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Elkarif, Halah & Rohrmann, Tim (2022). **Gendered expectations vs gendered initiatives: perspectives of male practitioners with migrant and non-migrant background in Germany.** Paper presented on the 30th EECERA Annual Conference, Glasgow/Scotland, 25.8.2022.

This study analyses how male practitioners in ECEC approach masculinities differently according to their cultural background. Drawing on data collected for a PhD project and following some cross-cultural research on men and gender in ECEC (Peeters et al. 2015; Koch & Farquhar, 2015; Xu, 2018), the current paper is investigating gender-related perspectives and attitudes among some male practitioners with migrant and non-migrant background in Germany. Adopting the social constructionist theory, masculinities in this study are considered as outcomes of merging social, cultural, and historical factors (Addis et al., 2016) and therefore masculinity here is not fixed, as it is always developing through interaction (Bryman, 2012). Although many studies addressed masculinities and men in ECEC (O'Keeffe, 2017; Brody, 2015; Brownhill et al., 2016), little attention was given to elaborate the role played by culture in shaping such perspectives and attitudes. Within a generic qualitative methodology, 18 face-to-face long interviews were conducted with male practitioners with migrant (Middle East) and non-migrant background in different cities and institutions in Germany. All participants gave written informed consent to the voluntary participation in the study and to the use of their anonymized data for scientific publishing purposes. Complicated intersections between masculinities and professionalism were highlighted across the analysed data, asserting a clear difference among the participants in understanding and practicing masculinity according to their cultural background. These findings suggest the need for continuous professional support for gender-mixed teams, with a specific focus on gender reflexivity and the interplay between gender and cultural factors.

### **Keywords**

Male educators, masculinities, gender, culture, practice

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# Gendered expectations vs gendered initiatives: perspectives of male practitioners with migrant and non-migrant background in Germany

Keywords: Male educators, masculinities, gender, culture, practice

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# Outline

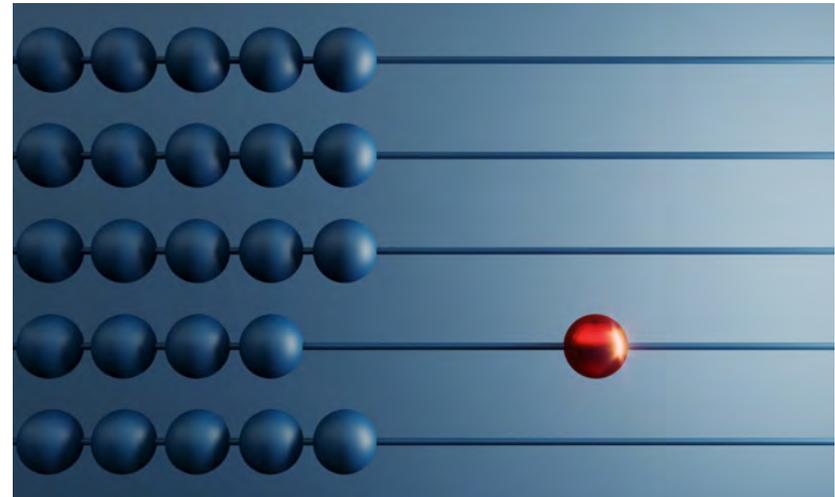
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- 1** Introduction & Overview
- 2** Results
- 3** Discussion & recommendations

# Introduction

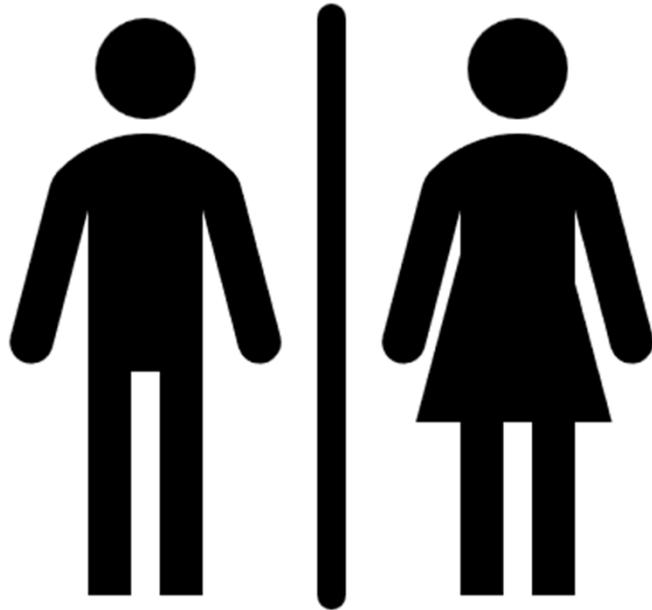
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- Men in early childhood education and care (ECEC)
- International phenomenon - Majority are women !
- 7% of the ECEC workforce in Germany are Men.
- A lot of challenges ! One of these challenges is : **Gendered expectations of men in ECEC**
- **Reactions and responses from a cultural perspective.**



# What are gendered expectations?

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# Migrant and non-migrant participants

Non-German (Middle east ) and German participants

Inspired by the definition of [Statistisches Bundesamt \(2017\)](#) for a person with a migrant background:

- **German** in this study (ohne migrationshintergrund) is “*a person whose both parents were born and raised in Germany, so as he*”
- **non-German** in this study points to “*a person whose both parents were born and raised in another country (MENA countries) rather than Germany, so as he*”



This categorization is only made for the purposes of the current research; however, it is not a classification of humans.

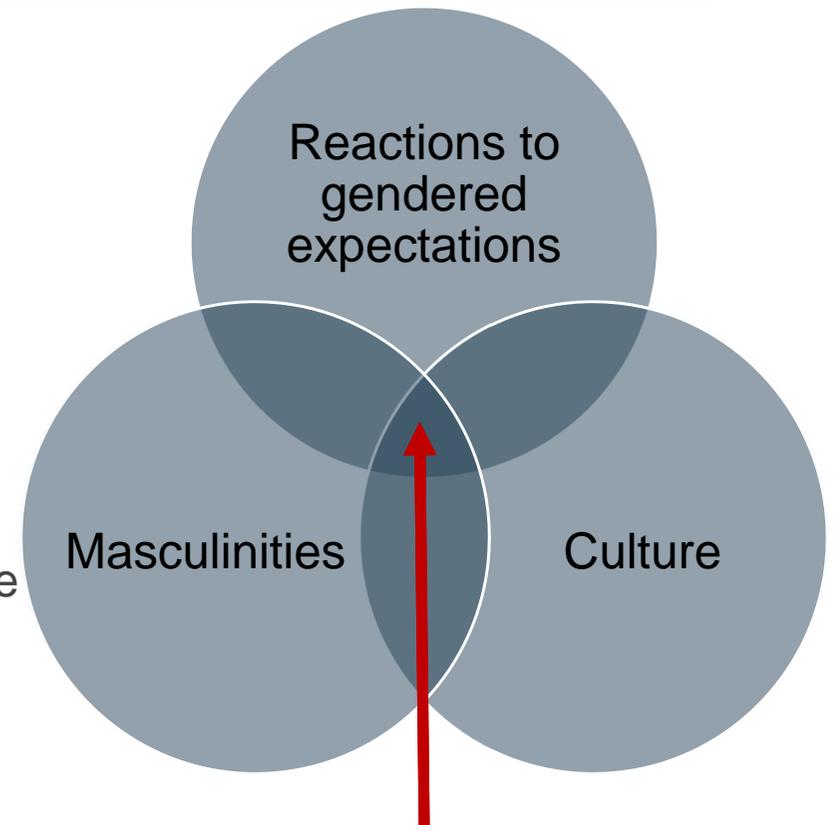
# Introduction

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Many previous studies documented **gendered expectations** faced by male educators in ECEC field. (Aigner & Rohrmann, 2010; Cremers et al. 2010)

Many studies addressed masculinities and men in ECEC (O'Keeffe, 2017; Brody, 2015; Brownhill et al., 2016). However, **little attention was given to elaborate the role played by culture in shaping such perspectives and attitudes.**

The current paper takes this further by investigating the relationship between **how male teachers are dealing with such gendered expectations** and **personal constructions of masculinities**, with a special focus on the role of **culture**.

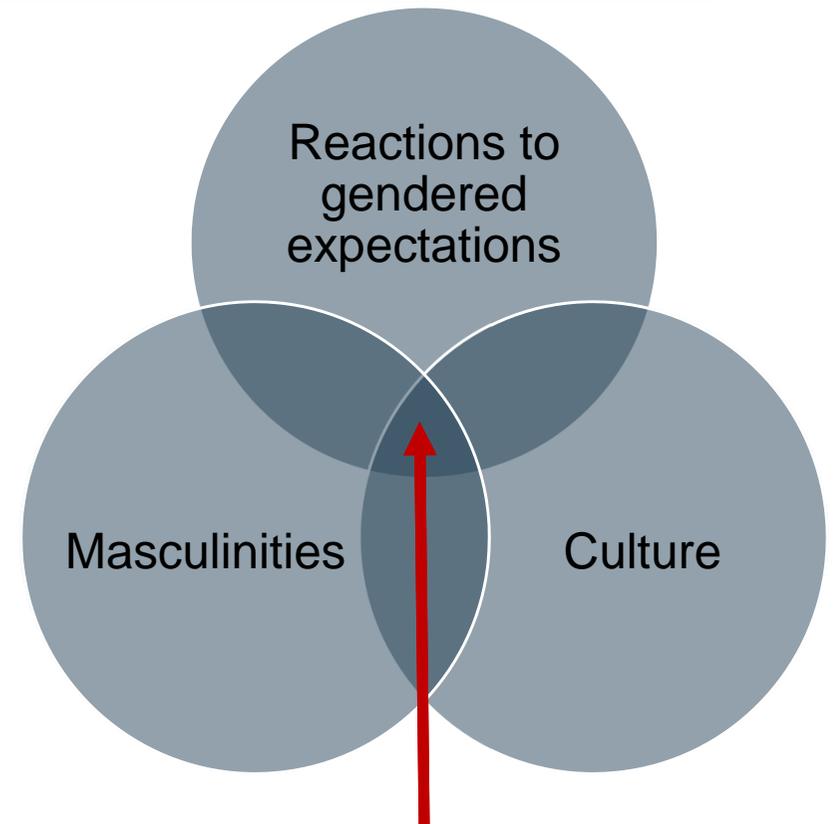


# Original project

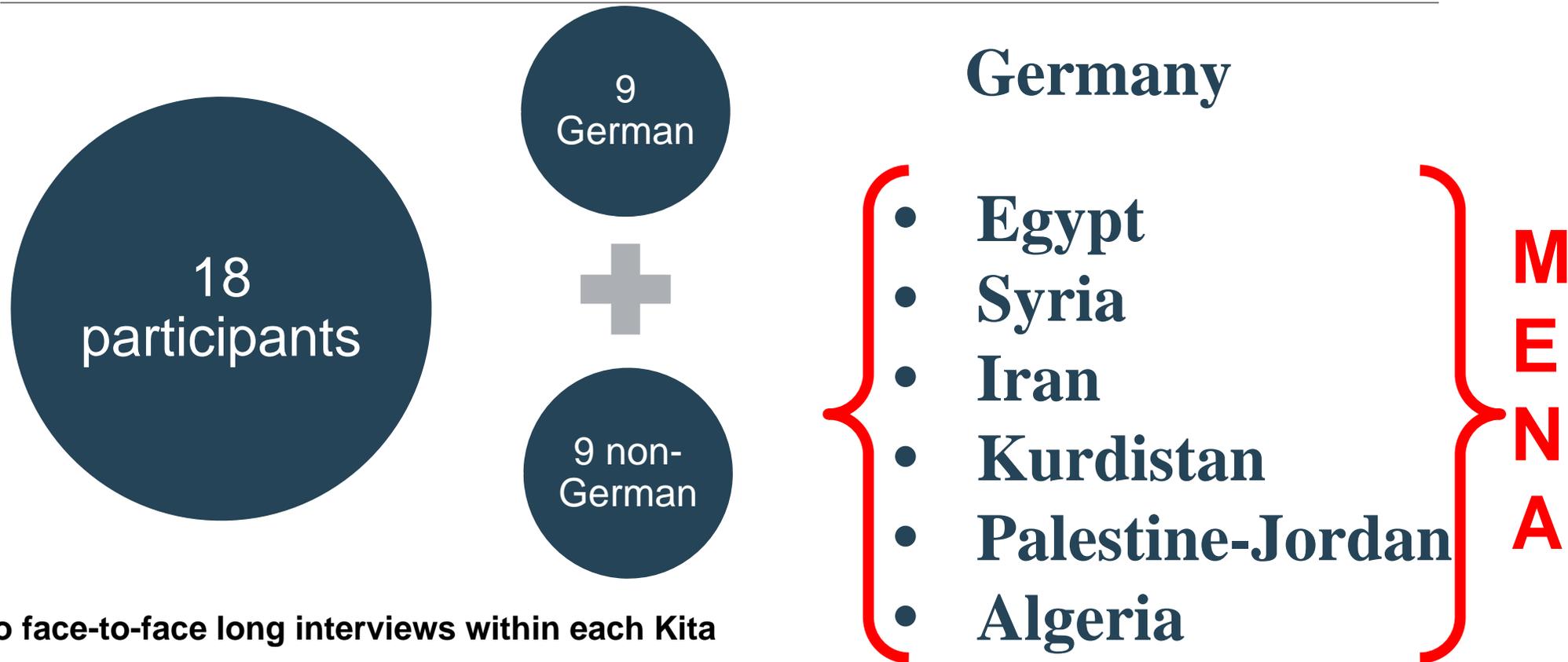
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Drawing on data collected for a PhD project and following some cross-cultural research on men and gender in ECEC (Peeters et al. 2015; Koch & Farquhar, 2015; Xu, 2018), the current paper is investigating gender-related perspectives and attitudes among **male practitioners with migrant and non-migrant background in Germany**.

All participants gave **written informed consent** to the voluntary participation in the study and to the use of their anonymized data for scientific publishing purposes.



# Migrant and non-migrant participants



# Masculinities & Cultural Background



# Outline

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- 1 Introduction & Overview ✓
- 2 Results
- 3 Discussion & recommendations

## Results

# Do your female colleagues have specific expectations of you as a man?

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- 15 of the 18 participants confirmed facing **gendered expectations** from their female colleagues.

- This ranged between ( only on few occasions ) to ( ALL THE TIME ).
- 2 participants - **non-gendered expectations** (such as playing guitar)
- 1 participant “ I am not the typical strong man to ask for such things!”



## Results

# Do your female colleagues have specific expectations of you as a man?

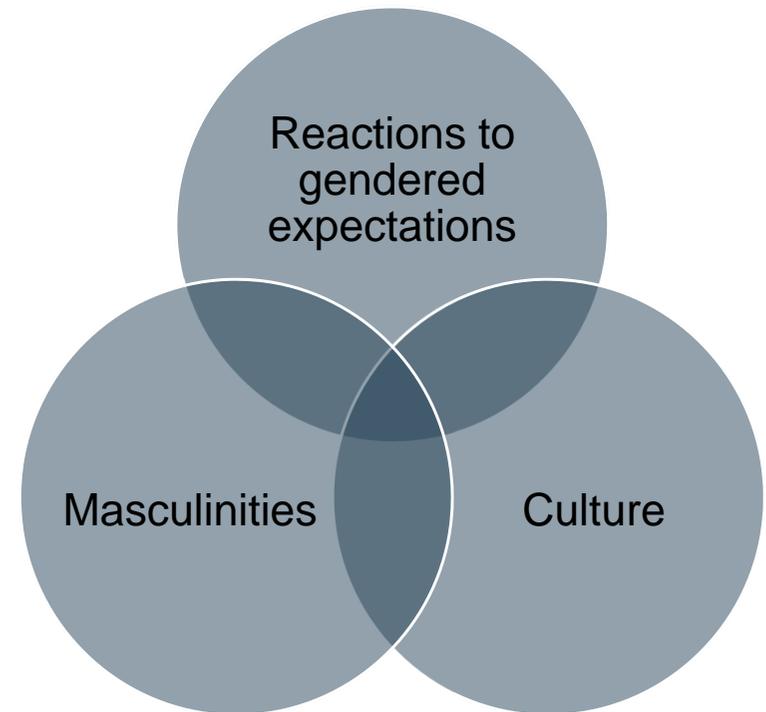
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- Carrying heavy things
- Repairing things (e.g., lamps)
- Cupboard installation
- Technical problems
- Christmas tree's decoration
- Carrying and placing tables and chairs when organizing events
- Communication with the father
- Rough-and-tumble play, especially with boys
- Control and discipline children (with the manly voice! )

**Directly  
asked**

# Reactions and responses to gendered expectations

15 participants



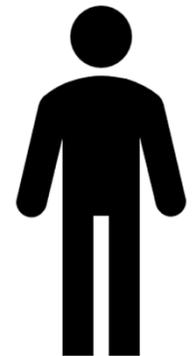
# Reactions and responses to gendered expectations

## 1) Informative rejection

He is rejecting any kind of assigning gendered tasks to him as a man, However ....

*“In the beginning I did those tasks, for example when I was an intern. At some point I said NO, I can't carry all your burdens here. I said I'm no longer a handyman, I've repaired a lot and so on, I've carried a lot of heavy things. This is enough. I will not do this anymore. I am just like you (female colleagues). Why should I do such tasks then?”*  
(A non-German participant – My translation)

*“At parties, when we have heavy tables, benches and so on. OR when we have to bring the drinks from the basement. I can see that my female colleagues are having a hard time doing this, So I step in. I'll do that. I will help them. But not because I have to as a man!”* (A non-German participant – My translation)



# Reactions and responses to gendered expectations

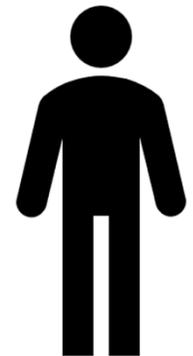
## 2) It depends... !

His feelings depend on task and time! but he does it anyway

*“ A LOT! My female colleagues always ask me: carry this, bring this, you are a man, hang this up, ...etc. I am a helpful person. I like to help my colleagues, especially the women (laughing). No, no, to speak seriously. I have no objection to doing such tasks in general. But it annoys me sometime that they would take me or one of my male colleagues out of our break time, to do such tasks. For example, when a heavy box needs to be carried from the car to upstairs. This is when I feel not good. But during normal work hours? I do not mind doing such tasks !“*

(A non-German participant – My translation)

Task !



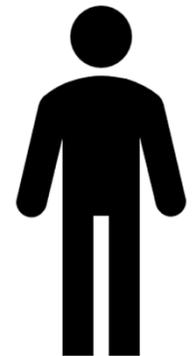
## Reactions and responses to gendered expectations

### 3) It is not a big deal! It is not a problem

He does not hate or like it. It is not a problem. It is not a big deal

*“Yes, they do, although I don't see a problem. If something heavy needs to be carried from here to here, even for my group or other groups in the institution, I have no problem. I do it ! It is not a big deal! I know that some of my male colleagues do not like this. They think that you do not want to be the janitor (Hausmeister) and you have to stick to your educational role as an educator. But for me personally? I do not see it like this. I know I am not the janitor here (Hausmeister) (laughs), so there is no problem”*

(A German participant – My translation)



# Reactions and responses to gendered expectations

## 4) Responding gladly

because they are masculine tasks

*They are asking me directly for such tasks. Can you please hold this? Or do that? But actually, the physical work is also men's work. So, I think it's okay. That is what you do as a man because you have more physical strength. You have more muscles. Sometimes, I say, I can get that thing because I am taller and can get easily to it. I have to say also that to some extent such things make me feel good as a man. I feel more confirmed by it, a little bit, yes. It's somehow part of the masculine stuff.*

(A German participant – My translation)



# Reactions and responses to gendered expectations

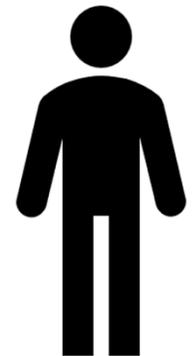
## 5) Gendered initiatives

He is proactively offering to do gendered tasks, instead of the female colleagues

*As an Egyptian Arabic man, I have this strong oriental / Middle Eastern masculinity. When I see something that I would do for my mother or my sister, I do it right away. Such as if I saw my female college carrying something .. even if it is not heavy, I will go to her and carry it instead. Because I would do the same for my mother or my sister without thinking.*

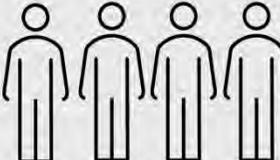
*Sometimes she says to me: No, no, Ahmed. This is my job. I can do this. But I tell them that this is my ethics. This is how I grew up. This is my culture. Even when we go out for picnics or something. Without thinking, I have to make sure that they all get on the bus or in the ferry first and then I hop on. I have to check on them first (the female colleagues) and make sure that they are safe and that everything is OK.*

(A non-German participant – My translation)



**Results**

# Reactions and responses to gendered expectations

Informative rejection	It depends... !		It is not a big deal!	Responding gladly		Gendered initiatives
<p>He is rejecting any kind of assigning gendered tasks to him as a man. However, ....</p>	<p>Rejecting some, while having no problem practicing some</p>	<p>His feelings depend on task and time! but he does it anyway</p>	<p>He does not hate or like it. It is not a problem. It is not a big deal</p>	<p>while interpreting it within non-gender frame</p>	<p>because they are masculine tasks</p>	<p>He is proactively offering to do gendered tasks, instead of the female colleagues</p>
						



**Results**

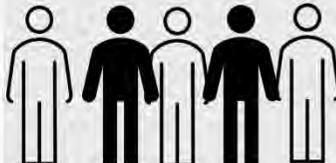
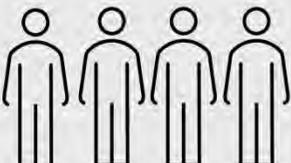


Non-German participant



A German participant

# Reactions and responses to gendered expectations

Informative rejection	It depends... !		It is not a big deal!	Responding gladly		Gendered initiatives
He is rejecting any kind of assigning gendered tasks to him as a man. However, ....	Rejecting some, while having no problem practicing some	His feelings depend on task and time! but he does it anyway	He does not hate or like it. It is not a problem. It is not a big deal	while interpreting it within non-gender frame	because they are masculine tasks	He is proactively offering to do gendered tasks, instead of the female colleagues
						

## Masculinities & cultural background

**What does it mean for you to “be a man” in today’s world?**

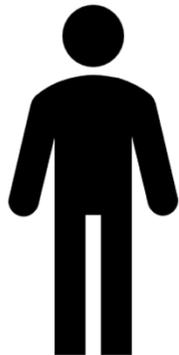
German participants	Non-German participants
German Language	Arabic language
Gleichberechtigung (equal-rights, equality...)	المسئولية Responsibility- taking care ..
Examples related to life with a female partner, while sharing tasks together.	Examples from being responsible for a family.

# Outline

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- 1 Introduction & Overview ✓
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# Are all initiatives the same?



*“At parties, when we have heavy tables, benches and so on. OR when we have to bring the drinks from the basement. I can see that my female colleagues are having a hard time doing this, So I step in. I’ll do that. I will help them. But not because I have to “as a man”!*  
(A non-German participant – My translation)



*“As a man? If I see my female colleague carrying a heavy box, I immediately offer her help. I will not wait for her to ask me. She has the right to accept or refuse my offer to help. But I have to offer this as a man!”*

(A non-German participant – My translation)



**Informative rejection**

**It depends... !**

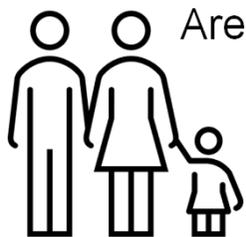
**It is not a big deal!**

**Responding gladly**

**Gendered initiatives**

# Masculinities through time and interaction

Informative rejection	It depends... !		It is not a big deal!	Responding gladly			Gendered initiatives



Are living in Germany for more than 30 Years ago



Non-German participant



A German participant

## Team dynamics ?

# Different masculinities in the same institution!

### German participants

#### German Language

*... I always fight against such stereotyping. But sometimes it is different, especially when comparing with colleagues from other cultures. In some cultures, it is common for the man to walk in the room and say: What is going on here? Then he begins to help. From the point of view of some female colleagues, this is an advantage”*

(A German participant – My translation)

### Non-German participants

#### Arabic language

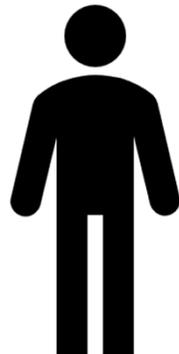
*... But I noticed that I often volunteer to help more than my German male colleagues. My German male colleagues do not offer help in such situations. And I think that my female colleagues realized this, and right now they know that they can ask directly for my help and I would never refuse their request. But I still don't see a problem with this.*

(A non-German participant – My translation)



# Are all initiatives the same?

Actually NO



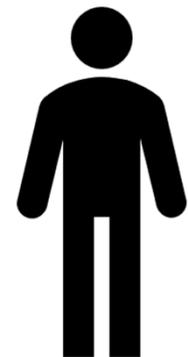
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*“As a man? If I see my female colleague carrying a heavy box, I immediately offer her help. I will not wait for her to ask me. She has the right to accept or refuse my offer to help. But I have to offer this as a man!’”*

(A non-German participant – My translation)



Informative rejection	It depends... !	It is not a big deal!	Responding gladly	Gendered initiatives
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## Based on these results ...

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- We verified that reacting and responding to **gendered expectations** of male educators in ECEC is strongly related to their **current conception of masculinity**.
- We confirm previous research indicated that masculinities are considered as outcomes of merging social, cultural, and historical factors (Addis et al., 2016) and that **masculinity is not fixed, as it is always developing through interaction** (Bryman, 2012).
- We assert the need to **more qualitative research** exploring the role played by cultural factors in shaping masculinities of men in ECEC, for example: Men in ECEC in MENA countries.



## Based on these results ...

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- We found that **complicated intersections between masculinities and professionalism were highlighted across the analysed data**, asserting a clear difference among the participants in understanding and practicing masculinity according to their cultural background.
- We argue for **the need of continuous professional support for gender-mixed teams**, with a specific focus on gender reflexivity and the interplay between gender and cultural factors, especially when different masculinities & cultures are relevant in the same institution.

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# If it is “cultural” is it unquestioned???

Thank You! 

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