

**CHARLES UNIVERSITY**  
FACULTY OF HUMANITIES  
Department of Gender Studies

**Kemal Dincer**

**Experiences of Vegan and Vegetarian Men**

**Living in Turkey**

Diploma Thesis

Thesis Supervisor: Dr. Ivy Helman

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“I declare that I wrote the thesis independently using the sources dutifully cited and listed in the bibliography. The thesis was not used to obtain a different or the same title.”

“I agree the diploma thesis will be published in the electronic library of the Faculty of Humanities of Charles University and can be used as a study text.”

Prague, June 29, 2022

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Kemal Dincer

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## ABSTRACT

**Key words:** Hegemonic masculinity, vegan, vegetarian, meat and men, masculinity.

Although there have been many different academic studies on veganism/vegetarianism in recent years, there are limited studies specifically addressing vegan/vegetarian men. Considering the studies on this subject in Turkey, it is also seen that there is almost no research focusing on vegan and vegetarian men. This study aims to find the relation between men and meat and the role of this relationship in the experiences of vegan/vegetarian men in Turkey. Using hegemonic masculinity as a theoretical framework, I aim to illustrate if veganism/vegetarianism is popular among men in Turkey, in which environments and areas vegan and vegetarian men are exposed to negative experiences, what kind of reactions do they get in social environments and what institutions are directly or indirectly involved in the experience of vegan and vegetarian men. Additionally, my thesis researches the position of vegetarian and vegan men within Turkey-specific hegemonic masculinity practices. My work also specifically addresses the question of whether vegan and vegetarian men challenge this Turkey-specific hegemonic masculinity, and if so, how does the process take place.

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

I remember that when I first decided to become a vegetarian about ten years ago, I was perceived as quite radical by my family and social circle. Since the number of vegans and vegetarians in Turkey in those years was very low compared to today, many people expressed that they had difficulty making sense of my decision. Although I have witnessed that veganism and vegetarianism have been increasing rapidly in Turkey in the last ten years, I observe that these individuals still have difficulties in many respects. In the conversations I have with my vegan and vegetarian friends, I see that they still receive reactions from their families and circles, and these reactions can get quite harsh from time to time.

As far as I have seen from both my own experiences and the experiences of my friends, it is possible to say that especially male vegans and vegetarians are exposed to these reactions. Especially during the conversations, I had with my fellow vegan and vegetarian friends, I realized that we all had similar experiences. Most of the vegan and vegetarian men living in Turkey are perceived as gay and feminine the society and are exposed to various jokes and comments on this issue. It is possible to say that this situation has a great impact on the fact that veganism and vegetarianism are less popular among men in Turkey. Since heterosexuality has an essential place in hegemonic masculinity practices in Turkey, it can be said that many men tend to avoid being vegan and vegetarian in order not to be perceived as gay or feminine.

While trying to understand the relationship between meat and masculinity, I first realized that the concepts of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity have an important place in the theoretical framework of my research. Connell (1998) defines hegemonic masculinity as the form of masculinity possessed by men holding power (245). Connell mentions that hegemonic masculinity is not only built on the relationship with women, but also on subordinated masculinities (245). Connell (2019) in her book “Masculinities” stated that subordinated masculinity is linked with men with different sexual orientations and they are the most excluded group because they are excluded from heterosexuality, which is the first step of hegemonic

masculinity (78-79). It is common for vegan and vegetarian men to be perceived as gay and feminine by society (Sobal 2005; Adams 2015). Therefore, the perception of vegan and vegetarian men as gay in society results in them having similar experiences with gay men within the definition of subordinated masculinity.

On the other hand, considering that the standards of hegemonic masculinity may vary from society to society, determining in which areas masculinity and hegemonic masculinity emerge in Turkey also has an important place in understanding the experiences of the men in my research. Barutcu (2013) states that a man in Turkey has to go through five stages to complete the construction of his masculinity and those stages are explained as circumcision, sexuality, military service, having a job and marriage (157). On the other hand, Ozekici (2014) argues that the reflections of hegemonic masculinity in Turkey are reflected in “body and power, militarism, heterosexuality and religion”. (55) Since as a vegan man I always hear some negative comments in terms of religion, tradition and family and heterosexuality, those comments made me question whether the other vegan/vegetarian men also share the same experiences as me.

At the same time, the argument stated by Ozekici in the literature that heterosexuality in Turkey has an important place in hegemonic masculinity played an important role in my research questions (58). In this context, I aimed to find out what kind of a position vegan and vegetarian men have in the dominant heterosexuality understanding in Turkey, because they are far from the masculine meaning attached to the meat.

When I studied the academic works in the literature in order to better understand the problems experienced by vegan and vegetarian individuals in Turkey, I realized that there are very few studies on vegan and vegetarian individuals. Moreover, since my research topic was based on the experiences of vegan and vegetarian men, I realized that there is no study that analyzes the experiences of vegan/vegetarian men in Turkey through their own statements. With this academic study, in which I will show the experiences and prejudices of vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey, I plan to fill the gap in this area in Turkey and aim to lead further studies.

### **The Objective of the Thesis**

The aim of my study is to understand the relation between meat and masculinity and how this relation is effective in the experiences of vegan/vegetarian men living in Turkey. By using

hegemonic masculinity as a theoretical framework in my study, I aim to find out how vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey are positioned in hegemonic masculinity practices specific to Turkey, for what reasons they are exposed to negative experiences within hegemonic masculinity practices, in which areas they are having negative experiences or exposed to prejudices in terms of their masculinity, and which institutions that are effective in the continuation of hegemonic masculinity have a role in these prejudices and experiences. With the answers to these questions, I also aim to find out whether my participants challenge the hegemonic masculinity practices in Turkey by being vegetarian/vegan men and if they do, how they challenge to those practices.

## **Structure**

In this study, while examining the relationship between meat and masculinity, I use not only interviews but also the sources in literature to find out what effect this relationship has on the experience of vegan and vegetarian men living in Turkey.

In Chapter 2, firstly I mention my positionality as a researcher, and I outlined how this positionality shaped my research. Then, I showed the demographic characteristics of the vegan and vegetarian men who participated in my research. Also, I illustrated how I reached the participants and according to which criteria I tried to select the participants. In this chapter, I also explained the limitations that I encountered due to the pandemic since my thesis process coincided with the Covid-19 pandemic.

In Chapter 3, within the scope of the literature review, I first discuss the general situation of vegan and vegetarianism in Turkey, secondly the concepts of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity and their reflections in Turkey, and also the relationship between meat and masculinity.

In Chapter 4, I first presented a brief description to better define the participants and interpret their responses better. Then, I analyzed the extent to which my research questions were answered based on the answers given by the participants.

In the last chapter, while presenting my research results, I explain to what extent the answers of the participants show parallelism with the literature studies.



## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

In this study, I conducted semi-structured interviews with twelve men aged between 25 and 40 years in order to evaluate the prejudices experienced by vegan and vegetarian men living in Turkey through the men's own statements. Most of the participants were born and raised in different cities of Turkey and have been eating vegan and vegetarian for about five years. While nine of the participants are single and three of them are married, seven participants define themselves as vegetarian and five participants as vegan.

All of the interviews were conducted over the internet through video interviews between December 2021 and March 2022. During the interviews, while general questions about vegan and vegetarianism were asked to men living in Turkey, more detailed questions were asked to understand the prejudices they are exposed to by family, work and society over their masculinity during the vegan and vegetarian processes. Interviews conducted in this context lasted an average of 25 to 45 minutes, before the interviews, permission was requested from the participants to take audio recordings and they were requested to fill in the consent form. All of the participants gave their consent for the recording of the voices and the use of the data within the scope of the research.

#### **2.1. Positionality**

As a vegan male researcher who lived in Turkey, personal experiences have had a great influence on my research on the prejudices of vegan and vegetarian men living in Turkey. As one of the few vegan/vegetarian male individuals living in Turkey, my curiosity about whether vegan/vegetarian men in Turkey are exposed to the same prejudices as me is of great importance in shaping this research topic.

As a man who is very sensitive about animals, after adopting a vegan diet, I have always faced difficulties in meeting my fellow citizens who live in Turkey and have a similar lifestyle as me. While this situation encouraged me to think about why men are less interested in being vegan/vegetarian than women, when I met vegan and vegetarian men, I witnessed that being a vegan/vegetarian creates separate challenges for Turkish men in a country like Turkey where

hegemonic codes of masculinity are at the forefront. As a result of the conversations I had with my vegan and vegetarian male friends, I learned that many of them are subject to prejudices over their masculinity and their masculinity is questioned by meat-eating men and their social circles.

As a vegan male born in Turkey, after deciding to study vegan/vegetarian men, I thought long and hard about the potential implications for my research regarding my position during the interviews and decided to act very carefully. Positionality in the research can be understood as the attributes that the researcher brings to the research process, and these attributes can be historical and geographical location, ethnicity, race, gender, social class, and status (Holmes, 2020. p.2). As a result of my research and reflection on the subject of positionality, I had the opportunity to better understand how my gender, class and ethnic position affect the interviews during the writing phase of the thesis.

Being a part of the vegan community was one of my biggest concerns during the interviews. Since I am a vegan man who lived in Turkey, the fact that other men who participated in the interviews were aware of this might have caused them to think that I was going through the same processes they were going through and might have caused them to share less information with me. However, when I felt that this situation could arise, I realized that I could get more responses from the participants by answering probing questions and I realized that I could avoid the negative situation that might affect the research process. As I reached more participants, I realized that these concerns were unfounded, and I realized that the participants tended to give more sincere answers since I was both a man and came from the same community as them.

On the other hand, I was skeptical about how detailed answers I would get, as many participants would share both their sexual orientation and some very private experiences for them. Especially in Turkey, where sexual orientation issues are perceived very sensitively and individuals are discriminated against, it would be very difficult for individuals to open up about these issues and to trust the researcher.

In order to avoid this situation, I tried to relax and make them feel more comfortable by having casual conversations with the participants before the interviews. I saw that while many participants gave shorter and more direct answers at the beginning of the interview, they started to open up and express themselves in more detail as the interview continued. However, despite my

concerns about this issue, I saw that many participants were comfortable sharing their personal experiences, and as a researcher, I realized that my gender created a sense of trust in the participants.

The fact that we spoke the same language with the participants helped us to establish a good rapport while making it easy for the participants to express themselves. At the same time, using the common mother tongue in the research provided an advantage in terms of interpreting the research data and cultural understanding during the conduct of the research (Welch & Piekkari, 2006. p.422).

Having a common background with the participants gave me an advantage not only during the interviews but also during the analysis of the participants' discourses. It was very easy for me to make sense of these concepts in Turkish society when the participants talked about the prejudices they experienced about their gender and gave examples on issues such as family members and religion.

## 2.2. Participants

In this section, I will present demographic information about the vegan and vegetarian men who participated in my research (see Table 1). In the summary table, the participants' type of diet, age, marital status, sexual orientation and the city they live in are included because they have an important place in analyzing prejudices and experiences. Since male participants shared very sensitive experiences about themselves within the scope of the research, I use pseudonyms for each user, as I stated in my consent form and the participants agreed.

Table 1. Description of Participants

Participants by pseudonym	Age	Marital Status	Sexual Orientation	City	Type of Diet
Sertan	25	Single	Bisexual	Istanbul	Vegetarian
Gokturk	28	Single	Gay	Ankara	Vegan

Serhat	29	Single	Gay	Edirne	Vegetarian
Can	25	Single	Gay	Ankara	Vegan
Kenan	30	Married	Straight	Istanbul	Vegetarian
Toprak	34	Married	Straight	Izmir	Vegetarian
Deniz	26	Single	Bisexual	Izmir	Vegan
Cem	24	Single	Gay	Istanbul	Vegetarian
Tansel	40	Married	Straight	Antalya	Vegan
Volkan	25	Single	Gay	Mersin	Vegan
Mert	25	Single	Gay	Mugla	Vegetarian
Kaya	26	Single	Gay	Hatay	Vegetarian

To reach the participants, I used snowball sampling, which provides sampling through references and is frequently used in qualitative research (Biernacki & Waldorf, 1981. p.141). The reference system made it easy for me to reach participants who were informed beforehand about the research and did not have any trust problems.

In order to get better result and to reach different sample groups, I first reached my own social circle and interviewed vegan and vegetarian individuals who were referenced by them, and asked the individuals who participated in my research for help in reaching other participants who were willing to participate in my research. Secondly, I asked vegan and vegetarian individuals that I knew before, to post short introductory articles describing the research topic on their social media accounts, and in this way, I reached vegan and vegetarian men who were born and grew up in different provinces of Turkey and belong to different social groups. Being a vegan myself and being a member of groups that include vegan/vegetarian individuals provided a great convenience in the process of reaching the participants and accepting my interview proposal.

Before the interviews I conducted with vegan and vegetarian individuals, I first reached out to the participants via telephone, e-mail and social media accounts, informing them in detail about the scope and purpose of the research, and reached a consensus on the time and place of the interview. Before the interviews took place, I sent a consent form to each participant, confirming once again that the information of the participants would only be used within the scope of the research and that their real names and identities would not be used in the research by revealing their details. In this way, each participant who accepted to participate in the research signed the consent form, declaring that their voices would be recorded during the interview.

During the selection and finding of participants, I tried to reach individuals from very different socio-economic groups in order for the research to give more comprehensive and broad results, but since veganism and vegetarianism became known in larger cities, I had a chance to reach individuals living in larger cities. At the same time, I gave importance to the inclusion of individuals with different sexual orientations and different age groups, so that the research would give reliable results and provide the opportunity to compare data. Since family has great importance in the lives of individuals in traditional societies such as Turkey, I also tried to reach the married participants in order to have information about the experiences of the participants with their families.

### **2.3. Limitations**

As my research process coincided with the Coronavirus pandemic, I faced various difficulties in reaching the participants. It was not possible for me to travel to Turkey and visit associations and organizations where vegans and vegetarians come together, especially in the period of lockdowns, with the consequences of travel restrictions. For these reasons, my sample group became more limited than I thought, both because the research location requires individuals to share their sensitive and private experiences, and because of the limitations of human interaction brought by the pandemic.

In addition to the negativities caused by the pandemic in reaching the limited number of participants, I also faced difficulties in finding a private space for the participants to share their private experiences during the interviews. Since many of the participants lived in the same

environment with their family members or spouses/partners and had problems finding private space due to lockdowns, various problems arose in terms of creating time for the interview. Since many of the participants had to hide their sexual orientation from their families, many participants stated that they had a period of time when they would be alone to conduct these interviews. In addition, we had to change the planned dates due to the fact that some of the participants were infected with COVID-19 before the planned interview dates, and we again had various difficulties in finding a private space suitable for both parties.

On the other hand, during the research, I realized that the technical glitches and internet problems brought by these platforms may cause them to be distracted. Technical glitches that arose, especially when the participant shared a very sensitive experience for himself, made it difficult for the participant to respond with the same sensitivity and attention again. In cases where this situation arises, I tried to reassure the participant that he could easily continue from where he left off by repeating the last sentence I heard to comfort the participant.

Before starting the research, I was aiming to reach about 20 participants within the scope of this research, but due to this whole pandemic process, lockdowns, my research questions were based on the experiences of individuals and because men in Turkey are not very interested in vegan and vegetarianism, I could reach 12 participants. Rather than including the general experiences of vegan and vegetarian men living in Turkey, I aim to show the experiences of a limited number of participants as a researcher by making a deeper and closer comparison.

#### **2.4. Research Question Formulation and Theoretical Framework**

As my main research question aims to find the relation between meat and masculinity and how this relationship affects the experiences of vegan and vegetarian men living in Turkey, the concepts of masculinity and hegemonic masculinity helped me to determine the sub-questions which are helpful to get the answer to my main research question. Since I will examine in detail the concepts of hegemonic masculinity and masculinity and how these concepts are positioned in Turkey in my literature review, I will only include my main research questions and sub-questions in this section.

### **Main Research Question:**

What is the relationship between meat and masculinity and how does this relationship affect the experiences of vegan and vegetarian men living in Turkey?

### **Sub questions**

1. Why are veganism and vegetarianism not common among Turkish men?
2. In which environments and areas are vegan and vegetarian men most exposed to negative experiences?
1. What kind of reactions do vegan and vegetarian men get in social situations?
2. What institutions are directly or indirectly involved in the experience of vegan and vegetarian men? How do these institutions affect the experience of vegan/vegetarian men?

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

In the first part of my literature review, as I mentioned in the previous section, I will explain in detail the concept of hegemonic masculinity, which has an important place in the formation of my main research question and sub-questions, and how this concept plays a role in shaping my questions. In the second part, since my research is on Turkey I will discuss the areas where masculinity and hegemonic masculinity can be observed in Turkey. In the third chapter, I will show the relationship between masculinity and meat in different ways and try to find out how vegan/vegetarian men are positioned in this relationship. In the last part of this chapter, I will analyze the general situation of veganism/vegetarianism in Turkey and I will also try to explain the prejudice practices specific to Turkey by using the limited number of academic resources written in this field in Turkey.

### 3.1 Hegemonic Masculinity

Since the concept of hegemonic masculinity has an important place in masculinity studies, it helped me to make sense of different masculinities, including vegan and vegetarian men. The concept of hegemonic masculinity also guided me to make sense of the difficulties experienced by different masculinities, including vegan/vegetarian men. In this section, while I discuss the concept of hegemonic masculinity in detail, I will also show how this concept is effective in shaping my main research question and sub-questions.

According to Connell (1998), the concept of hegemonic masculinity is defined as the form of masculinity possessed by men holding power (245). While Connell argues that hegemonic masculinity is built not only in relation to women but also in relation to subordinated masculinities, she states that men with dominant masculinity norms in society establish this superiority both over women and through the existence of men who have not become “full men” in their masculinity construction (249). Connell also states that the most prominent feature of hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality and the institution of marriage (249).

Connell states that the hierarchical structure between men creates different masculinities in her book "Masculinities", which was translated into Turkish in 2019, and mentions three different types of masculinity apart from hegemonic masculinity (149). The first of these, complicit masculinity, takes a share of patriarchal gain by taking advantage of both the subordination of women and the privileges offered by the patriarchal structure (79). Marginal masculinity, another type of masculinity, refers to men who are marginalized for this reason, who are excluded from all features that make up the "us" element such as race, ethnicity or class (80-81). Finally, subordinated masculinity refers to men with different sexual orientations. They are the most excluded group because they are excluded from heterosexuality, which is the first step of hegemonic masculinity (78-79). The fact that vegan and vegetarian men are generally seen as gay by society will bring the concept of subordinated masculinity to the fore in the process of analyzing the answers of the participants at this point.



Richard Howson, similar to Connell's arguments, states in his book "Challenging Hegemonic Masculinity" (2006) that hegemonic masculinity dominates all other gender types in society within today's western gender order, and states that this happens as a result of perceiving hegemonic masculinity as ideal (60).

Bozok, on the other hand, in his article "The Reverberation of Feminism on the Men's Front: Critical Studies on Men and Masculinity" 2009, argues that although all men have a share or benefit from patriarchal power, some men who have class superiority and are close to political power are determinative on the construction and rebuilding processes of other masculinities because they have a larger share of patriarchy than other masculinities. Men, who benefit more from patriarchy due to their class and political advantages, do not only control women but also establish their hegemony over other men (275-276).

Since I researched the experiences of vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey, it is important to discuss whether the concept of masculinity is the same in every society. Ozbay (2013) mentions in "Searching for Hegemonic Masculinity in Turkey" that the characteristics that make up hegemonic masculinity differ in every society (187). Ozekici (2014), similarly, in his article titled "Hegemonic Masculinity in Turkey and Serdar Akar Films", mentions that there are hegemonic and ideally shaped masculinities in every society, and since ideal masculinity is a broad concept, hegemonic masculinity is generally defined as something to be achieved or desired. (110). According to Ozekici, hegemonic masculinity can vary from society to society, from person to person, and the construction of hegemonic masculinity in Turkey is based on certain foundations (110). A narrative of youth and the body based on brute force, homophobic heterosexuality, militarism shaped by the heroic male soldier image, and a strong emphasis on masculinity with reference to Islam are decisive in this construction (110).

As a result of the argument that hegemonic masculinity can change from culture to culture, understanding the hegemonic masculinity principles in Turkey has been instrumental in creating some research questions that will help me to make sense of the experiences of vegan and vegetarian men. In the next section of the literature review, I will discuss the hegemonic masculinity principles in Turkey in more detail.

It is also important to talk about the institutions that have an impact on the production of hegemonic masculinity. Sancar, in her book titled “Masculinity Impossible Power” (2016), mentions that hegemonic masculinity is declared legitimate and rewarded through institutions such as states, laws, commercial companies, labor unions, heterosexual families, national army, mixed with economic - public activities, homophobic - heterosexual masculinity values. (3) In this context, I thought that it is also necessary to ask the participants how effective these institutes are in their personal experiences based on their being vegan/vegetarian men in Turkey.

Based on Connell's definition of hegemonic masculinity, it is possible to say that the concept of hegemonic masculinity exalts the concept of the ideal man, while ignoring other masculinities. While it is a fact that many forms of masculinity have emerged in the world with changing times and social forms, it is seen that many men still try to maintain the concept of ideal masculinity. In the process of formulating my research question, while trying to understand the connection between meat and masculinity, I realized that it was important to analyze the place of meat in the concept of hegemonic masculinity as a masculine practice. In this way, I aimed to find out to what extent vegan and vegetarian men can practice hegemonic masculinity practices and to what extent their experiences are related to these practices.

Connell & Messerschmidt in their article “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept. *Gender & Society*” (2005) mentions that while talking about the relationship between meat and masculinity, meat should not be considered only as a food, but also that it is a tool in the expression of masculine identity (851). At this point, the concept of hegemonic masculinity imposes the perception that real men must consume meat to ensure their hegemony. Therefore, it is possible for vegan and vegetarian men who do not eat meat to risk violating the hegemonic standards of masculinity. Since vegan and vegetarian men reject masculinity values, the concept of hegemonic masculinity states that these men need to develop certain coping mechanisms in order not to face prejudice by their fellows.

Since I will analyze the relationship between meat and masculinity in more detail in the third section, in this section I have tried to show briefly how vegan and vegetarian men violate the

standards of hegemonic masculinity and how this situation contributes to the shaping of my research questions.

### **3.2. Masculinity and Hegemonic Masculinity in Turkey**

Before examining how meat turns into hegemonic masculinity practice and the connection between meat and masculinity, in this section, I will discuss hegemonic masculinity and masculinity practices specific to Turkey.

#### **Masculinity in Turkey**

In his book titled “Masculinities with Questions and Answers” published in 2011, Mehmet Bozok brings together the studies he has done for years in Turkey and explains the main discussions on masculinity. According to Bozok, the concept of “masculinity” is a gender category, and it starts as a biological phenomenon and then is shaped by social and cultural tools (16). Bozok states that individuals who are biologically male learn to be a man from the first months following birth, and in this learning process, they are informed about how they need to behave in order to become socially accepted men (16).

According to Bozok, masculinity is shaped by many factors, from media to movies, from the internet to social networks, from family to education, from advertisements to slogans in sports matches, from interpersonal relations to politics, and from economic conditions to culture (23). Bozok mentions that all these channels produce, nurture and reproduce patriarchal discourses and that individuals become patriarchal men through a patriarchal "socialization" process (23). In this context, according to Bozok, patriarchal masculinity is not eternal, but a social and cultural phenomenon that is learned from birth and reproduced throughout life (24).

Bozok also mentions that men and masculinities are shaped by patriarchal discourse, and argues that patriarchal discourse, which is the product of historical, economic, social and cultural conditions, determines how men and masculinities will be in every field (24). Bozok argues that by contributing to the continuation of the patriarchal social structure, men also receive their share of the “blessings” of patriarchy and that there is a mutual relationship between masculinity and patriarchy (24).

Tayfun Atay, in his book titled “Chinese Work Japanese Work: Anthropological Remarks on Gender and Sexuality” published in 2017, explains the cultural aspect of masculinity, similar to Bozok's claim that masculinity is shaped by cultural tools, and discusses his research on this subject. According to Atay, masculinity is the sum of practices that determine how a man will think, hear and behave in social life, and that includes roles and attitudes expected from him simply because he is a man (14). According to Atay, masculinity is institutionalized as an identity of power, different from the identity and practice of femininity (14). However, according to Atay, masculinity should be perceived as cultural rather than natural, and it should not be forgotten that masculinity is a relative practice, and in this context, it should be considered that masculinity, which is a power practice, emerged in connection with a cultural change in a certain period of human history (15).

Atay exemplifies this cultural change with the plow farming period, the first output period of male power, and argued that the man who takes nature under his control also makes women dependent and convicted (16). According to Atay, in addition to activities such as plowing the fields and tending the herds, which are considered male work, the effort to keep the agricultural lands makes the physical power inevitable and brings men to the fore at this stage, where intensive agriculture is a lifestyle (16-17). Atay mentions that as a reflection of this situation, women are limited to domestic life and that as a result of the roles and identities formed accordingly, the cultural foundations of women's positioning as secondary and worthless against men are formed (16-17).

Atay exemplifies the research conducted by Mead on the indigenous tribes of Oceania in 1930 regarding the change of masculinity and accordingly male roles from culture to culture (20). In the study conducted by Mead on three indigenous tribes in Papua New Guinea, it is found out that in the society called Arapesh, both women and men exhibit the attitudes and behaviors expected from women in the modern West, and in the second community Mundugmor, both women and men exhibit the behaviors expected from men in the modern Western world, in the Tchambuli community, both men and women behave contrary to the expectations in the West (men are in a docile and passive position, they take care of the house; women are in a dominant and managerial position) (20-21). According to Atay, based on this research, it is possible to say that the roles of masculinity differ in various societies and cultures (20-21).

Based on Bozok and Atay's definitions of masculinity, it is seen that it is possible to make many definitions of man and masculinity. However, when all these definitions are examined, it can be said that there is a common point about masculinity. Although masculinity is the product of a socio-cultural structure, it also has external power. While society or culture determines what masculinity is, how men are defined, and what values or behavior patterns are attributed to men, at the same time, society constantly intervenes from outside to put men into certain patterns.

Considering that the perception of masculinity changes from society to society, the master's thesis titled "The Body and Social Stages of Masculinity in Turkey" by Atilla Barutcu in 2013, in which the construction of masculinity is interpreted through Turkey, aims to comprehensively reveal the perception of masculinity in Turkey. Barutcu states that a man in Turkey has to go through five stages in order to successfully complete the construction of masculinity, and he defines these stages as "circumcision, sexuality, military service, having a job and marriage" (157).

While talking about the role of circumcision in the construction of men's identity, Barutcu defines the phenomenon of circumcision as the first serious bodily stage that boys in Turkey must overcome (7). According to Barutcu, circumcision highlights the gender of the boy, which has not been emphasized much until that time, and ends his perception as a child and allows him to be called a man and become a source of pride (17). From this point of view, it is possible to say that circumcision is the first step in the transition to masculinity in Turkey.

According to Barutcu, another stage that can be seen as both a physical and a social phenomenon that confronts a man on the way to surpassing puberty and becoming a young man is the ability to have a strong sexual power (7). Barutcu explains that in order to successfully complete the construction of masculinity, men feel obligated to have a heterosexual relationship when they reach a certain age and to continue this type of relationship successfully for a long time. (61). According to Barutcu, patriarchal ideology operating within the gender order regulates sexual relations as well as bodies, gender roles, lifestyles, and even emotional worlds, and therefore, men gain an identity in heterosexual sexuality (61). Also, Barutcu states that it is very difficult for the identity of a gay man to be accepted, especially in Turkish society, and it is impossible for homosexual individuals to have dominant masculinity norms accepted in society since their sexuality will also affect other stages of masculinity after circumcision (61).

Barutcu argues that Turkish men, in addition to having roles related to their power in their social lives, also face the military stage where they can use this power to protect their homeland and nation, and they have to consider the land of their homeland as a place where the ruler is male, just like a house or a neighborhood (8). Barutcu sees military service as a service that nourishes men's masculinity construction and adds masculinity to their identities in the construction process (8). According to Barutcu, individuals who strengthen their masculinity by overcoming difficulties, gaining a warrior identity, learning obedience and violence, and risking their lives for the country, are ready to have a full-time job, get married and start a family after returning from the military (98).

Barutcu claims that having a job is also of great importance in the construction of masculinity in Turkey, and when it comes to gender-based division of labor, the first task that comes to mind for men is earning money (126). Barutcu states that a man who has a full-time job, brings food to the house, and is a financial resource for his family, has accomplished one of the most critical tasks necessary to reach the ideal masculinity position (126).

Besides, Barutcu states that the man who has found himself in the process of building masculinity since childhood has only one thing left to do after he has a full-time job: marry and start a family (127). Barutcu mentions that the man, who has been in heterosexual sexual relations since his youth, feels that he has to use this stability and power for other purposes and that he wants to have a child with the woman he marries and add a paternal role to top of everything (127).

### **Hegemonic Masculinity in Turkey**

Hegemonic masculinity refers to the masculinity group that holds power based on the power it has acquired through social approval. Thus, it is possible to say that hegemonic masculinity, by determining the normal and abnormal, designs the society within the relations of domination. Considering that the dominant masculinity practices change from culture to culture, it is also important to talk about dominant masculinity practices that are specific to Turkey.

Mert Ozekici examines how the hegemonic masculinity phenomenon is shaped in Turkish society and how it is reflected in Serdar Akar's films in Turkish Cinema, in his master's thesis titled "Hegemonic Masculinity in Turkey and Serdar Akar Films" from 2014. Ozekici states that in order to determine the reflections of hegemonic masculinity in Turkey, evaluations should be made on

the axis of "body and power, militarism, heterosexuality and religion" (55). While Ozekici states that physiological difference is the leading area in which men find the power to dominate, he mentions that in Turkey, hegemonic masculinity is not built on young men, old men, or men in need of care, disabled or sick (55). According to Ozekici, masculinity needs power in order to be hegemonic, influencing, and appear attractive, and this is present in middle age when both physical strength, health, performance and intellect are at their peak (56). In this context, Ozekici states that middle-aged men living in Turkey are in an advantageous position in terms of dominant masculinity (56).

While Ozekici states that modern armies need muscle power to fight and use weapons, he claims that this situation causes these structures to be composed of men (57). According to Ozekici, modern states have imposed their own moral norms with an ideal definition of masculinity compatible with warrior characteristics in order to persuade men to fight and die, and promise power to men with the image of hero (57). Ozekici states that compulsory military service for men in Turkey as a civic duty is achieved by experiencing an advantageous relationship with the state and its institutions (57). While Ozekici mentions that military service gains masculine meanings such as protection, courage and strength, he also states that state institutions are structured under male domination (57).

Ozekici states that heterosexuality and homophobia are the most important factors pushing and forcing men to hegemonic masculinity in Turkey (58). Ozekici mentions that dominant masculinity values see homosexuality as a situation that threatens masculinity, and therefore, homosexuality is characterized as a social moral problem rather than an individual tendency (59). From this point of view, Ozekici argues that the dominant masculinity values in Turkey are embraced by most men without question. (59). Ozekici says that in Turkey, where a heterosexist social order is dominant, men who do not define themselves as heterosexual are subjected to oppression and exclusion by hegemonic masculinity (59).

Ozekici argues that the share of religious beliefs is undeniably influential in the construction of the gender order and in connection with the production of hegemonic masculinity (61). According to Ozekici, in Turkey, where being born as a man is still perceived as important, there are models that a man can identify with in the passages of the Qur'an (62). According to Ozekici, especially in passages where women and men are discussed in the same context, the

positioning of men as a "qawwam" - responsible for and managing women - is in line with the traditional role perceptions of Turkish men (62).

### **3.3. Men and Meat**

Since there is an established relationship between meat-eating and masculinity identity in many cultures historically, in this section, I will first talk about the hunting man narrative in order to understand how this relationship was established in the historical process. Secondly, I will explain how the relationship between meat and masculinity works in the preparation, sharing and presentation of meat, and finally, I will explain the position of vegan/vegetarian men in the relationship between meat and masculinity.

#### **Hunter-Man Narrative**

In her article, titled "If the First Cultural Material was a Carrier Bag: Construction of Scientific Narratives at the Intersectionality between Masculinity and Meat-eating" published in 2015, Ezgi Burgan discusses the historical understanding that points to a period when men were hunters and women were gatherers within the scope of the scientific narrative that the spear was the first cultural tool (35). According to Burgan, this hunter-man narrative emphasizes that men were hunters and provide the basic vital food, while women only collect vegetables and fruits, which are secondary nutrients (38). According to Burgan, the hunter-man narrative plays a role both in constructing the gender-based division of labor and gender relations in accordance with the interests of men and in centering the meat associated with men in the diet (38).

Burgan mentions that the formation of the first division of labor between the sexes is based on the hunting of men in hunter-gatherer societies, and the fact that women are engaged in gathering, away from hunting, which is dangerous and heavy due to long pregnancy and childcare processes (38). Burgan argues that the hunter-gatherer understanding represents women in a simpler, incompetent and naive way, and men as the productive force that provides the economy and produces life, and argues that it builds the foundations of the gender-based division of labor in the interests of men (38). According to Burgan, the hunting man narrative not only makes women's labor and productive activity invisible; but at the same time, with the hunting activity attributed to men in this division of labor, meat becomes the dominant power in life, and with the



foraging activity attributed to women, various foods other than meat are rendered non-functional in the maintenance of life (38).

Ezgi Burgan's arguments on the male hunter-gatherer myth are also based on the arguments contained in the book “The Sexual Politics of Meat” written by Carol Adams and translated into Turkish in 2015. According to Adams, as Burgan states, this myth reveals the gendered division of labor and builds gender relations in the male's interest, and plays a role in centering the meat associated with male in diet (88). According to Adams, vegetable, which is a term generally used by meat eaters for every food other than meat, was identified with women, just as meat is identified with men, and subconsciously revived the time when women were gatherers (88). According to Adams, men who have control of the meat also hold the power in their hands and indirectly put women in a passive position (90).

Looking at the foundations of the hunter-man narrative, it can be said that the historical relationship between meat and masculinity began to take shape over this myth. Based on the definitions of Burgan and Adams, even in the hunting-gathering period years ago, women were seen as biologically weak due to gender stereotypes, and they were forced to work at home and close to home and take care of food obtained from plants. On the other hand, while men began to be described as biologically strong, ambitious, governing, hunting meat, that is, bringing “real food” to the house, a relationship between food-meat-plant and femininity-masculinity began to emerge from those times.

### **Process of Preparing and Sharing Meat**

In order to better understand the relationship between meat and masculinity, it is also important to talk about the dynamics in the process of preparing and sharing meat. Jeffery Sobal, in his book “Men, Meat, And Marriage: Models of Masculinity” published in 2005, explains the relationship between meat and masculinity from a theoretical point of view. Sobal, mentions that men give meat extra masculine meanings through some rituals (137). While Sobal exemplifies these rituals as meat-eating competitions, barbecue competitions and meat preparation competitions, he claims that they show masculinity through meat in these competitions (138). According to Sobal, the fact that men usually perform their practices such as barbecue outside is an effort to prove their masculinity (144).

The construction of masculinity in relation to meat is also reflected in the preferences of the man, who has control over meat, regarding the degree of cooking and presentation of the meat. According to Sobal, it is thought that the preference of meat by men mostly as undercooked, less sauced and raw is associated with traditional masculinity construction as a way of escaping from civilization and femininity (138). According to Sobal, men perform their masculinity by consuming (meat) foods that are associated with masculinity like men (140). Sobal exemplifies this situation with the food scenes in cowboy movies and mentions that the cowboy figure, who is performed in a masculine way, hunts fish with his own efforts, cooks the fish they catch in a very short time, consumes it undercooked, and usually consumes it outside with other people (140). Sobal exemplifies how masculinity is performed through obtaining, preparing and consuming food in cowboy movies (140).

On the other hand, Mehmet Can Carpar, in his article titled “Nutrition, Identity and Masculinity: The Sociology of Eating Meat” from 2020, expanding on Sobal's arguments on meat and barbecue, talks about a crisis in cooking as a result of women's economic freedom and men's participation in cooking practices. Carpar mentions that women obtaining their economic freedom requires especially middle-class men's participation in cooking practices and argues that men encounter a masculinity crisis when traditional roles attributed to masculinity are performed by women (255).

According to Carpar, this crisis related to cooking is tried to be eliminated by men, mostly by performing meat cooking outside, in public spaces (255). Carpar mentions that if cooking is to be done in some way, cooking for the purpose of a hobby in public rather than in the private sphere associated with femininity ensures that masculinity is stripped of femininity and will cause much less problems in terms of masculinity identity (255). Carpar argues that this situation can even turn into an advantage in terms of masculinity constructions by cooking the meat, which is built as the most valuable food, with techniques such as barbecue (255).

According to Carpar, barbecue culture, which has an important role for Turkish men, gains new meaning when the role of cooking, which is defined as a woman's job on the basis of the patriarchal pattern, is performed with masculine techniques (269). According to Carpar, barbecue culture corresponds to a practice that frees men from cynical assumptions about men doing women's work and even reinforces masculinity because the cooked food is mostly meat, which is

coded as a symbol of masculinity (269). Carpar states that to the extent that barbecuing is a masculine performance for the participants, barbecue meetings are constructed as a homosocial space where masculinities circulate, reproduce, and enable male power (269). According to Carpar, homosociality in the context of masculinity is that men exhibit masculine practices with each other and reproduce their masculinity; it is a symbolic mechanism by which they exclude women and non-patriarchal masculinities (270). Carpar says that there are many practices related to masculinity in the barbecue, which is an example of a monosexual community for men, as in other homosocial spaces (270).

In her book “The Sexual Politics of Meat”, Carol Adams also states that men are in an advantageous position in terms of meat preparation, degree of cooking and presentation, as well as sharing meat (77). According to Adams, women deliberately doom themselves to deprivation by offering the best food to men at the expense of their own nutritional needs (77). Based on the article titled “Who Really Starves: Women and World Hunger” by Leghorn and Roodkowsky, Carols gives an example from Ethiopia and claims that in Ethiopia, dinner is prepared in accordance with patriarchy and that men have priority during meals (77). Adams states that Ethiopian women and girls, regardless of social class, have to prepare two separate meals, and the privileged one of these meals consists of meat for men and non-meat products for women (77).

Similarly, in his 1976 work “Eat Not This Flesh: Food Avoidances in the Old World”, Frederick J. Simoons explains the relationship between meat and masculinity between sharing food and gives an example from Indonesia. Simoons emphasizes that meat is shared with other houses on religiously special occasions in Indonesia, and the point to be considered while sharing this is the number of men in the house to which the meat is sent (12). As can be seen from the Indonesian example of Simoons, while the meat is distributed on religious and special occasions, a division is made according to the number of men in the house to which it will go, and it is assumed that the meat should be consumed mostly by men (12).

### **Meat and Ideal Male Body**

Another phenomenon in which meat-eating is associated with masculinity is related to the idealized classical male body. İlker Erdoğan, in his article titled “Why Is the Healthy Man in Men's Magazines The Ideal Man? Hegemonic Masculinity and Popular Health Discourse in Men's Health

Magazine” from 2014, emphasizes a normative, ideal and healthy male body structure defined by the media, and talks about the definition of a healthy man symbolized and shaped by a muscular body (141). According to Erdoğan, being healthy is an important element in the construction of hegemonic ideals of masculinity (150).

Besides, Todd Reeser, in his book “Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction” published in 2010, argues that men build power through their bodies. According to Reeser, many men unconsciously claim that they will get a strong body with what they eat, and therefore they tend to consume meat (95). According to Reeser, while society emphasizes the importance of meat for men in a repetitive cycle, men also believe that meat is a symbol of power in this cycle and they must consume meat to achieve this power (95).

In her book titled “The Sexual Policy of Meat”, which was translated into Turkish in 2015, Carol Adams states that since meat is a male dish, it is an indicator that symbolizes masculine power (87). Adams explains this argument by feeling that the working man needs meat for his strength (87). According to Adams, eating the muscles of strong animals is thought to give strength to men, while according to the myths of patriarchal culture, meat increases power, and masculinity traits are obtained by eating masculine foods (87).

### **Position of Vegan and Vegetarian Men**

As can be seen, patriarchy directly affects the nutritional experience and the meanings attributed to foods and imposes appropriate nutritional practices on both genders. In this context, meat, which is seen as an ideal food for men, is interpreted by referring to normative masculinity features built-in patriarchal relations such as hunting, aggression, and muscularity. In this context, considering the definition of hegemonic masculinity made by Connell, eating meat provides men with various advantages in terms of benefiting from the patriarchal share and can be seen as an important step in reaching the ideals of hegemonic masculinity. However, it is possible to say that vegan and vegetarian men face various difficulties in reaching these ideals, in contrast to the dominant masculinity advantages that meat-eating men have.

Considering the relationship between meat and masculinity, it is also important to talk about the position of men who prefer vegan and vegetarian diets. Sobal, on the marginalization of vegan and vegetarian men, mentions that contemporary western women generally tend to be

vegetarian on the basis of women's nutritional tendencies, he mentions that vegetarianism violates the masculinity area, is associated with being gay, and provides a kind of identity to people (141). According to Sobal, vegetarianism is the arena of the struggle between the genders and many men who are vegetarians are marginalized, they have to struggle to manage gender in relationship with their vegetarian identities (141).

According to Adams, the association of meat with masculinity commodifies women or animals, while at the same time compelling men to assume certain defined roles (50). While Adams claims that this distinction in eating styles has a class quality as well as gender, he deduces that the one who has hegemony among different masculinity roles gets more meat (50). According to Adams' arguments, it is usual for women or second-class citizens (i.e., non-hegemonic men) to prefer to consume foods (vegetables, fruits, grains rather than meat) that are considered second-class in a patriarchal culture (50). Adams explains the reason for this preference with the idea that meat is primarily a man's food, and argues that this idea leads to the giving of meat to hegemonic men when the supply is limited (50). For this reason, Adams argues that since meat-eating is the measure of masculinity of cultures and individuals, the social structure equates vegetarianism with castration or femininity (50).

There is only one academic study on the relationship between meat and masculinity in Turkey, and the results of this research reveal the relationship between Turkish men and meat. In the thesis study titled "Nutrition, Identity and Masculinity: The Sociology of Meat Eating" by Carpar, which was also included in the previous parts of the literature review, it is examined how meat-eating men make sense of the phenomenon on the basis of their gender identity. Within the scope of the research, Carpar interviewed 14 men residing in Eskişehir, who are interested in different sports branches with different economic, social and demographic characteristics, and the experiences and perceptions of the participants regarding the meat-eating phenomenon were analyzed (257).

One of the reasons why Carpar's participants characterized meat-eating as part of their identity is embedded in the relationship between meat-eating and men's health (260). Carpar talks about the importance of being healthy and being sexually strong among hegemonic masculinity constructions and states that men are given advice that they need to eat meat to reach these constructs (260). Carpar argues that it is seen that these sexist advices are also embodied in the

statements of the participants (260). Some of Carpar's participants, especially by emphasizing the importance for their sexual health, imply that men should eat meat absolutely (260).

On the other hand, the emphasis of men in Carpar's interview shows that meat-eating is directly related to hegemonic masculinity construction processes in two aspects (260). First, eating meat enables a man to be strong, healthy and sexually capable in the imaginations of the participants, approaching the hegemonic ideal (260). The second is that the participants, who assume meat-eating as a necessity for reproductive health, interpret meat-eating within the framework of heterosexuality, which is one of the important hegemonic masculinity constructions, and in this respect, in order to reach the dominant masculinity characteristics, they exclude women and non-heterosexual masculinities (260). Carpar says that because of this idea it is understood that meat is seen as a food that must be eaten as a mandatory by the participants (260).

In the “Conflicting Cases: Vegetarianism-Veganism and Masculinity” section of Carpar's research, there are also important statements about how the participant men make sense of veganism and vegetarianism and how they subordinate vegan/vegetarian men based on which discourses and practices (264). Carpar states that to the extent that most participants describe eating large amounts of meat as a masculine practice, they also mostly associate being vegan and vegetarian with femininity (264). According to Carpar, on the basis of the designation of the herbal diet as a feminine practice, it is understood that some participating men stigmatize vegan and/or vegetarian men as "feminine" or "less man" within the framework of hegemonic ideals in their imaginations (265).

Based on the opinions of the participants, Carpar states that an important element of the masculinity constructions that occur through the feminization of vegan and vegetarian men is related to the tight relationship between meat and male sexual power (266). According to Carpar, the hegemonic masculinity type, which offers men the most suitable strategies to build their masculinity, is expressed with an active sexual life and sexual power, especially heterosexuality (266). Vegan and/or vegetarian men fed with herbal products, which are mostly seen as unsatisfactory for men's health, are labeled as losers by meat-eating (patriarchal) men (266).

When Carpar's research is evaluated, because of the hierarchical relationship established between masculinity and meat-eating, and vegetable and femininity, men describe plant-based

nutrition practices such as vegetarianism and veganism as feminine. In this respect, vegetarianism and veganism for patriarchal men are imagined as a kind of feminine fear towards their gender identity, and it is concluded that some participants feminize vegan and vegetarian men on the basis of non-masculine characteristics such as sexual inadequacy, incapacity, and powerlessness.

### **3.4. Veganism and Vegetarianism in Turkey**

Although veganism and vegetarianism have gained popularity in Turkey in recent years, there is little academic research on this topic. In this section, I will first present general information and research in the field of veganism and vegetarianism in Turkey. Then, I will present the general problems faced by vegans and vegetarians in order to better understand the reasons behind the prejudice against vegans and vegetarians in Turkey.

#### **General Situation in Turkey**

When examining the definitions and sources about veganism and vegetarianism in Turkish, I found out that there is still little information about both concepts. Although statistical data on the world's vegetarian/vegan population have been released in recent years, there are no detailed statistics on how many vegans/vegetarians there are in Turkey, in which part of the country there is a vegan/vegetarian population, or how much the population has increased/decreased. When the literature is reviewed, only Euromonitor statistics are available about the number of vegans and vegetarians in Turkey, but it turns out that these data also provide general information that is far from detailed.

On the other hand, some different researches conducted by Ozan Guler and Deniz Caglayan, Kayra Suna Tural, Guzin Yasemin Tuncay and Aylin Asil within the scope of their studies, and an online survey conducted by Gaia Magazine reveals the demographic characteristics of vegan and vegetarian individuals living in Turkey and provides information on the reasons for adopting a vegan/vegetarian diet.

Ozan Guler and Gamze Deniz Caglayan, in their article titled “How I Became Vegan, A Phenomenological Qualitative Research” published in 2018, stated that there is a limited number of studies in the Turkish literature and that these studies are predominantly vegan consumers' purchasing behavior and consumption habits, veganism as social identity. and vegan-friendly hotel

businesses (289). In this study, Guler and Caglayan draw a general portrait of veganism and vegetarianism in Turkey in order to fill the gap in the Turkish literature on the motivation of individuals to be vegan and vegetarian (289).

In the part of the study describing the situation in Turkey, Çağlayan and Güler, using Euromonitor statistics made in 2016-2017, explain that Turkey is among the 10 countries where vegetarianism has increased the most (288). Çağlayan and Guler state that the total rate of vegetarians and vegans in Turkey is below 5 percent of the population and the approximate vegan population in Turkey is around 80,000 (288).

When Euromonitor statistics are considered, it can be said that the vegan population is quite low, considering that Turkey's official population is approximately 84,000,000. However, since the details of Euromonitor statistics are not shared in the article, it does not seem possible to make a comprehensive comment on the demographic structure of vegan and vegetarian individuals in Turkey.

Kayra Suna Tural, in her thesis titled “What Do Vegans Want? A Roadmap Proposal for Travel Agencies and Tourist Guides Based on the Travel Experiences of Vegans” published in 2018, researched the travel experiences of vegans, the problems they experienced during their travels, their expectations from travel agencies and tourist guides, and within the scope of this study, various data were collected about vegan individuals in Turkey (2). Tural collected data from 52 vegans living in various cities in Turkey through an online interview form and included the demographic characteristics of vegan individuals within the scope of the research (37). Tural examines the demographic characteristics of vegan individuals under the headings of age, gender, occupation, income, residence, educational status and vegan community membership, and provides important information about the general situation of vegan individuals living in Turkey and sheds light on future studies in this field (38).

Within the scope of Tural's research, the average age of the participants was calculated as 31, and it was revealed that the youngest was 18 years old and the oldest 56 years old (38). In Tural's study, it was seen that 34 (67%) of the vegan participants in Turkey were female and 17 (33%) were male and it has emerged that individuals are mostly young adults and women (39).



Guzin Yasemin Tuncay also conducted interviews with vegan/vegetarian individuals living in Turkey in her doctoral thesis titled “Vegan and Vegetarianism in the Framework of Bioethics” written in 2016. Tuncay, aiming to reveal the participants’ reasons for choosing vegan/vegetarianism within the scope of her academic research, she also shares the demographic characteristics of her participants (4). As a result of the interview Tuncay had with 40 participants, it was revealed that the majority of the people (72.5%) were young, they were between the ages of 18-34 and the majority (60%) were women (95).

In the thesis study titled “Sociological Approach to Vegan Lifestyle: An Example of the City of Antalya” written by Aylin Asil in 2021, interviews were conducted with individuals aged 15 and over and living in the city of Antalya, who had a vegan lifestyle for at least two months (82). Asil, in her research on 50 vegan individuals living in Antalya, explained that 26 of the participants were female and 24 were male and the majority of vegans living in Antalya are unmarried, female, have a higher education level, live in urban areas and have a good socio-economic level (82).

In addition to the results of the research conducted by Tuncay, Tural, and Asil, a survey was conducted by Gaia Magazine in 2017 to find the number of vegans living in Turkey, 245 people participated in this survey. The survey conducted by Gaia Magazine gives a more general description of the situation in Turkey, as it reaches more participants. As a result of the survey conducted by Gaia Magazine, it was revealed that 72 percent of the participants were women, 67.2 percent were university graduates, 47 percent lived in Istanbul, 13 percent lived in Ankara, and 9 percent lived in Izmir. In the research conducted by Gaia Magazine, 9 people were over the age of 50 (3.7 percent), 16 people between the ages of 40-50 (6.7 percent), 72 people between the ages of 30-40 (30 percent), 119 people between the ages of 20-30 (51 percent), 21 people between the ages of 15-20 (8.8%) and the average age of the participants were calculated as 29.3 (Gaia Dergi, 2017)

It is possible to say that this research conducted by Gaia Magazine is similar to the research results of Tuncay, Tural and Asil. Considering the data revealed by Turkish researchers, it can be said that individuals who adopt vegan and vegetarian life philosophy in Turkey are mostly young adults and women and these findings are also consistent with other large-scale studies in the literature. Studies show that vegetarianism and veganism are more common among women as well as among young people.

In the study called “Meat Consumption and Meat Avoidance among Young People: An 11-year Longitudinal Study” published by Alan Beardsworth and Alan Bryman in 2004, data were collected from 634 participants over 11 years through questionnaires, and results were obtained about the trends in vegetarianism and meat avoidance. (315). As a result of Beardsworth and Alan Bryman's studies, it was revealed that women tend to be twice as likely to be vegetarian than men and that men tend to eat meat twice as much as women (319).

### **Motivations to Become Vegan and Vegetarian in Turkey**

In addition, to the demographic characteristics of vegan and vegetarian individuals living in Turkey, the reasons for preferring veganism and vegetarianism are also very important to understand the general situation in Turkey.

Tuncay (2016), in the same research titled “Vegan and Vegetarianism in the Framework of Bioethics” asked her participants about the reasons for preferring a vegan/vegetarian lifestyle and 43% of the participants said "to take a stance against animal exploitation", 25% for "ethical" reasons, and 8% for "to respect the life of all" and 'health reasons', 5% answered as "ecology", "nausea and vomiting because of the taste of meat", and 3% answered as "conscience" and "feminism" (98).

Similarly, Kayra Suna Tural (2018) in her thesis titled “What Do Vegans Want? A Roadmap Proposal for Travel Agencies and Tourist Guides Based on the Travel Experiences of Vegans” which has already been mentioned to show the demographic structure of the vegans in Turkey, also asked each participant about their motivations to choose veganism and her participants gave reasons as “being influenced by the articles” (15.7%), “ethical reasons” (15.7%), “disturbing the exploitation/torture of animals” (15.7%), “questioning/rejecting the domination of people over animals” (8.3%) and "discomfort from eating/using animals and secondary animal products" (7.4%) (46).

Aylin Asil (2021), in the same article, which has been mentioned to show demographic structure in Turkey, titled “Sociological Approach to Vegan Lifestyle: An Example of the City of Antalya”, also investigates the participants’ reasons for preferring veganism and states that 18 of the 50 participants who participated in the study gave answers as "Animal rights protection and ethics", 9 of them as "wanted to have a new status and trend", 8 of them as "Nature Conservation",

5 of them as "seeing it as a new generation's nutrition practice" and "health reasons", 3 of them as "feminist thoughts" and 2 of them as "economic situation" (83)

In the detailed analysis of the Sia Insight statistics published by the Marketing Turkey website in 2021, based on the answers of the participants, the most important motivation source of those who adopt a vegan lifestyle in Turkey is explained as protecting animals/animal rights / conscientious reasons for animals. Health is the second important motivation source. This is followed by dislike of the taste of animal foods, while environmental problems draw attention as the fourth main motivation for the transition to veganism (Marketing Turkey, 2021).

### **Problems Vegan and Vegetarian Individuals Experience in Turkey**

In addition to the demographic characteristics and motivations of vegan and vegetarian individuals living in Turkey, it is also useful to highlight the problems experienced by these individuals in order to understand the general situations in Turkey.

Within the scope of her same research, Tuncay (2016) mentions the difficulties vegans/vegetarians face in Turkey by giving the statements of the participants and classifies these difficulties into two categories as "Social Relations" and "Finding Vegan/Meat-Free Products" (114). It was revealed that the majority of people Tuncay interviewed (77.5%) did not have a vegan/vegetarian family background, and it was stated that 75% of the individuals interviewed had or still have problems in their family and social relationships (116). Tuncay states that the problems are less experienced while being vegetarian, and they reach more serious dimensions when they become vegan (116).

While Tuncay's participants stated that they were perceived as "strange" by their families, especially because of their vegan preference, some families stated that they saw this situation as a "disease" (116). In addition, 19 (47.5%) of the individuals who participated in Tuncay's research stated that they had difficulties in explaining vegan/vegetarianism to people (117). Tuncay explains this situation as the problems experienced in societies such as Turkey where meat consumption is so common and has a traditional meaning (117).

The fact that meat has a traditional meaning in the Turkish society that Tuncay mentioned is also stated in Aysu Altas's (2017) article titled "Vegetarianism and Veganism: Current Situation

in Turkey in the Light of Examples in the World”. Altas in her article aims to reveal the current situation of vegetarianism and veganism in Turkey and to prepare the groundwork for further studies (403). According to Altas, the use of meat for many years in Turkish history plays a major role in the dominant use of meat in Turkish cuisine and its becoming cultural learning (411). Altas states that traditional Turkish cuisine was influenced by many cultures and was shaped by immigrant communities from Central Asia, the Seljuks and predominantly the Ottoman State, traditional Turkish cuisine that emerged as a result of this interaction, especially lamb products come to the fore, and all kinds of meat are widely used (411). Altas mentions that the diet in Turkey is mainly meat-based, as well as dairy products are widely used and she explains that vegan and vegetarian individuals living in Turkey may encounter various problems because of this dominant use of meat (418).

Ayşe Busra Yılmaz, in her master's thesis titled “New Media and Social Movements: An Examination on Vegan Movement Example” from 2018, aims to explain the effect of social media and its relationship with the vegan movement (1). Within the scope of her research, Yılmaz analyzes the discourses about vegans in social media and their experiences in the process of being vegan with a research-based on Netnography in order to find out the problems that vegan individuals are uncomfortable within society (1). Yılmaz provided data for the research conducted by examining the communications of individuals through the accounts they created on social media channels such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Ekşi Sözlük, Medium, Ask.fm, Blogs, Girls Ask, and YouTube (2). Yılmaz, giving examples from the blog posts of the participants, states that the biggest problem experienced by individuals during the transition period of vegans in Turkey is the change in eating habits (65). In the blog pages that include the experiences of vegan individuals analyzed by Yılmaz, vegan individuals state that they cannot find anything to eat, especially in the first period, and they state that their choices are reduced, especially when they have to eat out (65).

Based on Yılmaz's content analysis, another major problem faced by vegans in Turkey is the criticism of their philosophy (70). Yılmaz mentions that when the people who criticize the vegan movement on social media are examined, the users are divided into two parts and they can be grouped as those who criticize the vegan movement in a humorous way and those who oppose being vegan (70). Yılmaz states that the use of humorous language is common among social media users in Turkey, but says that the use of humorous language can sometimes reach the point of

mockery (71). Yilmaz, when the #vegan tag on Twitter is examined, reveals that people who define veganism as "the diet of the rich" or "the philosophy of people who are obsessed with animals" share posts that criticize veganism (71) Yilmaz, when the same hashtag is examined, the people in the second group are those who are seriously opposed to being vegan. and states that these people, rather than making fun of veganism, argue that vegans primarily harm themselves and society (72). In the tweets reviewed by Yilmaz, it is strongly stated that these people argue that the vegan diet is absolutely unhealthy and they believe that those who eat vegan will experience health problems (72).

Ahmet Fatih Ozkul, in his master's thesis titled "An Ethnomethodological Approach to Perception of Religion in Vegetarians and Vegans", from 2021, investigates how vegetarian/vegan individuals act when religion's orders and prohibitions on nutrition conflict, and based on the statements of the participants, he talks about the problems experienced by vegan/vegetarian individuals living in Turkey. At this point, it is also important to mention that a large majority of Turkey consists of Muslim individuals and Islam has many influences in daily life (5).

While Ozkul's interviewees state that their religious status is questioned and criticized, they state that they receive harsh reactions from their families and close circles, especially on the basis of religion (86). According to Ozkul, the participants, whose vegan and vegetarian diet is thought to be against Islam and who are exposed to statements such as leaving religion, state that they are marginalized by their families and circles (87). According to Ozkul, based on these reactions of the participants, it can be said that there are people who think that consuming meat and animal nutrition have a religious aspect (87). While some of the individuals that Ozkul met think that Islam and veganism cannot be lived together, they base their arguments on the Qur'an and hadiths (94). According to Ozkul, some participants who state that veganism/vegetarianism do not coincide with Islam because Islam has a human-centered religious perception and that animals and animal food are seen as a blessing for people in the Qur'an, therefore, think that a person cannot be both a Muslim and a vegan (94).

Elif Gizem Kurt, in her article "Motivations, Values and Beliefs of Vegetarianism and Their Reflections on Spaces: A Qualitative Study in Istanbul" from 2019, aims to establish a relationship between the motivations behind individuals' adopting a vegetarian diet and the values associated with this diet and their reflection on spaces (2). While Kurt explains the problems

experienced by vegetarian individuals, he also argues that they are marginalized by religious circles (23). Kurt explains this marginalization through the fact that in many religions humans are seen as superior to animals and are presented as the owners of animals (23). Kurt also states that since all religions impose the duty of being the protector of animals on humans, people also see themselves as protectors of animals. (23). Kurt claims that the fact that all religions assign such a mission to humans causes people to accept that it is their natural right to decide the fate of animals (23). According to Kurt, for these reasons, killing animals is normalized by society (23).

Kurt also addresses the traditional dimension of religion and mentions that some religious traditions play a negative role in the adoption of vegetarianism and veganism (64). While Kurt claims that the understanding of the religion of Islam towards animals is adopted in Turkey, where the majority is Muslim, she defines the Eid-al-Adha ritual, which is common in Islam today, as an action that conflicts with vegetarianism and veganism (64). According to Kurt, the fact that animals were created for humans in Islam, as in other religions, conflicts with vegan and vegetarian values, and therefore, the development of veganism and vegetarianism in Turkey progresses very slowly (65). It can be said that Kurt and Ozkul's arguments are very important in order to understand the problems and prejudices of the individuals with whom Ozkul interviewed, on the axis of religion.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ANALYSIS**

#### **Short Description of Participants**

Before analyzing the interviews, I had with the participants, it is also helpful to mention the background and general situations of the participants in order to better understand my analyses. While each of the participants I choose from different cities of Turkey talked about their different experiences, I also understand that the marital status, orientation, and vegan/vegetarian choice of the participants have an important place in shaping these experiences.

It is possible to say that the experiences of vegan and vegetarian men living in different parts of the country are different from each other, as Turkey has a large population and hosts people from different ethnic origins and therefore different traditions. Similarly, the marital status of the

participants also has an indirect effect on their experiences. In addition, the prejudices and negative experiences faced by each participant who defines themselves as heterosexual, bisexual and homosexual differ from each other.

Sertan is a 25-year-old single vegetarian who was born and raised in Istanbul and defines himself as bisexual. Stating that he has been a vegetarian for about 5 years, Sertan feels especially that his family is judging him from time to time over his masculinity due to his vegetarianism. While he stated that he had no difficulty in meeting other vegan and vegetarian men since he was born and raised in a larger city compared to the other participants, he also states that he talks with other vegan/vegetarian men about their mutual experiences from time to time. However, Sertan states that he feels that he is sometimes judged by the women he has dated for being vegetarian. According to Sertan, being a vegetarian is perceived by women as interesting as being bisexual, especially during the first meeting.

Serhat is 29 years old man, born, raised and still living in Edirne and defines himself as gay. He states that being a vegetarian man is perceived as strange because he lives in a smaller city compared to other participants. Serhat also says that living in a small city had an effect in hiding his orientation. Although he tries to hide his orientation, he thinks that his orientation is being questioned because of his vegetarianism and that people guess he is gay. Serhat shares that especially his family and colleagues have difficulty in understanding that a man can be a vegetarian and states that he avoids expressing that he is a vegetarian from time to time in order not to be judged.

Can was born and raised in Ankara, the capital and 2nd largest city of Turkey, and lives in Ankara. He has stated that he has been vegan since the age of 18 and his circle of friends generally consists of vegan/vegetarian and LGBTI+ individuals. Saying that he does not hide his orientation and that he is accepted by both his family and friends, Can states that his masculinity is not questioned because of this and that he has not had negative experiences in this regard as he is a vegan individual. However, he states that he is aware of the fact that his experiences as a vegan man were not negative compared to other participants, because he had relationships with vegan/vegetarian homosexual individuals like himself. Can also states that his own experiences probably do not reflect the realities of Turkey and he thinks that other vegan men are probably judged more.

Kenan, who is 30 years old and lives in Istanbul and has been married for 4 years, states that he has been a vegetarian for 6 years. Kenan says that because he is a vegetarian, he remembers that he was perceived as very strange by his wife when they first met. He adds that he was exposed to jokes made about his masculinity about his vegetarianism, especially during the time he spent with his colleagues and in organizations such as company dinners. Kenan, who also encounters situations where he is thought to be gay because he is a vegetarian, mentions that the number of heterosexual and vegetarian/vegan male individuals like himself is very limited in Turkey and that men have to hide this even if they are vegan/vegetarian.

Toprak, who is 34 years old and has become vegetarian at the same time as his wife, mentions that he is seen as strange especially by her wife's family. He mentions that because his wife is a woman, being a vegetarian is partially perceived as more acceptable. He also states that since he has a skinny body, he is seen as a weak man, and it is always recommended that he needs meat to look muscular and strong. Toprak, who thinks that vegan and vegetarian men should be more visible in society, states that in order to challenge these prejudices, he avoids hiding that he is a vegetarian and tries to eliminate the prejudices he encounters with his own arguments.

Deniz, who is 26 years old and was born and raised in Izmir, one of the less conservative cities of Turkey, defines himself as a bisexual man and states that he has been eating vegan since the age of 19. He states that his veganism is considered very interesting, especially by heterosexual women she meets on dating apps and social media. Deniz also says that homosexual guys that he met on dating apps do not make any comments about his being vegan but the women he meets are frequently making comments as they never see any male vegan in their life. Stating that the number of vegan and vegetarian heterosexual men in Turkey is very low, Deniz also adds that he also personally thinks that if he meets a new vegan/vegetarian man, he may be gay.

Cem, who is 24 years old and lives in Istanbul and has a conservative family, states that he could not tell his family that he was a vegetarian for a long time. Stating that he still lives with his family because he is a student, Cem also hides his orientation from them. He stated that the biggest reason for his avoiding telling his family that he was a vegetarian was the phrase "man eats meat" which was frequently repeated by his father. He stated that telling his family that he was a vegetarian meant the same as saying that he was gay. That's why Cem told his family that meat was bad for his stomach and avoided eating at home for a long time. Cem says that his family also



does not approve of vegetarianism in terms of religion and they believe that animals were created to serve humans. Cem's family thinks that being a vegetarian is associated with western values and such lifestyles will not be accepted in Turkish society.

Tansel, 40 years old and living in Antalya, one of Turkey's touristic regions, with his wife and 2 children, states that he and his wife have been vegan for 10 years. Since Tansel is a heterosexual vegan man, he says that especially people he just met are surprised by this situation. However, he states that he has not had any bad experiences from his friends since his friends are made up of people with similar political views as him. Tansel states that being a vegan man is mostly judged in new environments, that people first thought he was gay, and were surprised when they heard that he was married.

Volkan, 25 years old and living in Mersin, stated that all the vegan/vegetarian men around him are gay and a heterosexual vegan/vegetarian man is very rare in Turkey. Volkan also mentions that he especially encounters prejudices from his relatives, and some of his relatives openly say that "things like veganism/vegetarianism are for girls, men eat meat". Volkan, who is open about his orientation towards his own family, mentions that his relatives often make gay references to him and that his being vegan is also effective in these implications. Volkan states that it is very difficult for men living in Anatolia to be vegan or vegetarian due to the dominant meat-based food culture.

Mert, 25 years old and living in Muğla, also states that he has been a vegetarian for many years and that all the vegan/vegetarian men around him are gay individuals like himself. Expressing that heterosexual men in Turkey are insensitive to animal rights, Mert adds that gays and women are more sensitive in general. He mentions that because he is a vegetarian, heterosexual males he met or some straight males from his university make offensive jokes to him.

Kaya is 26 years old and lives in the city of Hatay, where meat dishes are dominant. He states that it is almost impossible to find a vegan or vegetarian man in a city like Hatay. Kaya also states that Hatay is somewhat more conservative and certain gender roles are performed more clearly. Kaya says that he does not have a vegan/vegetarian male friends in the city where he lives, neither gay nor heterosexual, and he feels obligated to hide that he is a vegetarian, mostly for fear of being

seen as gay. According to Kaya, in the city he lives in, for men, saying they are vegetarian would be accepted as saying they are gay.

## **2.1. Popularity of Veganism and Vegetarianism Among Turkish Men**

In the first phase of the interviews with the participants, I asked my participants some questions to give an idea about the general situation in Turkey in order to better understand what it is like to be a vegan and vegetarian man in Turkey. Since I mentioned some findings in the literature review that veganism and vegetarianism are more common among women in Turkey, I tried to confirm whether this situation is also valid in my research. On the argument that veganism and vegetarianism are less preferred among men, I also tried to get the opinions of the participants on the possible reasons for this situation.

First, I asked the participants if there were any vegan/vegetarian men around them and whether veganism/vegetarianism is popular among men in Turkey. When I asked these questions, the participants also shared their thoughts on why veganism/vegetarianism is not popular among men, giving examples from their own environment.

One of my participants Kenan stated that vegan/vegetarianism is not very common among men in Turkey, he also explained that this situation is also valid in his own social environment:

The number of vegetarian men around me is only 2. However, I know many vegan and vegetarian women. I don't know how the situation is in Europe or the world, but it is very difficult to find vegetarian men in Turkey. I think that the number of vegan men is almost non-existent. In our society, the perception of "men eat meat" is very strong. Therefore, most of the men are grown up with this perception and it is very difficult for this perception to change. I also tend to hide that I am a vegetarian on some occasions. Even if I am not homophobic, I sometimes worry about being seen as less masculine. (Kenan)

Another participant, gave an example from the city he lived in and stated that all his vegan/vegetarian friends were women:

I think the number of vegans and vegetarians is very low in the city I live in. A limited number of vegan or vegetarian individuals are probably all women. I have only two

vegetarian friends in Hatay and they are both women. The moment I tell the men here I am a vegetarian, they will think what kind of man I am or that I am not even a man. Comments will probably be made about my masculinity. (Kaya)

Cem, on the other hand, stated that not only his friends, but also the vegan/vegetarian individuals he saw on social media were mostly women:

I have many vegetarian friends and they are all women. I don't have any friends who are vegan. When I look at vegetarian/vegan themed social media accounts, I always see women. I think Turkish men do not become vegetarians for fear of being feminine. If any of my relatives or friends knew that I was a vegetarian, they would make some comments about my masculinity. That's why I don't share with heterosexual individuals that I'm a vegetarian to hide my orientation. (Cem)

The answers given by the participants are similar to the studies in the literature revealing the gender-based distribution of veganism/vegetarianism in Turkey. In the academic study titled "What Do Vegans Want? A Roadmap Proposal for Travel Agencies and Tourist Guides Based on the Travel Experiences of Vegans" conducted by Tural in 2018, it was revealed that 34 (67%) of the 52 participants were female and 17 (33%) were male (39). Similarly, in the study conducted by Tuncay (2016), 60% of 40 vegan/vegetarian participants were women (95).

In addition, studies on how vegan/vegetarian men are generally perceived in the literature bear a great resemblance to the answers given by the participants. In the article "Is Meat Male? In A Quantitative Multimethod Framework to Establish Metaphoric Relationships" by Rozin et al (2012), it is stated that male individuals who eat meat are seen more masculine by society compared to male individuals who eat mostly vegetables (634-637).

This situation is also confirmed by the results of the study conducted by Heine and Ruby (2011) with 273 participants, published under the name of "Meat, morals, and masculinity" (448). Heine and Ruby asked the participants to score on certain characteristics of certain individuals, and as a result of the research, they found that vegetarian men were scored as less masculine by the participants (449).

Considering the opinions of the participants on the subject and the results of the research mentioned in the literature, which shows vegan/vegetarian men being seen as less masculine, it is possible to say that men in Turkey do not prefer to become vegan/vegetarian in order not to lose their masculinity.

## **2.2. Motivation of Vegan and Vegetarian Men in Turkey**

In order to have more detailed information about the general situation of vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey, I also asked the participants why they preferred veganism/vegetarianism. Almost all of the participants explained their motivation to be vegan/vegetarian as "ethical reasons".

The answer given by one of my participants, Can, to the question of why he prefers a vegan diet, also explains the motivations of the other participants in general:

The biggest reason why I preferred a vegan diet was that the idea of using animals as objects made me uncomfortable. I have a great love for animals since my childhood. The fact that any animal is slaughtered for whatever reason is not something I can accept. All of the vegans and vegetarians around me became vegan and vegetarian for this reason. I don't find it right to be vegan/vegetarian just for health. (Can)

Although almost all of the participants stated that they are vegan/vegetarian for ethical reasons, some of the participants stated that they took a few more reasons into consideration when making this decision. Although the participants, Tansel and Toprak, stated that they were vegan/vegetarian with ethical reasons as the primary reason, like other participants, they also shared that other reasons had an important place in taking this decision.

Toprak explained during the interview that besides ethical reasons, factors such as environment and health were also effective in the motivations for being a vegetarian:

When we started researching vegetarianism with my wife, we realized that we did not find the exploitation of animals ethical. However, our research on the health benefits of vegetarianism was very effective in making such a radical change and becoming a vegetarian quickly. My wife also started to research the ecological dimensions of

vegetarianism, and seeing its positive effects on the environment somehow motivated us. (Toprak)

Stating that he first became a vegetarian and then a vegan, Tansel added that, like Toprak, the first motivation was ethical reasons, and then he also considered ecological reasons and feminism in the transition to veganism:

My biggest motivation for becoming a vegan has been that I do not find it ethical to use animals as an object. However, as I did research on this issue during the transition from vegetarianism to veganism, I realized that veganism is also extremely beneficial for the environment. As I am interested in ecology and sustainability, I realized that veganism is extremely important for a sustainable life. At the same time, since my wife is in the feminist movement, I started to think that veganism and feminism converge on the same points. I questioned the similarity between the domination of women and the dominance of animals. My wife and I have done a lot of reading on this subject. As a profeminist male, this has been one of my motivations. (Tansel)

The answers of the above participants are in line with previous studies in the literature on veganism and vegetarianism in Turkey. In studies on the motivation of vegan and vegetarian individuals in Turkey, most of the participants mentioned that they took this decision primarily for ethical reasons, and a small minority stated that reasons such as health and ecology were effective in making this decision (Tuncay 98; Tural 46; Asil 83).

#### **4.3. Vegan and Vegetarian Men in Homosocial Areas**

After some questions I asked to understand the general situation of vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey, I asked the participants in which social environments they were exposed to negative experiences due to their veganism and vegetarianism. Most of the participants stated that they were exposed to more prejudice or had negative experiences especially in homosocial environments where men came together. After the participants stated that they had these experiences in homosocial environments, I realized from some specific situations they mentioned that these homosocial environments consisted of barbecue parties, gyms, military buildings and roommate situations with heterosexual men.

Before moving on to the participants' experiences in these areas, it will be useful to look at the definition of homosocial in order to better understand these areas. In the article titled “Homosocial Places and Sexual Orientations in Ottoman” published by Elif Yilmazli in 2020, it was stated that the term homosocial is related to the relationships and situations shared by individuals of the same sex, but it was explained that this term mostly refers to relationships between men (40). In this context, while the concept of homosocial defines the social bonds between men in the most general sense, it has an important place as a social dynamic in the continuation of hegemonic masculinity (40). While the places where the socialization process, which is determinant in the formation of masculinity, take place stand out as important areas in terms of male homosociality, they are also distinguished as areas where women are not wanted to be involved (43).

In the article titled “As A Space of Masculinity Coffeehouses” published by Ozkok in 2019, it is stated that among the places where men interact with other men and create male homosociality in Turkey, there are entertainment venues such as coffee houses, fan groups, boarding schools and dormitories, football matches and nightclubs where masculinity experiences are repeated (3). I noticed that boarding schools and dormitories, as examples of Ozkok's homosocial areas in Turkey, were also mentioned by some of the participants in my research. However, from the answers of some other participants, I understood that in addition to these areas mentioned by Ozkok, barbecue events, gyms and military service had an important place in their experiences.

Three of the participants stated that they were exposed to jokes by other men over their masculinity when they tried to participate in the barbecue ritual, which has an important place in the socialization of men in Turkish culture. The participants also state that in some cases they also felt not masculine enough during barbecue events.

When Kenan was asked in which areas he was exposed to negative experiences as a vegetarian man, he said that the most negative experience he remembers was at the barbecue event he went to with his colleagues:

I remember getting a lot of jokes when I went to a barbecue party with my male friends who worked for the same company. My colleagues constantly questioned what I would eat

when they had a barbecue. One of my colleagues joked that I had to prepare the salad because there was no woman between us. (Kenan)

While thinking about the areas where he had negative experiences, Toprak also remembered a barbecue event he attended and said:

I had attended a barbecue event at the urging of my male cousins. I remember one of my cousins making a joke that I had to prepare the salad with the women because I refused to eat barbecued meats. That day, I felt very bad because of the jokes made about my masculinity. (Toprak)

Cem, similar to Toprak and Kenan, mentioned that he was exposed to jokes by other men at barbecue events and said that he had experienced this situation in two different events in a similar way:

I was exposed to other men's jokes over my masculinity at the picnics I went to with my relatives and schoolmates in separate periods. My uncle especially put a lot of pressure on me to eat meat and told me not to act like a girl in public. At the picnic I went to with my schoolmates, I also experienced similar things. At the preparation stage, I was given the task of preparing the vegetables and salad and it was said that the men would take part in the preparation of the meat. I remember that these statements made about my masculinity made me very uncomfortable. (Cem)

The statements of the participants about the barbecue events coincide with the arguments by Sobal which are included in the literature and Sobal states that men demonstrate their masculinity through practices such as barbecue (138). Sobal also claims that activities such as barbecue, especially when performed in outdoors, are an effort to prove the masculinity of men (144). Carpar, similar to Sobal, associates the barbecue practice with the masculine techniques of carrying the food preparation ritual, which is normally identified with women in patriarchal cultures, to the outdoors (269). According to Carpar, meat, which is identified with masculinity, has a great effect on the transformation of this ritual into a masculine action (269). Carpar also defines barbecue gatherings as a homosocial space and mentions that masculinities are circulated and reproduced in this area, giving men more power as a result (269).

Based on the explanations of the participants, it is understood that in the barbecue practice, men attribute a special meaning to the meat cooking ritual and alienate other men who are not included in this ritual. In this context, since meat associated with masculinity has a masculine meaning, the preparation of meat with barbecue helps the men participating in this action to reproduce their masculinity and gain strength in a homo social field, while it gives the opposite meaning to men who are outside of this ritual, such as Kenan, Toprak and Cem. The participants are not seen as men enough by their peers because they refuse to consume meat, which is considered an important food for men, and are not part of a masculine ritual.

From this point of view, as Carpar stated, when the barbecue culture is evaluated within the homosocial field, it can be said that the men included in this field tend to exclude women and other men whom they do not consider as masculine as themselves (269-270).

Some of the participants who talked about their experiences also stated that they received reactions from other men in gyms because they did not eat meat. While the expressions of all the participants who shared their experiences in gyms were similar to each other, the participants stated that their male friends or trainers thought that they needed protein in order to have muscle.

Sertan, who gives an example from the times he went to the gym, states that he received advice from his boyfriends that he should eat meat and talks about those days:

When I decided to go to the same gym with my close male friends, they said I couldn't have a muscular look because I wasn't getting enough protein. In fact, some of my male friends recommended that if I want to have a muscular and strong body, I should at least eat a lot of meat during the sports period. (Sertan)

Kenan said that in addition to his male friends in the gym, his trainer also tried to persuade him to eat meat:

When I decided to join fitness classes for men, my fitness trainer was telling me that I should start eating meat as soon as possible. He mentioned that if I do not eat meat, it is very difficult to have a fit body and these lessons will not be useful. He repeated that especially the protein taken from meat has an important place in the muscle development of men. (Kenan)



The example Deniz gave from his trainer also reveals that he had similar experiences as Kenan and Sertan:

The gym I went to has two separate floors for men and women. When I first started sports, my trainer gave me a nutrition list and it was recommended that I should eat a lot of meat. When I told my trainer that I don't eat meat, he first laughed and then said “Let's take you to the women's floor if you want.” as a joke. My trainer was also telling me that it was impossible to have a muscular body without eating meat. (Deniz)

Similarly, Mert mentioned that in the kickbox class he attended, both other men and his friends recommended him to eat meat to be strong:

I started taking kickboxing lessons with my male friends. My friends stated that I was not strong enough because I do not eat meat and they think that this sport is not suitable for me. Everyone I spoke to during the lesson stated that this is a men's sport and men need to consume meat and animal products to be strong. (Mert)

The answers of Sertan, Deniz, Kenan and Mert are similar to the statement mentioned by Reeser in the literature that men will become a strong man by consuming meat (95). Especially Mert and Sertan's friends openly talk about the necessity of eating meat to be strong. This situation also confirms the argument in the literature that Adams emphasizes the belief that consuming the muscles of strong animals will give strength to men. (87) According to Adams, meat increases power in line with the myths of patriarchal culture, and in this way, masculine features can be obtained by consuming masculine foods such as meat (87).

On the other hand, Carpar mentions that sports as a social field, especially men's sports are built with masculine doxas, and he also states that meat-eating comes to the forefront as a condition for achieving the desired success in men's sports (272). As a matter of fact, the trainers and other fellows with whom the participants communicated also shared their opinions that they see eating meat as a necessity in order to be successful in the specified sports. An example of this is seen with Mert's friends, who started kickboxing lessons at the same time, imply that Mert would not be successful in this sport because he does not eat meat.

Carpar also mentions that many men look the success of vegan or vegetarian male athletes with skepticism in a similar way as women athletes, and also adds that they alienate them because they are not in line with the masculine doxa of the field (262). According to Carpar, also most men interpret the food that vegan and vegetarian men eat in relation to femininity, and therefore they feminize vegan and vegetarian men (262). The fact that Deniz's trainer jokes that she wants to take him to women's floor after learning that Deniz does not eat meat, is related to Deniz's consumption of nutrients related to femininity, and therefore Deniz is feminized and alienated.

In addition to the gyms and barbecue activities, the participants also described their experiences during military service, which has a major role in homosocial areas in Turkey. While talking about his military service days, Kenan stated that being a vegetarian caused great stress on him and he thought about whether his vegetarianism was sustainable for many reasons, especially before going to the military, and talked about those days as follows:

Before going to the military, I was aware that being a vegetarian would bring a very difficult process. Unfortunately, vegan/vegetarian options are not offered in the military, and most of the meals are prepared with meat. I guess they give it extra attention because of the belief that meat gives power to men. I couldn't tell my friends in the military that I was a vegetarian. Military is a place where masculine roles are applied very sharply, and I didn't think that the people I stayed in the same room would find it natural for a man to be a vegetarian. After a while, I started to eat meat temporarily, in order not to be hungry.  
(Kenan)

Serhat, similar to Kenan, expressed that he thought that other men would not understand veganism/vegetarianism, and he explained that he started to eat meat both to avoid prejudices and not to be hungry:

Frankly, I started to eat meat temporarily, to avoid hunger in the military. Telling someone in the military that he is vegan or vegetarian is the same as saying he is gay. The reason for the emergence of protein and meat-heavy meals in the military may be related to the fact that meat makes men stronger. I don't think being vegan and vegetarian in the military is sustainable. It is a high chance that you will be exposed to many jokes by your male friends.  
(Serhat)

Serhan, on the other hand, said that although other men would not understand this situation, he would not worry about what other men would think, unlike other participants, and he said that he ate meat from time to time just to avoid hunger.

When I was in the military, I ate meat because I felt I had to. But I knew that if I didn't eat meat, other soldiers wouldn't understand my motivations at all. However, if there was a vegan or vegetarian option in the military, I would continue to not eat meat. The reason why I took a break from this was so that I wouldn't be hungry there. I don't think I care much about other people's opinions. (Serhan)

The statements of Serhat, Serhan and Kenan have an important place in the phenomenon of military service, which is one of the five stages of hegemonic masculinity in Turkey, which is mentioned by Barut in the literature (157). As also mentioned by Altay in the literature, military service has a nourishing role in the masculinity of men and adds more masculinity to men's identities in this building process (8). According to Altay, men who fulfill their military duty reinforce their masculinity by overcoming difficulties, gaining a warrior identity, learning obedience and violence (98).

In the article titled “Investigation of The Effects of Paid Military Service (Mercenary) On Masculinity Perception: From Mehmetçik To Mehmet Bey” by Ahmet Burak Kahraman and Elif Yirmidokuz published in 2021, it is mentioned that the military institution is shaped according to a single gender and creates a homosocial space (272). According to Kahraman and Yirmidokuz when the civilian life is left out after entering the barracks, people take the form of a soldier with a uniform, with the same hair and beard shaving arrangement, and move away from the body they used to be by acquiring a new body perception (272). Therefore, the fact that Serhat, Serhan and Kenan, who exhibit different masculinities as vegan and vegetarian men outside, chose to hide that they do not eat meat and even start to eat meat again temporarily, supports the arguments of Kahraman and Yirmidokuz. As Kahraman and Yirmidokuz states in their article, some soldiers are also alienating themselves both psychologically and physically under masculine domination and trying to maintain their masculinity in the homosocial area with the new identity they have created. (272)

Since Serhat and Kenan hide that they do not eat meat, it can also be deduced that they have a fear of violating hegemonic masculinity standards in a homosocial space such as the military. As Carpar stated in the literature, some men consider meat eating within the framework of heterosexuality and heterosexuality has an important place in the hegemonic masculinity (260). Serhat and Kenan also developed certain coping mechanisms in order not to be faced with prejudices such as being perceived as less masculine or even homosexual by their fellows in case of rejecting hegemonic masculinity standards. These mechanisms were that Kenan and Serhat acted like other soldiers who maintained these dominant masculinity standards and started to eat meat.

Some of the participants also stated that they faced some negative judgments because of their veganism and vegetarianism in male-shared houses. Kızılkın (2009), who searches for the traces of masculinity in male sharing flats, one of the homosocial spaces, mentions in his article titled “Spaces of Masculinities: Bachelor Rooms in Suleymaniye” that leaving home and living in shared male rooms is a threshold for reaching ideal masculinity (182-184). According to Kızılkın, it is seen that men living in separate houses from their families try to build their own masculinity during that process (182). In the process of building their masculinity, according to Kızılkın, men who start living together exclude other gender identities by making their single homes gender-specific (182). In this context, the fact that Mert and Serhat are exposed to gay jokes by their fellows can be explained with Kızılkın’s arguments as Serhat and Mert’s not eating meat can be considered as a threat to the masculinity construction.

While Serhat stated that his days in the male dormitory were difficult for him during his student years, he stated that he was exposed to some jokes and judgments because he did not eat meat:

During my student years, I stayed in a male dormitory for a while. You know men's dormitories, I definitely felt like I should hide my orientation. At that time, I started to socialize with LGBT individuals and started to avoid eating meat. When my flatmate started noticing this situation, he started to make statements, saying, “Where did it come from suddenly? Are you gay or not?” He continued to ask such questions for a long time. (Serhat)

Mert talked about his days in the apartment he shared with two men and stated that his housemates made frequent comments about his masculinity at that time:

I lived with 2 heterosexual men in a shared house for a while. I thought I definitely had to hide that I am gay. I think you can imagine how is living in male apartments in Turkey. I tried to hide for a long time that I did not eat meat, for I was so afraid that my orientation would be exposed. Once one of my flat mates said that: “Why are you eating that salads like a woman, eat meat like a man.” Such expressions and jokes continued for a very long time. (Mert)

While Ozkok (2019) defines homosocial spaces, he mentions the brotherhood in these spaces and defines this brotherhood as a homosocial organization with strict rules (57). Brotherhood, as a homosocial organization, ensures the continuation of heterosexuality by dividing men and women into separate social groups (57). According to Ozkok, brotherhood also legitimizes socialization without being stigmatized as homosexual (57). Mert and Serhat's tendency to hide their vegetarianism due to their belief that eating meat is a masculine behavior can be given as an example to this argument. It can be said that Mert and Serhat tend to keep socializing without being homosexual by hiding their vegetarianism in their single house where their brotherhood is dominant.

In addition, Ozkok mentions that male homosociality contributes to the image of hegemonic masculinity and argues that it moves away from everything associated with femininity (76). At this point, the argument stated by Adams in literature as meat eating is seen as a masculinity measure by cultures and individuals and that vegetarianism is perceived as femininity is important (50). In the literature, Carpar, similar to Adams, mentions that veganism/vegetarianism is perceived as feminine by other men and that other men define vegan/vegetarian men as "feminine" or "less male" in the framework of their hegemonic ideals (265).

In this context, the gay jokes that Mert and Serhat are exposed to over the possibility of being vegetarian can be explained by the fact that vegetarianism is seen as a feminine practice and also linked with being a homosexual and male homosociality does not match with the hegemonic masculinity image.

#### **4.4. Religion, Family and Traditions: Position of Vegan Men**

In the previous section, I stated that I asked questions about which social areas the participants were exposed to negative experiences and prejudices. Based on the answers given by some of the participants, it was revealed that these social environments were primarily homosocial areas, while some of the participants also stated that they had negative experiences outside homosocial areas, especially in their families, with the argument that veganism and vegetarianism do not match with religion and Turkish culture.

Since the family has a traditional place in Turkish society, in order to better understand how the participants were perceived by their families, I also asked some questions about how their families reacted when they first became vegan/vegetarian. Considering that family, religion and traditions have an important place in hegemonic masculinity practices in Turkey, in this section, I will analyze how veganism and vegetarianism have a place in the negative experiences of the participants.

When I asked the participants directly what kind of reactions they received from their families as vegan/vegetarian, I first noticed that some participants received very harsh reactions, especially from their fathers.

Sertan said that he received various reactions from all family members because he stopped eating meat but the harshest reaction came from his father:

When meat is to be prepared in our house, this task is usually undertaken by my father. It is a kind of tradition to eat grilled meats prepared by my father on the balcony, especially on summer evenings. When he learned that I don't eat meat, he was disappointed because it meant that as father and son, we couldn't keep up this tradition anymore. He was saying: "What now? My son will prepare the salad with his mother and sister while I am grilling.

I don't accept that. Males are responsible for the preparation of meat in our family." It took a long time for my father to accept this. (Sertan)

Serhat, on the other hand, emphasized that he came from a traditional family and stated that he had difficulty in being understood by his father, like Sertan:

The task of preparing meat at home has always been shared by my brother, my father and me. Gender roles and household chores have always been defined strictly in our family. When they learned that I was a vegan, especially in the early years, whenever meat was prepared at home, my brother and father was like: "Stop these weird habits! Where did you see that? How can you stop eating meat? Eggs and Yoghurt even! You are changing the habits of our family." My father, in particular, reacted very harshly to my decision. He had never heard of veganism before. (Serhat)

Volkan also said that his father still criticizes him, similar to the experiences of other participants:

We had a tradition of going out for a man-to-man dinner with my brother and father. It is not possible for us to eat anything other than kebab in our male-to-man dinners. My father still makes comments like "Won't I have kebab with my sons anymore? What will you eat now? Like women on diet will you eat that salads? Stop this new habit and let's continue kebab parties as before." Since eating salad is about people on a diet in general, and women in particular, I feel that he is indirectly implying that I turned out to be more feminine. (Volkan)

The answers of the participants are similar to the research conducted by Tuncay in the literature. Tuncay mentions that majority of the participants in her research exposed to a negative perspective from their families because they are vegan or vegetarian (116). However, considering the answers of Volkan, Serhat and Sertan, their exposure to a negative perspective from their families is not only related to being vegan or vegetarian, but also related to being a vegan and vegetarian male.

When the answers of Volkan, Serhat and Sertan are evaluated, it can be said that Turkish fathers are giving much more reactions when they learn that their son is vegan/vegetarian anymore.

All 3 participants expressed that they were not approved by their fathers because they were vegan and vegetarian. Atilla Barutcu (2013) in his article “The Body and Social Stages of Masculinity in Turkey” states that the last of the five basic steps in the journey of man during the construction of masculinity is getting married, starting a family and becoming a father (146). What every man who has achieved this last stage must do is to preserve the socially accepted masculinity values he has achieved throughout his life and to keep these values alive in the society in order not to lose the hegemonic masculinity position he has reached (146). One of the most critical tasks for the man who has reached these values is to lead the new generations and to ensure the continuity of the hegemonic norms of masculinity in society. (146)

At this point, it is important to mention Connell & Messerschmidt's argument that meat is a tool in the expression of masculine identity (851). Since the concept of hegemonic masculinity imposes the perception that real men must consume meat to ensure their hegemony, as I mentioned before, men like Serhat, Sertan and Volkan who do not eat meat are at risk of violating hegemonic masculinity standards. It is possible to explain this attitude, to which the participants were exposed by their fathers, as Turkish father's effort to protect the accepted masculinity values, since their vegan/vegetarian sons have the potential to violate the hegemonic standards of masculinity as they are the sons who do not eat meat.

The participants stated that they were also exposed to prejudices from their families over their veganism and vegetarianism due to religious values. At this point, it is important to remember that Turkey is a predominantly Muslim society and this information is quite important while making analyzing the participants' experiences.

One of my participants Toprak said that Eid-al-Adha has always been a big challenge for him. Toprak, who refused to be included in the ritual of sacrifice due to his sensitivity to animals, said that Eid al-Adha was always very difficult for him:

Although it is not a problem for women to sacrifice an animal in the area where I live, this task is usually performed by men. The men of the family are expected to take part in this ceremony. I get very negative reactions from my family when I refuse to participate in this ceremony, where I do not eat meat and am against the idea of killing animals. I am also questioned a lot about my religious beliefs. Although I do not receive any criticism on my



masculinity directly, I am expected to attend this ceremony as I am one of the men of the family. (Toprak)

Kaya, on the other hand, stated that his religious values were questioned by his family because he refused to be involved in the ritual of sacrifice. He also added that he was constantly arguing with his family on this issue:

When I stated that I did not agree with the idea of slaughtering animals during Eid al-Adha, I always got a reaction from my environment. A few times, I was faced with the words of my friends, “What kind of a man are you? Don't you eat sacrificial meat too?” It is also assumed that I am an atheist because I am against this tradition. (Kaya)

The results of the research on the religious perception of vegan/vegetarian individuals living in Turkey by Ahmet Fatih Ozkul, who is also mentioned in the literature review, show similarities with the experiences of Toprak and Kaya. Vegan/vegetarian participants in Ozkul's study stated that they received harsh criticism from their families and close circles on religious values, and were marginalized by the argument that vegan/vegetarianism did not match Islamic values (86-87). The questioning of Toprak's religious beliefs and the thought that Kaya is an atheist because of her vegetarianism show parallelism with this situation. Ozkul explains this situation with the belief that Islam is a human-centered religion and that animals and animal foods are created as a blessing for humans (94).

Similar to Ozkul, Kurt, in her research on vegetarian individuals in Turkey mentioned in the literature review, argues that religion has an effect on the marginalization of vegetarian individuals in Turkey, and she argues that religions' belief that people are superior to animals is effective in this marginalization (23). Kurt also explains that this sense of superiority gives people the right to decide on the fate of animals, and therefore, killing animals is normalized by society (23). Based on Kurt's argument, when these normalized values are considered, Kaya and Toprak, who do not participate in the act of sacrificing and refuse to eat meat, are considered marginal in the eyes of society.

In addition to analyzing how the phenomenon of religion marginalizes vegan/vegetarian individuals, it is also important to look at the relationship between religion and hegemonic masculinity, which I also mentioned in the literature review. As mentioned by Ozekici in the

section where I showed the dominant masculinity practices specific to Turkey in the literature, it is important to examine the phenomenon of power-body relations, military service, heterosexuality and religion in order to better determine the reflections of dominant masculinity in Turkey (61). Ozekici mentions that when Muslim men are examined in the context of gender, a strong emphasis on masculinity is encountered with the reference to Islam (61).

In Turkey, where being born as a man is still perceived as important, it can be said that a man strengthens his masculinity through religion (Ozekici 61). However, in the eyes of the Kaya and Toprak's families, since they do not obey religious orders, they cannot get enough of the ideal hegemonic masculinity practices in Turkey and as a result, they are marginally positioned. Kaya and Toprak's rejection of the belief that man is superior to the animal, as stated by religion, firstly makes them irreligious or atheist, while at the same time, as Ozekici points out, they move away from the ideal strong male stereotype in Turkey with the reference to Islam.

Other than religion, some of the participants also stated that they received a reaction because of the thought that veganism/vegetarianism does not match with Turkish customs and traditions. Kenan's example emphasizes the importance of meat in Turkish culture:

When I say that I don't eat meat, I get comments on meat dishes, which are one of the traditional dishes of Turkish cuisine. I remember my mother's joke once, "Is there any man who doesn't eat kebab?" Since meat has a very important place in Turkish cuisine, I was in a very marginal position in their world. (Kenan)

Deniz, similar to Kenan, also stated that the importance of meat in Turkish culture and added that it is thought that veganism/vegetarianism is incompatible with Turkish culture:

During the periods when I discussed veganism with my family, they always say that there is no room for such a thing in our culture and that they think that such practices come from the western world. Eating meat is somewhat traditional for Turkish people, I guess. I am considered different by my relatives because I both refuse to eat meat and go against these traditions. (Deniz)

Similarly, the expressions of Cem's mother show that meat has a national value in Turkey, and it is understood that veganism/vegetarianism are only seen as a trend favored by western societies:

When I told my mother that I am vegetarian anymore, she replied as: “No way, we have very good meat dishes in our culture. You will not eat them at all? You will be hungry in this country whenever you go outside to eat something. Meal without a meat is not even tasty at all? Why do you do it to yourself?”. Since my mother always thinks that Turkish cuisine is very good and she is proud of it, not eating meat always seems strange to her. She had once comment as: ‘Will you eat vegetables every day like dieting women? You will be so skinny, you are man, you need to be strong’. She thinks I will lose weight because I don't eat meat. She claims that not eating meat is practiced by girls for diet only. She also thinks that the foreign TV series I watched and my foreign friends were influential in my decision. (Cem)

The answers of Kenan, Deniz and Cem are similar to those discussed by Altas in the literature and have an important place in understanding the dominant role of meat in Turkish culture (411). The families of the participants have difficulties in understanding the vegan/vegetarianism of the participants by giving examples of meat dishes in Turkish culture. Altas emphasizes that since meat has always been used as a dominant food in Turkish history, vegan and vegetarian individuals in Turkey may encounter various problems because they avoid eating meat (418).

At this point, since meat has a traditional place in Turkish culture, the participants are accused of moving away from these traditional values through their families' statements and they are again marginalized as in religious practice. Especially in the speeches of Cem's and Deniz's families, it was stated that foreign TV series, foreign friends and Western culture were influential in the choices of their sons, and based on this, it is understood that veganism/vegetarianism is not seen as a value belonging to Turkish culture.

The fact that the families of Cem, Deniz and Kenan evaluate their son's vegan/vegetarian choices as a movement against Turkish cuisine and Turkish culture can also be seen as a nationalist attitude. At this point, it is important to mention the argument in Nagel's article titled “Masculinity

and Nationalism: Gender and Sexuality in the Making of Nations” published in 1998 that hegemonic masculinity culture and ideology are parallel to the hegemonic nationalism culture and ideology (249). Nagel emphasizes that masculinity and nationalism can be articulated very well and that the nation-state is essentially a male institution (249). As can be seen in the discourses of the mothers of Cem and Deniz, it can be said that this hegemonic bond between masculinity and nationalism has left its mark on the minds and hearts of not only men but also women (261). Similarly, to the phenomenon of religion, Cem and Deniz are not able to get a share of the nationalist values of hegemonic masculinity because they move away from nationalist values this time, and their masculinity is questioned in the eyes of their mothers.

As mentioned in the literature, establishing a family, fatherhood, nationalism and religion have an important place in Turkey in order to maintain hegemonic masculinity practices. However, the participants are exposed to various prejudices by their families through statements, both because they move away from the masculine meaning attached to meat and because they do not eat meat and do not experience values such as tradition, nationalism and religion like other men.

#### **4.5. Homosexualization of Vegan and Vegetarian Men**

I noticed from the answers of the participants that they were mostly perceived as homosexual especially in the homosocial areas. In order to analyze this situation in more detail, firstly I asked the participants whether any predictions were made based on their orientation as they are vegan/vegetarian. A large majority of the participants stated that they were mostly perceived as homosexual or were exposed to various jokes about the possibility of their being homosexual after they express themselves as vegan/vegetarian. After I asked the participants to give examples of this situation, I also asked the question of what was effective in this perception. Finally, in order to better analyze the participants' experiences, I asked whether this perception gave them concern.

When I asked the participants whether there were any predictions about their orientation after they stated that they were vegan or vegetarian, almost all of them stated that they had experienced this. Participants' statements of their being labeled as gay because they do not eat meat is similar to the argument mentioned by Sobal, Carpar and Adams in the literature that vegan/vegetarian men are often perceived as gay (Sobal 141; Adams 50; Carpar 264-266 ).

The statements of one of my participants, Kaya, on this subject are very similar to the statements of other participants:

I've felt this a few times. Once I told a close friend that I was gay after our friendship developed. She said she already knew that I was gay. When I asked how she guessed it, she said that I am more feminine than other men and also, she had never seen any vegetarian man before. (Kaya)

Sobal mentions the perception of vegan and vegetarian men as feminine, that women generally prefer vegetarianism due to their nutritional tendencies in western societies, and therefore vegetarianism violates the field of masculinity (141). This argument of Sobal is similar to Kaya's friend stating that his vegetarianism was also effective in her thinking that Kaya might be gay (141). It can be said that Kaya's friend also thought Kaya's being vegetarian violated the field of masculinity and he was indirectly perceived as gay.

The fact that Tansel is thought to be gay at a company dinner is an important example in terms of showing the role of meat in patriarchal societies:

Once at a company dinner event, my wife was not with me and it was my first days in the company. While I was reviewing the options on the menu, I asked if they had a vegan option. Later, when I was speaking with one of my male colleagues, I told him that I am married. He seemed so surprised. Then when our relationship developed, he confessed that at first, they were thinking about maybe I am a gay. I remember that I was quite surprised and I asked him why he thought that way, he joked as, "I don't know, we've never seen a man eat salad while there is kebab on the menu. Only you and some women in the department ordered salad that day." I thought this was strange. (Tansel)

Adams, argues that women or second-class citizens (non-hegemonic men) are considered second-class in patriarchal culture because of the perception that they prefer foods such as vegetables (50). According to Adams, since meat is ideally perceived as a man's meal, and eating

meat is a measure of masculinity in the perception of cultures and individuals the social structure equates vegetarianism with castration or femininity (50). Kaya's male co-worker also indirectly supported Adams' argument and positioned Kaya as the second class in patriarchal culture, based on the fact that Kaya eats salad and avoids meat, which is the ideal male food and as a result he was labeled as feminine and indirectly as homosexual.

Similarly, Deniz's experience is important to understand the relationship between meat and masculinity and the perception of vegan/vegetarian men as gay:

While chatting with a close friend of mine, he said that a third friend whom we met through him in the same environment asked him if I was gay. When I asked him why he thought that way, he said that it seemed strange to him because I asked in the restaurant if there was meat broth inside the meal. I had a girlfriend at that time, and my friend told him that I even had a girlfriend. My friend said that the other guy was surprised with the fact that even I have a girlfriend. I guess because I'm vegan and I'm not masculine enough in his world, he thought the girls would have the same opinion with him. (Deniz)

Carpar states that in his study on vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey, the participants associated the meat with masculinity; veganism and vegetarianism with being feminine (264). Many of the participants in Carpar's research, like Deniz's friend, refer to vegan and vegetarian men as feminine or less men because they do not coincide with the hegemonic ideals of masculinity in their minds (265). Deniz's new friend's being surprised that Deniz has a girlfriend is similar to the fact that the men participating in Carpar's research stated that meat has an important place in the construction of masculinity by establishing a connection with meat and the sexual power of men (266).

Some of the participants explained that they were perceived as gay with various examples, but in order to better understand the possible reasons for this issue from the participants' eyes, I asked them why vegan/vegetarian men are perceived as gay. Two of the participants stated that they think that dishes such as salad and vegetables are perceived as a food preferred by women in Turkish society:

The biggest reason is that meat is considered as a men's food. Meat has a very important place for men in Turkish society. I don't know why, but for example, salads or vegetable dishes are mostly preferred by women. People are not used to seeing when men avoid meat. Also, people are used to seeing some women prefer light and calorie-free foods because they are on a diet for weight control. I think it is considered a feminine behavior for men to prefer light foods like vegetables. (Cem)

I guess it has to do with the fact that meat is seen as a man's food, and food like salad is seen as a woman's food. A man who avoids meat is not seen as a traditional man. So, people think you're a different man. (Mert)

The comments made by Cem and Mert on the reasons why vegan/vegetarian men are perceived as gay are similar to the association of vegetables with women and meat with men in the literature. Carole Counihan (1999), in her book "The Anthropology of Food and Body" mentions about the idea that food is gendered and women are linked with vegetables and men are linked with meat (13). As it was stated above, this has been also discussed in literature by Adams and Sobal in similar way (Sobal 141; Adams 50; Carpar 264-266). However, Burgan also explains the possible source of this idea with hunter-man narrative and argues that men are hunters and provide the most important and vital food, while women only collect vegetables and herbs, which are seen as secondary nutrients (38). Burgan states that the hunter-man narrative plays a role in centering the meat associated with men in the diet (38). Similar to Burgan's arguments Adams also states that vegetables are linked with women, just as meat is linked with men, and subconsciously revives the time when women were gatherers (88).

The comments made by Cem and Mert on salad and vegetables support the association of vegetables with women throughout history, starting from the hunter-gatherer myth. In this context, men who consume vegetables as a food identified with being women also result in the feminization of vegan/vegetarian men as stated by Sobal, Adams and Carpar, or their perception as homosexual (Sobal 141; Adams 50; Carpar 264-266).

After listening to the situations in which the participants were perceived as gay, I also asked whether this prejudice and stigma was seen as an element of anxiety for them. As I mentioned in the literature, since heterosexuality has an important place in the hegemonic masculinity practices in Turkey (Ozekici 50), many of the participants stated that they have a fear of being labeled as homosexual. While many of the gay participants stated that they had a fear of revealing their orientation because they were hiding their orientation from their families and close circles, heterosexual participants stated that they were afraid of being excluded and mocked over the possibility of being perceived as homosexual.

Cem explained that he hides his vegetarianism when he is worried about his orientation being revealed:

Yes, because I'm not open to my family. In some situations, I feel like I have to hide my orientation from certain people. And I try to hide that I'm a vegetarian or not talk about it too much. (Cem)

Kaya said that Turkey is a conservative society and he tends to hide his orientation, like Cem, because being gay in some environments may pose a problem:

When I'm with people who don't know about my orientation, I sometimes worry about it. Since Turkey is a conservative society, I do not know how people will react. It's always a joke, especially when other men know that I'm a vegetarian. I don't have that concern with other people who know my orientation. (Kaya)

Serhat also said that in the same way as Kaya, he had to hide that he was vegan from time to time to protect himself:

I know being gay is nothing to be ashamed of. However, I try to hide it in order not to be judged by the society and not to be treated badly. The society we live in demands it. There are cases where I hide that I am vegan for this reason. (Serhat)



Toprak and Kenan, two of my heterosexual participants, said that being seen as gay is not a problem for them but sometimes they feel nervous due to the reactions:

Being gay is not a problem for me. I am not a homophobic man. But of course, because I don't know how will people react in some cases, maybe I get nervous about being seen as gay. (Toprak)

As a heterosexual man, I think this situation does not bother me. Everyone can think as they wish. But this prejudice bothers me. Being perceived as gay may be problematic in some respects. As a result, gay people are exposed to a lot of exclusion. Or they can be mocked. It is not pleasant to be exposed to this with this stigma. (Kenan)

Yavuz (2014) describes the characteristics of hegemonic masculinity as power, dominance, authority, lack of emotion, heterosexuality, homophobia, competitiveness, business-power, being involved in one of the sports and being sexually active (112). As Ozekici said in the literature, heterosexuality and homophobia play a major role in the adoption of hegemonic masculinity by men in Turkey (58). Ozekici also mentions that men who do not define themselves as heterosexual due to the dominance of a heterosexist social order in Turkey will result in exclusion from hegemonic masculinity and exposure to oppression (59).

Kenan and Serhat's fear of being labeled as homosexual due to their vegan/vegetarian nature is in line with the arguments of Ozekici and Yavuz. Kenan and Serhat, because heterosexuality has an important place in hegemonic masculinity in Turkey, are afraid of being excluded from hegemonic masculinity when they are perceived as homosexual and therefore they are also afraid of exclusion from the society.

Ozbay (2013), in "Searching for Hegemonic Masculinity in Turkey", argues that heterosexuality forms the backbone of hegemonic masculinity in Turkey and that gay men almost automatically move away from the power of hegemonic masculinity (201). According to Ozbay, even when there is a possibility that a man's sexual identity may differ from heterosexuality, he claims that those men try to eliminate such situation and try to hide it (201). The fact that Cem and

Serhat stated that they hide their being vegan/vegetarian not to be labeled as homosexual can be interpreted as an effort to eliminate the problems that may arise as a result of moving away from heterosexuality in an effort not to move away from the hegemonic power of masculinity (201).

At the same time, it is important to remember again the argument mentioned by Connell in the literature that the hierarchical structure between men creates different masculinities and three different types of masculinity that are outside of hegemonic masculinity (Connell 78-79). Subordinated masculinity, which has an important place in Connell's four masculinity tours, has an important place in analyzing the answers of the participants. According to Connell, subordinated masculinity is related to men with different sexual orientations, and this group is also the most excluded group because it is excluded from heterosexuality, which is the first step in hegemonic masculinity (78-79). Vegan and vegetarian men also experience the exclusion practice of this group, staying out of heterosexuality because they do not eat meat and can be seen as homosexual in the society.

#### **4.6. Institutions That are Effective in the Experience of Turkish Vegan and Vegetarian Men**

As mentioned in the literature, masculinity is affected by media, cinema, internet and social environments, family, education, advertisements, football match slogans, culture, education, politics and economic conditions (23). In order to better understand the experiences and prejudices of the individuals participating in my research, I also tried to find out which institution mentioned by Bozok had an impact on their experiences.

When I asked the participants, "Which institutions do you think are effective in these experiences you have had?", almost all of the participants answered as the media and social media. While some of the participants stated that Turkish TV series and movies impose the perception of ideal masculinity on Turkish society, some others mentioned that magazines and newspapers promote the standard male body. Two of the participants stated that on social media especially vegan/vegetarians (especially male ones) are mocked a lot. At this point, within the scope of my research, based on the answers of the participants, I concluded that only the media is effective among the institutions Bozok mentioned in the experiences of vegan/vegetarian male individuals.

Can explains the impact of the media on the experiences of vegan/vegetarian men through Turkish movies and TV series:

When I look at Turkish TV series and movies, I see that there is always an ideal male type. In general, strong, masculine and muscular men are shown as the ideal man in Turkish society. At the same time, men always have to be strong and muscular in TV series and they have to do sports and act in a masculine way. (Can)

Donaldson (1993) in “What Is Hegemonic Masculinity? In Theory and Society” mentions that hegemonic masculinity is naturalized and transferred to the masses through heroes in books, movies or television (646). In a similar way, Can mentions that an ideal male type is emphasized in Turkish TV series and movies and mentions that strong, muscular and masculine men have an important place in hegemonic masculinity patterns in Turkey.

Similar to Donaldson, Christopher Forth mentions that masculinity has a great relationship with the male body in “Masculinity in the Modern West: Gender, Civilization and the Body” published in 2008. While Forth defines western societies as highly commercialized, he mentions that muscular men are shown as ideal (220). The fact that muscular men are reflected as an ideal man in cinema also brings with it the thought that men will build their masculinity by improving their bodies (220)

Gokturk, on the other hand, talks about Turkish newspapers and magazines and explains how these printed media indirectly affect the perception of vegan/vegetarian men in Turkey:

I saw many articles in newspapers and magazines that protein is important in muscle production. I've even read that vegan/vegetarians don't get as much muscle as they want even if they do sports because they don't get enough protein. I think, because of this and male vegan/vegetarians are perceived as weak and feminine. Based on the media texts, the perception is created that vegan and vegetarian men cannot have the ideal body building image, even if they do sports. (Gokturk)

In this context, it is important to examine once again the relationship between meat and the male body discussed in the literature. Reeser states that many men think that having a strong body is possible with foods such as meat, and in this context, society emphasizes the importance of meat

as the repetitive cycle (95). According to Reeser, while meat serves as a symbol of power in this cycle, he thinks that men must consume meat to obtain this power (95). The newspaper articles Gokturk mentioned also confirms this argument. In this context, meat and protein are promoted as a must for gaining muscle, and it is thought that vegan/vegetarian men cannot have a strong body because it is thought that they cannot get enough of this protein.

The argument that the ideal, normative and healthy male body defined by the media, which is also mentioned by Erdogan in the literature, is identified with being muscular, gains importance once again at this point (141). According to Erdogan, the healthy male body has an important place in reaching the hegemonic ideals of masculinity (150). When this argument is considered, it is not possible for men who do not consume meat to reach these ideals according to what media reflects. The thought that eating the muscles of strong animals, mentioned by Adams, will give strength to men, it also deprives vegan/vegetarian men of this power (87).

While the participants stated that traditional media is effective in the experience of vegan/vegetarian men, many participants state that there is generally a hate speech against vegan/vegetarian individuals on social media especially on Twitter. While the participants stated that they see more jokes about vegan men rather than vegetarian ones, it is possible to say that vegan men are exposed to more jokes than vegetarian men. One of my participants Mert described an example he saw on Twitter as:

I think social media is effective. Because I see that vegans are constantly being teased, especially on Twitter. Veganism is already perceived as too radical. I've seen a lot of content that makes fun of especially vegan men. For example, I saw a content shared on Twitter which was a photo of a social media celebrity who is seen as feminine man and there was a caption as 'I am sure he is a vegan male'. There are many examples like it. (Mert)

Like Mert, Can and Kenan also stated that jokes are made about vegan men on Twitter and shared some examples that they remembered:

In recent years, there has been a great hatred against vegans and vegetarians on social media. I do not know the reason. I think we look marginal. Jokes are constantly being

made, especially on vegan and vegetarian men. I once saw a tweet on twitter, ‘He doesn't say I'm gay, he says I'm vegan’. There are many examples like this. (Can)

Social media is definitely effective. I've read a lot of content on social media that vegans and vegetarians are doing something illogical. They often describe it as nonsense, with arguments against veganism and vegetarianism. Of course, it is considered absolutely illogical for men to be vegan and vegetarian. I remember the photo of a crying transgender individual on Twitter during the past Eid-al-Adha, and shared with a caption as ‘vegan males during Eid-al-Adha’. I thought this wasn't funny at all. (Kenan)

The statements of Kenan, Can and Mert are similar to the arguments of Yilmaz mentioned in the literature review on the problems faced by vegans in social media. When Yilmaz examines the criticisms of veganism in social media, she states that these criticisms consist of mocking as Can and Mert also states and also anti-veganism statements as Kenan states (70). Yilmaz mentions that although the use of humorous language is common among people who use social media in Turkey, she says that the use of humorous language can sometimes be witnessed as mockery (71).

At the same time, it is also important to consider the place of Twitter in the construction of masculinity, since the three of the participants give their examples on Twitter. In the thesis study titled “Digital Transformation of Hegemonic Masculinity Discourse in the Context of the Internet Subculture: The Example of # Erkekyerinibilsin Hashtag” written by Fatma Esra Ozturk (2021), in which the discourse of hegemonic masculinity in the context of internet subculture in Turkey is discussed, Twitter is mentioned as it also mediates the construction of masculinity across networks (113). It is stated on Twitter hegemonic masculinity is built on the exclusion and humiliation of subordinated masculinity (113). Considering subordinated masculinity, which is already included in the theory of masculinities section by Connell, refers to men with different sexual orientations (Connell; 78-79). In this context, it would be useful to recall the concept of hegemonic masculinity that Connell stated. Connell mentions that hegemonic masculinity does not only dominate women, but is also built in relation to other forms of masculinity (245). As I mentioned before in literature, the hegemonic masculinity system plays a role in the marginalization of different masculinities outside of this system as well as women.

In the sample tweets shared by Mert and Kenan, transsexuality and femininity are associated with veganism and indirectly vegan men are marginalized because they cannot find a place in hegemonic masculinity practices, and they are mocked by other men in the construction and protection of hegemonic masculinity, and vegan men become a protector of their hegemony in their struggle

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION**

In this research, I aimed to examine how the relationship between meat and masculinity has an effect on the experiences of vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey. Since masculinity and hegemonic masculinity is very important concept to understand the men's experiences, I used those concepts as my main theoretical framework. I conducted in-depth interviews with 12 vegan/vegetarian men living in Turkey, aiming to analyze the experiences of my participants through their own statements. The answers given by my participants allowed me to better understand the relationship between meat and masculinity, and I realized that this relationship has a major role in the experiences of men in Turkey.

Studies conducted in Turkey show that vegan and vegetarianism are more common among women in Turkey (Tuncay 95; Asil 82; Tural 39). To confirm this in my own research, I asked my participants questions such as "Do you know any other vegan/vegetarian men in Turkey?" and "Do you think being vegan or vegetarian is getting popular among men in Turkey?" While these questions helped me understand the popularity of veganism and vegetarianism among men in Turkey, they were also instrumental in assessing the general situation of vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey. In the answers I received, the participants stated that they know very few vegan and vegetarian men, and stated that vegan and vegetarianism is not very common among men in Turkey.

Since veganism and vegetarianism are not very common among men in Turkey, I also asked the participants one specific question as "Why do you think many men do not choose plant-based diet in Turkey". This question helped me understand the mechanisms involved in the experience of the vegan and vegetarian men I discuss in my research. Some of the participants

stated that the reason for this was the fear of looking less masculine. In some studies, on vegan and vegetarian men, it was found that men who do not eat meat are perceived as less masculine (Rozin et al 634-637; Heine and Ruby 449). In this context, it is understood that the participants' fear of appearing less masculine is a justified fear.

As I stated in previous sections, hegemonic masculinity highlights a certain standard definition of masculinity, and this definition of masculinity has an impact on the behavior of men. In this context, the belief that real men should eat meat can be evaluated as one of the definitions of masculinity imposed by hegemonic masculinity. The answers of the participants reveal this perception in the society, and because vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey do not eat meat, they are faced with various difficulties as they cannot fulfill the ideals imposed on them by the hegemonic masculinity. This situation may also cause other men not to prefer veganism or vegetarianism. However, it is seen that vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey challenge hegemonic masculinity by continuing to be vegan and vegetarian despite all the difficulties imposed by hegemonic masculinity.

On the other hand, the question "In which social settings have you had negative experiences or prejudices as a vegan and vegetarian male?" helped me understand the areas where my participants had the most negative experiences. Based on the answers of my participants, I understood that vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey mostly have negative experiences in homosocial areas. Considering that homosocial areas have an important place in the continuation of hegemonic masculinity (Yilmazli 40), it can be deduced that vegan and vegetarian men pose a threat to other men by staying out of the masculine meaning of meat. It is understood that vegan and vegetarian men, who think that they will be seen as a threat to the continuation of hegemonic masculinity, tend to hide their vegan and vegetarianism in order not to be exposed to the jokes and harsh reactions of other men in homosocial areas. Since homosociality is defined as a field in which men demonstrate and reproduce their masculinity, this field excludes women and other non-patriarchal (other) men (Carpar 269) and I realized that my participants were often afraid of announcing that they were vegan/vegetarian because of this fear of exclusion.

At the same time, based on the statements of the participants, it is also understood that they have a fear of being perceived as gay in homosocial areas because they think that they will be

exposed to harsh reactions from men. It can be deduced that the participants' fear of being perceived as gay is felt more intensely in military and male dormitories where more men are together and homosociality is more intensely experienced. Since hegemonic masculinity practices are felt very intensely in homosocial areas and heterosexuality has a very important place in hegemonic masculinity, they think that if they are perceived as homosexual, they will be subjected to mockery and bad words.

When I asked the participants some questions to understand in which areas they were exposed to negative experiences and prejudices, they did not only talk about homosocial areas but they also stated that they experience some negative attitudes from their families. However, while many participants stated that they received harsh reactions from their families, they especially stated that their fathers reacted more harshly to their veganism/vegetarianism than their mothers.

The fact that the participants expressed that they faced a harsh reaction in their families, especially from their fathers, can be explained by the argument mentioned by Barutcu that being a father has an important place in the hegemonic masculinity in Turkey. (146) Being a father and having a family, which are the last stage in the hegemonic masculinity construction, are considered as an effort to transfer the dominance that men have achieved in this last stage to the next generations (especially their sons) (Barutcu 146). Therefore, the fact that their sons do not eat meat creates a risk in terms of the continuation of the dominant masculinity ideals they have maintained until now and puts the dominant masculinity standards they have achieved as fathers at risk. In order to avoid this danger and to continue by transferring the dominant masculinity ideals to their sons, they hardly accept that their son is vegan/vegetarian, and they try to persuade the participants to eat meat from time to time, as can be seen from the answers of the participants.

However, based on the statements that the participants shared their experiences with their fathers, I realized that they did not hide that they were vegan and vegetarian, as in homosocial areas. All the participants who participated in my research and shared their experiences with their fathers stated that they started to explain to their fathers that they were vegan/vegetarian and they patiently tried to change their views on vegan/vegetarianism. These attitudes of the participants can also be interpreted as an effort to challenge their fathers' efforts to maintain hegemonic masculinity.



When I analyzed the reactions of the participants from their families, I also found that religion and traditions, which have an important place in the dominant masculinity practices in Turkish society, were effective in the reactions my participants received from their families. The participants state that they are exposed to criticism by their families during the Eid-al-Adha rituals because they do not eat meat and that they are perceived as marginal or irreligious. These statements of the participants are similar to the argument in the literature that vegan/vegetarian individuals in Turkey are marginalized on the grounds that they do not comply with the requirements and ideals of religion, especially by not participating in the ritual of sacrificing (Ozkul 87; Kurt 23).

On the other hand, considering that religion has an important place in the dominant masculinity practices in Turkey, it is seen that Islam offers certain masculinity practices to men and men strengthen their masculinity through religion (Ozekici 61-65). While some of the participants mention that the ritual of sacrifice is accepted as the duty of the men in their families, when they do not want to be involved in the ritual of sacrificing like other male members of the family because they are vegan/vegetarian, they face the reaction of other men in their families and are marginalized by not being able to take a share in religion's strengthening of masculinity practices.

Some of the participants, especially by emphasizing the dominant role of meat in Turkish culture and its place in traditions (Altaş 411), stated that their mothers marginalized them and their vegan/vegetarianism was not understood by them. Some participants stated that their families especially mothers did not identify veganism/vegetarianism with Turkish culture and that they thought their sons were vegan/vegetarian due to the influence of western culture. At this point, it is understood that veganism/vegetarianism is not seen as a practice belonging to Turkish culture and traditions, and it is understood that the participants' families adopt a nationalist attitude based on their meat-eating habits.

Considering that nationalism and hegemonic masculinity are in great harmony with each other (Nagel 249), it is thought that the participants distanced themselves from the nationalist values of hegemonic masculinity due to their involvement in a movement that does not belong to Turkish culture. Based on the answers of the participants, it is revealed that their masculinity is questioned by their mothers as they move away from the traditional values associated with meat

and cannot get a share of the traditional values of dominant masculinity, and as a result, they are not understood from time to time.

It is understood that the comments of the participants on religion and nationalism through their veganism and vegetarianism are indirectly related to their masculinity. Because of the veganism and vegetarianism of the participants, their masculinity was not directly questioned, but rather they were perceived as marginal. However, when the experiences of the participants through religion and nationalism are evaluated, it is understood that they continue to be vegan and vegetarian, challenging the ideals that hegemonic masculinity imposes on them through religion and nationalism.

When I asked what kind of experiences the participants had in certain areas, almost all of the participants stated that they were perceived as gay because they were vegan/vegetarian men (Sobal 141; Adams 50). Based on this, it can be said that there is a very strong prejudice in Turkey that vegan and vegetarian men are gay. Adams explains this prejudice in literature as since meat-eating is the measure of masculinity of cultures and individuals, the social structure equates vegetarianism with castration or femininity (50). However, in order to better analyze why vegan and vegetarian men are perceived as gay, I also asked the participants what potential reasons could be for this stigma.

Almost all of the participants who answered this question stated that they think that they are perceived as gay because vegetables are associated with femininity and it is thought that eating vegetables makes men feminine. As already stated in the literature where I illustrated the relation between men and meat, hunter-man narrative helps to understand how this idea has been shaped. According to this narrative, when men are considered as hunters and provide the most important and vital food (meat), women only collect vegetables and herbs, which are seen as secondary nutrients (Burgan 38). In this context, participants who consume vegetables which are seen as a food identified with women, experience the feminization or homosexualization of vegan/vegetarian men as stated by Sobal, Adams and Carpar in the literature (Sobal 141 ; Adams 50; Carpar 364-266 ).

Considering that heterosexuality has an important place in the hegemonic structure of masculinity in Turkey (Ozekici 50), I also tried to find out whether the participants' perceptions of

them as homosexual were worrying for them. Some of the participants stated that they thought they would be excluded from society if they were perceived as homosexual. Since there is a dominant heterosexist social order in Turkey, it is possible for homosexual individuals to be excluded from dominant masculinity and to be oppressed (Ozekici 59; Ozbay 201). At this point, the thought that the participants will be excluded from the society can be interpreted as a true concern as it is based on some arguments.

At the same time, some of the participants stated that they hide that they are vegan and vegetarian in some cases in order not to be labeled as homosexual. This tendency of the participants to hide is understood as an effort to eliminate the problems (exclusion and mockery) that may arise due to the dominant power of heterosexual masculinity because they think that they are moving away from heterosexuality (Ozbay 201).

On the other hand, it is also important to remember the different types of masculinities which are already discussed in literature by Connell. As, subordinated masculinity is related to men with different sexual orientations, Connell states that this group of men are the most excluded group since they are excluded from heterosexuality, which is the first step in hegemonic masculinity (Connell; 78-79). Since vegan and vegetarian men are seen as homosexual by the society as already stated by the participants, they carry a risk to stay out of heterosexuality and to not experience the exclusion they try to hide their being vegan/vegetarian.

In the last part of my research questions, I asked my participants which institutions they thought were influential in their experiences. As already mentioned in the literature, masculinity is shaped by media, cinema, internet and social environments, family, education, advertisements, football match slogans, culture, education, politics and economic conditions (Bozok 23) but my participants stated that only the media from these institutions was effective in their experiences with regard to their masculinity because they were vegan/vegetarian.

Many of the participants mentioned that an ideal, strong and muscular male body was brought to the forefront thanks to television series, movies, newspaper news and newspaper articles, and they stated that the media channels mediated the idea that men should eat meat in order to reach this body. The responses of the participants about this situation is similar to the arguments in literature section where relationship between meat and the male body discussed.

As Reeser states, having a strong body is thought to be possible with foods such as meat and society has the idea that men must consume meat to obtain their power (95). Adams also states that eating the muscles of strong animals is believed to give strength to men (87) and it is seen that media is the mediator to impose this thought.

On the other hand, the ideal, strong, muscular, and therefore healthy male body that is highlighted by the media is parallel to the fact that the healthy male body mentioned in the literature has an important place in reaching the ideals of hegemonic masculinity (Erdogan 150). In the healthy strong male ideal that comes to the forefront in the media contents expressed by the participants, vegan/vegetarian men are positioned at a disadvantageous position in reaching these ideals because they do not consume meat and are thought not to be muscular enough.

In addition to the difficulties that hegemonic masculinity presents for vegan and vegetarian men, the media examples mentioned by my participants also contribute to the continuation of hegemonic masculinity by imposing the belief that men should eat meat. In the examples given by my participants through movies, television, newspapers and magazines, the belief that men need to eat meat to be strong emerges, while my participants emphasize that this belief can only be effective in the eyes of the society. My participants expressed that they did not agree with the statement made by the media on veganism and vegetarianism, and showed that they challenged the media's efforts to maintain hegemonic masculinity.

In addition to the answers given by the participants as the media, many participants also state that social media, especially Twitter, imposes a negative thought on vegan/vegetarian men. The answers of the participants who stated that there are too many jokes and funny posts about vegan men rather than vegetarian men in particular are similar to the argument expressed by Yilmaz in the literature that veganism and vegetarianism get a lot of reaction on social media (70-72).

At the same time, the participants stated that vegan men were identified with transsexuality, homosexuality and femininity, especially in the tweets made about vegan men, and they mentioned that these posts were usually made by other male users. At this point, the examples given by the participants can be explained by the argument expressed by Ozturk that hegemonic masculinity on Twitter is built by exclusion and humiliation of subordinated masculinity (113)

As I already mentioned in previous sections, the hegemonic masculinity plays a role in the marginalization of different masculinities as well as women. In the sample tweets shared by participants, it is seen that transsexuality and femininity are associated with veganism and vegan men are marginalized by other men because they cannot find a place in hegemonic masculinity practices that other men already have. In this context vegan men are mocked by other men in the construction and protection of their heterosexual hegemonic masculinity, and they have a new role as a protector of their hegemony in their struggle.

## **5.1 Final Remarks**

I started my research with the question of whether there is a relation between meat and masculinity and if there is a relation, how this relation effects the experiences of vegan/vegetarian men in Turkey.

Findings revealed that veganism/vegetarianism is not very common in Turkey among men due to the fear of men being seen as less masculine. Also, participants stated that they were faced some negative reactions in homosocial areas such as barbecue events, military service, gym halls, male shared flats and dormitories, where hegemonic masculinity is intensely felt because of their distance to meat which is linked with masculinity in the society. At the same time, according to the findings, some participants stated that they received harsh reactions especially from their fathers because as vegan/vegetarian males they posed a risk for their fathers to perpetuate their hegemonic ideals of masculinity. In addition, some of the participants stated that they were criticized both for their veganism/vegetarianism and for not being able to maintain the religious and tradition practices which have an important place in hegemonic masculinity in Turkey. Another finding in my research is that most of the participants are seen as gay because the meat is seen as a measure of masculinity and sometimes they tend to hide that they are vegan/vegetarian because of fear of exclusion which is also experienced by subordinated masculinities. Lastly, media and social media are stated to have a great impact on the experiences of vegan/vegetarian men in Turkey because of it imposing ideal male, muscular body type which can be reached only by eating meat.

I understood from my findings that because of the masculine meaning associated with meat and the association of vegetables with femininity, it is clear that hegemonic masculinity imposes on society that men need to eat meat in order to reach masculinity ideals. The answers given by my participants show that some men in Turkey alienate, mock and feminize vegan and vegetarian men in an effort to maintain their masculinity as a result of these ideas imposed on them by the hegemonic masculinity.

In addition, another finding that gained importance in my research is that the negative experiences of vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey are felt more in homosocial areas as hegemonic masculinity practices are felt and masculinity is rebuilt in these areas. Vegan and vegetarian men tend to hide their vegan and vegetarianism, especially in order not to have negative experiences in homosocial areas. The participants also stated that they hide their veganism and vegetarianism in situations and environments where they think they will be perceived as homosexual, since heterosexuality has a very important place in the hegemonic masculinity practices in Turkey. However, the participants who stated that they hide their veganism and vegetarianism in order not to be perceived as gay in some cases claimed that they were not homophobic and said that they did this mostly to protect themselves.

In conclusion, the answers of my participants show that hegemonic masculinity in Turkey has a great impact on the experience of vegan and vegetarian men. Although vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey seem to not challenge this hegemonic masculinity by hiding their veganism and vegetarianism from time to time due to the difficulties of hegemonic masculinity in Turkey, in fact, they do a very difficult thing by continuing to be vegan and vegetarian in a country like Turkey where hegemonic masculinity and masculinity practices are intensely felt. As a vegan and vegetarian man in Turkey, the participants also indirectly challenge the hegemonic practices of masculinity by continuing to be vegan and vegetarian.

Lastly, As I mentioned before, the lack of an academic research focusing on vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey was influential in my decision-making process for this research topic. With this study, I aimed to fill the gap in this field by including the experiences of vegan and vegetarians in Turkey with their own statements. Based on the answers of my participants, I aimed to show the general experiences of vegan and vegetarian men in Turkey, and I found that all of my main research question and sub-questions mentioned were answered.

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## **APPENDIX I**

### **Interview Questions**

### **Questions to know the participants better**

- Could you introduce yourself a little bit?
- Where are you from?
- May you tell me your age, vegan/vegetarian status and marital status?
- How long have you been a vegetarian/vegan?
- What motivations were effective in your becoming vegan and vegetarian?

### **Questions to understand the popularity of veganism and vegetarianism among men in Turkey**

- Do you know any other vegan/vegetarian men in Turkey?
- Do you think being vegan or vegetarian is getting popular among men in Turkey?
- Why do you think many men do not choose plant-based diet in Turkey?  
How is the perception of men who follow plant-based diet in Turkish society?
- How do you evaluate Turkish society's behavior towards animals? Do you think society is compassionate towards animals? Do you think men are as compassionate as women?
- How often do you spend time cooking? Do Turkish men like spending time cooking?

### **Questions to understand in which areas vegan and vegetarian men have negative experiences**

- In which social settings have you had negative experiences or prejudices as a vegan and vegetarian male?
- If you are single, how is your experience of dating? Do you date with people who are vegan/plant-based? How is their reaction? If you are married or have a partner, is your partner vegan/plant-based? If not, how is their reaction?
- How is your family's reaction about your diet?
- When you state that you are vegan/vegetarian, do you encounter any reaction on the basis of religion and traditions?

### **Questions on the perception of vegan and vegetarian men as homosexual**

- Have you had any guesses about your orientation because you are vegan and vegetarian?
- Do you think vegan and vegetarian men are often perceived as gay? Why do you think vegan/vegetarian men are considered gay?
- Have you had experiences where you were assumed to be gay because you were vegan or vegetarian?
- As a vegan and vegetarian male, is it a concern for you to be assumed to be gay?
- Have you ever felt afraid of losing your masculinity in the eyes of your social group?
- Have you ever thought that your masculinity was called into question because of your diet?

### **Questions to understand the institutions that play a role in the experience of vegan and vegetarian men**

- Which institutions do you think have an impact on the experiences of vegan/vegetarian men living in Turkey?
- Do you think the media is influential in the prejudices vegan and vegetarian individuals are exposed to? How are vegan/vegetarian men portrayed in the media?