



The Impact of the Opinions of Male Citizens in Northern Cyprus as Regards Compulsory Military Service on the Construction of Masculinity

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Abstract: This study benefited from the literature on masculinity studies. In the study, the intersection points of hegemonic masculinity and nationalist and militaristic structure are considered important in terms of evaluating compulsory military service. The main purpose of the study is to focus on the conscription process through the definition of hegemonic masculinity and the experiences of male citizens of Northern Cyprus who have experienced this process. The model of the study has the characteristics of qualitative research, and the study group was formed with the criterion sampling method. Within the scope of the study, the data were collected from 24 participants through face-to-face semi-structured interview forms. Using the phenomenological analysis technique, the impact of compulsory military service on the construction of masculinity, and the opinions and experiences of the people who experienced this process, were collected and evaluated through interviews. In the context of examining power and gender relations, the study emphasized the fact that masculinity has an unstable structure that varies depending on time, culture, and society. It has been concluded that masculinity is not a given phenomenon but is acquired through certain stages in social life.

Keywords: masculinity and military service, conscription, nationalism, militarism, hegemonic masculinity.

1. INTRODUCTION

Studies on masculinity and masculinities have been carried out in an interdisciplinary fashion since the 1970s. The critical aspect of masculinity studies, which has become an ever-expanding literature, is important for gender relations to adopt an egalitarian position. In revealing the unequal aspect of gender relations, masculinity studies draw attention to the constructed aspect of masculinity. It is underlined that there are different states of masculinity, and that being a man is learned in socialization processes. Masculinity is the product of the ideology that is glorified in the patriarchal social structure and aims to legitimize the current gender order. It is believed that examining men, who are the primary agents of patriarchy in terms of gender relations, with the support of literature from masculinity studies, has a critical aspect. Critical masculinity studies stemmed from the theoretical debates defined by radical feminist theory (Erkol, 2018). The fact that radical feminist theory defined the system as patriarchal and male-dominated also paved the way for masculinity studies. In terms of the importance of the definition of gender, it is aimed to focus on the social structure that affects human behavior, contrary to the view that genders are natural in terms of biology. From this point of view, one of the stages that men go through in the social structure in the direction of the constructed gender relations and learned masculinity is compulsory military service. Addressing the subject in terms of masculinity studies requires obtaining the evaluations of people who have experienced this process and benefiting from the masculinity studies literature in terms of gender relations. In this study, the compulsory military service process of Northern Cyprus citizens was examined. It is considered important to reveal the relationship between masculinity and military service in terms of the unique historical and social conditions of the country and to evaluate gender relations.

Every person who is a citizen of Northern Cyprus and is of military service age is considered obliged to do his military duty in accordance with the Military Internal Order Law No. 59/2000. In the text of the law, it is mentioned that women defined in the military age can also be recruited in the face of an extraordinary situation. As of January 1, of the year in which a male citizen of Northern Cyprus will turn 19, the compulsory military service process starts, or if he is still a student, he must apply to the ASAL (enlistment) branch in Nicosia for the postponement procedures. Military service age is defined as 19-49 years of age. Male citizens who have completed the compulsory military service process are required to contact the ASAL branch for mobilization one or more days a year, depending on their rank during the compulsory military service period, and take place in the designated military unit on the designated day. The varying durations of compulsory military service on the basis of rank are as follows:

- 15 months as a private,
- 12 months as a third lieutenant,
- 12 months as a sergeant, and
- In the case of military service by payment, there is a 1-month service period as a private.

According to the Health Capability Regulation of the Northern Cyprus Security Forces Command, those who are not deemed suitable in terms of health are exempted from compulsory military service. In the military law, those who must do their compulsory military service are defined as “liable soldiers”. Reference is made to the Military Offenses and Penalties Law No. 29/1983, which covers the scope of penalties for breaking the rules regarding compulsory military service. In the 74th article of the 1985 Northern Cyprus Constitution, military service is defined as “Homeland Duty”. Homeland duty is explained as “the right and sacred duty of every citizen”. In Article 72 of the Constitution of Northern Cyprus, it is envisaged that there is no discrimination beyond the qualifications required by the duty, and discharge from compulsory military service is required as a condition. A discharge certificate is required for male citizens so that they can apply for a job in the private sector. The scope of penalties as a result of non-compliance to enlistment rules and other military laws is defined by law.

Discussions on the compulsory military service process in Northern Cyprus are limited, but there are legal studies and discussions on the compulsory military service process in many countries of the world. In the post-Cold War period, the application of compulsory military service began to be discussed, and conscientious objection and professional military service became a hot topic among European Union countries (Murat, 2006). It is argued that citizens have begun to show discontent with the application of compulsory military service, which was now seen as a cumbersome structure. The predominant aspect of today’s debates is the use of the continuation of the concept of unity that conscription has given in terms of nationalism. In the examination of the military institution, in order to evaluate the whole set of rules specific to the military, haircuts, shaving, wearing a uniform, standardization, experience, thoughts about hierarchical relations, and stereotypes about military service. It is believed that examining the relationship between military service and masculinity in terms of Northern Cyprus will contribute to masculinity studies, which have an important place in gender studies.

In terms of social gender norms, masculinity has been defined through completeness, wholeness, not being helpless, not having any deficiency, not being upset, strength, and concealing one’s feelings. This idea of completeness attributed to masculinity in fact creates an illusion by ignoring the helplessness of being human and the fact that being human means the need for each other. In a life where the illusion of masculinity is maintained through an absolute adequacy phenomenon, the moments when this illusion is compensated create a masculinity crisis. With the concept of “bargaining with patriarchy”, Kandiyoti (2011) refers not only to women’s consent to certain norms but also to understanding the overlap of masculinity with the concept of diversity. The author considers these bargains, which allow the patriarchy to continue, important in terms of comprehending the facts. Just like “hegemonic masculinity”, the concept of “bargaining with patriarchy” is “an important step towards understanding what patriarchy looks like through the eyes of men, as it emphasizes that gender relations are networked and based on mutual reactions and moves”

(Günay-Erkol, 2018). Critical men’s studies originated from the theoretical debates of second-wave feminism and started with the definitions of social gender and the patriarchal system. Critical studies on masculinity and masculinities have been eye-opening for gender studies. They started to be discussed in academia and among activist groups in the second half of the 1970s and claimed a place in academia along with (pro)feminist studies in the mid-1980s (Arık, 2016). The roots mentioned in the literature for men’s studies, as stated by Connell, Kimmel, and Aronson, emerged with the Men’s Liberation Movement in the late 1960s (Horzum, 2018). In the 1970s, feminism gained a critical characteristic as a theoretical and activist movement. On one hand, the subordination of women was defined; on the other hand, the domination relations of the masculine patriarchal system in history, society, and economy were revealed and nurtured by critical thinking. The replacement of women’s studies by social gender studies with a critical view paved the way for men’s studies. Women’s studies left the role of masculinity out of scope, and in the 1950s and 60s, social theory studied men through the role of fatherhood. On the other hand, in the 1970s, masculinity studies examined the role of masculinity. In the 1980s, the definition of hegemonic masculinity expanded the meaning of the concept of social role, and the focus shifted to the fact that masculinity is based on diversity (Carrigan, Connell, and Lee 1985). Therefore, the 1980s was a period when there was no single masculinity, and different masculinities could be mentioned when the concept of masculinity started to be examined in terms of its relationship with the patriarchal system (Çakır, 2017). By considering masculinity as a gender category, masculinity studies aim to investigate the role of masculinity in an interdisciplinary position and the manifestations of men’s power in society. In studies, masculinity is defined as a social construction. The concept of hegemonic masculinity, whose foundations were laid by Connell (1998) in the literature, is related to power and accepted as a type of power, which underestimates other masculinity forms. The hegemonic understanding of masculinity leaves them out of the scope by creating competition and establishing an oppositional relationship with many men and masculinities. This definition of masculinity excludes “disabled, gay, old” men in addition to females because it sees them as opposed to hegemonic masculinity defined as “strong” (Akgül, 2010, p.15). Hegemonic masculinity enables us to understand not only the domination of men over women but also the relations of domination between men (Çakır, 2017). In the patriarchal system, hegemonic masculinity creates an ideal, the competition and hierarchical plane between men. In this respect, there are differences between black masculinity, white masculinity, poor masculinity, European masculinity, Asian masculinity, Christian masculinity, and Muslim masculinity in terms of sharing power and benefiting from the patriarchal order. With the emergence of nation states, conscription is defined as an obligation imposed on male citizens, which replaces the voluntary basis and is defined by the ability to fight. It represents the overlapping relationship of the modern state with the military institution, and citizens are assigned the tasks of protecting the borders of the state against defined enemies outside and against anti-state revolts inside. The modern state creates the concepts of “us” and “other” and defines the enemy through this distinction: the perception of “us” is constructed within the army by uniformization and the destruction of individuality (Aykaç, 2011). In terms of gender roles, compulsory military service is defined in relation to the image of men who protect the homeland with their warrior, strong and protective role and this process is seen as a stage that must be passed when building masculinity. In order to create subject bodies, male citizens are prepared for this process by constructing male roles before military service. Authority turns the individuals into subjects through ideologies. In every role given to individuals by ideologies, there is an aspect of being “summoned”. Individuals become subjects through ideology. This definition function is explained through the metaphor of “summoning” (Güngör, 2001). Summoning is related to the “argument that ideology is processed through interpellation: interpellation of individuals as ‘subjects’ by the ideology” as emphasized by Althusser (Turan, 2013, p. 310). The individual called by the ideology knows that this call is directed to him and responds to this call: thus, the process of becoming a subject begins. Men who do not complete military service, which is defined as their duty as a man, are considered incomplete, and the society tends to think that they are not ready for marriage. People who reject the compulsory military service also have difficulties in getting a job and getting married as a relationship established with the state. For those who are discharged after completing the compulsory military service, the way to find a job and marry is paved. Conversations in military-related male groups can be described as homosocial settings: “being a man enough” is

about gaining acceptance among other groups of men. Homosocial (male-to-male environments) relationships play an important role in this respect (Gedik, Çakır, & Coşkun, 2020).

In this study which is conducted on the compulsory military service process in Northern Cyprus, the importance of analyzing through definitions in the literature on masculinity studies requires a discussion of gender relations in terms of Northern Cyprus. The definition of masculinity appears as a product of a series of complicated socio-cultural interactions as a social gender category. It is a social construction that has a practical counterpart in daily life (Connell, 1998). On the basis of gender-based discrimination relations, masculinity is constructed as a social phenomenon. The male-dominated structure is taken as a reference where feminine elements are excluded (Sancar, 2016). The aim of this study is to examine the relationship between masculinity and the compulsory military service process through the definition of hegemonic masculinity terms used in masculinity studies. For this purpose, answers to the following questions were sought:

1. What is the place of the conscription process in Northern Cyprus in the construction of hegemonic masculinity through the discourse found in the laws?
2. Are there any differences in the evaluation of the military service perspective of men who are citizens of Northern Cyprus at least 5 years after being discharged?
3. What are the differences between motivation factors before military service and opinions on conscription after discharge in terms of evaluating the perspective on military service?
4. What are the differences in the opinions on military service of those who were discharged after completing their compulsory military service based on their rank and compulsory military service term?
5. What are the opinions of male citizens of Northern Cyprus about the existence of certain obligations in the body-subject relationship and behavior patterns with a view to improving performance during the compulsory military service?

2. METHOD

2.1. Research Model

The model of the study was constructed with the qualitative method, and the phenomenology pattern was used. In phenomenological research, the studied phenomenon (concept, thought, emotion) is emphasized, and a study is conducted on how the participants experience the phenomenon as well as their discourses regarding this experience (Tekindal and Uğuz-Arsu, 2020). The purpose of such studies is to understand these experiences in depth and to reveal the meanings that people give to these experiences, based on the practices of people in their daily lives. Since the phenomenon of military service is discussed in depth within the scope of the study, it is aimed to reveal the meanings created about a phenomenon that is experienced in common during this process.

2.2. Study Group

Study group was formed with individuals covered by the compulsory military service process using criterion sampling method, which is a purposive sampling method. Criterion sampling involves “studying all cases which meet a series of pre-determined criteria” (Baltacı, 2018, p. 254). The fundamental approach in criterion sampling method is studying all cases that meet a series of criteria chosen in advance. Two criteria were applied in choosing the participants of the study: participants having completed military service, and 5 years having passed after their discharge. The criterion that 5 years having passed after the discharge was used so that they could remember the military service period, be able to talk about mobilization experience, and having time to evaluate these processes. From these perspectives, 24 people were selected who completed compulsory military service as private (15 months), sergeant (12 months), and third-lieutenant (12 months). Demographic features of the participants are given in Table 1.

Table1. *Demographic Information on Participants who were Discharged upon Completion of Compulsory Military Service*

No	Age	Education Status	Marital	Military	Occupation
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			Status	Rank	
G1	33	Master	Single	Sergeant	Archaeologist
G2	35	Undergraduate	Single	Sergeant	Business Administrator
G3	40	Undergraduate	Married	Sergeant	Architect
G4	32	Undergraduate	Single	Sergeant	Civil engineer
G5	31	Undergraduate	Single	Sergeant	Accountant
G6	32	Undergraduate	Married	3 rd Lieutenant	Public Officer
G7	32	Master	Single	3 rd Lieutenant	Master architect
G8	31	Undergraduate	Married	3 rd Lieutenant	Teacher
G9	30	Master	Married	3 rd Lieutenant	Software engineer
G10	35	High School	Married	Soldier	Construction worker
G11	32	High School	Single	Soldier	Artisan
G12	40	High School	Married	Soldier	Repairer
G13	45	High School	Married	Soldier	Hair Dresser
G14	38	High School	Single	Soldier	Business person
G15	35	Undergraduate	Single	Soldier	Technician
G16	42	High School	Married	Soldier	Operator
G17	32	High School	Single	Soldier	Unemployed
G18	31	High School	Single	Soldier	Technician
G19	36	High School	Married	Soldier	Musician
G20	47	Undergraduate	Single	By Payment	Mechanical engineer
G21	34	Master	Single	By Payment	Lecturer
G22	38	PhD	Single	By Payment	Mining engineer
G23	37	Master	Married	By Payment	Dentist
G24	48	PhD	Married	By Payment	Lecturer

The names of the interviewees were coded as G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, G6, G7, G8, G9, G10, G11, G12, G13, G14, G15, G16, G17, G18, G19, G20, G21, G22, G23, and G24 according to ethical rules. Interviewees coded G1, G2, G3, G4, and G5 were discharged after 12 months of compulsory military service at the rank of sergeant. Interviewees coded G6, G7, G8, and G9 were discharged after 12 months of compulsory military service at the rank of third lieutenant. Interviewees coded G6, G7, and G9, after passing the written and sports exam required for third lieutenant service, received training in Tuzla, Istanbul, in the first month of their compulsory military service. Later, they came to the TRNC and completed their compulsory military service by working overtime as a third lieutenant in various barracks. Interviewee coded G8, after passing the written and sports exam required for third lieutenant service, received training on interpreting in Ankara in the first month of their compulsory military service. Later, they came to the TRNC and completed their compulsory military service by working overtime as a third lieutenant in the Bosphorus Headquarters, where the translator military personnel work. Interviewees coded G10, G11, G12, G13, G14, G15, G16, G17, G18, and G19 were discharged after completing their compulsory military service as privates in 15 months. Interviewees coded G20, G21, G22, G23, and G24 were discharged after completing their compulsory military service as private for 1 month based on military service by payment.

2.3. Data Collection Tool

The data were obtained within the scope of the study using semi-structured interview forms in face-to-face interviews. The form was prepared by researchers after scanning relevant resources. In order for the study to reach its objectives, 9 questions were asked to individuals who were discharged after completing their compulsory military service. The interview form consisted of open-ended questions, as well as additional questions aimed at helping interviewees and making them remember. Open-

ended questions were preferred as they ensured that the emotions, opinions and attitudes of interviewees could be understood better and an interactive and flexible dialogue could be established during the interview.

2.4. Data Collection Process

Interviews were started after obtaining Ethical Compliance Approval from Eastern Mediterranean University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Board. Then, interviews were conducted with study group until April 16, 2022. Appointments were requested from people to be interviewed, and the interviews were booked for the days and hours suitable for the potential interviewees. Prior to the interviews, voluntary participation form was signed by the interviewees who were explained that they had the right to reject participation without any sanction and that they could abort the study any time they wanted. It was stated that the information received during the interview would not be matched with the identity of the interviewees, their names would be kept confidential during the study, and a coding system would be used for the information received. Each interview lasted one hour on average. When the interview started, information was given about the audio recording and permission was obtained so that the interviews could be audio recorded. The files containing the audio recordings of the interviews were converted into text in Word format without changing the words used by the interviewees in their statements.

2.5. Analysis of Data

The data obtained in the study were interpreted using phenomenological analysis techniques. “According to phenomenology, the concept of phenomenon refers to the objects, events and/or phenomena perceived by conscious”, and the focus is on the “subjective realities that people perceive through their conscious” (Çarpar, 2020, p. 694). The interviews focused on the experiences of the interviewees and attention was paid to the meaning, attitude, and perceptions of interviewees as regards military service as a phenomenon. Themes were created as regards the information obtained through the interviews and interpreted. Dialogues between the researcher and interviewee progressed interactively, and common themes were formed based on the cognitive and emotional expressions of the interviewees regarding phenomena. Considering that language is affected by the culture and ideological arguments of individuals, phenomenological analysis was underlined so that the perspectives of interviewees as regards military service could be explored.

3. FINDINGS, INTERPRETATIONS, AND DISCUSSION

In this section, the findings provided by the participants who were discharged after completing the compulsory military service were gathered under themes and interpreted in the light of the relevant literature, supported by quotations from the participants where necessary.

Opinions of the Interviewees Who Have Completed the Compulsory Military Service Process on the Body of Rules About This Process

Persons who completed their compulsory military service in the rank of sergeant, private, third lieutenant, and private by payment were asked, “What are your opinions on the body of rules in the conscription process?” Table 2 shows how the participants interpreted this question in terms of standardization, wearing uniforms, and hierarchical relations in the military.

Table 2. *The Opinions of the Interviewees Discharged from the Compulsory Military Service on the Body of Rules in This Process*

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes	Participants
Body of Rules	Standardization	Destruction of personality	G1, G11, G16, G19, G22
		Necessary for discipline	G4, G6, G7, G10, G15, G18
		Required to manage	G8, G13, G17, G23
		Required in the system	G5, G12, G20, G21, G24

		Being reasonable	G2, G3, G9, G14
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As can be seen in Table 2, responses given by the interviewees as regards the body of rules in compulsory military service were organized and common themes were used. Participants in Table 2 show variance as private, sergeant, third lieutenant and private by payment. The comment that standardization destroys personality was shared by interviewees who performed military servant as a sergeant (G1), private (G19), and private by payment (G22). Two interviewees (G20, G21) who performed military service in similar ranks and terms and were discharged after military service by payment in one month stated that standardization was necessary for the systematic operation of the military institution. Likewise, two interviewees (G2, G3) who completed their military service with the status of sergeant focused on the rationality of standardization. They argued that the military has a managerial logic in itself, and an important part of this logic is standardization. They claimed that standardization has a logic in the field conditions in case of war. In addition, they emphasized that everyone was equal in order to replace the “me” feeling with the “us” feeling.

The hegemonic definition of masculinity is about manhood which does not exist in reality but is defined ideally. Connell explained the concept of hegemonic masculinity as the gender inequality between men and women, the balance of power among men, and their relationship with demonstration (Horzum, 2018). The military institution also creates an ideal construction through uniform symbols which infuse the invincible feeling of “us”. Men in uniform create the demonstrated power of militarist masculinity as they act in a single order, show obedience, and display the same styles which look like extensions of their bodies (Çoban, 2013). Below are sample views of the participants on this subject.

“They want to completely destroy your identity and produce a person with a different personality. Apart from that, it aims to humiliate and oppress different mentalities. They also make insulting addresses to people who do not accept that uniform, that weapon, or that do not accept that task” (G1)

“So, I think it’s good for discipline, to discipline people and soldiers” (G7).

“Command or hierarchy, whatever you want to call it, what they want to teach is that they want us to do it without questioning in any situation” (G12).

“You have to somehow contain a large group of people without necessarily being visible to anyone, that is... So, you have to direct a behavior, and the way to do that is probably standardization” (G20).

“Some people go to the military willingly and some unwillingly. It is very difficult to keep everyone in line. That’s why ridiculous rules and penalties can be applied. They want to make us look the same in order to keep everyone in line and tell the society that these people are soldiers” (G23).

Findings Concerning the Opinions of Interviewees Who Have Completed the Compulsory Military Service Regarding the Stereotypes of This Process

There are certain stereotypes and syntaxes learned and reproduced in the socialization process related to compulsory military service. These syntaxes can be heard in every period of life, which reveals the aspect of language supporting gender inequalities. The language used in daily life is affected by culture, and the male-dominant structure of culture affects the usage of language, which popularizes sexist terms.

In this regard, examples of stereotypes reconciling the perception of military service and masculinity were presented to those who have completed their compulsory military service, and their opinions were asked. These stereotypes are explained and exemplified as ‘you can’t become a man without completing military service, you can’t get married without completing military service, every man should complete military service, the military process teaches men to be responsible and disciplined’. In Table 3, the opinions of people who were discharged after completing their compulsory military service are organized based on codes.

Table 3. *The Opinions of the Interviewees Discharged from the Compulsory Military Service on the Syntaxes Related to the Military Service and Masculinity*

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes	Participants
Stereotypes	Reflections on syntaxes associated with masculinity	I don't think is related to masculinity.	G1, G4, G5, G8, G11, G12, G13, G14, G15, G17, G18, G19, G20, G21, G22, G23
		I think it is directly related to masculinity	G2, G3, G9, G24
		I am not certain	G6, G7, G10, G16

Opinions of interviewees, as regards syntaxes about military service, display their perspectives on military service during the interview. The basic opinion shared by all interviewees (G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, G6, G7, G8, G9, G10, G11, G12, G13, G14, G15, G16, G17, G18, G19, G20, G21, G22, G23, G24) is that military service is a stage that has to be gone through. They share the view that they faced military service as an obligation and accepted it without question as a stage to be overcome and that life begins after discharge. Among the interviewees who completed military service in different ranks and times, only G6 and G7-coded participants gave uncertain statements about the relation between military service and masculinity. Both completed their military service as a third lieutenant and were superiors to people in various ranks in their barracks. G8, who thinks that military service is not related to masculinity, completed his military service as a third lieutenant, worked as an interpreter at the military due to his expertise, and was positioned in an office environment instead of barracks. Interviewees who completed military service as private (G17, G18, G19) share the view that it is not related to masculinity. Privates stated that they did not perform any war-related practices and were busy with toilet cleaning, barrack cleaning, and construction work during their service. In this respect, they explained that military service is not suitable for its purpose, and therefore, the practices of compulsory military service are not related to masculinity. The interviewees who completed their military service as privates by payment (G20, G21, G22) stated that the compulsory military service process has nothing to do with masculinity. They argued that they only rose from and went to bed at definite times during their military service, that they prepared for the ceremony within a month, and that this ceremony was nothing more than a show. These interviewees stated that the one-month compulsory military service period has nothing to do with masculinity. Two interviewees (G2, G3) who think that it is related to masculinity completed their military service as sergeants in 12 months. These participants focused on the system of ranks in the military process and the ideological connection of military service with masculinity in terms of war doctrine. The discourse series in which stereotypes are produced are beyond being a mere narrative and determine the construction of power and subject (Doğan, 2019). Below are sample views of the participants on this subject.

“I think the ideology here is about trying to keep the military ideology alive. Just to keep that mentality living. Frankly, they try to abolish your brain since you first enlist in the military, they just offer you a system that is enough for you to live with your spinal cord” (G1).

“In order to be able to stand on their own feet and take care of their spouse or child, military service is required” (G3).

“Is it possible not to go? If I didn't go, I would be referred to as a traitor or a useless person. but yes, military service is not a place to go” (G9).

“I was a cleaner, a construction worker, a laborer... I used to make coffee, so this is not military service; my company was a mine company, and I didn't see any mines... A mine company is normally a fortification company. So they told us like this: you go in the front, you destroy the mines, or you go somewhere and set a mine. I served in the military for 15 months; I do not even know the shape of the mine. I've never seen one. On the other hand, I became familiar with construction materials such as brooms and mops there” (G17).

Findings Regarding the Opinions of Persons Who Have Completed their Compulsory Military Service

Military service is defined as “homeland duty” in Article 74 of the Northern Cypriot Constitution. Male citizens of Northern Cyprus are obliged to receive a discharge certificate from the military or, if they are not fit for military service, an exemption certificate in this regard. As conscientious objection is not defined by Northern Cypriot laws, every male citizen is defined as a liable soldier within laws under the armed forces when his age is suitable. Interviewees who were discharged after completing the compulsory military service were asked whether they would join the military if this process was not compulsory. The opinions of the interviewees who were discharged after completing the compulsory military service about compulsory military service are organized in Table 4.

Table 4. *Opinions of Interviewees Discharged from Compulsory Military Service about Military Service being Compulsory*

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes	Participants
Thoughts on compulsory military service	Opinions on obligation	I wouldn't join if it wasn't compulsory	G1, G3, G4, G7, G8, G12, G15, G17, G18, G19, G20, G21, G22, G23, G24
		I would join even if it was not compulsory	G2, G5, G11, G13
		I am uncertain	G6, G9, G10, G14, G16

As can be seen in Table 4, all but two of the interviewees who were discharged after completing military service (G1, G3, G5, G6, G7, G8, G9, G10, G11, G12, G13, G14, G15, G16, G17, G18, G19, G20, G21, G22, G23, G24) stated that they would not have joined the military if the service was not compulsory. G6, who completed military service as a third lieutenant, stated that he was not sure whether he would have joined the military in the case of social pressure and whether he would feel incomplete if the men in his environment joined the military. He argued that to overcome this feeling he could have decided to join the military even if it was not compulsory. Another interviewee (G2) who completed compulsory military service as a sergeant stated that he could have wanted to join even if it was not compulsory. Considering the relationship of military service with masculinity, there is a relationship between nationalism, militarism, and masculinity with a view to the request of a man to be included in the military process, which is defined as the duty of every man, even if it is not compulsory. Boys being directed to play with guns from childhood, wearing camouflage, and being urged to choose professions such as military and police force are also an indication of this fact. Underlying the demand to take part in the defense of the country's borders against the enemy, as a military defense, lies the learning of the nationalist ideology, and the male-specific perception of this task, thus, the connection of militarism with masculinity. Below are sample views of the participants on this subject.

“I definitely wouldn't join. I wouldn't even pass close to it” (G1)

“I am a classical man, and I think that some things have to exist. Because I think that I need to gain some experiences, and because I think that experiencing will add something to me, and because the feeling of homeland and nation predominates” (G2).

“Would I join if it wasn't compulsory, I can't give a full answer. As I said, a little bit of social pressure, I wonder what I would think if it was voluntary, just because we thought so. Would it be like, “my best friend joined the military, so I should go”? Frankly, I can't imagine right now” (G6).

“I would not join. It is loud and clear” (G18).

“Military service is not a smart place. Let those who want to go or do it for a fee. I am starting my future one year behind to do military service” (G24).

Findings Related to Interviewees who have Completed Their Mandatory Military Service Concerning the Idea of Mobilization

The Security Forces Command defines mobilization as follows: “The preparation, standardization, and use of all the material and moral forces and resources of Northern Cyprus from a state of peace to a state of warfare to meet the needs of war.”¹ Mobilization Office and Mobilization was defined in Northern Cypriot 59/2000 Military Service Law. In the Mobilization Law No. 17/1980, information about the mobilization exercise is given and it is stated that a penalty would be imposed in case of failure in participating in the mobilization exercise. The notification regarding the mobilization is made to the person through the Main Branch of the Security Forces Command or the police department. Persons discharged from the compulsory military service process have to show up in the barracks, which are notified to them every year according to their rank during the military service process. Former privates, sergeants and privates by payment have to participate in mobilization one day a year, whereas former third lieutenants have to spend two days a year. The purpose here is to keep alive the information of reserve forces as regards military order and warfare. The interviewees who were discharged after completing their compulsory military service were questioned about their views on the practice of mobilization and their motivation for mobilization. In Table 5, the opinions of people who were discharged after completing the compulsory military service period regarding mobilization are organized.

Table 5. *Opinions of the Interviewees Discharged from the Conscription on Mobilization*

Theme	Sub-theme	Codes	Participants
Opinions and attitudes towards mobilization	Opinions on mobilization	Inappropriate and time consuming	G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, G6, G7, G8, G9, G10, G11, G12, G13, G14, G15, G16, G17, G18, G19, G20, G21, G22, G23, G24

All interviewees who were discharged after completing military service (G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, G6, G7, G8, G9, G10, G11, G12, G13, G14, G15, G16, G17, G18, G19, G20, G21, G22, G23, G24) stated that they regularly attended mobilizations, and their motivation was the chance to see their old friends and its obligatory nature, non-compliance to which was to be punished. As seen in Table 5, the opinion that the people who discharged after completing their compulsory military service were not properly mobilized and that mobilization were a waste of time was shared by all the interviewees (G1, G2, G3, G4, G5, G6, G7, G8, G9, G10, G11, G12). The opinion that mobilization was not performed rationally was expressed by the interviewees. The statements of G4, who said that he wanted to receive weapons education so as to be able to protect his wife and children, is a manifestation of the unequal gender relations and the protective role imposed on men. In this regard, it is important to mention paternalism as a concept. Paternalism (protectionism) reflects the view that women need protection in the position determined by the male perspective (Doğan, 2019). Below are sample views of the participants on this subject.

“Obviously, they don’t train in any way in mobilization. In no way, that is, they do not offer you a new rule, a method, a technique. I think there is a system that says, “You will come here when I want and you will learn to obey again, you couldn’t get rid of me by serving in the military for a year” ... There is no motivation, it’s an obligation just like military service” (G1).

“We, the Turks in the north, used to mobilize only to find friends and satisfy our longing. But on the Greek side, when the men finish their military service, they take weapons to their homes, and we don’t have any guns. If war breaks out, can we use that weapon or not? It’s ridiculous, but it’s not like that on the Greek side, the guys on the Greek side are ready as good marksmen, so even you mobilize for fifty years as much as you want, you can’t catch up with them. I mean, if they say you will come to me, you will wear your clothes, you will practice shooting all day, we will show you our new rocket launcher, you will get in the tank, you will hit that target, all of us will go, but it is ridiculous to go and sit in an empty field” (G3).

“Mobilization is completely unnecessary in our country. In fact, it is a correct system in terms of literature. Nothing is done, no shooting is done, no weapons training is done, the weapon is not

¹Security Forces Command, “Mobilization” <https://mucahit.gov.ct.tr/Sayfa/Tarihce/> Accessed on: 05.08.2022

broken and installed, military basic training is not reminded. Total waste of time, go sit there and wait for the hour, and rush back. Otherwise, if the mobilization is implemented as it is in the literature, yes, it is necessary, the situation of the country we live in is clear, anything can happen at any time. Frankly, I want to remember that weapon, to remember that training to protect my family and my wife” (G6).

“Would I go and do something in the mobilization, I won’t, I’ll kill time again” (G8).

“I look at it as a rest day, I look at it completely as a rest day that I get one day a year from work. Seeing my old friends again. This is my only motivation” (G18).

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study aims at revealing the connection between compulsory military service and masculinity in the case of Northern Cyprus and explore the opinions of people who experienced this process. It is the first of its kind with these characteristics. The study focuses on the process of military service which constitutes an important part of the lives of male citizens and is defined as a process that should be experienced. The military process brings together many aspects of daily life such as being in the barracks in the army, wearing a uniform, standardization through haircuts and shaving in the same style for everyone, sleeping in the same place with the people in the same summons through the bunk bed system, getting up at a certain time, eating at a certain time and doing sports activities at a certain time. As defined in the Northern Cyprus Constitution, the military service process is explained as a duty and is compulsory for male citizens.

Interviews were held so as to evaluate this process with people who were discharged from compulsory military service. In these interviews, it was found out that interviewees were prepared to this process within socialization before they were conscripted, and conversations were held about military service memories in male homo-social environments. It was noticed that as regards military service, the factor of social setting on being included in this process affected the opinions and behaviors of interviewees. The legitimacy of individuals in being included in this process is affected by nationalist and militarist elements as well as their opinions on masculinity. One of the points on which interviewees are focused as regards military service is its compulsory nature, which is the first reason for participation in this process. Compulsory military service includes only male citizens in the case of Northern Cyprus and helps create a homo-social environment. From this perspective, due to the obligation of being in the same barracks with certain people for a certain period of time, males develop a version of group psychology. People create and adopt group norms beyond the members of this group by creating a social setting. The process of compulsory military service constitutes the process of creating harmonious individuals and obedient bodies, in which the perception of the individual is replaced by the perception of “us” and individuality is destroyed through standardization. The interviews displayed that in terms of such constructed group norms, people had difficulty showing their individuality in civilian life in the barracks environment and that they were in a state of keeping pace with the group norms.

It was noticed that the male citizens of Northern Cyprus who were interviewed during the study did not agree with the connection between military service and masculinity in the direct questions asked, but they mentioned this connection in their responses to other questions during the interview process. When the results of the study are evaluated, it was found out that the opinions as regards compulsory military service are related to the ideological views of the interviewees. Participants who were close to nationalist ideologies emphasized that compulsory military service is a stage that every man has to experience and that it is critical to learn how to fight so as to protect one’s wife and the country. On the contrary, the interviewees who do not have nationalist views tended to reject compulsory military service. The comment received from the participants about the uniformity reinforced by practices such as wearing uniforms, having a haircut, and shaving during the compulsory military service is that there are certain obligations in all institutional structures. Among the interviewees, there is a prevailing view that wearing a uniform creates a feeling of “unity” and equalizes everyone. The fact that the option of military service is regulated within the scope of compulsory military service is an indication that economic inequality is embedded in the structure of the institution. All of the participants share the view that this process is a stage in their lives that must be overcome. In a

master’s thesis written on the relationship between compulsory military service and social capital, interviewees in Turkey were asked what feelings they felt while enlisting in the military. Most of the participants defined this process as patriotic duty and mission (Demirkan, 2019). In this study conducted with male citizens of Northern Cyprus, the general trend regarding compulsory military service is that this process is a phase that needs to be overcome. The words “patriotic duty” or “mission” were not used in the definitions. Compulsory military service was not defined as “homeland debt, homeland duty, mission, task”. The view that this process was an obstacle in front of them was shared by the participants. All of the people who were discharged after completing their compulsory military service for fifteen months as privates stated that this process did not teach them to fight, and that they spent their military service doing things such as cleaning, painting the barracks, and collecting garbage. The privates by payment interviewed stated that they only prepared for the ceremony during their 1-month compulsory military service, did not do sports during their military service, and did not learn war techniques. Those who were discharged after completing their compulsory military service stated that their compulsory military service taught them to take responsibility for the weapon entrusted to them and to be disciplined by planning what they would do during the day.

Interviewees who were discharged after completing compulsory military service mentioned that friendships established during compulsory military service could be long-lasting, and attributed the development of such a friendship relation to the fact that they spend the entire day together, far from their family and regular friends. The majority of the interviewees stated that good friendships were established during military service and stated that their military service friendships continued afterward. As a similar result, in a thesis study on military service in Turkey, friendship in military service was found to be sincere and not based on self-interest by the participants, even though they came from various geographies and cultures (Demirkan, 2019). In line with the information received from the interviewees, the experience of the ward was likened to the sports and youth camps before compulsory military service, the dormitory where people stayed during university years, and the environments where people stayed together due to work. Regarding the mobilization process that started the year after the end of compulsory military service, all the participants who were discharged after completing their compulsory military service focused on the fact that mobilization was not performed properly. It was argued that activities such as sports and shooting during the military service were not carried out during the mobilization and that it caused a waste of a complete day. In the light of the information obtained from the interviews, the motivation factors behind mobilization which came to the fore were the fact that the mobilization was compulsory and was punished in case of non-compliance and that it provided the opportunity to meet with old friends from the military service period.

This study, which focuses on the experience of compulsory military service, shows that, in terms of the constructed aspect of masculinity, a universal definition of masculinity cannot be made based on the view that masculinity is something that can be acquired or lost. The military service process, which is compulsory for the male citizens of Northern Cyprus, constitutes one of the stages of masculinity. The idea that only men who have completed their compulsory military service can get married, start a regular job, and actually begin their lives was shared by the interviewees. It is difficult for a person who has not been discharged from military service to find a job. In addition, the idea that military service should be completed for marriage is also shared by the society.

The following recommendations can be offered based on the findings of this study:

- It is recommended that the rights of conscientious objection and total rejection be opened to discussion for those who do not want to participate in the compulsory military service process.
- Since the compulsory military service process is considered long by the interviewees, it is recommended to open a discussion on shortening the process.
- Since the opinion that the mobilization is not in accordance with the procedure was shared by the interviewees, it is recommended to open a discussion on the mobilization practice.

- It is recommended to carry out social studies to question sexist discourses in order to prevent myths such as soldier-nation.
- At the end of this study, which has the characteristics of a qualitative research, it is recommended to conduct quantitative studies on the process of compulsory military service and masculinity.
- It is recommended that a research group be selected from the people who are exempted from the compulsory military service process, in order to collect the opinions of these people about this process and to provide a detailed research opportunity.

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