

## In the Shadow of Gender: The Construction of Masculine Domination and Violence Through the Conflict Between Hegemonic and Fragile Masculinities in the Films “Black Night” and “Burning Days”

Toplumsal Cinsiyetin Gölgesinde: “Karanlık Gece” ve “Kurak Günler” Filmlerinde Hegemonik ve Kırılgan Erkeklikler Arasındaki Çatışma Üzerinden Eril Tahakküm ve Şiddetin İnşası

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### ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine how patterns of hegemonic and fragile masculinity are constructed and represented in two Turkish films, *Black Night* and *Burning Days*. Through thematic analysis, it reveals how masculine hegemony transforms into symbolic and physical violence and how fragile masculinities are punished. Although both films have different cinematic narratives, they share a common universe in legitimizing and reproducing male domination. While *Black Night* focuses on physical violence, *Burning Days* depicts symbolic violence through institutional structures. The findings demonstrate that symbolic and physical violence function as main instruments in maintaining and reproducing masculine hegemony in everyday practices. By focusing on cinematic representations, this analysis makes visible the manifestations of gender inequality as reflected in Turkish cinema.

**Keyword:** Turkish Cinema, Gender Representation, Hegemonic Masculinity, Fragile masculinity, Symbolic Violence

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## ÖZ

Bu çalışma, iki Türk filmi olan Karanlık Gece ve Kurak Günler üzerinden hegemonik ve kırılğan erkeklik örüntülerinin nasıl inşa edildiğini ve temsil edildiğini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Tematik analiz yoluyla, eril hegemonyanın nasıl sembolik ve fiziksel şiddete dönüştüğü ve kırılğan erkeklik biçimlerinin nasıl cezalandırıldığı ortaya konulmaktadır. Her iki film farklı sinemasal anlatılara sahip olmakla birlikte, erkek egemenliğini meşrulaştıran ve yeniden üreten ortak bir evreni paylaşmaktadır. Karanlık Gece fiziksel şiddete odaklanırken, Kurak Günler kurumsal yapılar aracılığıyla sembolik şiddeti betimlemektedir. Bulgular, sembolik ve fiziksel şiddetin, gündelik pratikler içerisinde eril hegemonyanın sürdürülmesi ve yeniden üretilmesinde temel araçlar olarak işlev gördüğünü göstermektedir. Sinemasal temsillere odaklanan bu analiz, toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin Türk sinemasına yansıyan görünümünü görünür kılmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Türk Sineması, Toplumsal Cinsiyet Temsili, Hegemonik Erkeklik, Kırılğan Erkeklik, Sembolik Şiddet

## Introduction

Gender is a complex socio-cultural and historical construct that cannot be reduced to biological differences between men and women. One of the most visible expressions of this construct is hegemonic masculinity as a dominant, idealized form of masculinity that reinforces power not only over women but also over men perceived as “others” (R. Connell, 1995). Cinema can both reinforce and challenge patriarchal structures. As a cultural narrative, it constructs a social lens that redefines the fiction-reality relations, revealing everyday contradictions and enabling the representation of alternative perspectives, offering a critical space for interrogating gender and masculine domination (Diken & Laustsen, 2005; Sever & Açıklan, 2025; Smelik, 1998). Since the 2000s, scholarly interest in representations of hegemonic masculinity and masculinity crises in Turkish cinema has expanded (Aydoğan, 2020). A growing body of scholarly work has sought to illuminate this critical potential of cinema, particularly by examining patterns of patriarchal domination and gender through diverse analytical lenses.

In the literature, studies on what is masculinity crisis and hegemonic masculinity in Turkish cinema have gained momentum since the 2000s. Koçer & Ulucan, (2021) in their analysis of *On Board (Gemide)*, discuss the representation of masculinity and observe the emergence of fragile and dislocated male figures in 1990s cinema. Oktan, (2008) in his sociological analysis of *Toss-Up (Yazı Tura)*, argues that the film reveals a tension between patriarchal identity and postmodern sexual identities through its characters, shaped by political and economic conflicts. Biner (2013), in the study on *Everything's Gonna Be Great (Her Şey Çok Güzel Olacak)*, examines how the crisis of capitalism transforms definitions of “ideal” masculinity by introducing the concept of “childish” masculinity through a conflict between brothers. Yüksel (2013) in the analysis of *Breath (Nefes: Vatan Sağolsun)* in the context of the masculinity crisis and hegemonic masculinity patterns, argues that although the film questions hegemonic masculinity, it also reproduces masculine domination through performances of hypermasculinity within its militaristic structure. Kabadayı (2016), focusing on three films from the 2000s-*Janjan (Janjan)*, *Toss-Up (Yazı Tura)*, and *For Love and Honor (Kabadayı)* finds that portrayals of male characters with physical and mental deficiencies erode the image of the strong, authoritative, and emotionally and physically healthy man. Lastly, İri (2016) in his study on Turkish films released

between 2011 and 2015, concludes that lower-middle-class men are portrayed as insecure and vulnerable within an ambiguous and chaotic socio-political environment.

Becerikli & Kalamam (2019) in their study of *Love, Bitter (Acı Aşk)*, examine the masculinity crisis and find that the male character, portrayed as relatively “modern” and “educated” structures his relationship with the opposite sex within traditional codes, thereby reconstructing masculinity through his domination over the woman. Karadaş (2020) focusing on *Yellow Heat (Sarı Sıcak)*, discusses how male identity within the feudal family structure is shaped according to traditional and hegemonic norms. The study concludes that, despite the emergence of different forms of masculinity in Turkish cinema, men are predominantly presented within traditional patriarchal structures and normative frameworks in feudal systems. Kara (2021), drawing on Connell and Foucault's concepts of power, analyses *Butterflies (Kelebekler)* and *Remember Us (Bizi Hatırla)*, concluding that hegemonic masculinity operates as an omnipresent form of power, transforming both male and female characters into carriers of hegemonic masculinity. Başar (2024) within the framework of fragile masculinity theory, examines the father figure in *The Wild Pear Tree (Ahlat Ağacı)* and determines that the erosion of traditional teachings under neoliberalism diminishes the dominance of the traditional male stereotype, which constructs its identity through fatherhood and authority, due to transformations in the economic system.

Özküralpli (2021) critiques Connell's theory from a feminist standpoint, calling for new conceptual approaches to masculinity studies in Turkey. Aligning with Ozkuralpli's critique, this study acknowledges the limits of hegemonic masculinity as a conceptual framework. It therefore analyzes *Black Night (Karanlık Gece, 2022)* and *Burning Days (Kurak Gunler, 2022)* through both (R. Connell, 1995) theory and the “fragile masculinity” perspective developed by (Kimmel, 2008). This study argues that hegemonic and fragile masculinities mutually reinforcing constructs that uphold male dominance. Both films examine rural masculinity, highlighting the isolation of male protagonists by peers who conform to heteronormative norms. Through thematic analysis, this study examines how masculinity is constructed through characters' dialogue, behavior, and social roles, offering a lens to understand gender inequality in cinematic narratives.

## 1. Masculinity and Its Transformation in the Context of Gender Patterns

According to Oakley (2018) gender comprises socially learned and culturally reproduced roles rooted in biological sex. Masculinity and femininity, therefore, reflect not only physical traits but also historically, culturally, and structurally shaped social norms. Butler (1990), theory of gender performativity supports this view, arguing that gender is not innate but enacted through repeated behaviors shaped by social norms. Within this framework, femininity and masculinity reflect not only biological differences but also social norms shaped by cultural, historical, and structural factors. From this perspective, it can be argued that gender inequality exists and is reinforced through cultural transmission. The fact that women and men possess different physical characteristics also plays a role in determining their life skills, responsibilities, and constraints. Whether a society adheres to a traditional or modern paradigm influences how gender differences are perceived and whether such differences are interpreted as equality or inequality. Expressions such as “acting like a woman” or “being a man” reflect the society's perspective on gender roles and serve to define concepts such as

superiority and weakness through gender, while also prescribing what is considered appropriate or inappropriate behaviour for each gender (Bourdieu, 2001).

In defining masculine identity, the idea that identity is constructed through binary oppositions is especially relevant-particularly in the notion that the question "Who is a man?" is often answered by stating "A man is someone who is not like a woman." Within this dichotomy, not only is masculinity defined in contrast to femininity, but the characteristics attributed to women are also constructed in relation to the dominant, powerful male figure. The field of masculinity studies began to emerge in the 1960s, in parallel with the growing momentum of feminist movements. During the 1970s, masculinity studies started to gain greater visibility within feminist theory. Early academic discussions on the crisis of masculinity were initiated by scholars such as James R. McGovern (1966), John Higham (1970), and Gerald Franklin Roberts (1970). McGovern (1966) analysed the obsession with masculine power in the life and work of journalist David Graham Phillips. Higham (1970) discussed the concept of "muscular Christianity" in late 19th-century American culture, focusing on widespread interest in the male body and physical exercise. Roberts (1970) argued that a "cult of masculinity" emerged during the Progressive Era as a response to modernization. In 1976, Brannon categorized masculine norms into four dominant themes to explain how the ideology of masculinity was constructed in American culture: "No Sissy Stuff" (rejection of anything feminine), "The Big Wheel" (emphasis on success and status), "The Sturdy Oak" (emotional restraint and toughness), and "Give 'em Hell" (aggressiveness and boldness). Feminist theorist Ann Douglas (1977) also contributed to the academic debates on the masculinity crisis by arguing that with the onset of modernism, masculinity became engulfed by a process of feminization. This line of inquiry became more prominent in the late 1970s and early 1980s through the work of Joe Dubbert (1974, 1979) and David Pugh (1983), laying the groundwork for historical readings of the masculinity crisis (Winter, 2003). As a result of these studies, men were, in a sense, compelled to confront their own masculinity (Akça & Tönel, 2011). In the 1980s, masculinity began to be examined through more systematic and theoretical approaches. Harry Brod's edited volume *The Making of Masculinities: The New Men's Studies* (1987) introduced masculinity studies as an emerging academic discipline. Connell, (1995) introduced the foundational concept of hegemonic masculinity. In the 2000s,(Hearn & Pringle, 2006) and (Kimmel, 2008) expanded the field across disciplines. Their studies demonstrate that masculinity is not a single identity but is shaped by cultural, political, and structural forces. Rather than a fixed essence, masculinity is constructed through social and power relations (Connell, 1995; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Hearn, 1996; Kimmel, 1996)

Hegemonic masculinity-characterized by strength, heterosexuality, and dominance is a socially idealized form. It asserts power over women and over subordinate men (Connell, 1987; Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005). It is commonly constructed through binary oppositions, chiefly by rejecting femininity, and is marked by strength, success, economic power, and traits such as aggression, homophobia, and emotional restraint. Normalized through social norms and power discourses, it legitimizes violence as a means of dominance and sustains hierarchies both among men and over women (Connell, 1987; Hanke, 1992; Real, 1998). Bourdieu (2001)'s concept of symbolic violence describes how dominance operates subtly through norms, language, and social institutions. It shapes perceptions unconsciously, leading individuals- both men and women-to accept male dominance as natural. Education, media, and language reproduce these norms, reinforcing patriarchal structures (Chambers, 2005; McLeod, 2005; Schinkel, 2003).

Binary oppositions also play a defining role in the construction of hegemonic masculinity. Masculinity is often understood in narrow terms as everything that is not feminine. Power structures within masculine domination are built through hegemonies imposed upon “others” and are associated with concepts such as strength, endurance, physical ability, and success. Accordingly, the construction of hegemonic masculinity relies on characteristics such as avoidance of femininity, achievement, economic self-sufficiency, homophobia, aggression, and violence, all of which are transmitted to men and gradually normalized (Connell, 1995; Real, 1998). Hegemonic masculinity operates within the social structure in two keyways. First, it asserts dominance through the subjugation of those who are considered “weak,” “powerless,” or who do not represent the “natural” masculine ideal. Second, it becomes dominant through the language and discourse of those men who hold and seek to maintain power (Demetriou, 2001). As Connell (1995) emphasizes, hegemonic masculinity provides a useful framework for understanding the true motivations behind homophobic and domestic violence, and for examining how and why violence manifests on a cultural level. Masculine hegemony legitimizes men’s pursuit of power and control, while violence is instrumentalized as a tool for shaping power dynamics (Kaufman, 1999). Hegemonic masculinity not only reinforces male domination over women but also regulates the power relations and hierarchies among different groups of men. In this regard, hegemonic masculinity constitutes the dominant position of manhood, constructed not only to women but also in opposition to subordinate or “non-normative” masculinities (Hanke, 1992). Binary oppositions such as “inside/outside” and “home/work” define which spaces and practices are considered appropriate for men and women, thereby reinforcing what is seen as “normal” and “natural” for each gender. In the construction of male dominance, the physical strength of men is positioned against the perceived weakness of women, and gender patterns are shaped through behavioural and attitudinal differences. The hegemonic status of men’s physical and financial power is further reinforced by the continuous reproduction of dominant masculine ideals in media, advertising, television, news, and cinema, which infiltrate daily life and normalize male authority (Bainbridge & Yates, 2005; Cuklanz & Erol, 2021; Ricciardelli et al., 2010).

Connell (1995)’s theory of multiple masculinities highlights alternative forms of masculinity. Complicit masculinity aligns with patriarchal norms without embodying dominance. Subordinated masculinities are linked to traits deemed “feminine” (e.g., homosexuality, effeminacy) and are placed lower in gender hierarchies. Marginalized masculinities refer to those excluded due to race, class, or disability. Meanwhile, alternative masculinities encouraged by feminist ideals emphasize empathy, equality, and caregiving (Hearn, 1996). Newer perspectives, especially those by (Kimmel, 1996) introduce the concept of fragile masculinity. When viewed through the lens of Connell (1995)’s theory of hegemonic masculinity, this fragile structure reveals how men engage in performative behaviours to prove themselves as “real” men according to culturally coded ideals of strength. The need to perform and continually reproduce hegemonic masculinity fosters exclusionary mechanisms. This constant demand for masculine validation facilitates the marginalization of those who are perceived as insufficiently masculine—particularly women and subordinated men—while legitimizing patriarchal domination over them. Popular culture products such as advertisements, television series, and films reinforce hegemonic forms of masculinity, while simultaneously erasing alternative masculinities and normalizing processes of othering (Vandello & Bosson, 2013).

## 2. The Representation and Transformation of Masculinity in Turkish Cinema

Cinema is one of the key cultural domains in which male power is visibly enacted on a social level. The relationship established between the viewer and the film can also be examined in terms of patterns of pleasure and power. The representation of masculinity in cinema extends beyond the depiction of individual characters or events; rather, it functions as a site for the reproduction of gender patterns and masculine domination. Throughout film history, representations of masculinity have undergone significant transformations across different social periods, shaped largely by the socio-cultural and political context of each era (Bainbridge & Yates, 2005)

Early Hollywood and global cinema portrayed men as embodiments of hegemonic ideals—strong, rational, dominant—while women occupied passive, supportive roles. Postmodern cinema, however, introduced more complex, contradictory, and fluid representations of masculinity (Jeffords, 1994; Kaplan, 2003; Oktan, 2008; Ryan & Kellner, 1988). The transformation of traditional forms of masculinity represented in cinema has also been shaped by broader social changes accompanying the transition into the postmodern era. These include the questioning of the dominant ideals associated with the "acceptable" male identity that formed the core narrative of modernity; the erosion of men's financial power as a result of women's increased participation in the labor force; the disruption of the traditional division of labor between "men" and "women"; and the transformation of the family structure. Additional contributing factors include men's fear of losing power over women, the anxiety and insecurity caused by unemployment and uncertain futures—often framed as the "loss of masculinity"—the declining authority of the father figure within traditional family structures among younger generations, and the growing visibility of homosexuality as a subculture in Western societies (Bozok, 2009, p.34; Demez, 2005, pp.39-40; Onur & Koyuncu, 2004, p.36; Sancar, 2009, pp.102-126).

In the Yesilcam era of Turkish cinema, masculinity was typically constructed within traditional frameworks, echoing classical Hollywood's star-centered narratives. With the emergence of "women's films" in the 1980s and especially from the 1990s onward, Turkish cinema began to interrogate masculinity more critically. Modernization disrupted conventional gender roles, leading to portrayals of men as emotionally repressed, violent, or morally conflicted figures. Urbanization, feminist movements, and changing family structures contributed to the blurring of gender roles, challenging the hegemonic model of masculinity. The destabilization of male identity because of modernization has led to a rise in representations of male characters as anti-heroes, emotionally repressed figures, or men inclined toward violence. These portrayals reflect a masculinity in crisis, prompting the emergence of alternative masculine myths and signalling a shift in the construction of hegemonic masculinity. During this period, the stereotypical patriarchal male figures of earlier decades were gradually replaced by more fragile, introspective characters who question traditional gender roles. The crisis of masculinity reflected in cinematic narratives fundamentally stems from the tension between traditional norms and the uncertainties of fluid modernity. The cinematic representation of masculinity in crisis is closely tied to the challenges that patriarchal ideology faces in articulating a coherent narrative amid processes of urbanization associated with modernity. In particular, the blurring of rigid gender roles in urban life, the rise of feminist movements, and broader societal transformation have increasingly problematized the construction of male identity based on hegemonic masculinity. As a result, Turkish cinema has become a significant site for examining shifting representations of masculinity. Consequently, cinema became a key medium for examining and redefining male identity

in Turkey (Aydođan, 2020, pp. 8-9; Oktan, 2008, p.153; Ulusay, 2004; Uluyađcı, 2001, pp. 35-36; Yılmaz & Zinderen, 2023)

Since the late 1990s, Turkish cinema has increasingly focused on diverse representations of masculinity. Within the context of the emerging neoliberal world order, these films explore the economic, social, and identity crises experienced by male characters, along with transformations in modes of relationships. Representative examples include *Block C* (C Blok, 1994), *The Night, Angel and Our Gang* (Gece, Melek ve Bizim ocuklar, 1994), *The Bandit* (Eşkiya, 1996), *Innocence* (Masumiyet, 1997), *Cholera Street* (Ađır Roman, 1997), *On Board* (Gemide, 1998), *Everything's Gonna Be Great* (Her Şey ok Güzel Olacak, 1998), *A Madonna in Laleli* (Laleli'de Bir Azize, 1998), *The Trial* (Duruşma, 1999), *Hemşo* (Hemşo, 2000), *Offside* (Dar Alanda Kısa Paslaşmalar, 2000), *Where's Firuze?* (Nerdesin Firuze, 2003), *Everything About Mustafa* (Mustafa Hakkında Herşey, 2004), *Toss-Up* (Yazı Tura, 2004), *My Father and My Son* (Babam ve Ođlum, 2005), *Magic Carpet Ride* (Organize İşler, 2005), *Takva: A Man's Fear of God* (Takva, 2005), *The Magician* (Hokkabaz, 2006), *At the Bar* (Barda, 2006), *Jan Jan* (Jan Jan, 2007), *For Love and Honor* (Kabadayı, 2007), *Alone* (Issız Adam, 2008), *Breath: Long Live the Homeland* (Nefes: Vatan Sağolsun, 2009), *Losers' Club* (Kaybedenler Kulübü, 2011), and *the Egg* (Yumurta, 2007), *Milk* (Süt, 2008), *Honey* (Bal, 2010) trilogy. Across these films, spanning a wide range of genres male characters are portrayed in both hegemonic and fragile roles. Within the context of the emerging neoliberal order, many films explore men's experiences of economic, social, and identity crises, as well as evolving relationship dynamics. These films portray male characters across a spectrum from hegemonic to fragile masculinities. The men are often emotionally repressed, lacking a paternal figure, and socially disconnected. Some engage in unrealistic schemes for money, isolate themselves in male-only environments, or wrestle with patriarchal values like honor, tradition, homeland, and masculinity. Throughout both urban and rural settings, these men are depicted as conflicted and alienated from traditional masculine norms. Characters who are effeminate, homosexual, or transgender individuals begin to appear in supporting roles, reflecting a broader crisis of masculinity. Rather than a single dominant form, Turkish cinema of the 1990s presents masculinity as multifaceted (Becerikli & Kalamani, 2019; Gürbüz, 2016; Kabadayı, 2016; Oktan, 2008; Ulusay, 2004; Yüksel, 2019). Since 2010, this transformation in the representation of masculinity has continued in films such as *Once Upon a Time in Anatolia* (Bir Zamanlar Anadolu'da, 2011), *Beyond the Hill* (Tepenin Ardı, 2012), *Nobody's Home* (Köksüz, 2013), *Sivas* (Sivas, 2014), *Frenzy* (Abluka, 2015), *The Wild Pear Tree* (Ahlat Ağacı, 2018), and *Butterflies* (Kelebekler, 2018). These films feature not only traditional portrayals of masculine authority, strength, and dominance, but also emotionally fragile, marginalized male characters experiencing identity crises and challenging dominant gender norms. The representations of power dynamics between characters and the patterns of relationships constructed around authority contribute to the continuous reproduction of the hegemonic/fragile masculinity cycle within the quest for social validation of manhood. In this period, narratives in Turkish cinema increasingly highlight the erosion of male dominance, the questioning of hegemonic masculinity patterns, and the growing visibility of alternative forms of masculinity. Based on this cinematic shift, the following section of this study examines two award-winning contemporary Turkish films *Black Night* (Karanlık Gece, 2022) and *Burning Days* (Kurak Günler, 2022) in the context of the transformation of masculinity.

### 3. Methodology

This analysis aims to examine how patterns of hegemonic and fragile masculinity are constructed and represented in contemporary Turkish cinema, particularly focusing on the associated gender roles, forms of masculine domination, and types of violence portrayed in Turkish cinema. Studies on representations of masculinity in Turkish cinema have mainly focused on the crisis of hegemonic masculinity, diverse masculinities, and patriarchal structures. However, the literature does not adequately address how the conflict between hegemonic and fragile masculinities is constructed within cinematic narratives, how it is rendered visible through symbolic and physical violence, and how it contributes to the reproduction of masculine domination. In contemporary Turkish cinema, fragile masculinities are not only represented but are positioned within an oppositional framework that reinforces hegemonic masculinity through exclusion, stigmatization, and suppression. Accordingly, this study approaches cinema not merely as a reflective medium but as an ideological field that legitimizes hegemonic masculinity while marginalizing fragile masculinities. Despite extensive studies on hegemonic masculinity, the relational positioning of fragile masculinities, particularly along the axes of violence, space, social pressure, and institutional power, remains underexplored in contemporary Turkish cinema. Addressing this gap, the study examines how the tension between hegemonic and fragile masculinities is constructed in *Black Night* and *Burning Days*, how violence operates within this tension, and how these narratives reproduce gender inequality and masculine domination.

Within the scope of this study, the films *Black Night* (*Karanlık Gece*, directed by Özcan Alper) and *Burning Days* (*Kurak Günler*, directed by Emin Alper), which were released in 2022 and gained significant acclaim at national and international festivals, were selected through purposive sampling due to their critical engagement with gender representations and their problematization of the construction of masculinity. The preference for purposive sampling stems from the fact that each film contains a similar narrative that allows for an in-depth analysis of the conflict between hegemonic and fragile masculinities, patterns of violence, and the tension between rurality and modernity. From this point, a comparative lens allows for a more nuanced understanding of how these shared themes are differently constructed across narrative, spatial, and socio-cultural contexts. Despite focusing on different geographies and forms of masculinity, both expose the enduring nature of masculine hegemony and its entanglement with violence. The thematic and narrative features include the conflict between hegemonic and fragile masculinities, patterns of violence, the exclusion of fragile male identities, implicit gender roles, and the tension between rurality and modernity. Releasing in the same year and receiving awards at various film festivals enables a comparative analysis. While the socio-cultural contexts differ, both construct their narratives around the social reproduction of masculinity. *Black Night* focuses on a lynching in a provincial Anatolian town, addressing masculine violence, silence, social pressure, and exclusion. *Burning Days*, meanwhile, follows the alienation of a newly appointed prosecutor in a rural town, highlighting modernity and feudal order. While the films differ thematically, share key elements particularly the tension between hegemonic and fragile masculinities, spatial dynamics, and the narrative construction of violence and masculinity. These commonalities make them well-suited for a comparative analysis within the gender studies framework selected for this study.

In this study, the thematic analysis technique, a qualitative research method widely used in media studies, was employed. The six-phase model of thematic analysis proposed by Braun & Clarke

(2006) was followed. During the familiarization phase, both films were viewed twice. Observational notes were taken regarding the characters, settings, and instances of symbolic and physical violence, followed by preliminary coding. In the second phase, coding was conducted scene by scene, including representations of violence against women, intra-male dynamics, male-female relationships, and rural power structures. In the third phase, potential themes were constructed based on scenes and codes including modern and traditional masculinity conflicts, the denigration of femininity, and patterns of physical, verbal, symbolic, and spatial violence. During the fourth phase, overlapping themes were merged and their alignment of relevant scenes were evaluated. In the fifth phase, five main themes related to hegemonic and fragile masculinity were identified. In the final phase, relevant scenes from each film were examined in relation to these themes, and the results were interpreted; accordingly, these themes were constructed and defined based on the existing literature as shown in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Themes Identified in *Black Night* and *Burning Days*

Theme	Definition
<b>Normalization and Enactment of Violence</b>	The performance of masculinity through physical, verbal, or symbolic violence, and the transformation violence normalization within social contexts (Connell, 1995; Kaufman, 1999) as well as how these performances are constructed through scenes and dialogues.
<b>Reconstruction of Traditional Gender Patterns</b>	The naturalization of patriarchal norms in the narrative, and the stereotypical portrayal of men and women (Butler, 1990; Connell, 1987; Hanke, 1992; Real, 1998) as well as how these performances are constructed through scenes and dialogues.
<b>Performative Masculinity and Exclusion of Alternative Masculinities</b>	The performance of masculinity driven by fear of exclusion and continuously reconstruction through social/group validation, and the marginalization “others” (Connell, 1995; Hanke, 1992; Vandello & Bosson, 2013) as well as how these performances are constructed through scenes and dialogues.
<b>Conflict Between Hegemonic and Fragile Masculinity</b>	The conflict between representations of hegemonic and fragile masculinities, often expressed through violence, exclusion, or ridicule (Bourdieu, 2001; R. Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 2008; Vandello & Bosson, 2013) as well as how these performances are constructed through scenes and dialogues.
<b>Punishment of the “Othered/Fragile” Masculinity</b>	The suppression or elimination of male characters who do deviate traditional gender roles, frequently through various violence forms (Becerikli & Kalamani, 2019; R. Connell, 1995; Kimmel, 2008; Vandello & Bosson, 2013) as well as how these performances are constructed through scenes and dialogues.

To ensure reliability, the coding process was conducted by multiple researchers. A subset of the data was independently coded, and the results were compared to establish inter-coder agreement. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved through consensus, and a shared codebook with clearly defined themes was used to maintain consistency throughout the analysis. Validity was supported by following the systematic six-phase thematic analysis approach proposed by Braun & Clarke (2006). The films were viewed multiple times to ensure data familiarization, and themes were continuously

reviewed in relation to the data and the theoretical framework. The use of established concepts such as hegemonic and fragile masculinity further strengthened the theoretical grounding of the analysis.



#### 4. Findings



The findings of the thematic analysis conducted on the films Black Night and Burning Days are presented below. The analysis was carried out within the framework of themes identified through scene descriptions, dialogues, and character representations.

##### 4.1. The Naturalization and Enactment of Violence

This theme encompasses scenes in both films where masculine performance is manifested physically, verbally, or symbolically, and normalized through its transformation into a recurring behavioral pattern.

**Table 2:** Scene Analyses in the Context of the Naturalization and Enactment of Violence

<p><b>Black Night- Armed Men in the Truck Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:01.05-01.30</b></p>  <p>In a rural setting, men ride in pickup trucks wielding rifles and clubs. Before the hunt, they fire their guns into the air and shout with excitement to boost their motivation.</p>	<p>This depiction symbolizes masculinity as a collective performance of power, normalizes violence, and frames it as a socially sanctioned expression of manhood. Objects like guns and clubs emerge as legitimized instruments in constructing hegemonic masculinity in the scenes.</p>
<p><b>Black Night – Riverside Conversation Between Ali and Ishak Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration: 49.50-51.00</b></p>  <p>By the river, Ali and Ishak talk as Ishak recalls his childhood shaped by his father’s violence.  <b>Dialogue-</b> Ishak: “I’d come home after dark, and then, oh boy, is it really you coming home this late, Ishak? My father would beat me... In our family, no one escaped beatings, my mother, my sister, me...”</p>	<p>The scene reveals how patriarchal violence is internalized and normalized, illustrating how patriarchy maintains power through acceptance and voluntary submission. Because in the scenes, Ishak speaks of it as if it were an ordinary memory.</p>

<p><b>Burning Days-Armed Men on a Boar Hunt Scene</b> <b>Time Duration: 02.43-03.40</b></p>  <p>Men head out for a wild boar hunt, armed with rifles, traveling in pickup trucks and cars and on foot in the middle of the rural village as Emre arrives as a prosecutor in the scene.</p>	<p>In the scene, Guns, vehicles, and the hunt function as markers of masculinity. Violence becomes a collective, legitimized masculine practice embedded in rural culture.</p>
<p><b>Burning Days- Abused Disabled Girl Hospital Scene</b> <b>Time Duration: 47.30-49.30</b></p>  <p>These scenes depict a mentally disabled Romani girl who has been sexually assaulted. When questioned by the prosecutor and police, she remains silent.</p>	<p>In the scene, while the violence is visible, it also carries symbolic and discursive dimensions through the silencing of the victim. Her silence and the superficial investigation reveal how male violence is legitimized by the underlying social structures and mechanisms of control.</p>

In both movies, violence is legitimized through masculine elements such as stones, clubs, firearms, and hunting. It is reproduced and naturalized through performative displays of masculinity by local men. However, *Black Night* foregrounds the internal dynamics of the local community, revealing how discursive forms of masculine hegemony are reproduced by victims themselves. In contrast, *Burning Days* highlights broader control mechanisms such as the police and politicians in legitimization of violence.




When evaluated within the framework of R. W. Connell's (1995) concept of hegemonic masculinity, it becomes evident that masculinity is constructed through power, control, and domination. In particular, the hunting scenes and the use of firearms in the films *Karanlık Gece* and *Kurak Günler* emerge as rituals through which masculinity is collectively performed. This suggests that masculinity is not merely an individual identity, but also a socially staged performance. On the other hand, the normalization of domestic violence in İshak's childhood memories can be explained through Pierre Bourdieu's (2001) concept of "symbolic violence." In this context, violence becomes invisible and normalized and is internalized by individuals without being questioned. Similarly, in *Kurak Günler*, the invisibilization of violence against the disabled woman by institutional mechanisms demonstrates, as noted by Michael Kaufman (1999), that masculinity is reproduced through violence. Therefore, in both films, violence functions not only as a physical act but also as a cultural and discursive tool that sustains hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, it normalizes physical and sexual violence against women through their objectification and silencing, reinforcing subjugation through mechanisms of male control.


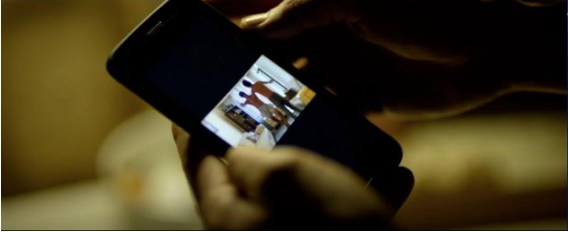
## 4.2. The Reconstruction of Traditional Gender Patterns

This theme encompasses scenes in both films where male and female characters are portrayed within predefined gender roles and reproducing of gender patterns in alignment with normative ideals of masculinity and femininity.

**Table 3:** Scene Analyses in the Context of the Reconstruction of Traditional Gender Patterns

<p><b>Black Night-Nightclub Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:03.00-03.47</b></p>  <p>In this scene, Ishak plays the saz in a brothel-like nightclub as a woman in a revealing outfit sing on stage, observed closely by men.</p>	<p>The setting in the scene highlights hegemonic masculinity, where the female body is objectified for the male gaze. The nightclub reinforces the binary view of women as either “respectable” or “sensual,” positioning the singer in the latter role.</p>
<p><b>Black Night-Ishak and His Mother Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:06.42-07.42</b></p>  <p>In this scene, returning to his hometown, Ishak talks with his ailing mother in the garden.</p> <p><b>Dialogue - Mother:</b> “You’re not getting any younger. You should find a suitable girl and start a family. Your father insisted that poor orphan Sultan wasn’t good enough for you, and I foolishly went along. By now, you’d have children of your own.”</p> <p>Ishak does not answer his mother and quietly leaves.</p>	<p>The scene reveals how hegemonic masculinity is discursively reproduced and how symbolic violence is imposed on men through expectations of marriage and procreation, reinforced by the maternal figure. Her remarks reflect the intergenerational transmission of patriarchal norms.</p>
<p><b>Black Night- Ali &amp; Sultan Intimate Moment Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration: 1.12-1.16</b></p>  <p>In the scene, Ali and Sultan meet Ali’s house to study. After drinking coffee, they become intimate, but when Ali refuses to continue, Sultan reacts with anger and then leaves.</p> <p><b>Dialogue - Sultan (angrily):</b> “So, it’s true what they’re saying around town?”</p> <p>Ali: “What are they saying?”</p> <p>Sultan: “That you’re... like that. Is it true?”</p>	<p>In the scene, Sultan’s expectation reinforces patriarchal codes, while Ali’s refusal marks him as embodying subordinate masculinity. The scene illustrates how deviations from heteronormative roles are socially punished; while women also take part in sustaining these very norms through their reactions and expectations.</p>

<p><b>Black Night – Ishak, Sultan, and Her Husband Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration: 1.17-1.18</b></p>  <p>In this scene, Ishak visits Sultan at her home. During their argument about the past, her husband arrives. Sultan immediately ends the conversation.</p>	<p>This scene illustrates how gender norms and male authority silence women. By ceasing interaction, Sultan conforms to the expected role of a “proper woman,” reflecting her internalized submission to patriarchal control.</p>
<p><b>Burning Days – Sexual Abuse of the Mentally Disabled Girl Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration: 51.57-52.03</b></p>  <p>In this scene, Pekmez, a mentally disabled Romani girl, is sexually and physically abused by town’s prominent men during a drinking gathering attended by Prosecutor Emre.</p>	<p>The abuse scene illustrates a gendered structure in which women are blamed and silenced, their bodies and sexuality rendered available for hegemonic male use without consent.</p>
<p><b>Burning Days - Prosecutor and Female Judge, Her Husband Dinner Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:1.17-1.19</b></p>  <p>The prosecutor is dining at the home of the female judge and her husband. They talk about the femininity of housework and cooking. When the couple learn that he is single and not considering marriage, they highlight the challenges of living alone.</p> <p><b>Dialogue</b> -Prosecutor: “This is delicious, thank you.”  Judge: “Being single is hard...”  Judge’s husband: “If I were single, I’d never cook at home.”</p>	<p>In the scene housework is defined as “women’s work,” reinforcing gendered divisions within marriage. The scene illustrates how symbolic violence is embedded in daily routines, sustaining hegemonic masculinity. Moreover, the prosecutor is indirectly encouraged to marry, and his reluctance is perceived as suspicious within the framework of traditional gender patterns.</p>
<p><b>Burning Days- Teenage Townsman and the Prosecutor Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:1.35-1.37</b></p>	<p>In this scene, the young man’s accusation against the journalist functions as a form of moral exclusion rooted in the town’s collective memory. His speech implies a violation of traditional gender norms, marking the journalist as deviant due to his perceived orientation. The scene reveals how symbolic violence operates through language and</p>

	<p>gossip, policing non-normative masculinities and female sexuality.</p>
<p>In the scene, a teenage townsman comes to the prosecutor’s house. The young man accuses the journalist of immorality because he believes the journalist is an opponent of the mayor, whom he thinks will solve the town’s water problem.  <b>Dialogue</b> - Young man: <i>“That immoral guy? He tricked all kinds of people—men and women... Even seduced Uncle Selim’s ex-wife... Everyone around here knows. That’s why Selim divorced her.”</i></p>	<p>In the narrative, despite the journalist’s role in exposing political corruption in the town, his perceived sexuality becomes a sign of intimidation. The video functions as a warning, reinforcing heteronormative masculinity and reflecting the persistence of traditional gender patterns that regulate social behavior.</p>
<p><b>Burning Days- Prosecutor’ Inappropriate Videos Receiving Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:1.08.12-1.08.54</b></p> 	<p>In this scene, anonymous videos targeting the journalist’s sexual identity are sent to the prosecutor. Emre sees journalist is dancing half naked with another man in video.</p>

In both films, female characters are primarily portrayed as passive. In *Black Night*, figures like the nightclub singer, Sultan, and Ishak’s mother are objectified to reinforce patriarchal norms through their speech and actions. In *Burning Days*, the young girl subjected to sexual violence symbolizes women’s powerlessness under hegemonic masculinity. Authoritative figures like the female judge contribute to maintain male dominance. While *Black Night* reinforces gender norms mostly through male-female dynamics, *Burning Days* more directly explores the fear of homosexuality and society’s enforcement of “acceptable” gender roles, using this fear to exclude what is perceived as different.

Within the framework of Judith Butler’s theory of gender performativity, femininity and masculinity are understood not as fixed identities, but as constructs continuously produced through repeated practices. In the nightclub scene, the objectification of the female body functions as an extension of the “male gaze,” thereby reproducing hegemonic masculinity.



In the scenes involving Ishak and his mother, it becomes evident that patriarchy is reproduced not only by men but also through women’s actions and roles. As R. W. Connell (1987) emphasizes, this illustrates how hegemonic masculinity is sustained through social consent. In the film *Kurak Günler*, the attribution of domestic labor to women represents a form of inequality embedded in everyday life, which can be explained through Pierre Bourdieu’s (2001) concept of symbolic violence. Moreover, the silencing of women in the face of sexual violence reveals how patriarchal structures operate at both




institutional and cultural levels. In this context, it can be argued that gender norms are not merely represented in both films but actively reproduced.



### 4.3. The Performance of Masculinity and the Exclusion of Alternative Masculinities


This theme encompasses scenes in both films that depict the fear of social exclusion or expectations imposed on men by gender norms scenes where certain forms of masculinity are privileged while others are marginalized. It also includes scenes where masculinity is performatively constructed through specific attitudes and behaviors expected of men.

**Table 4:** Scene Analyses in the Context of the Performance of Masculinity and the Exclusion of Alternative Masculinities

<p><b>Black Night- Ali's Father and the Gendarmerie Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:12.30-12.55</b></p>  <p>Ali's disappearance prompts a search by the gendarmerie. Upon learning that Ali's father was a literature teacher, the commander mocks the profession.</p> <p><b>Dialogue</b> - Gendarmerie Commander to Ali's father:  <i>"What do you do for a living?"</i>          Father: <i>"I'm a retired teacher. I used to teach literature."</i>          Commander: <i>"Like father, like son, huh?"</i></p>	<p>In the scene, the gendarmerie embody state power and hegemonic masculinity. Their humiliating behavior subtly attributes the son's non-conforming masculinity to paternal influence. Instead of addressing structural factors, the scene illustrates how hegemonic masculinity is reinforced through gender policing and the devaluation of alternative masculinities.</p>
<p><b>Black Night- Ishak and His Friends' Hunt Invitation Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:56.00-57.00</b></p>  <p>In the scene Ishak is invited to the hunt by his friends from the town. He refuses, but his friends insist.</p> <p><b>Dialogue</b> - Ishak: <i>"I'm not coming."</i>          Friends: <i>"What's your excuse this time? Sitting around the house like a woman!"</i></p>	<p>In the scene friends' response reveals how hegemonic masculinity is policed through gendered language. The comment symbolically excludes Ishak for deviating from normative masculine behavior and illustrates how peer groups enforce conformity through symbolic violence.</p>

<p><b>Black Night- Townsman and Ishak at Raki Table Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:57.00-1.01</b></p>  <p>In the scene, Ishak joins his male friends on a wild goat hunt. He does not react much to their conversations and sits by the fire instead of at the table. Among the men, occasional verbal tensions and swearing occur.</p> <p><b>Dialogue</b> - One of the men at the table (referring to a woman): <i>"We went to the woman, but when I put this on [condom], she went cold... You don't see mine, though—she's begging for it!"</i></p>	<p>In the scene, a typical "masculine conversation" emerges. The dialogue reinforces male bonding through gendered and objectifying talk about women. Masculinity is performed and affirmed here through the sexual objectification of women. Ishak's refusal to engage in the group's masculine acts symbolizes the exclusion of alternative masculinity within a hegemonic social order.</p>
<p><b>Black Night- Ishak and His Friends Okey Playing Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:1.26-1.28</b></p>  <p>Ishak and his friends are playing okey in a traditional coffeehouse. They start to argue about Ishak's friendship with Ali, then fight.</p> <p><b>Dialogue</b> - One of the men at the table: <i>"Yours has moved into the watchtower."</i>  Ishak: <i>"Mine? Who's mine?"</i>  Man: <i>"The one you hang out with by the stream, your rose's nightingale."</i>  Another man during the altercation: <i>"While you're bickering here, that city slicker already sealed the deal with Sultan."</i></p>	<p>The coffeehouse is a space reinforcing male solidarity and hierarchical masculinity in the scene. Ishak's emotional closeness to Ali is ridiculed through feminizing language, positioning emotional intimacy as incompatible with normative masculinity. Ali is further marginalized as a "city slicker", symbolizing outsider status. As the teasing escalates into physical conflict, the scene reveals how hegemonic masculinity is performatively enforced.</p>
<p><b>Burning Days: The Lawyer and the Dentist's Visiting of Prosecutor's Office Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration: 08.01-13.14</b></p>  <p>The lawyer and the dentist visit the prosecutor, to welcome him to the town. They talk about hunting,</p>	<p>The visit scene, reinforce local masculine ideals tied to nature, dominance, and violence. Hunting is framed as central to manhood, with phrases like "when we shoot, we hit" asserting male authority. The alliance between the hegemonic lawyer and the complicit dentist contrasts with the prosecutor's subtle exclusion, illustrating how hegemonic masculinity is upheld through inclusion and marginalization.</p>

<p>firing and its legal aspects. In response to the prosecutor’s critical attitude, they naturalize masculine rituals subtly belittling the prosecutor.</p> <p><b>Dialogue</b> - Lawyer: <i>“So, Prosecutor, did we scare you off?”</i> (referring to the wild boar chase and hunting scene in town)</p> <p>Lawyer: <i>“As soon as we entered town, we were right behind the boar.”</i></p> <p>Dentist: <i>“Oh, it’s nothing, just fun for the kids. Our people are used to this from our ancestors. Nothing to worry about... We know where we shoot, and when we shoot, we hit. Around here, nobody’s shocked by guns. They’re used to animal carcasses too...”</i></p>	
<p><b>Burning Days – The Prosecutor, the Lawyer, the Dentist and the Mayor Evening Gathering Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:19.00-22.00</b></p>  <p>In this scene, the prosecutor drinks raki with the town’s influential men in the mayor’s garden. Mayor joins them for while in raki table.</p> <p><b>Dialogue-</b> Mayor (to his son): <i>“Well done, I wouldn’t have expected you to think of that—before I even said a word...”</i></p>	<p>The mayor praises his son “the lawyer” for visiting the prosecutor, showing how approval shapes acceptable behavior in a patriarchal system. Here, the raki table becomes a more than a social setting; it acts as a symbolic space where masculine norms are performed and reinforced. The lawyer, by earning his father’s approval, is portrayed as complicit in the dominant order and closer to hegemonic masculinity. Meanwhile, the prosecutor remains an outsider whose masculinity still questioned and not yet accepted.</p>
<p><b>Burning Days- The Prosecutor, the Lawyer, the Dentist Evening Gathering Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration: 33.30-37.50</b></p>  <p>At the beginning of the scene, the men talk about sex workers, guns, and hunting. Afterwards, they start arguing about the prosecutor’s refusal of their masculine rituals offers.</p> <p><b>Dialogue –</b> Lawyer: <i>“Come on, don’t tell me knowing the language is a problem, nema problema.”</i></p> <p>Prosecutor: <i>“Is this decent?”</i></p> <p>Lawyer: <i>“Why not, what’s wrong with it? It’s not forbidden or anything, we’re men, after all.”</i></p> <p>Prosecutor: <i>“What about our respectability in society?”</i></p> <p>Lawyer: <i>“So what? We’ve done this before with other prosecutors, and no one reacted like this.”</i></p> <p>Prosecutor: <i>“When you say other prosecutors</i></p>	<p>The sex workers, guns, hunting, alcohol, and sexuality at the raki table bringing together core elements of hegemonic masculinity in the scene. The prosecutor, who does not conform to these expectations, becomes the subject of symbolic exclusion. The lawyer’s remark, “we have done this before with other prosecutors” highlights masculinity as a performance of conformity. The prosecutor’s appeal to “reputation in society” suggests an alternative masculinity grounded in ethics and responsibility, revealing the tension between conflicting models of masculinity.</p>

<p><i>accepted it and I don't what exactly are you implying?"</i></p>	
<p><b>Burning Days – The Prosecutor and the Journalist Home Talking Scene</b> Time Duration: 1.26-1.29</p>  <p>In the scene, the journalist visits Prosecutor Emre with evidence of environmental misconduct. They begin to talk about the night when Emre was drunk. Emre recalls the event only in fragments but feels uncomfortable.</p> <p><b>Dialogue-</b> Journalist: <i>“You were outside crying and shouting in the middle of the night. I brought you upstairs, took you to the bathroom, took off your shirt, took off your pants, poured some water on you only then did you come to your senses.”</i> Prosecutor: <i>“Is that so?”</i></p>	<p>In the scene, the journalist’s reminder of his physical support during a previous crisis unsettles Emre, who amid rumors about his sexuality and interprets this intimacy as a threat to his masculinity and institutional authority. The scene highlights how emotional closeness is perceived as undermining hegemonic male identity.</p>

In both films, masculinity is constructed through performative elements such as hunting, alcohol, and sexuality. Black Night reinforces these through slang, misogyny, and male surveillance, with conflict centered among local men and open exclusion of non-conforming behaviors. In Burning Days, similar traits are shaped by institutional authority and heteronormativity. Masculinity is affirmed by disparaging others and resisting deviation, with exclusion enforced through systemic pressure as the conflict extends. According to R. W. Connell’s (1995) theory of hegemonic masculinity, masculinity is a status that must be constantly reasserted and proven. This is particularly evident in exclusionary discourses such as accusations of “acting like a woman,” which reveal that masculinity is constructed in opposition to femininity. Michael Kimmel’s (2008) concept of fragile masculinity further deepens this perspective. The perception that masculinity is always under threat drives men to validate themselves by excluding other men. In the dinner with raki scenes, the objectification of women and the sexually charged language function as key mechanisms in the construction of homosocial bonds among men. Similarly, the marginalization of the prosecutor and the perception of his emotional closeness with the journalist as a threat demonstrate how hegemonic masculinity excludes alternative forms of masculinity into the political realm, revealing subtler forms of control.

#### 4.4. The Conflict Between Hegemonic and Fragile Masculinities

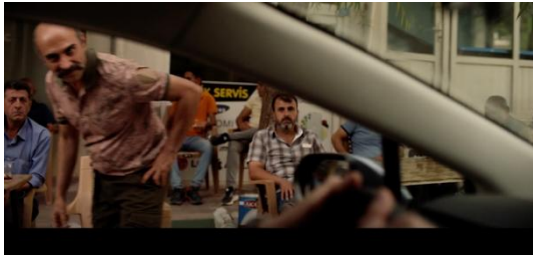
This theme encompasses scenes from both films that depict tensions between hegemonic and fragile masculinities, manifested through forms of verbal and symbolic violence. These conflicts are expressed both directly and indirectly throughout the narratives.

**Table 5:** Analysis of Scenes within the Context of the Conflict Between Hegemonic and Fragile Masculinities

<p><b>Black Night – Ali and the Men of the Town Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration: 14.35-17.00</b></p>  <p>At a local venue, a group of men are drinking when Ali, the outsider, enters. The men inside mock Ali for his appearance and behaviors.  <b>Dialogue-</b>A local man: <i>“Brother, what is this? Some kind of cannibal music?”</i></p>	<p>His unconventional ringtone draws mockery, marking him as embodying fragile masculinity. Through his clothing style and the ringtone, Ali is positioned as “the other.” Their mockery of Ali’s ringtone illustrates even subtle deviations from normative masculine codes are ridiculed and used to reaffirm their own masculine identity and dominance.</p>
<p><b>Black Night- Townsman and Ali Argument Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:1.09-1.10</b></p>  <p>Ali, as a forest ranger argues with a townsman and his father about the collection of traps and the enforcement of the hunting ban.  <b>Dialogue-</b> Townsman: <i>“Are you the one messing with our traps?”</i>          Ali: <i>“There are laws, sir. There’s a wildlife protection act.”</i>          Townsman: <i>“Get lost. Don’t start with your laws”</i> he says angrily.          Elderly Townsman: <i>“Listen, son, you won’t last long around here. You’ll be wasted.”</i></p>	<p>In the scene, the townsman’s hostility targets not only Ali but also what he represents modernity, education, and legal order. By mocking Ali and the laws, he upholds, the townsman asserts masculine dominance and resists outside control. Through coded, patronizing language, the elder man reinforces traditional gender norms, portraying Ali’s youth and idealism as weakness. Calling him “son” and warning him functions as a threat, symbolically excluding alternative masculinities.</p>
<p><b>Burning Days- Prosecutor and Teenage Neighbor Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:1.35.22-1.35.42</b></p>  <p>In the scene, the teenage neighbor brings rat poison to Prosecutor Emre’s house, and they talk about the rats.  <b>Dialogue</b> - Prosecutor: <i>“Are there a lot of rats?”</i>  <b>Teenage Neighbor:</b> <i>“Old houses-of course there are.”</i></p>	<p>The “rat” metaphor exposes the contrast between urban and rural masculinities in the scene. While the prosecutor’s concern signals fragility, the local man’s dismissiveness asserts, place-based masculinity. The scene subtly undermines bureaucratic masculinity by framing it as disconnected from rural norms.</p>

**Burning Days: The Prosecutor and the Lawyer Town Square Confrontation Scene**

**Time Duration: 1.46-1.47**



As Prosecutor Emre drives through the town square, he encounters the lawyer he has been investigating for the sexual abuse of Pekmez. He feels disturbed by the lawyer's threatening looks and gestures.

In the scene, the lawyer and his male supporters use bodily gestures and spatial dominance to reject Emre's association with law and justice, portraying it as weak. Emre's authority is symbolically eroded, revealing how hegemonic masculinity exerts control not through direct violence, but through public intimidation and the marginalization of institutional masculinities.



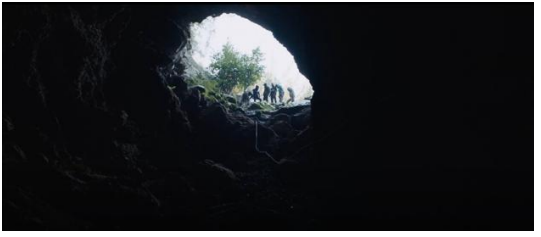

In both films, the tension between hegemonic and fragile masculinities is clearly evident. In *Black Night*, hegemonic masculinity is constructed by marginalizing Ali, whose appearance, behavior, and profession reflect a deeper conflict between tradition and modernity. Male figures form alliances to suppress Ali, who is portrayed as the "other", to reaffirm their masculine identity. As a result, Ali becomes the direct target of exclusion and confrontation. R. W. Connell's (1995) concept of multiple masculinities provides a powerful framework for understanding this conflict. The character of Ali is positioned as the "other" and marginalized because he does not conform to hegemonic masculinity norms. This exclusion emerges not merely as an individual reaction, but as a form of collective masculine defense.



In *Burning Days*, Prosecutor Emre is constantly tested in terms of his masculinity by Local power figures such as the lawyer, the doctor, and the mayor. Although Emre is not directly excluded, he occupies a vulnerable position where he must continually defend himself, thus being indirectly othered. Both the townspeople and local authorities reinforce this tension, maintaining this conflict at social and institutional levels. The contrast established between the prosecutor, who represents modernity, and traditional local masculinity demonstrates that masculinity is produced differently across spatial and cultural contexts. Within the framework of Pierre Bourdieu's (2001) theory of power and field, this conflict can also be interpreted as a struggle for dominance between different social fields. Therefore, this portrayal reveals that masculinity is not a singular or fixed structure, but rather one that is continuously negotiated and reconstructed through conflict.

#### **4.5. The Punishment of Othered/Fragile Masculinity**

This theme encompasses scenes from both films in which male characters perceived as "fragile" or "othered" are suppressed/eliminated due to their incompatibility with the hegemonic masculine order.

**Table 6:** Analysis of Scenes within the Context of the Punishment of Othered/Fragile Masculinity

<p><b>Black Night-Stones Thrown at Ali’s House Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:1.11-1.12</b></p>  <p>In this scene, local men throw stones at Ali’s house in an act of intimidation intended to punish him for disrupting the town’s patriarchal social order.</p>	<p>The stone becomes a symbolic warning, an effort to silence or erase Ali’s alternative masculinity, marking him as the target of collective violence. This moment marks the first physical attempt to eliminate the values he represents, illustrating how hegemonic masculinity suppresses differing male identities.</p>
<p><b>Black Night- Ali’s Lynching by the Townsman Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:1.42-1.45</b></p>  <p>In this scene, Ishak witnesses a group of men beating Ali to death with sticks as an act of punishment because they see him as a threat.</p>	<p>Ali’s beating to death in the scene symbolizes masculine power. Though hesitant, Ishak is drawn into the violence, revealing his conflict between moral conscience and conformity. Ali, representing fragile masculinity, is lynched for defying dominant norms. The scene illustrates how collective aggression uphold hegemonic masculinity.</p>
<p><b>Black Night- The Townsman Cutting Rope of Ishak’s into the Sinkhole Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:1.47-1.49</b></p>  <p>Following his conscience, Ishak continues to search for Ali’s body. As Ishak descends into the sinkhole to find Ali’s body, the townsman, fearing that their crime will be exposed, cut the rope, causing Ishak to fall and die.</p>	<p>The sinkhole becomes a powerful symbol of how patriarchal violence is sustained, not just a space of death, but a metaphor for how masculine dominance is reproduced. Violence is reinforced by complicity and the suppression of dissent. Ishak, the only man who challenges hegemonic masculinity, is also eliminated, his pursuit of justice places him outside masculine norms.</p>
<p><b>Burning Days- The Prosecutor and the Journalist’s Car Assault Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:1.45-1.46</b></p>  <p>In this scene, the prosecutor and the journalist drive through a crowd waiting for water. Suddenly, someone throws a water container at their car. The two men reacts but could not find out who did it.</p>	<p>This assault symbolizes the town’s collective punishment, triggered by rumors of a homosexual relationship between the two men in the scene. The two characters are made scapegoats not only for their perceived nonconformity but also for the town’s water crisis, even though they are not responsible. Gender norms and social frustrations intersect to justify symbolic and physical violence against those seen as “deviant.”</p>

<p><b>Burning Days- The Prosecutor’s House Attack Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration:1.57-2.02</b></p>  <p>In this scene, townsmen surround the prosecutor’s house at night with torches and slogans, enacting collective intimidation. They throw stones at the windows, while the prosecutor and the journalist panic but could not find any legal help.  <b>Dialogue (Townsmen):</b>“What are you doing out so late? This is Yanıklar (name of the village)—there’s no way out. What’s the rush? Heading to the water again? Did your little gathering end too soon?” “Down with the deviants!”  “Don’t touch Yanıklar! Don’t test our patience!”</p>	<p>Institutional silence renders the home a symbolic site of isolation and control in the scene. Accusations of homosexuality provoke linguistic and physical violence, reinforcing heteronormative masculinity through panic and public shaming. The retreat of the prosecutor and the journalist marks the successful enforcement of hegemonic gender norms.</p>
<p><b>Burning Days- Chase and Sinkhole Scene</b>  <b>Time Duration: 2.02-2.06</b></p>  <p>In this scene, the prosecutor and journalist attempt to flee, they are pursued by armed men. When they reach the outskirts of the town, a sinkhole appears between them and their pursuers.</p>	<p>In this scene, the townsmen, as extensions of patriarchal domination, take on the role of hunters, while the prosecutor and the journalist embodying fragile masculinity become the hunted. Their escape through the sinkhole symbolizes a rupture between dominant and marginalized masculinities. Although spared physical harm, the protagonists are symbolically excluded from hegemonic masculinity.</p>

In both movies, fragile or othered male characters are punished. In Black Night, Ali and Ishak, who are portrayed as deviant or fragile, face escalating threats that culminate in their deaths. Violence begins with acts of intimidation, such as house attacks. Eventually, Ali is lynched by a group, and Ishak is killed when his rope is cut while descending into a sinkhole. In Burning Days, the fragile or deviant characters Prosecutor Emre and journalist Murat are also similarly targeted through staged attacks on their car, their houses, while state institutions remain passive. Ultimately, Emre and Murat are hunted by local power figures and forced to flee the town. In the film Burning Days, the fact that the prosecutor and the journalist are not physically killed but instead socially excluded serves as an example of symbolic violence. According to R. W. Connell (1995), hegemonic masculinity not only establishes dominance but also sustains itself by suppressing alternative masculinities. The lynching of Ali and the killing of Ishak represent the most extreme manifestations of this mechanism of suppression. Michael Kimmel’s (2008) concept of fragile masculinity helps explain the underlying motivation behind such violence. When men perceive their masculinity to be under threat, they tend to become more aggressive and exclusionary. In this sense, violence operates not merely as a tool of control, but also

as a “defense mechanism” of masculinity. As noted by Pierre Bourdieu (2001), symbolic exclusion can function as a mechanism of control that is as powerful as physical violence.

Both films feature recurring symbols of punishment, such as stones and sticks. However, the violence is more direct and fatal in *Black Night*, where both fragile characters are killed. In *Burning Days*, while the protagonists narrowly escape death, they are symbolically exiled from the community.

## Conclusion

Discussions of hegemonic masculinity often focus on its effects on women. However, patriarchal dominance also targets men who deviate from dominant gender norms, those perceived as "non-normative" or fragile. Cinema can be transformative for normalizing non-heteronormative masculinities. Therefore, a critical analysis of how cinema represents gender roles is crucial. This study examined *Black Night* and *Burning Days* to show how Turkish cinema portrays patriarchal hegemony and the intersection of symbolic and physical violence with masculinity. In both films, hegemonic masculinity dominates not only women but also men who deviate from traditional norms such as Ali and Emre who subsequently face exclusion or violence.

The thematic analysis indicates that hegemonic masculinity is not just about asserting power but maintaining control. Connell (1995)'s theory of “multiple masculinities” is evident in both films, particularly in *Burning Days*, where the prosecutor, the journalist, and the mayor's son represent subordinate, fragile, and complicit masculinities, respectively.

Both films are grounded in representations of rural space and small-town atmospheres. However, the social structures shaping rural masculinity constructs differ. *Black Night* presents a more traditional and people-centered narrative structure, while *Burning Days* emphasizes provincial bureaucracy and local power relations. Female characters play secondary roles in both films and are positioned as either carriers or victims of patriarchal domination. Scenes involving symbolic or physical violence such as hunting, weapons, alcohol, profanity, stones, sticks, and sexuality visibly accompany moments of hegemonic masculinity assertion.

Hegemonic masculinity is clearly represented in both films. *Black Night* presents a narrative in which physical violence is portrayed more explicitly, whereas *Burning Days* focuses on symbolic violence. Despite their differing tones, both films share a common theme: the reproduction of patriarchal order through othering, repression, and violence. In both narratives, women and non-normative men are othered, while networks of male solidarity play a legitimizing and sustaining role in this exclusion. The pressure exerted by hegemonic masculinity on fragile masculinity is initially expressed through symbolic violence verbal forms of humiliation and mockery which later escalate into physical violence in the movies. Symbolic violence, introduced as a warning or a form of suppressive control, gradually intensifies and evolves into physical violence, underscoring the power embedded in the hegemonic structure. The punishment of the main characters Ishak and Ali in *Black Night*, and Prosecutor Emre and Journalist Murat in *Burning Days* demonstrate the increasing severity of hegemonic violence and the power mechanisms aiming the “other” elimination. However, the emergence of solidarity between the fragile/othered male characters in both films is also crucial, indicating that the “othered” is not entirely alone and retains the potential to assert identity and agency in the face of hegemonic structures.

These films portray internal male hierarchies and external gender-based oppression. Bourdieu (2001)'s concept of symbolic violence helps explain how domination is expressed not only through actions but also through language, gaze, and social expectations. While the two films differ stylistically, both legitimize male dominance. This study concludes that hegemonic masculinity is not merely a gender identity, but a system of domination sustained by cinema and internalized by audiences. Challenging these portrayals is vital for gender equality, as patriarchal power often appear "natural". Cinema, therefore, is not just a narrative form but a key site of ideological struggle.

This study makes an original contribution to the literature by analyzing how the relationship between hegemonic and fragile masculinities in Turkish cinema is constructed not only at the level of representation but also along the axes of violence, space, social pressure, and institutional power. While existing studies have mainly focused on the crisis of hegemonic masculinity and patriarchal domination over women, this analysis centers on the positioning of fragile masculinities in relation to hegemonic masculinity within the selected films. Furthermore, the study demonstrates how the conflict between hegemonic and fragile masculinities is produced through mechanisms of exclusion, stigmatization, and suppression within narrative structures. By showing that symbolic and physical violence function as key instruments that render this conflict visible and sustain it, the analysis contributes conceptual depth to masculinity studies. Additionally, by approaching cinema not merely as a reflection of social reality but as an ideological field that legitimizes hegemonic masculinity while punishing fragile masculinities, the study offers another significant contribution to the literature. In this respect, the analysis of *Black Night* and *Burning Days* within the framework of hegemonic vs. fragile masculinity conflict fills a vital gap by explaining how hierarchies among masculinities are reproduced in contemporary Turkish cinema.

In line with this study's findings, it is recommended that future research expand its analysis of masculinity representations across different contexts. In this regard, longitudinal analyses of Turkish films produced in different periods may reveal the transformation of hegemonic and fragile masculinities over time. Additionally, medium-centered comparative studies focusing on digital platform content and television series could be conducted to examine how constructions of masculinity evolve across these media. Furthermore, audience-centered research can be conducted to explore variations in the reception of hegemonic and fragile masculinity representations. Finally, cross-cultural comparative studies encompassing diverse cultural contexts could contribute to the literature by identifying similarities and differences between masculinity representations in Turkish and global cinema.

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