. 4 years after I lost him with an accident, I decided to become a member of this marriage website." (Emineizm, F, 41, eCift, İzmir, Not religious)

In this regard, it is seen that all the religious female interviewees of Islamic marriage website share a similar kind of background about their parents' attitude towards dating and flirting. They explain that when they were teenagers or young girls living with their parents, dating and flirting was not approved in the family.

"I spent my childhood in a very conservative neighborhood. It was not a modern neighborhood. Also, my family was very oppressive and conservative. I was raised with my grandparents. They did not send me to school after primary school. I finished high school years after with my own efforts after I got divorced. As I did not go to school, I did not have a chance to meet with the boys. My grandparents arranged my marriage and I got married when I was sixteen. I had never met with men outside before I subscribed to this website." (Saskin39, F, 39, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

"I think they will not be too judgmental if I tell them I am seeing someone now but it was very difficult for me when I was a young girl. There was a big family pressure... they were against flirting." (Kocae37, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, Kocaeli, Muslim / Conservative)

On the other hand, the accounts of some religious interviewees from Istanbul introduce a relevant change in the attitudes of religious families living in the big cities of Turkey and interviewees state that flirting is not as problematic for religious families as it was before.

"I think even very religious families in İstanbul do not perceive flirting period as problematic as before. The parents know that their daughters see someone. It is not a big taboo anymore. But I do not know how religious people perceive these kinds of relationships before marriage in small cities or in the Eastern part of Turkey." (Consİst, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim / Conservative)

Only one of the liberal marriage website female user's account on her premarital relationships reveals that she had a sexual relationship with her boyfriend before they got married. This interviewee defines herself as a woman who does not have taboos regarding sexuality. As different from other divorced female interviewees, she got married at a later age (30) and she had a relatively long relationship period with her husband that includes premarital physical intimacy before marriage.

"After I finished the university, first I worked in USA as au pair for one and half years. Then, I started working as a civil servant. I met my first husband there. He was an engineer. Yes, we had sexuality in our relationship. We got married three years after we met... However, we did

not have a happy marriage. I tried to protect the relationship for a while and in the end I gave up and we got divorced. (EsEsİst, F, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Not religious)

On the other hand, the accounts of male users manifest that they had relatively more offline relationship experiences compared to female users. However, the attitudes of religious and relatively less religious users show differences in terms of the limits of premarital relationship. In this context, it is also observed that none of the interviewees mentioned cohabiting with their girlfriends and most of them did not have long relationships with their girlfriends. Besides, two of the liberal marriage website male users and one male user in Islamic marriage website mentioned having their first sexual experience with sex workers.

"I had my first long relationship when I was in the university. It lasted one year. Later I met another woman in English language course. It lasted only six months. I had my first sexual experience after the university. I did not have a sexual relationship with these girlfriends I mentioned. My first sexual intercourse was with someone I pay for having this experience." (Andanka, M, 35, eCift, Ankara, Not religious)

In Turkey, "prostitution is legal" (Özbek, 2010) and "it got regulated in 1884 with the motivation to benefit public health and social order" (Wikström, 2014:6).[282] This regulation can be explained with the common acceptance of active male sexuality out of marriage. In reference to the portrait of the customs and regulations regarding the sexuality of men and women in Turkish society, Wikström explains the prevalence of prostitution as a measure to control the chastity of Turkish women as it provides an option for men to satisfy their sexual needs with sex workers (Wikström, 2014:6).

The male users who had their first sexual experiences with sex workers were reluctant to talk about these experiences and rather than naming the type of experience openly, they referred to sex workers as "other ways of experiencing sex with money".

[282] "Even though there is legal and regulated prostitution in Turkey, these legal brothels have a bad reputation and they are seen as shabby. This is a consequence of the connection between liberal views on prostitution and conservative views on sexuality. The "whore" is rather treated like a criminal than a respected worker". For more information, see: Erika Wikström, **Buying sex as a privilege? A qualitative study of middle class Turkish men and their views on sexuality, gender equality and prostitution**, (Unpublished master's dissertation), University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden, 2014

In the second place, as mentioned above briefly, only three male users mentioned having long relationships with women and none of the Islamic or liberal marriage site male users have cohabited with their girlfriends.

"I had one relationship before I was subscribed to these kinds of sites. I never had a long relationship with a woman. I had my first sexual experience in my early 20s." (emre, ecift)

"I am 38 years old and I never had a real relationship with a woman other than my marriage for 7 years. There was another woman with whom I had a relationship for one year but we were barely seeing each other once or twice in a month. I was admiring her as she was a grounded and a free woman. Then, we had relationship problems and we had to separate." (Barbaİst, M, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

When I explore the premarital relationship practices of Islamic marriage website male users, I also observed a difference between the use of language of Islamic and liberal marriage website male users in reference to the significant others in their lives. Several male interviewees of Islamic marriage website were referring to their girlfriends as *'konuştuğum'* (the one I talk with) or *'görüştüğüm'* (the one I meet) and they refrained from calling them as girlfriends or lovers. Besides, the accounts of male users of *Gönülden Sevenler* reflect the tension they experience between the norms of Islam and modern premarital relationships. While some of them state that there should be a limitation of number of meetings with spouse candidates, some of them claim that flirting is against Islam. Another finding that came out of the interviewees with male users of Islamic marriage website is; Islamic marriage users rationalize their negative attitude towards long premarital relationships with the impossibility of knowing someone even though the main reason behind keeping the relationship short is refraining from possible sexual encounters. However, they stated that dating with someone does not help them to know these potential partners.

"I do not think that the relationship before marriage should be long. Three or four meetings can be enough. I think like that as I do not want to commit too much sins. If you see the girl more than this, you can start to hold her hand. You can start to be more close. Thus, if the relationship gets longer, you might find yourself doing things that you should not do and you might start having sins. So, keeping the pre-marital period short is the good way for Islam. Besides, even if you date with a girl for years, you can still have problems in the marriage. You can not know a girl with dating even if you stay with her for a long period of time" (Tutuc27, M, 27, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim / Conservative)

"As I am very religious, I want to do everything in accordance with the religion. I find dating and flirting absurd. If a couple is together for 5 or 6 years old, they can go out together, pardon me but they can sleep together. This is wrong. If these kind of people get married, as they had experienced everything with their wife before, the relationship gets boring, it does not last." (Devo26, M, 26, GönüldenSevenler, Ağrı, Muslim /Devout)

On the other hand, three of the male users of Islamic marriage website stated having sexual encounters with women before. However, these male interviewees were critical about themselves as they bended the rules of Islam.

"In Islam, there is nothing about flirt period between couples. In Islam, if a man meets with a woman before marriage, there should be a curtain between them. You can hear her; you can talk with her but you should not see her. We are bending the rules of Islam too much unfortunately." (Tutuc27, M, 27, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim / Conservative)

"I do not want to think of spending a night with a spouse candidate before marriage. I can keep her hands; maybe I can kiss her or become closer. This strengthens the bond between us. However, if we have a sexual intercourse, it shows that our purpose is different. I do not want to be so close with a spouse candidate before marriage…However I had several sexual encounters with women that I met via Siberalem dating website. It was a different period for me. I regret it. I do not want to get married with a woman I had sexual encounter before" (Cihangir02, M, 33, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

Consequently, one can argue that while the premarital relationship experiences of male and female users of marriage websites are manifold compared to previous generations, the traditions and customs regarding premarital sexuality are still important factors that shape the attitudes and behaviors of these marriage website users. On the other hand, there is a discrepancy between the premarital relationship experiences of pious men and women. While both parties feel the tension between Islamic norms and modern mate selection practices, men can bend these rules more easily than women as customs and social norms allow room for sexual encounters of men. On the other hand, the accounts of both pious and not pious female interviewees embraced in this study demonstrate that these women internalize the norms and impose more self control on their sexuality compared to male users.

3. Online relationship formation sequence

The analysis of female and male users' accounts sets out an online relationship formation sequence composed of 10 principal steps. Following their subscription to marriage websites, users usually prepare their online self presentations. Both Islamic and liberal marriage site users prefer filtering the available mate candidates according to their mate selection criteria and they quickly review the profiles of users that match their criteria. As it will be discussed in detail in the following pages, male users initiate the contact by sending first messages in general while female users resort to other features of online marriage websites like winking, smiling or notification to show their interest to male candidates. The initial process usually continues on the marriage website for a while and users exchange text messages using the facilities of these marriage websites.

Table 5.1: Online Relationship Formation Sequence (Male)

Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10
Subscription To Marriage Website	Online Self Presentation	Filtering	Quick Perusal Of Opposite Sex's Personal Profile	First message Visiting female user's page	Texting each other via messaging function of marriage websites	Facebook WhatsApp Skype Telephone	First face to face meeting invitation	Ensuing face to face meeting(s)	Terminate marriage website membership Terminate the relationship

If they decide to continue their communication with each other, they move on to the other communication mediums like WhatsApp, Skype, Facebook or they simply talk with each other on the phone. If both parties agree, they plan for their first meeting. As several interviewees mention in their accounts, many users decide not to maintain the relationship if they realize that their mate candidate does not match with their mate selection criteria in their face to face meetings. Female users who do not want to be disturbed by the male candidates (that do not match with their mate selection criteria) usually block these users after this initial meeting. If the first meeting passes well for both sides, users continue seeing each other depending on their relationship strategies. Finally, if they acknowledge each other as lovers or spouse candidates, they usually terminate their current memberships and they do not open a new account unless they break up with the current mate candidate.

Table 5.2: Online relationship formation sequence (Female)

Subscription To Marriage Website	Online Self Presentation	Filtering	Quick Perusal Of Opposite Sex's Personal Profile	Winking Smiling Visiting male user's page	Texting each other via messaging function of marriage websites	Facebook WhatsApp Skype Telephone	First face to face meeting	Ensuing face to face meeting(s)	Terminate marriage website membership Terminate the relationship

4. The decision to subscribe to marriage websites and users' preferences

The scholars analyzing the advantages of online dating and marriage websites state that these websites provide their users "three key services". Accordingly, they state that these websites provide "unprecedented access to potential dating partners", they ensure "the ability to communicate using mediated channels before determining to meet face to face" and they give users "the option of being matched using romantic compatibility algorithms" (Finkel et al., 2012 in Ramirez, Sumner et al., 2014: 101).

While the self-presentation infrastructures Turkish marriage websites offer, the positioning of these marriage websites and their institutional identities are not similar, all of them offer a significant number of potential mates for female and male users looking for spouse candidates. The multitude of male and female users in these websites is acknowledged as an advantage by all interviewees. When the accounts of interviewees who are subscribed to liberal websites (providing algorithms) are taken into account, it is seen that these matching algorithms provide positive impression on users and affect the subscription decision of the users of *eCift* and *Pembe Panjur* websites as these features lead them to think that such sites are more professional ones.[283] *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website does not provide such an online matching algorithm.

In the third place, "the ability to communicate using mediated channels before determining to meet face to face" (Finkel et al., 2012 in Ramirez, Sumner et al., 2014: 101) is interpreted in various manners by the interviewees. In the first place both female and male users interpret the mediated communication practices as convenience and they state that the convenience of finding a mate via these websites is one of the reasons they decided to subscribe.

[283] However, as it will be discussed in usage practices, most of the users prefer "filtering" the available candidates themselves other than starting contacts with the users provided by these algorithms.

"I am a shy person. I can never talk openly with a woman even if I am deeply in love with her. You know sometimes you see a woman and you say she is the woman of my life. Even if I see such a person, I can not go next to her and talk with her. Thus, these websites are great for people like me. I can talk more easily in these online contexts." (Tutuc27, M, 27, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim / Conservative)

"It is really easy. I can date with anyone I like online while my parents are looking at the television at home. I do not even have to move. I can sit on my sofa and choose my spouse candidates." (Kocae37, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, Kocaeli, Muslim / Conservative)

In addition to the restrictive customs about premarital marriages and other possible obstacles behind premarital relationships such as corporate control on women in especially more conservative and underdeveloped regions, lessening mixed socialization environments and the neoliberal urbanization projects complicating socialization possibilities, both liberal and Islamic marriage website users who had accomplished university education state that they do not have access to mixed socialization contexts like they had before in their university time. One of the reasons that limit their socialization possibilities is their working conditions according to male users. Besides, they also state that the people they used to socialize together are not available any more as their lives changed in years. Thus, they state that websites enable them to socialize more easily with the opposite sex as they do not have the necessary means as they had before due to their changing lifestyles. Besides, even though religious revivalism has given rise to many "Islamic" socialization contexts in big cities, these places are mostly preferred by married religious couples and they do not allow for a mixed socialization environment like the liberal mixed socialization contexts like cafes, bars, concerts, etc.

"As time passes, I realize that I do not have the same amount of people around me as I had before when I was in university. My friends are married now so we can not socialize as frequently as before. I am very busy and I spend most of my time working. Besides I live in a residential complex and there is not much option to socialize around my home. Thus, even though I trust myself more compared to older times, I can not meet with people easily. I do not have the means to socialize like time, friends, etc. even though I have more money now. I have been using these types of websites since 10 years. Before I was just using it for fun but now I am trying to find someone who can be my wife." (Cihangir02, M, 33, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

In addition to the convenience and easy socialization facilities these websites provide, most of the female interviewees highlight their desire to get married as their reasons to subscribe to these marriage websites together with the limited socialization possibilities in their lives.

I did not know what to do after my divorce. I was not someone who goes out so often at night and I decided to subscribe to a website and date with a male member every night until I find someone that I can get married." (EsEsİst, F, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Not religious)

I decided to become a member of this marriage website as I wanted to get married." (Emineizm, F, 41, eCift, İzmir, Not religious)

Different from the other benefits of marriage websites, some liberal male users also state that finding spouse candidates or lovers via these websites is more affordable compared to dating outside (e.g. bars or restaurants) with women.

"I had never met with someone using these kinds of websites before. I had met the women in my life either at bars or festivals of in holidays. After I broke up with my wife, I saw the advertisement of eCift and I wanted to give it a try as I was curious about its character test and matching algorithm. Then I checked the price of this website, it was really cheap. I thought that I could spend this money on this website and meet with many women instead of having a drink at a bar and check the people around. Later I subscribed to Pembe Panjur as well." (Bü39, M, 39, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Not religious)

In addition to the key services these websites provide, the symbolic differences between these websites also affect users' choices. As we have discussed in the previous chapters, the accounts of the users reveal that less conservative or liberal Turkish internet users who embrace the cultural tastes of *Engaged Cosmopolitans* (Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014: 172) prefer liberal marriage websites as they expect to find individuals like themselves in these online platforms.[284]

"I saw Pembe Panjur's ad and I decided to check. Before I was using another dating application on Facebook but I was not satisfied with the quality of this application. As Pembe Panjur defines itself as a serious website for marriage which has a matching feature, I decided to try it. I really like the fact that the site enables its users to filter their users in terms of age and occupation. I could clearly state my mate selection criteria and I managed to meet with people who are educated and decent, the people that meet my criteria and my life style and my tastes. I trusted this website." (Çiğ34, F, 34, PembePanjur, Istanbul, Muslim/ Believer)

[284] The accounts of male and female users of *Pembe Panjur* and *eCift* marriage websites reveal the fact that users of these websites find these sites equivalent. Some of the users of *eCift* had used *Pembe Panjur* before and in a similar fashion, six members of *Pembe Panjur* have used or they are still using these two websites synchronously.

On the other hand, the spiritual capital of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website differentiates this website significantly from other marriage websites. The accounts of the interviewees using this website manifest clearly that religious and conservative people prefer this marriage website because of its religious positioning. The spiritual capital of *Gönülden Sevenler* lead some of their users to assume that religious and "decent" individuals appear in Islamic marriage websites and these marriage websites are comprised of people who would not deceive them.

"First I started using eCift but then I found out that this site is not suitable for me. I am a conservative person and the emphasis of "Islam" and "Islamic Marriage" of Gönülden Sevenler marriage website convinced me to register to this site. eCift and Pembe Panjur are sites where the main goal of male users is to flirt or to have a sexual intercourse…Frankly, I can not say that I trust this Islamic Marriage website too but I am still hopeful…I am looking for someone who has a life philosophy like me". (Flowera, F, 28, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

"I became a member of Gönülden Sevenler as I find myself as a conservative man. Even though I do not look like a religious person and I cannot obey all the rules of Islam, religion is important for me. I do not use alcohol for example. I am looking for someone like me. She can be an open woman; she does not have to be veiled but she should carry the fear of God within herself." (Cihangir02, M, 33, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

In sum we can state that, interviewees prefer these websites for the multitude of potential mate candidates in these websites, their algorithms, their convenience and as they provide affordable socialization facilities. However, the symbolic differences of these websites lead users to select the one that matches with their lifestyle and religiosity.

5. Self presentation and filtering strategies of marriage website users

5.1. Self presentation strategies of marriage website users

In the third chapter, I have presented the influence of symbolic differences between Islamic and liberal marriage websites on users' self presentation together with the differences between self presentation structures and communal expectations in different websites. As the third chapter of this dissertation study covers the self presentation of marriage websites users, in this section I would like to highlight users' self presentation strategies which does not take part explicitly in their online declarations.

In this regard, with reference to Goffman's theory (1956) on self presentation, I would like to explore and share what users want to conceal and highlight in their "profile work" (Silfverberg et al., 2011 in Uski & Lampinen, 2016: 450) to impress other users and to present the "idealized image of themselves". This analysis will enable us to see the similarities and differences between their online and offline declarations about their self presentation. In the second place, I will be sharing what kind of filters members use to select their mate candidates on these marriage websites.

In this context, the accounts of female interviewees display similarities with the findings of previous researches regarding age and physical appearance discussed in the third chapter (Hall, Park et al., 2010: 121). In the first place, women who consider themselves aged in reference to mate selection criteria of men prefer to conceal or misrepresent their age in their profile forms and profile pictures.

"I do not prefer to highlight my age. I am 41 years old but as I am in a good shape, I do not look like 41." (Emineizm, F, 41, eCift, İzmir, Not religious)

"I did not want to share my age on the profile form. I am 38 years old but everybody tells me that I look younger. I did not want men to think that I am old." (Rabi38, F, 38, PembePanjur, Ankara, Muslim / Not Conservative)

Besides, male users also underline the fact that several women post older photographs of themselves to give an impression of a younger woman.

"I could have met many women face to face in an offline setting if the physical qualities they mentioned on their profile and their photographs matched with their current shape. I had several skype sessions with female users before meeting. Some of them put attractive photographs of themselves. Once you make a skype session with them, you understand that these photographs belong to maybe 10 years ago…" (ErkStu, M, 38, PembePanjur, İst, Muslim /Religious)

In the second place, some women prefer to conceal information regarding their residence type and residence area. On that note, some female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* refer to the stigma regarding the women living alone in conservative circles. In the second place, as the findings of recent researches manifest "the context of the social interaction" and online dating website users' perceptions about "target audience" of that specific context also influence

the ways online users present themselves (Toma, Hancock, & Ellison, 2008). Therefore, the account of the female interviewee's misrepresentation of her residence type as presented below can be explained with the stigma attached to women living alone in conservative circles, social expectations of the Islamic marriage websites users and the perceptions of the female users around these expectations.

"I live alone but I do not share it on my profile as this can cause men to have different perceptions about me. I have rules, even though I do not live with my family, I do not want to be perceived as alone and free.

- *What might men think if you say declare that you live alone?*

They can think that I am an easy woman" (AslGül, F, 24, GönüldenSevenler, Tekirdağ, Muslim /Conservative)

However, as one of the female user describes in our interview, the concealment of the area of residence can also be related with the concealment of economic capital.

"I did not share information that can reveal my real identity and my real address. In this profile form, I just mentioned the district I live but I did not reveal my neighborhood as it is a neighbourhood where wealthy people live. I also do not share information about my income and wealth. I also prefer photos taken from a long distance and I use big eye glasses to disguise my face." (Saskin39, F, 39, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

Besides, many interviewees stated not sharing photographs of themselves with sexy attires which display their bodies as they do not prefer highlighting their sexuality in public in general but some of them also stated that publishing sexy pictures would not create good images on the minds of male users who are subscribed to these marriage websites. Thus, one can assume that these interviewees refrain from being stigmatized as women "nothing but sexuality" (Saktanber, 1995, p. 155) as they act with the intention to represent themselves as "ideal spouse candidates" in line with Turkish gender norms. In this context, only one female interviewee using *Pembe Panjur* marriage website stated publishing such photographs on her profile to attract male users.

On the other hand, in parallel to the netnographic observations of these websites, several female interviewees (8 in 15) state highlighting in their profile that they are looking for a "trustworthy man" with whom they can "get married". In addition to these, three female users mention publishing personal notes on their profiles to express that "they are not looking for sex

partners". On that note, in parallel with the netnographic observations of female users' self presentation statements, one of the male interviewees argues that the statements of some female users that describe and limit the type of men that can contact cause him to lose his motivation to initiate a conversation with these women. In this regard, I would like to share the profile notes of two female interviewees and the comment of one male interviewee regarding these types of profile notes.

"People, who do not match with my criteria, please do not waste your time and my time for nothing. As I do not want anyone to see my photos, I did not share clear photos; you will see me anyway when we meet face to face. First our opinions have to match, then comes look. For me physics and chemistry are very important☺ I am a religious, natural, sincere and liberal person. I am looking for a cultivated, smart, brave, gentle and romantic person who wants to meet for getting married." (Consİst, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim / Conservative)

"I know that there is no more prince charming. I am looking for love, respect, trust, honesty...I am looking for a good person to get married and share the rest of my life. Those looking for sexual partnes, do not write!!" (Saskin39, F, 39, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

As it was stated in the third chapter, the unequal distribution of male and female users on these websites have an effect on usage practices. As the percentage of men are much higher compared to women, women receive superabundant number of messages from male users and they eliminate several male candidates quite easily without engaging in any kind of communication. Besides, as it will be revealed in the next section where the first messages of male users are analyzed, both the analysis of these messages and the accounts of users (in netnographic field research and in semi structures interviews) demonstrate that women receive several sexually explicit messages in Islamic and liberal marriage websites. The netnographic observations of these marriage websites demonstrate that even the first messages male users send can include such content. Thus, one can assume that while this unequal gender distribution on marriage websites lead women to be more selective than men, the sexually explicit messages they receive also lead them to be more precise on their profile descriptions. However, the profile notes of some female users leave a negative impression on some male users as it is mentioned in the account of a male user:

"In their profile description, some women make such statements; 'I am a person like this, I do not want to spend so much time with men to get to know each other' or 'If you do not plan to

get married, do not write to me.' Even though some of these women have charming pictures, I would never write to them. I feel under pressure when I read such messages" (Barbaİst, M, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

As a final remark, none of the female interviewees mentioned highlighting their occupation or education level in their profile forms.

When the responses of the male interviewees regarding the qualities they highlight and conceal are examined, it is seen that significant number of male users (8 in 15) prefer to highlight that they are trustable men.

"I tried to reveal that I am person that women can trust if they decide to meet me." (Gürcizm, M, 35, eCift, İzmir, Muslim /Religious)

In this context, it is worthwhile to highlight the importance of trust for male and female users of marriage websites. The findings of the statistical analysis of the qualities men and women look for with reference to spouse compatibility in *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage websites demonstrate that trust is the most important quality for male (88%) and female users (89%) in spouse compatibility according to the users of this marriage website.[285] In addition to this, the results of the analysis of one question in *Pembe Panjur* (regarding the most important three qualities in mate selection) manifest that honesty and sincerity are also the most important qualities for male and female users of this website as well.[286] Thus, the preference of male users to highlight this quality in their profile forms can be explained with the preferences of female users they observe as well as their own need to trust the declarations of female users in these quasi-anonymous marriage websites.

On the other hand, the accounts of three male interviewees demonstrate their relatively low levels of "impression motivation" (Leary & Kowalski, 1990 in De Vries, D. A. 2016: 45). These male users do not have the motivation or "the feel for the game" for presenting idealized versions of themselves on these websites as they observe that most of the users act with the motivation to do so.

[285] The statistical information revealed in this study regarding this Islamic marriage website reflects the findings of 1636 *Gönülden Sevenler* members who were online at the peak use time on 27 June 2015

[286] 540 males and 70 females responded to this question in Pembe Panjur marriage website so the results revealed in this section represents the responses of these users who were online at the peak use time on 23 and 24 September 2016.

"You fill these profile forms to promote yourself. It is not possible to talk about oneself objectively. When you talk about yourself, you tend to mention the positive qualities of yourself as if you are praising yourself. I prefer not to give too much information other than my age, my occupation and education level and my photograph" (Cancan35, M, 38, eCift, İzmir, Not religious)

"Nobody wants to highlight his negative qualities in these websites. Even if they start dating, I believe nobody shows their real face until they get married in these candy-bouquet periods." (Bü39, M, 39, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Not religious)

"I do not want to share too much information about myself on this website, I prefer to tell about myself when I meet with a woman face to face. I think it is pretentious to give too much information about oneself before the real encounter. I just mention my age, the city I live and my job. I got suspicious about the information people share on their profiles, I am never sure that they are true until I meet them." (ErkStu, M, 38, PembePanjur, İst, Muslim /Religious)

However, as the accounts of these male interviewees put forward, even though they do not share too much information about themselves, they still highlight the qualities that take place in female users' mate selection criteria such as occupation, education or "being trustworthy".

Besides, the accounts of other male interviewees demonstrate that some male users prefer to highlight their character qualities that will appeal to the mate selection criteria of female users. On the contrary, other male users state that they conceal their negative character qualities such as "being depressive or pessimist" while one user states not mentioning his income level as it does not match with the mate selection criteria of women.

In sum, there are salient differences between the self presentation strategies of female and male users. In this context, one can assume that female users tend to present themselves as young, attractive but not as promiscuous or as an easy woman, whereas male users choose giving a trustworthy, educated and bread-winner male impression. These findings also show significant similarities with the findings of the declarative identities of marriage website users that were analyzed in the third chapter of this study.

5.2. Filtering strategies of marriage website users

Previous researches on online dating demonstrate that users engage in filtering practices for determining the physical and personal qualities of potential mates before they make the first contact with other users (Couch & Liamputtong, 2008: 277) in a manner that Goffman could define as "quiet sorting" (Goffman, 1982:8). Filtering can occur before the first conversation as well as after the initial conversations with the potential mates.

Heino, Ellison & Gibbs explain this process by referring to "market metaphor". In this regard, first of all they define "various facets of relationship initiation" (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010: 434) and they state that the main themes in this process are "assessing others' market worth", "determining one's own market worth", "shopping for perfect parts", "maximizing inventory" and "calibrating selectivity" (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010: 434). In this direction, one can claim that the ability to filter the qualities of other users to select the ones that fit best to one's mate selection criteria also leads users to develop their strategies for online mate selection.

Visual and verbal cues play a significant role in this process in addition to the declarations stated on the profile forms of these users. The findings of the interviews demonstrate that "participants adopt strategies such as avoiding profiles without a photo, without multiple photos, or with only one blurry photo" as it was also revealed in Heino, Ellison & Gibbs's research (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010: 434). On the other hand, verbal and linguistic cues, especially proper use of Turkish grammar are important for interviewees who search for educated partners.

"It is not very hard to tell about yourself. You need a good Turkish, that's it. Sometimes I see women who do not explain themselves in details but I think it is vey important for male and female users. If you explain yourself well with a good grammar, you get better comments and messages. Otherwise, users do not respond to your messages if you do not use a proper Turkish." (Gönülden Sevenler, Male, Religious, University Graduate, 33, İstanbul)

As we have discussed in the previous chapters, Enguix and Ardévol claim that the self presentation infrastructure of marriage websites "fragment bodies" and attribute "importance to measurements" in a manner "objectifying the body and relate bodies as a collection of measured attributes" (Enguix, Ardévol, 2014: 504). On that note, the findings of Heino, Ellison

& Gibbs reveal that in addition to the physical attributes, personal qualities are also presented in a fragmented fashion in these types of dating and marriage websites. In this direction, the scholars argue that these types of infrastructures "encourage a shopping mentality, in which participants search for the perfect match based on discrete characteristics and reduced potential partners to the sum of their parts" (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010: 436-437).

"Decision making based on these qualities was quite different from offline dating situations in which individuals often get a more holistic impression of the individual, usually taking into account unquantifiable aspects of personality (such as energy level) and interaction (such as chemistry). For some participants, online dating encouraged an environment in which partner selection became sterile and calculating as opposed to a spontaneous, "magical" crossing of paths" (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010: 437).

The findings of these interviews also manifest that several male and female users have the tendency to filter others based on their specific qualities (e.g. height, hair color, house ownership, etc.) as self presentation infrastructure of these websites enable them to do so, unlike "spontaneous" or "non-spontaneous" offline face to face encounters where they can have the possibility to assess the potential partners in sum.

In this regard, I would like to present an account of the qualities interviewees refer in their filtering process. While photographs are used as the first filters marriage website members resort for selecting partners, in their accounts male and female users and Islamic and liberal website users referred to several other filters as well.

Physical qualities

In the first place, I would like to explore the filters regarding the physical qualities users apply in online mate selection. These filters set a good example of "search for the perfect match based on discrete characteristics and reduced potential partners to the sum of their parts" (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010: 436-437). For instance, one of the male users of *eCift* states that he implements strict filters to be able to have a pool of female users that match exactly his criteria. For this reason, he applies his filters which are "height" (1.70 cm and over), "slimness" and "not being a smoker". He claims that in the end, he can have a pool of women whose number do not exceed 300 as many Turkish female users do not meet his criteria. Below, I share some of the examples of Islamic and liberal marriage website users' filters regarding physical appearance.

Table 5.3: Mate Selection – Filters that are used by interviewees (Physical Qualities)

	Liberal marriage websites	**Islamic marriage websites**
Female Interviewees	*"I prefer medium weight, tall, charismatic, handsome men who look trustworthy."* (Emineizm, F, 41, eCift, İzmir, Not religious) - *"I would not prefer a man who is fat and shorter than me."* (Akad34, F, 38, eCift, İstanbul, Muslim / Not Conservative) - "*I prefer tall men and they should not be fat."* (Rabi38, F, 38, PembePanjur, Ankara, Muslim / Not Conservative)	*"I did not care about physical appearance before I started using this website. After I met a few men who does not appeal to me, I decided to care more about the look. I do not have specific criteria but he should be good looking."* (Flowera, F, 28, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative) *"I am looking for an attractive man. I would prefer a man who is tall and has grey hair."* (Ladydoc, F, 31, İzmir, GönüldenSevenler, Muslim /Religious)
Male Interviewees	- *"Taille is very important for me. As Turkish women are not very tall, this criterion limits the number of women I can meet. I am 1.85 and I do not talk with girls below 1.70.*" (Cancan35, M, 38, eCift, İzmir, Not religious) - *"As I am tall, I do prefer tall women, especially blond. I would never send a message to a woman who does not correspond to my mate selection criteria. I do not care about what else she shares on her profile if she does not look good."* (Gürcizm, M, 35, eCift, İzmir, Muslim /Religious) - *I do not prefer fat women. I also would not prefer being with a woman over 1.75 cm, I look like a child next to her. So I filter women according to these criteria."* (Barbaİst, M, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative) - *"As I am person who cares about his appearance, I prefer women like me. Her eyes and her look have to affect me. I prefer fully figured women. I do not search for slim women."* (Emrciv, M, 33, eCift, Ankara, Muslim / Moderate Conservative)	- *"I first check the physical appearance of women; how they describe their look; the color of eyes, the color of hair...I do not like short and overweight women. Thus, I filter users according to their physical qualities in the first place. After that, I check her level of education and what she writes about herself."* (Tutuc27, M, 27, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim / Conservative) - *"I check if they share veiled photos or not. I am a conservative man and I prefer veiled women."* (Gönülden Sevenler, Male, Religious, Undergraduate, x, İstanbul) - *"I do not like fat women. I prefer not to talk with these types of women."* (Gönülden Sevenler, Male, Religious, Undergraduate, x, İstanbul)

While the physical preferences of users show variations as the specific qualities they filter depend on their own physical qualities or tastes as well, the accounts of interviewees

manifest that most of the male (9 in 15) users mention not preferring fat or overweight women and less than half of the female users (7 in 15) state that they do not prefer fat or overweight men. Only one interviewee mentioned preferring fully figured women. On the other hand, male users do not prefer women who are taller themselves whereas female users look for men who are taller themselves. In the second place, while most of the interviewees did not specify the hair color they search for, four male interviewees of liberal marriage websites mentioned preferring blond women whereas five female users mentioned preferring men with grey hair.

The preferences of male and female interviewees in terms of the physical qualities they look for in mate candidates resemble the ways men and women are portrayed in mainstream advertisements as it was discussed in the third chapter (Goffman, 1987). Male interviewees tend to present an image in the society where they look taller or in a physically higher position than women and female interviewees prefer the opposite. Some male users state "they do not want look like kids next to taller women". Male users (7 in 15) also state preferring women who take good care of their physical appearance with regimes or sports, in other saying they prefer women who undertake practices which require the disciplining of their bodies whereas none of the female users mentioned searching for such a quality. However, several women stated not preferring fat or overweight male candidates. On the other part, where as female interviewees prefer "grey haired" men, none of the male interviewees mentioned prefering this quality as well.

Age preferences

In terms of age preferences, the accounts of male interviewees manifest that they prefer women younger themselves. While five of the male interviewees state that age of women is not very important for them, ten male users state that they prefer women who are younger them.

"I think that women over thirty years have a lot of experience and they can be drowned out after some relationships…So I do not think they take relationships serious and I do not prefer them". (Andanka, M, 35, eCift, Ankara, Not religious)
"I am looking for men at most 9 years younger than me, I do not prefer women older than me." (Dem40, M, 40, PembePanjur, Yalova, Alewi)

"I prefer women between 18 and 25 years old." (ErkStu, M, 38, PembePanjur, İst, Muslim /Religious)

Only one of the female interviewees stated that she could also preferr male candidates that are younger than her. Most of the female interviewees stated using filters to select an age range close to their age or older than them.

"He should be around my age, between 25 and 35." (Flowera, F, 28, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

"As I am looking for someone who is more mature and cultivated than me, I am looking for a man between 40-50 years. I can not do with men younger than me." (GsSarı, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Not religious)

The age preferences of male interviewees correspond with the motivation of some female interviewees to present themselves as youthful and younger than their age as it was also revealed in the previous studies investigating online self presentation (Hall, Park, et al., 2010). In the second place, as the average age in these marriage websites are over 30, the age preferences of women and men provide an obstacle for several female and male marriage website users who do not meet such criteria and limit the number of potential mate candidates they can meet.

Education level

In contrast with the findings of the researches that refer to the importance of "educational homogamy" in mate selection (Blossfeld and Timm 2003: 333 in Schmitz, 2017:61), the responses of Turkish interviewees in terms of education level show variances. While some of the male interviewees with university degrees (6 in 15) do not attribute importance to the education level of female users, some other male users prefer female users with at least high school level (4 in 15) and some other prefer university graduates or higher (5 in 15). On the other hand, two of the female interviewees with university degrees stated preferring at least high school graduates where as other female users (including two of the interviewees with high school diplomas) mentioned preferring male candidates at least with university degrees. In this specific context, there is not a significant difference between liberal and Islamic marriage website users. In the light of the preferences of interviewees regarding education, one can assume that female interviewees tend to prefer educated men as they link good education with good income level in parallel with the findings of the third chapter. On the contrary, the physical qualities of women are the most important qualities for male users' mate

selection decision. They examine other qualities of women after they use a filter to choose the physical qualities they look for and check the photographs of women if available.

"She should be at least highschool graduate." (Gürcizm, M, 35, eCift, İzmir, Muslim /Religious)

"She has to be a university graduate." (Abdoco, M, 40, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Not religious)

"Education level is not important for me; she should be at least primary school graduate." (ErkStu, M, 38, PembePanjur, İst, Muslim /Religious)

"I used to think education level is not so important for me but after meeting some people I see that I find men who have post graduate education more attractive." (Flowera, F, 28, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

"He should be a university graduate." (Emineizm, F, 41, eCift, İzmir, Not religious)

Income level

The accounts of interviewees regarding income level show similarities with the general mate selection preferences of Turkish people (TAYA, 2011). On that note, the education, job ownership and income level of women affect the importance female interviewees attribute to this quality. None of the male interviewees mention that income level of female users is important for them in their search criteria while some of them (2 in 15) state checking the income level of users if they publish it on their profile pages.

"Her income level is not important at all for me." (Cancan35, M, 38, eCift, İzmir, Not religious)

"I check if she mentions her income level on her profile but it is not important at all." (eCift, Gürcan)

"Her income level is not important." (Kuzey28, M, 28, GönüldenSevenler, İst, Muslim / Conservative)

However, some of the male interviewees (4 in 15) state that they would be annoyed if their spouse candidate earns more than themselves.

"I would not prefer a woman who earns more than me. You know there are social pressures on men and if she earns more than me, I will be annoyed." (Barbaİst, M, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

Most of the female users (11 in 15) stress upon the importance of income level in their search criteria even though some of these women (6 in 11) are women holding jobs. Besides some of the female interviewees (4 in 15) also stated that house and car ownerships are other important criteria for mate selection. On the other hand, some women holding jobs, who have regular income or properties did not stress upon the income level of male candidates as much as the other female interviewees but their accounts highlighted the fact that they regard men as the bread-winner of the family and they would not prefer a male who does not have sufficient income level.

"Even though I work, his income level must also be good and he should be able to take me out at least two times a week. And he should have a car, if he does not have a car, I do not prefer him as I think I can find some other men who have a car." (Kocae37, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, Kocaeli, Muslim / Conservative)

"He should have a good income level. It is very important for me because I do not want to continue working after I get married. His income level is important for establishing a good family." (AslGül, F, 24, GönüldenSevenler, Tekirdağ, Muslim /Conservative)

Those who have property and income stated that as it is a man's responsibility to contribute to the expenses of the house.

"I am not looking for a rich man. My income level is good. However, it's a man's responsibility to take the financial responsibility of the house. He should be able to make enough money for that." (Saskin39, F, 39, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

"I do not look for a car or a house. I have all of them but he should have a regular income." (Emineizm, F, 41, eCift, İzmir, Not religious

Occupation

The findings of TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey (2011) manifest that 91,7 % of Turkish women state that they prefer a man who "have a good job". In parallel with these findings all the female interviewees state that the occupation of the male candidate is very important for them. On the other hand, four male interviewees who are members of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website and four members of liberal marriage websites state that the occupation of the female candidates are not very important for them while one of them mentioned not preferring women working longer hours than him.

"I do not care too much about the occupation of my spouse candidate. I do not want to limit anyone but she should have the same working hours with me. I come around 17h in the evening, she should be at home when I arrive home. That is very important for women. Besides, I would prefer if she works as a civil servant like me." (Emrciv, M, 33, eCift, Ankara, Muslim / Moderate Conservative)

Besides, one of the conservative users of Islamic marriage website stated that he does not prefer a working woman. The remaining six male interviewees who are members of liberal marriage websites stated preferring working women for different reasons. In this regard, three of them stated the importance of women's contribution to family budget and two of them underlined the advantages of being with a working woman for better couple relationships.

"I believe that if the woman works, the relationship between couples get better. Otherwise, she will have a lot of free time and she would start too questioning many insignificant issues and create problems in the relationship. I experienced it when I was married. Our relationship got worse after she quitted her job." (Barbaİst, M, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

However, none of the male users mentioned using filters to select a woman with a specific profession while women stated searching for doctors, civil servants, lawyers and so forth.

Religion

As the analysis of self presentation infrastructures of marriage websites demonstrate, *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website gives place to more questions regarding religiosity and the religious practices. Other than that, the questions they include which interrogate the hobbies and cultural tastes of their users also include religious connotations. While all of the interviewees who are members of this marriage website mentioned checking the replies of other users regarding religion and religious duties, the accounts of the users manifest that alcohol consumption is also a determinant factor in understanding the level of the religiosity of potential candidates.

"When I search for a man, I filter like this…First of all, I check for someone between 39 and 42 years old. Then I filter the ones who do not live with their kids. I do not search for singles. Besides, I check the ones who fulfill their religious duties, like fasting and namaaz. He should not consume alcohol. His education level is also important. I prefer university graduates or master graduates." (Saskin39, F, 39, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

However, female interviewees who had spent more than six months on this website state that after observing the messages and interactions of male users for an enough period of time, their mate selection criteria in reference to religion have showed alterations in time. They state that after they received several sexually explicit messages from male users who define themselves as religious (as these men state practicing all their religious duties in their profile forms), they decided to pay less attention to these criteria as they think that the aims and deeds of these men do not match necessarily. Despite the fact that several female interviewees state having these types of messages which they do not approve, none of them consider using liberal marriages websites as they do not trust "liberal male users".

"When I became a member of this site, I was more interested in men who perform the salaat. I am a person who fulfills her religious duties and I believed that men who fulfill their religious duties are good men. However, after I spent some time in this website, my criteria about men have changed. Now I prefer men who are honest, respectful and to whom I can trust...I do not plan to change the marriage website I use, it is the only option for conservative users lik me." (Consİst, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim / Conservative)

When the accounts of liberal marriage website users are assessed, it is seen that several male interviewees (6 in 9) attribute importance to religious homogamy.

"Religion is an important search criterion for me. When I make search, I search for Sunni Muslim women as I prefer to be with someone who comes from a similar cultural background." (Gürcizm, M, 35, eCift, İzmir, Muslim /Religious)

"My spouse candidate can not be from another religion. You might have a friend who has a different religion but not a spouse. Your languages will be different in the first place" (Emrciv, M, 33, eCift, Ankara, Muslim / Moderate Conservative)

In this context, it is worthwhile to recall that Hanafi tradition which have continued under Ottoman and Turkish states that place importance upon the equivalency on belonging to same religion, religious sect and patrilineal lineage (Imber & Bedir, 2004:182). While tradition rejects women to marry with men who are not Muslims, men are allowed to get married with women belonging to Abrahamic religions (Barlas, 2002:155). In this respect, the accounts of male interviewees who are users of liberal marriage websites might seem in contradiction with the tradition as they attribute importance to this quality. However, one can argue that the

accounts of users of liberal marriage websites manifest that what liberal male users search in a female candidate is more about cultural similarity rather than practicing the same religion.

On the other hand, three female users of liberal marriage websites state clearly that they do not want conservative male candidates as they do not want to be oppressed by their husbands' belief systems. As a final remark, the accounts of male users also manifest the importance of the religion in social interactions. As male users do not want to be stigmatized by other people in their social circles (probably Muslim circles), they do not want their potential spouse candidates to express their opinions in public if they do not have the same belief system with these people in their possible future interactions.

"I do not care about religion so much. Atheism and Deism are popular among many people in İstanbul nowadays. I do not care about her beliefs but we live in a society, I can be with an atheist but I would not like her to speak about her beliefs in the public openly, even among our friends. I would be disturbed if she explains why she is an atheist to other people." (Barbaİst, M, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

Sexual experience

None of the female interviewees consider the previous sexual experiences of a male candidate as a selection criterion. On the other hand, the accounts of male users' show variations according to their level of religiosity, their age and their previous relationship experiences when they have to respond a question regarding the sexual experiences of a potential spouse candidate.

Previous researches show that young men in Turkey attribute significant importance to virginity in their mate selection (Aydın & Gülçat, 2006:19; Özyeğin, 2015:40). The results of Özyeğin's research which was conducted with students who study in one of the most prestigious and liberal universities of Turkey put forward that more than half of the male students "agreed with the statement 'I want to marry a virgin,' while one third of men wanted a sexually experienced partner". On the contrary, the findings of the same study demonstrate that only 15 % of female students preferred a spouse candidate with no previous sexual experience (Özyeğin, 2015:40). In this thesis study, as the average age of interviewees is 34,1 and several of them have had marriage experiences before, their perspectives show variations from the general mate selection criteria of younger Turkish population.

In this direction, the accounts of the male users of liberal marriage website users and Islamic marriage website users are quite different. Single male users of Islamic marriage website prefer virgin spouse candidates. However, one divorced male user of Islamic marriage website stated that he prefers divorced women as well as they have previous marriage experiences. On the other hand, liberal male users have conflicting views about the previous sexual experience of female spouse candidates. The accounts of three male interviewees of these liberal marriage websites - who define themselves as "not religious" and who had mentioned having sexual relationships with female users on these websites before -demonstrate a clear preference for getting married with virgin women which reminds Saktanber's statement about the conservative understanding of female sexuality in Turkey, one more time (Saktanber, 1995, p. 155).

"I would not prefer a candidate who has sexual experience. I can say that virginity is important for me. Even if she is not a virgin, I would prefer her not to mention it in our relationship." (Andanka, M, 35, eCift, Ankara, Not religious)

On the other part, one of the users of liberal marriage website describe the change in his attitude in years and he states that he does not give importance to virginity anymore as he is aged and he had experiences before.

"I am not looking for a virgin girlfriend as I am not so young anymore. Ten years ago, it was an important criterion for me, I was looking for a virgin girl to marry but not anymore." (Barbaİst, M, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

Besides, three male interviewees using liberal marriage websites claim that they prefer sexually experienced mate candidates as sexuality is an important part of the marriage. However, some of them prefer not to be acknowledged about the previous experiences of their spouse candidates or they state not preferring a woman who has a lot of sexual experiences.

"I prefer a candidate who has sexual experience. Sexuality is very important in marriage for both sexes. I prefer someone who is experienced about making love and who knows how to take pleasure. If the spouses do not have a good sexual life, they can start searching for other people." (Emrciv, M, 33, eCift, Ankara, Muslim / Moderate Conservative)

"I am ok with sexual experience but I would not prefer someone who has a lot of experiences of course. Virginity is not important for me." (ErkStu, M, 38, PembePanjur, İst, Muslim /Religious)

In this respect, one can assume that the accounts of some male users of liberal marriage websites also correspond with the general understanding of Turkish patriarchal culture which differentiates "women to marry" and "women to have fun". However, the findings of these interviews reveal that liberal marriage site users are relatively more open than Islamic marriage website users in terms of getting married with women who are not virgins and who have previous sexual experiences.

In this context, it is also worthwhile to mention the religious marriage propositions of some male users of Islamic marriage website. In my participant observations in the field, three female users of *Gönülden Sevenler* mentioned meeting with male users who ask for conducting a non-official, religious ceremony to be able to have sexual encounters with them. In addition to these women, two female interviewees also stated that they had received religious marriage offers from many male users. These interviewees' description of these marriage proposals resemble temporary religious marriage called "*misyar"* [287]. While the women I met in *Gönülden Sevenler* during my netnographic field research and one female interviewee stated finding these types of propositions immoral, another female interviewee had conflicting ideas about these types of propositions.

"There are men who invite me to a hotel immediately or there are men who propose religious marriage on this Islamic marriage website. I read their messages. Some of them write like this; 'I am married but I am planning to divorce as I have problems. If you agree, we can have a religious marriage. I will support you financially.' Can you believe it? I was shocked when I saw these." (Kocae37, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, Kocaeli, Muslim / Conservative)

On the other hand, the other female interviewee had conflicting ideas about these types of propositions as she considers sexuality as an important part of the marriage.

"Many male users on Gönülden Sevenler ask for conducting a religious ceremony. They say that if we conduct these ceremonies, we will not be committing sins. Besides, we can see if we have sexual compatibility or not. In the beginning, I was totally against it. Now I started to find it more rational. Many couples break up due to sexual problems. It is also logical to see if we have sexual compatibility or not." (Consİst, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim / Conservative)

[287] "Another temporary marriage practice developed in Sunni countries, especially in Saudi Arabia is ambulant or itinerant marriage called *misyar*. As with *mutah*, the requirements of a contract, witnesses and some form of *mahr* are present, but the marriage is not registered and there is not a wedding ceremony." For more information, see: Ann Black, Hossein Esmaeili, Nadirsyah Hosen, **Modern Perspectives on Islam**, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013, pp.124

On that note, one of the female interviewees who had received this religious marriage offer was a divorced woman and the second interviewee was a single one. In this regard, one can assume that virginity is not a criterion for male Islamic marriage users who propose these types of religious marriages.

According to the Turkish Civil Code implemented in 1926 religious marriage was declared to be an option only after civil marriage was formalized.[288] However, in May 2015, Turkey's top court authorized citizens to be religiously married without a legally binding civil marriage.[289] There are two versions of impermanent marriage; *mutah*[290] and *misyar* in different Islamic schools of thought. These practices were not common practices in Turkey and according to the latest statistics, only three percent of marriages (over 18 years old) are religious marriages and ninety-five percentage of marriage are both civil and religious marriages. These religious marriage contracts do not give equal rights to men and women to divorce and child custody as civil marriage. In the second place, unofficial religious marriages are also important as they might give rise to polygyny practices practices in Turkey which were banned after the establishment of Turkish Republic in 1926 and Swiss civil code was implemented to bring "major legal family reforms".

According to the accounts of male interviewees who are subscribed to Islamic marriage websites "religious marriage is a rising trend among conservative people" and their description of these unofficial "religious" marriage practices in their conservative circles also remind polygyny practices which had been banned by Kemalist reforms as it is stated above.

"Some of the conservatives are adapting interesting behaviors... You know there are mass housing projects in Başakşehir[291]*...In these houses; the second or third wives of wealthy*

[288] Kathryn M. Coughlin (ed.), **Muslim Cultures Today**, Greenwood Press, London, 2006, p. 192

[289] "There is no regulation in Turkey on couples that live together or have extramarital children; their relationships have no legal status without any rights or penalties. However, before the recent Constitutional Court ruling, individuals living together solely through religious weddings without a civil marriage were sentenced according to paragraph 5 of Article 230 of the Turkish Criminal Code". For more information, see: http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2015/05/turkey-court-ruling-religious-marriages-spurs-uproar-150530151909516.html

[290] "Temporary marriage (mutah, sometimes 'marriage of enjoyment' is an established Shia, especially Jafari School, practice. All Sunni schools reject the validity of *mutah*. *Mutah* allows for a fixed term of marriage, with the date of expiry stipulated in the marriage contract. When the term expires the marriage ends, but can be renewed through a new contract. A *mutah* marriage requires a contract where *mahr*[290] is specified, and can also have conditions. Unlike permanent marriages, there is no numerical limit on mutah wives". For more information, see: Ann Black, Hossein Esmaeili, Nadirsyah Hosen, **Modern Perspectives on Islam**, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013, pp.124

[291] *Başakşehir* is one of the second-level districts of Istanbul. Until 2009 most of *Başakşehir* was a quarter in *Küçükçekmece* district, then it was declared as a district.

conservative businessmen are living. They have religious marriage contract with these women. Their real wives do not know about it. It is getting popular among conservative men." (Cihangir02, M, 33, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

In our interview, another religious male interviewee also stated that many conservative men around his social circle were trying to get more information about the *mutah* marriage these days and some of them were looking for partners for *mutah* marriage.

'I think that civil and religious marriage should be together. I heard people searching for mutah marriage or looking for a mutah partner. In short, they want to make "helal" random sex. They think that they will not have sins if they have mutah marriage. They cannot deceive Allah! They do not want to commit adultery so they think this is an option. They can keep their real wife at home, they can perform a mutah marriage ceremony with other women and they can start having sexual intercourse with them as well? No, it is totally ridiculous and not acceptable...They must not satisfy their sexual desires by using religion. They are giving harm to religion by doing that." (Tutuc27, M, 27, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim / Conservative)

In the light of the information above, the accounts of the interviewees demonstrate that while online marriage websites enable users from conservative circles to connect with religious males and females using modern communication technologies, these practices might also contribute in reviving traditional, patriarchal practices which were banned in the beginning of 20th century. In the second place, it also manifests how some conservative male users of these marriage websites might exploit the trend of religious revivalism to create possible sexual encounters with women by marriage propositions without being limited by continual secular family norms.

<u>*Other qualities*</u>

While some researchers investigating the differences between online dating and traditional dating emphasize the decreasing importance of "spatial proximity" in online mate selection practices (Rosen, Cheever et al, 2008: 2126), the accounts of interviewees living in big cities reveal that many users place importance to the spatial proximity. Accordingly, 22 of the interviewees living in big cities prefer a candidate living in the same city than them.

"I would not care about the city so much if I did not work but I am living and working in İstanbul. If we do not live in the same city, we can not meet easily. In order to get to know each

other and in order to be able to end it with a marriage, I prefer someone from İstanbul." (Barbaİst, M, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

On the other hand, as the percentage of members using Islamic and liberal marriage websites are lesser in small cities, users living in small cities also search for possible mate candidates living in the cities closer to their cities.

In the second place, as it was revealed in the statistical analysis of mate selection preferences of *Gönülden Sevenler* users, most of the male and female users do not prefer a spouse candidate with a kid. In the same direction, even though the interviewees are open to getting married with a divorced men or women, most of them (27 in 30) do not want a candidate with a kid.

In the third place, as we have discussed in the first chapter, Turkey is a country where interracial marriages are very rare and only "one in about 40 marriages" that takes place in Turkey are realized by spouses belonging to different ethnic groups (Gunduz-Hosgor, Smits, 2002: 429-430). The accounts of some of the users (5 in 30) demonstrate their preference for "ethnic homogamy". In this context, while three users clearly stated not preferring to get married with Kurdish people, two of them stated not preferring someone other than their ethnicity.

"I filter Kurdish candidates as I do not want to see them as mate candidates." (And, eCift)

On the other hand, when the other users are further interrogated and prompted about the importance of ethnicity in their mate selection decision, a significant number of interviewees stated the importance of having spouses with similar cultural backgrounds (20 in 25).

In the last place, the importance of cultural tastes in mate selection is explored. While some of the male members of *Gönülden Sevenler* and liberal marriage websites state that cultural tastes and hobbies are not so crucial for getting married, other male members and female interviewees state checking these qualities to understand the cultural milieu of male candidates. Two of the female liberal marriage website users state that they would block male candidates who listen to *arabesque* music as these women associate *arabesque* listeners with

people who has low cultural tastes.[292] On the other hand, the accounts of some of the liberal marriage website users demonstrate that the cultural tastes are used as a part of first message strategy by some male users. Some of the male users stated checking the tastes and hobbies of female users in order to initiate first conversations.

As a conclusion, when the mate selection or filtering preferences of interviewees are taken into account, it is seen that the preferences of male and female interviewees show similarities with the declared accounts of Islamic and liberal marriage websites as well as the findings of TAYA Family Structure Research in Turkey (2011). While the female interviewees attribute importance to income level and occupation of male users, male interviewees of Islamic and liberal marriage websites do not put too much emphasis on income level as a mate selection criterion. Besides, only three male users (3 in 15) care about possible female candidate's contribution to family budget. In the third place, female interviewees in both types of marriage websites attribute more importance to the education level of spouse candidates.

The preferences of male and female users regarding the sexual experience of a spouse candidate differ significantly. While female interviewees accept male sexuality as the "right" of male users and do not question their previous experiences, some of interviewees from liberal marriage websites and single male users of *Gönülden Sevenler* state not preferring female candidates with sexual experience and they attribute importance to virginity of female spouse candidates. Even though some male users of liberal marriage websites have experienced sexual relationships with female users of these websites, these interviewees do not regard these sexually active women as potential spouse candidates. Islamic marriage website users attribute importance to the religious practices of spouse candidates. However, some female users who have spent some time on this marriage website state that their mate selection criteria and the importance they attributed to the level of religiosity of partner candidates have changed in time after their interactions with some male users who convey religious men impression on their profiles. In this regard, these interviewees claim having unpleasant experiences with male users who give an impression of a religious man but who do not act according to the rules of religion.

[292] "In the formative years of the Turkish Republic and beyond, arabesque music was an object of disapproval for the country's Westernized, secularist, and urban mainstream because of its connections to Eastern and Arab culture. Today arabesque is one of the most popular music forms in the country". For more information, see: Özgür, İren, "Arabesk Music in Turkey in the 1990s and Changes in National Demography, Politics, and Identity", **Turkish Studies**, 7:2, 2006, pp. 175-190

Besides, the accounts of interviewees demonstrate that they place importance to religious and ethnic homogamy in mate selection.

On that note, I want to remind MAS researchers' tendency to look for universal traits like "educational homogamy" (Blossfeld and Timm 2003: 333 in Schmitz, 2017:61) and their predisposition towards generalizing mate selection criteria of different social groups. As it was highlighted in Schmitz's account, the demand for such mate selection qualities depend "on the specific actor's position in the market therefore depend on mating situation as a whole" (Schmitz, 2017:61). Thus the findings of the filters interviewees mentioned in this study can not be generalized and can not be accepted as valid mate selection filters for individuals who have different habitus-based dispositions and capitals. In this regard, one can also claim that the differences between mate selection criteria and filtering practices of Islamic and liberal marriage website users can not be solely explained as "individual choices" (Schmitz, 2017: 102) as the habitus-based qualities of these users affect their mate selection practices.

6. First messages (Step 5)

As it was briefly mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, both female and male members underline the fact that male users are the ones who send the first message. In the second place, the netnographic observations on these marriage websites confirm the accounts of interviewees. On that note, I want to mention my experiences as a participant observer in these websites briefly. Despite the fact that I introduced myself as a researcher, disclosed my intentions and avoided sharing any other information that does not align with the reasons for my presence in these websites, I received between 50 to 100 messages in a day when I was online on these marriage websites as a female user. On the other hand, I barely received three salutation messages that just included "hi!" or "hello" from female users during my netnographic observations in the last three years.

In their accounts, male interviewees have stated sending the same first messages to many online female users and despite the fact that I presented a profile indicating my aims, I might have received many messages including a content that other female users probably had received in these marriage websites. For these reasons, I had analyzed the first messages I had received from 40 male users in the peak hour of marriage websites between 24:00 -1.00 on 02.10.2016. When the content of these messages are examined in bold lines, it is seen that 11

of these messages were just salutations, 11 of them were single meeting requests, 8 of them were questions or requests and 5 of them were comments. Even though the number of the first messages embraced in this section are limited, their contents show significant similarities with the first messages I received during my netnographic observations when I did not mention my position as a researcher. According to these observations, first messages can be "only salutations", "brief self presentations", "single meeting requests", "other questions / requests" and "comments".

Table 5.4: First Message – Content (Male)

only salutation	self presentation	single meeting request	questions / requests	comments
11	11	8	8	2

While single salutation messages did not convey much information regarding the male users' self presentation or intentions, the way some male users of Islamic marriage website salute differed slightly from liberal marriage users as their words had connoted their conservative habitus as *"Hayırlı geceler"* (auspicious nights) or *"Selamünaleyküm"* (peace be with you). In the second place, I would like to explore messages conveying information about how they describe themselves, the questions and requests they send. In this regard, I would like to share some examples of the self presentations of users in their first messages.

"Hello. I am a mechanical engineer. I run my own business. I am a sportsman. I want a serious relationship and marriage. I will be very happy if you give me the chance to introduce myself to you." (Pembe Panjur, 29, Male, Undergraduate, Istanbul)

"Hello. I am 1.75 cm and 75 kg. I am handsome and single. I am working as a civil servant. I exist for loving and being loved. Can we meet?" (Pembe Panjur, 40, Male, Undergraduate, Istanbul)

"Hello. I hope you are well. I am here for getting married. If you are also willing to get married, please meet with me. By the way, I run my own business, I have an apartment and a car. I want to get married after a short period of meeting. If you add me on skype or facebook from this mail address frommyheartxxxx@xmail.com, I will be happy. I can call you if you share your phone number?" (Gönülden Sevenler, 36, Undergraduate, Male, Istanbul)
Hello. I am Ahmet. I am 37 years old. I am divorced. I have a 10 years old daughter and she is living with her mother in Çorum. The fact that I am a divorced man does not mean that I am a bad man even though I know that we are to be blamed for divorces. However, my case is a bit different. I am from Erzurum. I am working in Istanbul as a geography teacher. I live alone. I have a very good family and our family ties are strong. I have a house and a car. I do not have financial problems. I am 1.77 cm and 75 kg. I am brunet and I am not ugly. I am a responsible,

thoughtful and sensitive person. I am not an ordinary and simple person. I am neither aggressive nor a nervous person. I care about the physical appearance of the people I meet. I use WhatsApp. My telephone number is 05xx xxx xx xx. I never disturb anyone. You can contact with me easily. (Gönülden Sevenler, 37, Male, Undergraduate, Istanbul)

In similar to the findings of chapter three, male users underline their occupation and income level in order to demonstrate that they accord with the mate selection criteria of Turkish women. In addition to these, some male users prefer to highlight their car and house ownership as well. In these messages, some users also feature their physical appearance, character qualities, their aims and expectations from the female user. Besides, it is observed that several male users (7 in 25) in *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website share their contact information in the first messages they send while none of the messages received from male *Pembe Panjur* users included such contact. The latter can be explained with the rules of *Pembe Panjur* marriage website that warns their users not to share their contact information in their first messages.

While single meeting requests did not include any information other than conveying male users' requests to meet like the question "can we meet?", other questions included content that reveal users' motivations and mate criteria. In these questions, two of the male users interrogated my hometown. On the other hand, some of the first messages (1 in 25) from male users of *Gönülden Sevenler* included sexually implicit messages.

"Hello. Can we meet and make love?" (Gönülden Sevenler, 30, Male, Undergraduate, Istanbul)

In sum, male users are the ones who start the first conversation with a written message to present themselves, to share messages their relationship motivations and so forth. However, sending first message is not the only way to initiate the first contact as winking, smiling or the notifications users receive when a user visits their profile are also accepted the signs manifesting the interest of the users in these marriage websites. In their accounts, male users state several reasons for being the ones who send these first messages. First of all, in marriage websites, male users are the ones who pay for site membership. As they have a limited time for their memberships, they want to make use of these sites as much as possible; meaning that they want to meet as much as female users they can to find spouse candidates or random sexual partners. Secondly, the percentage of male users on these websites is significantly more than the percentage of female users. In addition to the accounts of female interviewees, as it was

revealed in the message example sent by one male user, some male users send sexually implicit messages which do not match with the positioning and rules of this Islamic marriage website.

On that note, as some female interviewees state in their accounts overtly their main objective which is getting married using these websites and some other warn male users sending sexually explicit messages. In this regard, some female users of Islamic marriage websites block these users and / or file a complaint about them to remove them from this marriage website.

On the other side, as it was already stated, the accounts of the female interviewees reveal that rather than sending messages female users prefer using notifications, winking or smiling to show their interest in male users. That being said, this preference is also related with the gendered expectations of Turkish people in their interactions.

"As I am a Bayan (Miss / Mrs.)[293][294] *user, if I find someone attractive, I use the smile button on the site. He looks at who smiled at him and thus sees my profile. If he wants to contact with me, he writes, not me, I do not write first messages as a female user."* (GsSarı, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Not religious)

"The first message comes from men. You receive 10 to 15 messages the moment you log into the website." (Kocae37, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, Kocaeli, Muslim / Conservative)

"I checked his page. When he received my notification, he wrote back to me. I do not want to write to men. I want them to write first. I want to feel that they like me and they choose me so that I can act accordingly. It is not right for a woman to send the first message. Men should take the first step" (EsEsİst, F, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Not religious)

"I do not know if it is ok for women to send the first messages in these websites but I would never do that, I am not easy to get. I am an eastern woman; I am from Erzurum. It has been only 5 years since I moved to İstanbul. Maybe my reluctance to send the first messages is related with my social background but I never did that." (Çig34, F, 34, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Muslim / Believer)

[293] I observed that several male interviewees preferred to use 'Bayan' (Lady) when they refer to a woman. I noticed a reluctance to use the word 'Kadın' (Woman). In Turkish society, while it is normal to refer to man with their gender and call them 'erkek' (man), there is a general reluctance in the society to refer to woman with their gender and call them 'kadın' (woman). Turkish feminists and feminist organizations have been fighting about this issue for a long time.

[294] 'A Turkish woman is considered *kadın* not only when she grows old but also when she loses her virginity or gets married. A woman socially acquires the title of *kadın* as soon as she becomes a mother... Unfortunately, the negative semantic connotation of women is rooted in Turkish society. If we look at proverbs, we immediately find stereotypes for women; unreliability, dangerousness, etc.' See for further information: Marina Castagneto and Rosita D'Amora, "A World Of Difference: Gender Disparity In The Turkish Word Thesaurus*"* in Ave Maria Thune, Simona Leonardi et al. (Eds.), **Gender, Language and New Literacy**, British Library Publications, London, 2006

Only one female interviewee claimed that she does not hesitate to send the initial messages to male users. This participant was a 39 years old, religious female interviewee with high-income level who lives in a prestigious neighborhood of Istanbul.

"If I want to write to a man, I write. I do not have such taboos." (Saskin39, F, 39, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

The accounts of female users indicate that in terms of relationship initiation, there is not much difference between female Islamic marriage website users and female liberal marriage website users. However, their socio-economic backgrounds and their previous encounters with males also affect how they respond to these messages. A female interviewee who is a member of *Gönülden Sevenler* marriage website explained her hesitation to respond to first messages of men as follows:

"In the beginning I was too shy to respond to the messages I received from the men. I was not used to interact with men like this. I was shy because I was afraid that they could think that I am a lascivious or an easy woman. In time, I got used to it." (GsSarı, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Not religious)

7. Strategies to get to know the potential spouse candidates better (Step 6 - 7)

The responds of male users regarding their first conversations with female users also expose some of the tactics they implement to be able to attract the attention of Turkish female marriage website users. On that note, as mentioned before, some male users state referring to cultural tastes of female users if female users' preferences are listed on their personal profiles.

"I check the profile forms of female users to be able to understand their tastes and life style preferences. Hence I can send them messages that can attract their attention." (Barbaİst, M, 38, PembePanjur, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

One of the married couples also mentioned about the importance of cultural tastes to initiate the first conversation. In this case, as the female user of a liberal marriage website had mentioned her distinctive taste about Mongolian restaurants, the male user invited her to eat together in this restaurant and they moved to face to face interaction phase more easily as they have common tastes that differentiate them from other users. In the second place, as some of the first message examples demonstrate, some male interviewees state that they use the tactics of giving a 'serious marriage candidate impression' to take the attention of female users.

"In order to attract the attention of female users, you have to give the impression that you are a serious person and you are looking for a spouse, starting from the first message on. If female users talk with me, they do because I give such an impression." (Cihangir02, M, 33, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim /Conservative)

In the second place, McKenna, Green, and Gleason (2002) state that online relationship formation proceeds sequentially from "e-mailing or online chatting to phone calls" and these conversations finally "lead to meeting live" (Rosen, Cheever et al, 2008: 2126). As users have other options to communicate in our day, several interviewees stated passing to other communication platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook or Skype to get to know each other better and to communicate more easily after spending some time on these marriage websites chatting with other users.

"If our conversations on the website please me, I can continue talking with the male user on WhatsApp or Facebook. I hardly share my telephone number, I only just shared it with a few users...if I understand that their intentions are different, I mean if they are looking for sexual partners, I immediately block them". (Kocae37, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, Kocaeli, Muslim / Conservative)

Female interviewees stated that they prefer to take the male user's number as they prefer to call male users without displaying their telephone number to protect their privacy. If the conversation does not proceed as they want, female users block male users' numbers and users' accounts on the marriage website. Tone of speech, the quality of the voice, selection of words and the content of the conversation are the cues that help users to learn more about the spouse candidate.

"*After messaging for a while on the marriage website, I prefer to talk on social media for a while. If I enjoy these conversations, I communicate with male users on the phone"* (Rabia, Pembe Panjur)

However, several interviewees state communicating with other users on WhatsApp or Facebook before moving on to telephone conversation. Interviewees state two reasons for preferring these mediums. First of all, they state that these mediums are more convenient and more easy to use compared to messaging functions of marriage websites. Secondly, these mediums enable them to get more clues about other user's lifestyle, tastes and preferences.

"I use WhatsApp to check the profile photos of the person I am talking to. I check if their profile pictures are fake photographs or not... And, Facebook helps me to have more clues about the identity of the person. It also gives me clues about his family, his social circle, etc. I use Facebook to understand what type of a person he is." (GsSarı, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Not religious)

As several interviewees mention, these mediums also help users to see if there is a discrepancy between the photograph of the person on the website and on social media or WhatsApp. However, some interviewees also mention that several members prefer to open new social media accounts to share it with only with marriage website users to be able to control the impression they want.

"Less than ten percent of the women have profile pictures on Gönülden Sevenler. I use WhatsApp to understand how she looks. I can make my decisions accordingly after that. Sometimes I see women with turbans that are not in line with religious rules and I do not continue my conversation with them." (Devo26, M, 26, GönüldenSevenler, Ağrı, Muslim /Devout)

8. First face to face meeting (Step 8)

As it was shortly portrayed in the previous section, after the first contact is established, users move on to other communication mediums to get more information about each other and to develop the relationship. Ramirez, Sumner et al. propose that "partners determine whether to pursue other forms of communication outside of the dating site" after this initial contact" (Ramirez, Sumner et al., 2014:100). According to the researches investigating face to face communication phase of online dating relationships, a big percentage of users prefer to meet with the selected mate candidate if his / her qualities match with the mate selection criteria of the user.

"Although some online daters engage in a drawn out process of mediated courtship, most prefer to meet potential partners face-to-face (FtF) relatively quickly after the initial communication. Indeed, 65% of online daters in Whitty and Carr's (2006) study reported arranging FtF meetings within one week of their initial online encounter" (Ramirez, Sumner et al., 2014:100).

First face-to-face meeting has several functions for the users. As scholars suggest "it provides additional cues that could either enhance or diminish online daters perceptions of each other (Finkel et al., 2012 in Ramirez, Sumner et al., 2014:100) and therefore helps daters assess

their offline romantic relationship potential" (Whitty, 2008 in Ramirez, Sumner et al., 2014:100). The interviewees define this initial meeting as an another occasion after WhatsApp or Facebook to verify the identity of the person. They check whether if the user's online self-presentation match with his or her offline self presentation. The interviewees state that most of the users do not prefer to give misleading information about their physical qualities as most of the users have access to social media to check the information given. However, some interviewees state that users can give misleading information about their age and occupation. The first meeting may arrive just after a few messages or after a month depending on the users' preferences and their background. On that note, one of the male interviewees from the Islamic marriage website state that some conservative female users raised in traditional families postpone the first meeting until they establish a trust relationship with the male user.

On the other hand, researchers state that "online daters create mental constructs of their potential partners by reading their online dating profile, using that information to fill-in-the-blanks of who the partner might really be in the offline world" (Ramirez, Sumner et al., 2014:110). As most of the online dating and marriage website users act with the motivation to present "idealized" versions of themselves (Hall, Park, Song & Cody, 2010; Fullick, 2013; Turner, 2012; Hancock & Toma, 2009) and they "engage in minor and strategic misrepresentations in order to develop positive impressions on their profile page" (Hancock & Toma, 2009 in Ramirez, Sumner et al., 2014:110) as it was already mentioned in the previous chapters of this study. According to the findings of these researches investigating offline phase of these relationships, these misrepresentations have different effects depending on the period between the first contact on marriage website and the first face to face meeting can create different relationship outcomes.

> "Daters who wait too long to meet in person, and therefore cross this tipping point, might find it difficult to accept any discrepancies from their idealized mental construct of their partner. Consequently, partners who meet relatively early might be able to accept any minor differences between their expectations and reality, but partners who wait too long may experience increased uncertainty when the person they interacted with fails to meet their well-developed expectations face to face" (Ramirez, Sumner et al., 2014:110).

The accounts of some interviewees who prolonged the time between the first contact and the first face to face meeting correspond with the findings of these studies.

"I had met a woman on eCift. She did not want to send her photographs. I did not insist. However, we developed a kind of relationship in time without seeing each other. We were talking on the phone for hours, we were caring about each other. I had some health problems

and she called me several times…At the end of these talks, we even started talking about getting married without meeting. Finally, two months later we met in café. She was so negative and cold. We did not have any physical intimacy, not even shaking hands after two months of talking. After this meeting, she blocked me and we did not talk again…I had so many stories like this till now, sometimes I do not understand why I still continue, maybe I am still hopeful" (Andanka, M, 35, eCift, Ankara, Not religious)

While the accounts of limited amount of interviewees is not enough to validate this theory regarding the timing of the meeting and expectations, the accounts of couples who met each other using *Pembe Panjur* marriage website also match with the findings of these researches presented above. Both couples state meeting a few days after the initial contact. However, when the mate selection criteria of users are investigated, it is seen that the timing of the first meeting is not enough to explain the "success" of their relationship as other factors intervene in their decision making process. To set an example, according to accounts of married interviewees, the most important factor that led them to communicate with each other were the similarity of their cultural tastes in their self presentations.

The accounts of interviewees regarding their first face to face meeting experiences with their potential mate candidates show variations. While some users as it was in the case of married couples engage in a long term relationship in a faster pace, the accounts of some users show that several users do not find someone that match their criteria or they do not match the mate selection of their potential mates.

"I had met with several men. My longest relationship was three months. The second longest one was three weeks. Besides, there were several others. I did not have any physical intimacy with the men I met online. I am a person who wants to develop an emotional bond before getting closer with them and these men could not wait for that. I finished most of my relationships that started on this marriage website for these reasons…and one of the men I met was married even though he stated that he was single on his self presentation. After I understood that he lied, I did not see him again." (Rabi38, F, 38, PembePanjur, Ankara, Muslim / Not Conservative)

"Since I subscribed to this website a year ago, I have met five men. Only one of them was a real Muslim. Indeed, it is not possible to divide men as religious or non religious. All of them are running sexual encounters. I do not trust most of the men using this marriage website. There are many married men. Divorced men are trying to increase the number of lovers until they get remarried again. Only old guys are sincere but they are old. I even receive messages from 25 years old guys. I do not think that they write me with the intention of getting married. They also seek available women for sexual relationships. It is called an Islamic marriage website but it is not very serious." (Consİst, F, 36, GönüldenSevenler, İstanbul, Muslim / Conservative)

"It has been six months since I subscribed to this website but I still could not meet with any one face to face." (Gürcizm, M, 35, eCift, İzmir, Muslim /Religious)

"I have been a member since three years. I had three or four one-night relationships with women with whom I met using this marriage website and I had two longer relationships. One of them lasted one month and the other lasted four months." (Emrciv, M, 33, eCift, Ankara, Muslim / Moderate Conservative)

If both parties decide to continue the relationships after the first face to face meeting and engage in a relationship, they terminate their marriage website memberships. However, several male users state resubscribing to these sites when their relationships end.

CONCLUSION:

The findings of this dissertation study demonstrate that there are several different factors that affect the online relationship formation practices of male and female users. First of all, the percentage of female users are much lower than the percentage of male users. The prevailing gender gap regarding internet access despite the overall increase of percentage of internet users (Consalvo, 2002: 2), the stigmatization of online dating and marriage practices and users (Costa, 2016; DeMasi, 2011), restrictive premarital customs and rules as well as the negative representation of these dating and marriage websites ingenerate the limited participation of female users in online relationship formation field. In the second place, as the accounts of female and male interviewees demonstrate, female users receive disproportional amount of attention and meeting requests from male users. This gender gap in these marriage websites, in other words unequal representation of female and male users in these websites not only enable women to be more selective than men but this situation also lead them to be the decision makers in the beginning of the relationships. In this direction, as some female users prefer to highlight their restrictive selection criteria on their profile forms. However, some male users do not feel motivated to communicate with these types of women.

In the third place, quasi anonymous architectures of marriage websites enable male and female users to misrepresent themselves as several users want to leave a good impression on the opposite sex. As online dating and marriage websites usually act with the motivation to present the idealized versions of themselves and as they do not want to be stigmatized (Goffman, 1963), they appeal to social norms and socially accepted "repertoire of available self presentations" (Cavanagh, 2007:130) in their online self presentations. In this regard, the online self presentation infrastructures of marriage websites both enable them to present themselves online and limit the extent of users' self presentation. While Islamic marriage websites provide their users infrastructures that represent the habitus based qualities and tastes of *Engaged Provincialists,* the questionnaires provided by liberal marriage websites represent the habitus based qualities and tastes of *Engaged Cosmopolitans* (Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014). Thus users select mate candidates based on the fragmented descriptions of potential mates (Enguix, Ardévol, 2014: 504) revealed in these infrastructures representing different habitus based qualities and tastes.

On the other hand, as personal narratives of interviewees exemplify, when the socio-demographic and religious qualities of Turkish population are taken into account together with the increasing amount of people accessing in Turkey as revealed in the second chapter, one can assume that several marriage website users are not born into urban, well educated families but a quite high percentage of them are ones who are raised relatively in conservative families which limit premarital relationships, regardless of the level of religiosity of their parents. Besides, as the findings of the TAYA Research on Family Structure in Turkey (TAYA, 2011) demonstrate as well as the findings of other researches, as likely as not, one can assume that a big percentage of users' parents are ones who got married with arranged marriages practices. In the second place, one can state that the "corporate control" over female bodies in Turkey (Kandiyoti, 1987:325), ongoing religious rules and customs regarding virginity, sexuality and premarital relationships (Aydın & Gülçat, 2006; Özyeğin, 2015) have a significant influence on pre-marital relationship practices of these female users' of marriage websites. The accounts of female users demonstrate that most of them internalize the norms of the society that they have learnt through their families, educational institutions, media and they control their premarital relationships strictly in order not to transgress the norms of the society and the rules of Islam (Bargach, 2006: 52-53). As it is revealed in the account of a female interviewee who explain her refusal to engage in premarital sexual relations as "I would not let men to use my body to satisfy their needs", several women consider sexuality as something men demand from them and they do not see sexuality as their right or need. On the other side, male users have similar family histories as well. They grow up in a society where active male sexuality is appraised whereas active female sexuality is discouraged, criticized and sometimes punished as it is the case in honor killings (İlkkaracan, 1998). As the accounts of three male interviewees demonstrate, some of them experience their first physical intimacy with sex workers other than their significant others.

By all means, one can also assume that there are also some female and male users who question the gender norms of the society as well as the norms regarding premarital relationships and mate selection practices in Turkish society and engage in practices that deviate from these norms as well.

"I had met someone on this website and we are together since then…I am not planning to get married with my girlfriend. In Turkey, as you know a man does not get married with a woman only. Once you get married, all the family is also becoming a part of the relationship. I just see marriage as an institution that allows for legal sex. I do not like the customs. I do not like that

women are treated like second class. I have been to weddings recently and they still attach a red ribbon on bride to show that she is virgin. These customs are not acceptable. Yes, I use a website for marriage to meet with women but I do not plan to get married soon. It is not because I do not like my girlfriend. I do not like the social rules around sexuality and marriage." (Cancan35, M, 38, eCift, İzmir, Not religious)

As it was revealed in the beginning of this dissertation study, the main objective of this study was to bring an understanding of new dating and marriage practices of Muslim women in Turkey through the analysis of new communication technologies and aims to investigate how these new media forms that are used for dating and marriage by Muslim women coincide & collide with established and emerging mate selection practices and gender norms and how the users of these websites negotiate with the norms of these websites, traditional/ modern mate selection norms and gender norms of the Turkish society.

In this direction, the principal questions that were formulated in this study were:

A. How do marriage websites negotiate with established and emerging mate selection norms and gender norms in Turkish society?

B. How do the users of marriage websites negotiate with the written rules and the uncodified communal rules of marriage websites in Turkey?

C. How do the users of marriage websites negotiate with gender, religious and mate selection norms of Turkish society in their online mate selection and self presentation practices?

D. How do the users of marriage websites negotiate with the expectations of other users?

In the first place, the findings of the second chapter manifest that marriage websites negotiate with mate selection norms and gender norms of Turkish society depending on their position in online relationship formation field. In this regard, this study introduces the influence of main actors of this field and it reveals how the unique features of Islamic and liberal marriage websites investigated in this study are shaped by the habitus of these websites' owners and managers. While the analysis of institutional identities as well the architectural qualities of both Islamic and liberal marriage websites demonstrate that these websites reproduce the "binary conception of gender" in a way that "reinforces heteronormativity" (Julliard, 2013: 66), the positionings of these marriage websites create a difference between the ways these websites represent and reproduce these heteronormative relationships. While Islamic marriage websites

represent and contribute in reproducing the conservative, religious habitus that reflects the cultural tastes of "*Engaged Provincialists"* (Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014) by their institutional identities and their self presentation infrastructure, liberal marriage websites engage in representing and reproducing the cultural tastes of "*Engaged Provincialists"* (Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014).

In the second place, marriage websites in general have tight architectures (Papacharissi, 2009) as users enter into several obligations with the user contracts they approve, together with the rules and penalties of these sites. On that note, even though the way Islamic marriage website demark their "reason for being" in a distinctive manner and define precisely the type of interactions allowed in this website, it is observed that their rules and regulations are looser than liberal websites.

"We only give approval to new people who would like to subscribe to our website to get married and we ban users who have other intentions. Our doors are open to honest, sincere people who wants to get married. It is forbidden to use our website with other intentions. We respond to the complaints of our users almost immediately and take the necessary action."[295]

Despite, Gönülden Sevenler's definition of type of interactions allowed in this website, the accounts of the female interviewees demonstrate that several male users show tendency or act with the motivation to find sexual partners as well as marriage partners in this Islamic marriage website in a similar fashion to users of dating applications or dating websites, in a manner bending the written rules of this website. In this regard, it is worthwhile to state that the discrepancy between the understanding of female and male sexuality in Turkish society manifest itself in the tensions between the usage motivations and practices of male and female users in these marriages websites and especially in *Gönülden Sevenler* Islamic marriage website. The customs and norms of users' relatively more conservative and more religious habitus call female users to impose more self control in these quasi anonymous marriage website in comparison to male users though several religious male users also question the appropriateness of using this marriage website for mate selection purposes.

On the other hand, as the accounts of interviewees manifest, users observe uncodified communal rules of marriage websites as well. These unwritten rules correlate with the positioning of these websites. To set an example, while a female user in *Gönülden Sevenler*

[295] http://www.gonuldensevenler.com/page/whygs

marriage website refrains from declaring that she lives alone in her self presentation in order not to be perceived as "an easy woman", a male user in *Pembe Panjur* might hesitate declaring that he listens to arabesque music which can be accepted a sign of low culture by the female users of *Pembe Panjur* that reflects the cultural tastes of "*Engaged Cosmopolitans"* (Rankin, Ergin& Gökşen, 2014).

In the third place, as the statistical analysis of Islamic and liberal marriage website users' declared self presentations convey, these marriage websites allow Turkish women and men whose certain qualities (age, civil status, etc.) do not match with the general mate selection criteria of Turkish people (in their first marriages) to enter marriage market. On the other side, despite their limited number, the semi-structured interviews with the users demonstrate that several users implement certain mate selection criteria (which are shaped by their habitus) which reproduce the gendered mate expectations of Turkish people in general. In this regard, one can state that male users tend to prefer female users who are younger than themselves, who are physically attractive, who are not overweight and shorter than them; whereas the findings of the interviews also demonstrate that several male users attribute importance to virginity. When the mate selection criteria of female users are considered, it is seen that female users tend to prefer male users with "good income", "good education" and in terms of physical qualities they prefer male users who are taller than them. Unlike male users, female users show tendency to prefer males who are older them as well.

In the fourth place, when we analyze the way female users - who act with the motivation to find spouse candidates - present themselves on these websites with their declarations, photographs and nicknames, the findings of this dissertation study demonstrate that female users tend to present themselves within the limits of socially accepted gender roles to reflect themselves as "ideal" spouse candidates.

Correspondingly, the photographs produced and published by female users reveal the fact that female users of marriage websites present themselves as submissive, defenseless and as of approving the other, hierarchically in a lower position (than men), in private spaces (usually in a home context), avoiding "wanton" look by refraining from poses that connote sexual availability. In return, men present themselves as powerful, professional, having control of their actions, patronizing, hierarchically in a higher position (than women) and as car owners (which is a symbol of status in Turkey). Thus it can be claimed that in order to present idealized

versions of themselves, women tend to present themselves in these websites, in line with the norms of gender representation of mainstream media. In addition to that, female users in *Pembe Panjur* and *Gönülden Sevenler* refer to nature, small sized animals, fruits, physical qualities and soft colors in their nicknames more than male users.

In a similar fashion, in their first messages, their profile pictures even in their nicknames several male users act with the motivation to present an "ideal" male spouse candidate that match with the social expectations of women in Turkey. In this direction, they tend to publish photographs taken in their work spaces or offices, mention their professions in their nicknames, give place to their profession in their first messages. As some of the male interviewees state, regardless of their motivations, male users have to strategically present themselves as "serious users who act with the motivation to get married" to be able to attract the attention of female users.

All in all, the findings of this dissertation study demonstrate that online mate selection practices can not be simply defined as practices based on personal choices within the limitations of a social space. Users' personal histories, their families, the norms of religious field, media field and the regulations brought by the field of power (as exemplified by the accounts of interviewees who refer to increasing amount of temporary religious marriage practices that take place in Islamic marriage websites) as well as the distinctive features of online communication, the positioning of these Islamic and liberal marriage websites, their self presentation infrastructures and their architectures shape users' online mate selection and self presentation practices. In other saying, when a male or female user sits alone on his or her sofa in a quiet room and engage in online mate selection practices such as filling his / her profile form, posting his / her profile picture or filtering available users online, s/he does not realize these actions solely based on his / her (rational) individual choices as his / her choices are shaped by his / her habitus.

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Table C.1: ICT Usage in Households and Individuals – Turkey 2014 - 2016 (%)

	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
Computer Usage (Total)	23,6	22,9	-	33,4	38,0	40,1	43,2	46,4	48,7	49,9	53,5	54,8	54,9
Male	31,1	30,0	-	42,7	47,8	50,5	53,4	56,1	59,0	60,2	62,7	64,0	64,1
Female	16,2	15,9	-	23,7	28,5	30,0	33,2	36,9	38,5	39,8	44,3	45,6	45,9
Internet Usage (Total)	18,8	17,6	-	30,1	35,9	38,1	41,6	45,0	47,4	48,9	53,8	55,9	61,2
Male	25,7	24,0	-	39,2	45,4	48,6	51,8	54,9	58,1	59,3	63,5	65,8	70,5
Female	12,1	11,1	-	20,7	26,6	28,0	31,7	35,3	37,0	38,7	44,1	46,1	51,9
Households with access to the Internet	7,0	8,7	-	19,7	25,4	30,0	41,6	42,9	47,2	49,1	60,2	69,5	76,3

Table C.2: Individuals using Internet in the last 3 months by education level – Turkey / 2014 - 2016 (%)

	Literate without a diploma	**Primary school**	**Secondary and vocational secondary school**	**High and vocational high school**	**Higher education**
Year	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
2004	0,7	1,3	17,6	29,8	60,1
2005	0,4	1,7	15,1	32,9	62,6
2007	0,8	6,4	31,3	59,8	82,7
2008	2,1	9,8	41,1	64,4	86,6
2009	2,1	11,1	52,4	70,6	87,7
2010	2,8	14,0	54,0	69,9	89,6
2011	2,8	15,7	57,7	73,3	91,0
2012	3,5	17,7	57,6	76,4	93,0
2013	2,6	17,9	59,4	74,5	91,7
2014	3,2	22,4	64,3	79,2	93,6
2015	6,1	25,9	67,2	80,6	94,1
2016	7,4	34,7	75,8	86,4	95,6

Table C.3: Individuals using the computer and Internet in the last 3 months by employment situation – Turkey - 2014 - 2016 (%)

Year	Regular or casual employee	Employer	Self employed	Unpaid family worker	Not employed	Student	House works	Retired
2004	26,6	-	-	5,1	20,7	53,5	1,2	2,6
2005	29,8	-	-	4,9	22,9	54,2	1,5	4,7
2007	-	54,2	19,3	12,9	42,2	82,8	6,9	8,7
2008	-	67,7	22,7	13,3	48,7	83,3	10,0	12,6
2009	56,8	66,1	21,1	15,7	41,6	88,2	12,4	15,9
2010	60,5	67,8	26,4	16,2	48,2	89,5	14,3	18,2
2011	64,6	76,6	28,1	16,5	53,9	88,3	18,3	17,7
2012	66,0	76,6	32,2	16,9	54,4	89,9	19,9	22,2
2013	67,5	78,6	33,8	20,8	55,6	87,6	19,1	18,9
2014	71,2	81,6	41,2	24,7	58,0	89,3	24,6	24,9
2015	74,9	85,1	48,3	35,4	64,2	89,4	28,4	25,1
2016	81,4	89,6	50,9	35,0	72,2	93,0	36,9	29,6

Table C.4: Individuals using Internet in the last 3 months by age – Turkey - 2014 - 2016 (%)

	16 - 24	25 - 34	35 - 44	45 - 54	55 - 64	65 - 74
Year	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
2004	26,6	15,7	9,4	5,5	1,6	0,4
2005	27,8	16,7	9,7	6,3	2,3	0,9
2007	50,4	32,3	23,8	14,8	4,8	1,4
2008	54,8	41,4	29,3	19,4	6,9	1,6
2009	59,4	45,1	30,2	18,6	6,2	2,0
2010	62,9	50,6	34,7	22,4	7,8	2,7
2011	65,8	55,1	39,7	22,7	10,4	2,7
2012	67,7	58,5	42,6	25,5	11,9	3,6
2013	68,7	58,8	45,6	24,9	11,1	4,2
2014	73,0	67,1	52,0	30,4	15,3	5,0
2015	77,0	71,7	55,4	34,0	17,2	5,6
2016	84,3	78,8	65,4	41,3	21,0	8,8

Table C.5: Detailed Content Analysis of Marriage Websites in Turkey

Liberal Marriage Websites		**Spiritual Marriage Websites**	
eCift	**Pembe Panjur**	**Gönülden Sevenler**	**Nasipse**
Main Page (My page) Messages button (received, sent, draft, erased), Profile Visitors (Member suggestions, Members i contacted, Members who viewed my profile, The profiles I visited, My favorites, People who added me to their favorites' list), Member suggestions button (a sub-page where you can see the information of people that the	**Personal Column** Messages, Sent Messages, Those who viewed my profile, Profiles visited, Suitable members, Those who wink at you, People you winked at, Favorites, Members who added me to their favorites	**Personal Column** Nickname, Verification with Facebook button, SMS Verification button, Profile picture upload button, Basic Information button, Prospective Partner Search button, Self-presentation essay	**Search Column** Online members, Members in your city, New members, Detailed search, Nickname search, Latest photos of members, Members who can send SMS, Members who were born today

website suggests for you), Activities (a sub-page where you can see the recent activities other members do), Premium Membership Advertising (A paid membership which allows you to contact with online members, to see their profile pictures, enables you to send messages and see recommended users)			
Member Suggestions Page Member suggestions, Contacted members, Members who visit my profile, Members whose profile I visited, Favourites, Members who added me to their favourites	**Website Forum / Updates** A column for letting users share what they have in their minds and and inform users about updates on users' profiles	**Website Forum** A column for letting users share what they have in their minds and inform users about updates on users' profiles	**Website Forum** A column for letting users share what they have in their minds and inform users about updates on users' profiles
Message Box Page Received, Sent, Drafts, Erased	**Ouick Search Column** Suitable members, Members with photos, Online members, Age span, City, District, Distance	**Notifications Column** Message Box button (received, sent, special, erased), Favorites button (my favorites, people who added me to their favorites' list, those who viewed my profile, profiles i viewed, profiles i blocked), Viewers button, Smile button, Gift button (A paid service that enables you to send rose, teddy bear, heartshape, ring pictures to other members)	**Message Box Column** Received, Sent
Search Criteria Page Smoking, Alcohol, Civil Status, Kid Ownership, Age, Taille, Religion, Ethnicity, Education level, City (Google Map)	**Notifications Column** Those who viewed my profile,	**Ouick Search Column** Country, City, Age Span, Members with photos, Online members	**Member Suggestions Column** Online favorites, Members who visited my profile, Members whose profile I visited, Favourites, Members who added me to their favourites, Members who greeted me, Members I greeted, Members I blockes
Premium Membership Advertising A paid membership which allows you to contact with online members, to see their profile pictures, enables you to send messages and see recommended users)	**Search Column** City, Age span, Distance, Physical qualities (taille, weight, eye color, hair color), Education & Other (occupation, education, income level, civil status, kid ownership), Life (horoscope, alcohol, cigarette, disability), Word search button, Name search button	**Personal Advertising** A paid advertising service announcement (This service highlights your profile in the site to become prominent among others	**Premium Membership & SMS Advertising** A paid membership which allows you to contact with online members, to see their profile pictures, enables you to send messages and send SMS
what is eCift? What is eCift, Site tour, Services, Security, Success stories, eCift mobile)	**Gold Membership Advertising** A paid membership which enables you to send messages.	**Success Stories Column (Married)** "All happy couples" button (a sub-page where you can see the couples married using this website), "Share your story" button	
eCift magazine Welcome, ecift Guide, Relationship advices, Preparation for the first meeting advices	**Shortcuts** Search, members you blocked, members that does not interest you, profile preview, profile update, character analysis	**Shortcuts** Profile Page, Account, Password)	

Updates Announcements about the members who update their profiles	**Success Stories Column (Married)** "Share your story" button		
	General Recommendations Membership, Photos, Messages, Security		

Table C.6. Social qualifications sought by Turkish men in future spouse, TAYA 2011 (%)

Social attributes	Important	It doesn't matter	Unimportant
Getting married for the first time	84,7	9,0	6,3
Similarity between family structures	75,3	16,4	8,4
Religiousness	73,3	17,4	9,3
A good education	58,5	24,9	16,7
Being from the same religious sect	57,6	27,8	14,6
Having a job	52,7	24,5	22,9
Coming from the same ethnic origin	57,6	27,8	14,6
Being from the same social circle	47,2	33,7	19,1
Not working for long hours	46,3	31,4	22,4
Being from the same hometown	36,1	38,5	25,4
High income level	29,3	39,0	31,7

Table C.7: Social attributes of men required by Turkish women, TAYA 2011 (%)

Social attributes	Important	It doesn't matter	Unimportant
Having a job	91,7	6,1	2,1
Getting married for the first time	83,4	10,5	6,1
Similarity between family structures	81,5	13,7	4,8
Religiousness	79,3	14,4	6,3
Being from the same religious sect	67,8	22,0	10,2
A good education	67,5	21,5	11,0
Coming from the same ethnic origin	56,4	28,8	14,8
Not working for long hours	53,9	34,5	11,6
Being from the same social circle	53,0	31,9	15,0
High income level	44,8	36,2	18,9
Being from the same hometown	41,2	37,1	21,7

Table C.8: Personal qualifications sought by Turkish men in future spouse, TAYA 2011 (%)

Social attributes	Unimportant	It doesn't matter	Important
His/her being in love with him/her	5,8	11,6	82,6
Being handsome/beautiful	14,7	30,2	55,0
Taking care of herself (such as hygiene)	2,5	6,2	91,4
Fidelity to partner	0,4	1,5	98,1

Enjoying to spend time with her family	0,8	3,1	96,1
Being a reliable person, not lying	0,3	1,4	98,3
Caring about the feelings of the other person	0,3	1,9	97,8
Being thrifty	0,6	3,5	95,9
Being generous	0,8	4,2	95,0
Being patient and tolerant	0,3	1,8	97,9
Protecting partner against her family	0,8	2,5	96,7
Behaving properly in society	0,3	1,5	98,3

Table C:9 Personal qualifications sought by Turkish women in future spouse, TAYA 2011 (%)

Social attributes	Unimportant	It doesn't matter	Important
His/her being in love with him/her	6,0	13,0	81,1
Being handsome/beautiful	18,9	33,1	48,0
Taking care of herself (such as hygiene)	1,5	5,8	92,7
Fidelity to partner	0,3	1,7	98,0
Enjoying to spend time with her family	0,5	2,7	96,9
Being a reliable person, not lying	0,2	1,4	98,4
Caring about the feelings of the other person	0,2	1,8	98,0
Being thrifty	0,6	3,4	95,9
Being generous	0,4	3,5	96,1
Being patient and tolerant	0,2	1,3	98,5
Protecting partner against her family	0,3	1,7	98,0
Behaving properly in society	0,1	1,4	98,4

Table C.10: Nasipse Marriage Website Questions

Photograph Optional. Maximum x photographs are allowed								
Socio-demographic Information			**Other information**					
Basic Information	**Education/ Professional Status**	**Family Relationship Status**	**Character Values & Expectations**	**Religious Life Style**	**Physical Appearance**	**Life Style**	**Tastes**	**Candidate**

Sex Age Place of residence (Country /City) Nationality Religious affiliation Ethnic origin	Level of education Profession Current employment status Income level (monthly) House / Car ownership Languages spoken	Civil status Number of kids Habitation (Alone, With Kids / Family / Friends) Place of origin Family	Character properties Astrological sign Desire to have kids	Sects Namaz Quran Fasting Influence of religion in life	Height Weight Physical appearance Eye color Hair color Hair type Veiling Disabilities	Hobbies Interests Sports Alcohol Smoking Cooking House work Pets	Music Cinema Books Holiday	Age Civil status Religion Kids Alcohol Smoking Level of education Income
Questions about marriage (Multiple choice) *Would you consider getting married with someone from another city? Would you consider changing your city if your partner asks for that? Would you accept living with the parents of your spouse candidate? Would you accept quitting work if your partner asks for that?*								
Marriage test (Multiple choice) *What is marriage for you?, Why do you want to get married?, What are the qualities you look for in a spouse candidate? How do you choose your partner?, How do you make yourself attractive? How do you learn the real qualities of your partner? Who should have the authority in a marriage? How do you understand if your partner loves you? If your partner has qualities that you do not approve, what do you do in that case? What would you do if your family does not approve your partner? What should be the role of your family in your relationship? What is the quality they you can not accept at all in your partner? How do you act for a healthy communication? Why do you think engagement period is necessary? What would you do if you have problems with your partner? What kind of a personality do you prefer?*								

Table C.11: eCift Marriage Website Questions

Photograph							
Optional. Maximum 12 photographs are allowed							
Socio-demographic Information							
Basic Information	**Education/ Professional Status**	**Family Relationship Status**	**Physical Appearance**	**Character Values & Expectations**	**Religious Life Style**	**Life Style**	**Tastes**
Sex Age Place of residence (Country /City) Nationality Religious affiliation Ethnic origin	Level of education Profession Current employment status Income level (monthly) Languages spoken	Marital status Number of kids Habitation (Alone, With Kids / Family / Friends)	Height Weight Physical appearance Eye color Hair color	Character properties Astrological sign Desire to have kids	Religious beliefs Sects	Hobbies Interests Sports Habits (Alcohol, Smoking) Pets	Music Cinema Books Holiday
Open-ended question							
Describe yourself *I describe myself as… (511 characters), Things important for me in a relationship (open / closed ended), The things about me that my partner should know, A perfect day for me… (511 characters), what I do in my spare times… (511 characters), Things I say I wish I could do… (511 characters), My favorite place is… (511 characters), Two things I can't give up… (100 characters), Things I do not like… (511 characters)*							

Table C.12: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Basic Information

	Questions	**Answer choices**
1	Nickname	*Open ended question*
2	Gender	Woman / Man
3	Age	18 to 82 years old
4	Civil Status	Single / Divorced / Widowed
5	Place of residence	*Multiple response options*

Table C.13: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Questionnaire (Personal)

	Questions	**Answer choices**
1	Eye color	Black, brown, hazel brown, green, blue, other
2	Hair color	Black, brown, red, grey, blond, other
3	Height	1.20 cm to 2.10 cm
4	Weight	35 kg to 150 kg
5	Physical description	Slim, Normal, Fully-figured, Overweight
6	Do you have kids?	I do not have a kid / I have a kid but s/he does not live with me / my kid lives with me
7	Do you want kids?	I want / I want later / I do not want / I did not think about it
8	Do you smoke?	I do not smoke / I smoke / I smoke occasionally
9	Do you consume alcohol?	I never consumed / I do not consume / I consume occasionally /I consume
10	With whom do you live?	With my family / With my flat mate / Alone / With my kids / Other
11	What is your level of education?	Primary education / High school / Associate degree / Undergraduate / Postgraduate
12	What is your occupation?	Multiple responses
13	What are the foreign languages you can speak?	English, German, French, Arabic, Spanish, Japanese
14	What is your way of working?	Full time / Part time / I do not work / Self-employment
15	What is your income?	0-1000 TL, 1000-2000 TL, 2000-4000 TL, 4000-6000 TL, 6000+ TL, I do not want to indicate
16	What kind of a personality do you have?	Open minded, positive, self-contained, friendly, religious, modern, fun, honest, serious, jealous, talkative, conservative, sympathetic, smart
17	What are the qualities you search for in a spouse candidate?	Political harmony, tolerance, respect, sexual harmony, education, love, having good time together, trust, income compatibility
18	What are your hobbies?	Night life, computer, dance, art, television, cooking, internet, housework, music, books, cinema, sports, theatre, going for a jaunt, friendship
19	What kind of music do you listen?	Religious chants, arabesque, classical, Turkish pop, Turkish rock, Turkish classical music, foreign pop, foreign rock, Turkish folk music
20	What kind of books do you read?	Risale-I nur, Fiqh, Hadiths, Religious stories, exegesis, novel, science-fiction, short stories, psychology, religious, self-help
21	What is your religious sect?	Hanefi, şafii, hanbeli, maliki
22	Do you perform your prayers (namaz)?	I perform / I try to perform / I perform Friday prayers / I can not perform my prayers / I do not perform

23	Do you know and read Quran?	I know how to read and I read / I know how to read but I do not have time / I do not know how to read but I want to learn / I do not know how to read
24	Do you fast in Ramadan?	I fast all the required days / I try to fast / I can not fast due to my health problems / I do not fast
25	Are you connected with a religious cemaat?	I am connected with many of them / I am connected to one of them / I am not connected to any of them
26	What are the qualities that you value in accordance with Islam and morality? (for spouse candidate)	Fear of god , performing prayers, religious knowledge, honesty, not estraying, not compromising Islam, not lying
27	What are the qualities you will not compromise?	Performing prayer, fasting, loyalty, honesty
28	What are the qualities you find intolerable in a spouse candidate?	Cheating, physical violence, swearing, lying, coming home late, friend circles, visiting coffee houses often, extravagantness, laziness, Too much talking, too much laughing, Too much interaction with the opposite sex, wasting time
30	Do you have any physical disabilities?	No, visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically handicapped, other
31	What is your horoscope sign?	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius, Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn, Gemini, Libra, Aquarius, Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces

Table C.14: Gönülden Sevenler Marriage Website – Questionnaire (Spouse Candidate)

	Questions	**Answer choices**
1	Age range	18 to 90 years old
2	Civil status	Single, divorced, widow, doesn't matter
3	Eye color	Black, brown, hazel brown, green, blue, other
4	Hair color	Black, brown, red, grey, blond, other
5	Do you accept someone with kids?	Yes, no, doesn't matter
6	Do you accept someone who smokes?	No, yes, doesn't matter
7	Do you accept someone who consume alcohol?	Strictly no, s/he can drink occasionally, s/he must not drink, doesn't matter
8	What should be her/his level of education?	Primary education / High school / Associate degree / Undergraduate / Postgraduate
9	What should be her/his level of income?	0-1000 TL, 1000-2000 TL, 2000-4000 TL, 4000-6000 TL, 6000+ TL, I do not want to indicate
10	What are the qualities s/he should not compromise?	Performing prayer, fasting, loyalty, honesty
11	Should s/he be connected with a religious cemaat?	S/he can be connected with them, S/he can be connected to one of them, S/he should not be connected to any of them, doesn't matter
12	What should be her / his religious sect?	Hanefi, şafii, hanbeli, maliki
13	Should s/he perform your prayers (namaz)?	S/he should perform, S/he should try to perform, S/he should perform Friday prayers, doesn't matter
14	Do you accept a partner with physical disabilities?	No, visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically handicapped, other

Table C.15: Pembe Panjur Marriage – Questionnaire (Personal – Part 1)

	General Information (Part 1)	**Answer choices**
1	Gender	Woman / Man
2	Age	18 to 87
3	Place of residence	Multiple responses
4	Your preference about the distance of candidates from your location	Doesn't matter, 30 km distance, 100 km distance, 200 km distance
5	Monthly income	Below 1000 TL, 1000-2000 TL, 2001-5000 TL, 5001-10000 TL, Over 10000 TL
6	How important is the income level of your candidate?	Not important, It matters mildly, I am not sure, Important, Very important
7	Civil status	Never married, divorced, living separate, widowed
8	Profession	Multiple responses
9	Do you have kids?	Yes / No
10	Do you accept someone with kids?	Yes / No / Maybe
11	Do you want to have kids?	Yes / No / Maybe
12	Ethnicity	Turkish, Azeri, Balkan, Circassian, Armenian, Kurdish, Greek, Other
13	Religious belief	Islam – Sunni, Islam – Alewit, Atheist, Christian, Judaism, Other
14	Your preference for the religious belief of your candidate	All of them, Islam – Sunni, Islam – Alewit, Atheist, Christian, Judaism, Other
15	How important is the religious belief of your candidate?	Not important, It matters mildly, I am not sure, Important, Very important
16	Do you have any physical disabilities?	No, visually impaired, hearing impaired, physically handicapped, other

Table C.16: Pembe Panjur Marriage - Questionnaire (Personal – Part 2)

	Physical Qualites (Part 2)	**Answer choices**
1	Height	140 cm to 210 cm
2	Weight	40 kg to 130 kg
3	Eye color	Brown, hazel brown, green, blue
4	Hair color	Black, brown, red, grey, blond
5	Physical description	Slim, Normal, Fully-figured, Overweight
6	How important is the weight of your candidate?	Not important, It matters mildly, I am not sure, Important, Very important
7	How important is the height of your candidate?	Not important, It matters mildly, I am not sure, Important, Very important
8	How important is the physical look of your candidate?	Not important, It matters mildly, I am not sure, Important, Very important
9	How do you define your style?	I do not care much, I care about my style occasionally, I am stylish all the times
10	How important is the style of your candidate?	Not important, It matters mildly, I am not sure, Important, Very important

Table C.17: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website - Questionnaire (Personal – Part 3)

	Education & Other Qualites (Part 3)	**Answer choices**
1	Education level	Primary education / High school / Associate degree / Undergraduate / Master degree / PhD degree

2	What is the name of the institution you graduated from?	*Open ended question*
3	Are you a student now?	Yes / No
4	How important is the education level of your candidate?	Not important, It matters mildly, I am not sure, Important, Very important
5	Do you have a preference for the education level of your candidate?	High school or over, associate degree or over, undergraduate degree or over
6	Do you smoke?	I do not smoke / I smoke / I smoke occasionally
7	Do you accept someone who smokes?	S/he should not smoke, S/he can smoke, S/he can smoke occasionally
8	Do you consume alcohol?	I do not / I consume alcohol / I consume alcohol in social occasions
9	Do you accept someone who consume alcohol?	S/he should not consume alcohol, S/he consume alcohol, S/he can consume alcohol in social occasions
10	With whom do you live?	With my family / With my flat mate / Alone / With my kids / Other
11	Do you own a house?	Yes / No
12	Way of working	Full time / Part time / Retired / I do not work
13	What are the foreign languages you can speak?	English, German, French, Arabic, Spanish, Italian, Russian, Other

Table C.18: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website - Questionnaire (Personal – Part 4)

	Education & Other Qualites (Part 4)	**Answer choices**
1	I have strong family ties	No / Not really / I am not sure / Slightly / Yes
2	I like to practice economy	No / Not really / I am not sure / Slightly / Yes
3	I plan everything	No / Not really / I am not sure / Slightly / Yes
4	I like to help people	No / Not really / I am not sure / Slightly / Yes
5	My room / house is always tidy	No / Not really / I am not sure / Slightly / Yes
6	I like kids	No / Not really / I am not sure / Slightly / Yes
7	I am a….. person	Sympathetic, Smart, Ambitious, Introvert, Energetic, Religious, Adventurous, Happy, Fragile, Patient, Sincere
8	I go to cinema	Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Frequently / Always
9	I like going to night clubs or parties	Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Frequently / Always
10	I visit art galleries	Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Frequently / Always
11	I watch television	Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Frequently / Always
12	I read books	Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Frequently / Always
13	I go shopping	Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Frequently / Always
14	I go to concerts	Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Frequently / Always
15	I listen to music	Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Frequently / Always
16	I go walking	Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Frequently / Always
17	I do sports	Never / Rarely / Sometimes / Frequently / Always
18	Can you describe the man / women of your dreams? (Occupation, Physical qualities, education)	*Open ended question*
19	If you describe yourself… (What are your expectations from a relationship? How do you spend your time?)	*Open ended question*

Table C.19: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website - Questionnaire (Personal – Part 5)

	Character Analysis (Part 5)	**Answer choices**
1	Speaking in between the crowd gives me energy	Yes / No
2	I prefer to work alone	Yes / No
3	I pay attention to my surrounding and details	Yes / No
4	When I work, I just focus on this work	Yes / No
5	I am a straightforward person	Yes / No
6	I try to understand the thoughts of other people	Yes / No
7	I do not like being indecisive	Yes / No
8	I am a calm person, I do not get upset with everything	Yes / No
9	I like to attract attention	Yes / No
10	I like to stay alone for a long time	Yes / No
11	I try to improve my skills	Yes / No
12	I read between the lines	Yes / No
13	I do not let other people understand my feelings	Yes / No
14	I like to talk about my feelings and my relationships	Yes / No
15	I can not concentrate when I am in a untidy room	Yes / No
16	I can start a new task before finishing the other	Yes / No
17	I am relaxed near the people I just met	Yes / No
18	I think about what to say before I start talking	Yes / No
19	I interpret the situations using my logic	Yes / No
20	I use metaphors when I speak	Yes / No
21	I care about what others think	Yes / No
22	When I have to make a decision, I think about how it will affect other people	Yes / No
23	I like tidy and organized places	Yes / No
24	I focus on my duties when the deadline is near	Yes / No
25	I always find something to talk	Yes / No
26	I am careful about making new friends	Yes / No
27	I prefer focusing on subjects that have clear outcomes	Yes / No
28	I think about many things generally	Yes / No
29	People blame me for being indifferent to their needs	Yes / No
30	I care about others' appreciation and approval	Yes / No

31	I pay attention to arrive my meetings on time	Yes / No
32	I can have fun before I finish my work	Yes / No

Table C.20: Pembe Panjur Marriage Website - Questionnaire (Personal – Part 6)

	Introduce yourself (Part 6)	**Answer choices**
1	3 qualities you look for in your spouse candidate	*Open ended question*
2	3 qualities you do not want to see in your spouse candidate	*Open ended question*
3	3 things that you keep with you all the time	*Open ended question*
4	Television habits (what are your favorite tv series or tv programs?)	*Open ended question*
5	Music taste (What are the music genres you prefer? Who are your favorite musicians?	*Open ended question*
6	Cinema taste (What type of movies do you prefer? Who are the actors, actress you like?	*Open ended question*
7	Book preferences (What type of books do you read? How often do you read?	*Open ended question*
8	Sports and you (Do you do sports, if so what type of sports do you prefer or you like to follow?	*Open ended question*
9	Holiday preferences (Culture holiday, sea holiday, winter holiday, etc.)	*Open ended question*
10	Experience of foreign countries (What are the countries you visited/ lived? What are the countries that you want to visit in the future? Why?)	*Open ended question*
11	Food / Drink preferences	*Open ended question*
12	What do you do in your spare times? (What do you do at weekends, what are your hobbies?)	*Open ended question*
13	Game and you (What are the computer, internet or board games you like to play?	*Open ended question*
14	What was your favorite cartoon film when you were a kid?	*Open ended question*

Table C.21: Muslima Marriage Website – Questionnaire (Personal)

	Questions	**Answer choices**
1	Gender:	Female / Male
2	Age:	18 to 87

3	Lives In:	Multiple responses
4	Relocate:	Multiple responses
5	Hair Color:	Bald/ Shaved, Black, Blonde, Brown, Grey / White, Light Brown, Red, Changes Frequently, Other, Prefer Not To Say
6	Hair Length:	Bald, Bald On Top, Shaved, Short, Medium, Long, Other, Prefer Not To Say
7	Hair Type:	Straight, Wavy, Curly, Other, Prefer Not To Say
8	Eye Color:	Black, Blue, Brown, Green, Grey, Hazel, Other
9	Eye Wear:	Contacts, Glasses, None, Other, Prefer Not To Say
10	Height:	1.40 M – 2.20 M
11	Weight:	40 Kg– 220 Kg
12	Body Type:	Petite, Slim, Athletic, Average, Few Extra Pounds, Fully Figured, Large And Lovely
13	Ethnicity:	Arab (Middle Eastern), Asian, Black, Caucasian (White), Hispanic/Latino, Indian, Mixed, Pasific Islander, Other
14	Complexion:	Very Fair, Fair, Wheatish, Wheatish Brown, Dark, Prefer Not To Say
15	Facial Hair:	
16	Appearance:	Below Average, Average, Attractive, Very Attractive
17	Physical / Health Status:	Normal, Minor Health Issues, Serious Health Issues, Minor Physical Disability, Major Physical Disability, Prefer Not To Say
18	Drink:	Don't Drink, Occasionally Drink, Do Drink, Prefer Not To Say
19	Smoke:	Do Smoke, Don't Smoke, Occasionally Smoke
20	Eating Habits:	Halal Foods Always, Halal Food When I Can, No Special Restrictions
21	Marital Status:	Single, Separated, Widowed, Divorced, Married
22	Have Children:	No, Yes-Don't Live At Home, Yes – Sometimes Live At Home, Yes- Live At Home
23	Number Of Children:	0, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, More Than 8
24	Oldest Child:	0 / Older Than 18
25	Youngest Child:	0 / Older Than 18
26	Want (More) Children:	Yes, Not Sure, No
27	Occupation:	32 Options
28	Employment Status:	Student, Part-Time, Full-Time, Homemaker, Retired, Not Employed, Other, Prefer Not To Say
29	Home Type:	Apartment / Flat, Condominium, Farm, House, Town House, Other, Prefer Not To Say
30	Living Situation:	Live Alone, Live With Friends, Live With Family, Live With Kids, Live With Spouse, Other, Prefer Not To Say
31	Residency Status:	Citizen, Permanent Resident, Work Permit, Student Visa, Temporary Visa, Other
32	Willing To Relocate:	Willing To Relocate Within My Country, Willing To Relocate To Other Country, Not Willing To Relocate, Not Sure About Relocating
33	Relationship You Are Looking For:	Marriage / Friendship
34	Nationality:	Full List

35	Education:	Primary School, Middle School, High School, Vocational College, Bachelor Degree, Masters Degree, Phd
36	Languages Spoken:	Popular Languages /Arabic, English, French, Pidgin, Urdu, German Spanish, Other Languages / List Given
37	Religion:	Islam- Sunni, Islam- Shiite, Islam- Sufism, Islam-Ahmadiyya, Islam-Other, Willing To Revert, Other
38	Born / Reverted:	Born A Muslim, Reverted To Islam, Willing To Revert To Islam
39	Religious Values:	Very Religious, Religious, Not Religious
40	Attend Religious Services:	Daily, Only On Fridays, Sometimes, Only During Ramadan, Never
41	Wear A Niqab:	Yes, Sometimes, No
42	Wear A Hijab:	Yes, Sometimes, No
43	Read Qur'an:	Daily, Occasionally, Only On Fridays, Only During Ramadan, Read Translated Version, Never Read, Prefer Not To Say
44	Polygamy:	Accept Polygamy, Maybe Accept Polygamy, Don't Accept Polygamy
45	Family Values:	Conservative, Moderate, Liberal, Prefer Not To Say
46	Profile Creator:	Self, Parent, Friend, Brother/Sister, Relative
47	In Your Own Words:	*Open ended question*
48	Your Profile Heading:	*Open ended question*
49	A Little About Yourself:	*Open ended question*
50	What You Are Looking For In A Partner:	*Open ended question*

Table C.22: Personal qualifications sought by Turkish men in future spouse, TAYA 2011 (%)

Social attributes	Unimportant	It doesn't matter	Important
His/her being in love with him/her	5,8	11,6	82,6
Being handsome/beautiful	14,7	30,2	55,0
Taking care of herself (such as hygiene)	2,5	6,2	91,4
Fidelity to partner	0,4	1,5	98,1
Enjoying to spend time with her family	0,8	3,1	96,1
Being a reliable person, not lying	0,3	1,4	98,3
Caring about the feelings of the other person	0,3	1,9	97,8
Being thrifty	0,6	3,5	95,9
Being generous	0,8	4,2	95,0
Being patient and tolerant	0,3	1,8	97,9
Protecting partner against her family	0,8	2,5	96,7

Behaving properly in society	0,3	1,5	98,3

Table C.23: Personal qualifications sought by Turkish women in future spouse, TAYA 2011 (%)

Social attributes	Unimportant	It doesn't matter	Important
His/her being in love with him/her	6,0	13,0	81,1
Being handsome/beautiful	18,9	33,1	48,0
Taking care of herself (such as hygiene)	1,5	5,8	92,7
Fidelity to partner	0,3	1,7	98,0
Enjoying to spend time with her family	0,5	2,7	96,9
Being a reliable person, not lying	0,2	1,4	98,4
Caring about the feelings of the other person	0,2	1,8	98,0
Being thrifty	0,6	3,4	95,9
Being generous	0,4	3,5	96,1
Being patient and tolerant	0,2	1,3	98,5
Protecting partner against her family	0,3	1,7	98,0
Behaving properly in society	0,1	1,4	98,4

Table C.24: Social qualifications sought by Turkish men in future spouse, TAYA 2011 (%)

Social attributes	Important	It doesn't matter	Unimportant
Getting married for the first time	84,7	9,0	6,3
Similarity between family structures	75,3	16,4	8,4
Religiousness	73,3	17,4	9,3
A good education	58,5	24,9	16,7
Being from the same religious sect	57,6	27,8	14,6
Having a job	52,7	24,5	22,9
Coming from the same ethnic origin	57,6	27,8	14,6
Being from the same social circle	47,2	33,7	19,1
Not working for long hours	46,3	31,4	22,4
Being from the same hometown	36,1	38,5	25,4
High income level	29,3	39,0	31,7

Table C.25: Social attributes of men required by Turkish women, TAYA 2011 (%)

Social attributes	Important	It doesn't matter	Unimportant
Having a job	91,7	6,1	2,1
Getting married for the first time	83,4	10,5	6,1
Similarity between family structures	81,5	13,7	4,8

Religiousness	79,3	14,4	6,3
Being from the same religious sect	67,8	22,0	10,2
A good education	67,5	21,5	11,0
Coming from the same ethnic origin	56,4	28,8	14,8
Not working for long hours	53,9	34,5	11,6
Being from the same social circle	53,0	31,9	15,0
High income level	44,8	36,2	18,9
Being from the same hometown	41,2	37,1	21,7

Table E.1: Semi Structured Interview / Participant Profiles

	Website	**Gender**	**Age**	**Home town**	**City**	**Occupation**	**Religion**	**Education**	**No Of Siblings**
1	Ecift Akad34	Female	38	Hamburg	İstanbul	Academician	Muslim / Not Conservative	Phd	1
2	Ecift Emineizm	Female	41	Ankara	İzmir	Civil Servant	Not Religious	Undergrad	3
3	Ecift Andanka	Male	35	Kırşehir	Ankara	Lawyer	Not Religious	Graduate	3
4	Ecift Cancan35	Male	38	İzmir	İzmir	Trade	Not Religious	Undergrad	2
5	Ecift Gürcizm	Male	35	Bolu	İzmir	Computer Programmer	Religious	Undergrad	3
6	Ecift Emrciv 4.5 Yrs	Male	33	Yozgat	Ankara	Civil Servant	Moderate Conservative	Undergrad	4
7	Dem40 Pembe Panjur	Male	40	Erzurum	Yalova	Accountant	Alewi	Undergrad	5
8	Pembe P Barbaist 3 Yrs	Male	38	Burdur	Istanbul	Driver	Conservative	Undergrad	2
9	Pembe P Erkstu 4 Yrs	Male	38	Mersin	İstanbul	Student	Religious	Undergrad	4
10	Pembe P Rabi38 6 Months	Female	38	Bursa	Ankara	Civil Servant	Not Conservative	Undergrad	3

11	Pembep Bü39	Male	39	Istanbul	Istanbul	Consultant	Not Religious	Undergrad	2
12	Pembe P Esesist	Female	39	Istanbul	Istanbul	Civil Servant	Not Religious	Undergrad	2
13	Pembe P Çig34	Female	34	Erzurum	İstanbul	Unemployed	Believer	Undergrad	4
14	Pembe P Abdoco	Male	40	Kayseri	İstanbul	Computer Engineer	Not Religious	Undergrad	3
15	Pembe P Rose01	Female	29	Adana	Adana	Unemployed	Not Religious	Highschool	3
16	Pembe Panjur	Female	23	Ankara	Istanbul	Student	Not Very Religious	Graduate	8
17	Pembe Panjur	Female	31	Denizli	Izmir	Unemployed	Not Very Religious		3
18	GS Aslgül	Female	24	Edirne	Tekirdağ	Consultant	Conservative	Undergrad	2
19	GS Kocae37	Female	37	Eskişehir	Kocaeli	Court	Conservative	Undergrad.	4
20	GS Saskin39 5 Years	Female	39	Istanbul	Istanbul	Decoration	Conservative	Highschool	4
21	GS Gssarı	Female	36	Hatay	Istanbul	IT Manager	Not Religious	Undergrad.	3
22	GS Consist 1 Year	Female	36	Kars	Istanbul	Teacher	Conservative	Graduate	4
23	GS Cihangir 02	Male	33	Amasya	Istanbul	Media	Conservative	Undergrad.	2
24	GS Devo26	Male	26	Van	Ağrı	Police	Devout	Undergrad.	4
25	GS Tutuc27	Male	27	Uşaklı	İstanbul	Manager	Conservative	Graduate	2
26	GS Flowera 1 Year	Female	28	Adana	Istanbul	Student	Conservative	Graduate	8
27	GS Pink34	Female	36	Kırklareli	Istanbul	Teacher	Conservative	Undergrad.	3

28	GS Engine06	Female	33	Edirne	Ankara	Engineer	Conservative	Undergrad.	2
29	GS Ladydoc	Female	31	Erzurum	Izmir	Doctor	Religious	Undergrad.	4
30	GS Kuzey28	Male	28	Zonguldak	İstanbul	Trade	Not Religious	Graduate	2

Table E.2: Semi Structured Interview Guide for Marriage Website Users

A. <u>Socio-Demographic Qualities</u>

A.1. How would you describe yourself?

Probes						
Gender	*Age*	*Education*	*Hometown*	*Residential city*	*Occupation*	*Religion*

A.2. How would you describe your family?

Probes						
Number of siblings	*Education level of siblings*	*Occupation of siblings*	*Education level of parents*	*Hometown of parents*	*Occupation of parents*	*Religiosity of parents*

A.3. Describe how your parents met?

B. <u>Marriage Website Membership</u>

B.1. How would you describe your membership experience in this website? Please tell me also what you think about this marriage website.

Probes				
How long have you been a member of this marriage website?	*Are you a member of other dating or marriage websites? (Names)*	*How did you decide to become a member of this marriage website?*	*What are your positive and negative thoughts about this website?*	*What are your positive and negative thoughts about other dating and marriage websites you use / you have used? (Names)*

B.2. Think of the ways you use this marriage website. Describe a typical usage practice.

Probes				
What do you think about the design / architecture of this website? Do you find it user-friendly?	*What type of an electronic device you use to connect to this website? (desktop,*	*What time of the day do you use this website?*	*Do you know the rules of this marriage website? Have you ever read these rules?*	*Do you tell your friends / family that you use this website? Why / Why not?*

	laptop, iPad, mobile phone)			

C. Self Presentation on Marriage Websites

C.1. Describe how you present yourself on this marriage website. Please tell me this experience in detail including what you want to highlight or withhold during this process.

Probes					
How do you define this experience? Was it difficult or easy for you? Which parts were easier / more difficult for you?	*What are the qualities you want to highlight?*	*What are the qualities you want to withhold?*	*Do you think profile pictures are important? Why?*	*How did you choose your profile picture? Why did you choose this one/ these ones?*	*How often do you update your profile page? Why do you update?*

D. Mate Selection Criteria

D.1. Please describe the mate candidate you are looking for on this website?

D.1. Think of how you use this marriage website to search for mate candidates. Please describe the filters / criteria you implement to select your mate candidates?

Probes						
Age range	*Physical qualities*	*Education level*	*Occupation*	*Income level*	*Location*	*Religion / Religiosity*

Hobbies / Tastes	*Self – description with own words*	*Previous marital experience*	*Previous sexual experience*	*Family / Parents*	*Other*

E. User Experience

E.1. Think of the steps you take before meeting with mate candidates face to face. Explain this process in detail.

E.2. Please describe your previous usage experiences in detail.

Probes					
Number of messages you receive each day approximately	*Number of messages you send each day approximately*	*Do you send the first message? Why? Why not?*	*How often do you share your communication details? With how many people? With whom?*	*Number of male / female users you have met face to face*	*Number of short term / long term relationships with people you met on*

					this marriage website

E.3. Think of your first face to face meetings with other users. Please describe these first face to face meetings? (Where do you meet? What do you talk about? How do you prepare yourself? etc.)

E.4. Please describe your previous short term / long term relationships with people you met on this website in detail.

Probes		
How did your short term relationships start? How long did it last? How did it end? Other?	*How did your long term relationships start? How long did it last? How did it end? Other?*	*Did you have any sexual experience with people you met on these marriage websites? How many people?*

E.5. Do you have any other thoughts about these relationships that you would like to share?

F. <u>Pre-marital / Marital Relationship Experience</u>

F.1. Please describe your previous short term / long term relationships before you subscribed to this marriage website.

Probes		
Marriage / short term and long terms relationships	*First pre-marital relationship*	*First sexual intercourse*

F.2. Please describe your thoughts / feelings about arranged marriages?

Probes	
What do you think about it?	*Should parents assist their children to find spouse candidates?*

F.3. Please describe your thoughts / feelings about pre-marital sexual intimacy, dating, romantic love?

Probes		
Dating (Positive / Negative)	*Pre-marital sexual intimacy (Positive / Negative)*	*Is romantic love a prerequisite for marriage? (Why / Why not?*

Do you have any other thoughts about these issues?

ÖZGEÇMİŞ

1979 yılında İstanbul'da doğdu. Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık bölümünde lisans eğitimini tamamladı. 2002-2005 yılları arasında Sabancı Üniversitesi Görsel Sanatlar ve Görsel İletişim Tasarımı bölümünde yüksek lisans eğitimi aldı. 2005 yılından itibaren iletişim stratejisti olarak bir çok iletişim ajansında çalıştı. 2011 yılında Galatasaray Üniversitesi Medya ve İletişim Çalışmaları programında başladığı doktora eğitimine, 2014 yılından itibaren Paris 1 Sorbonne-Pantheon Üniversitesi Siyaset Bilimi bölümü ile birlikte müşterek doktora programıyla devam etti.

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