

The representation of women in press: the example of turkish media essay sample



In Turkey, analyzing media is somewhat difficult work. Because, media is a male-dominated branch. In fact, the problem of being dominated by men is faced with almost every aspect of life. Moreover, the scholars go further and explain this domination as a beginning of the new discourses which are called as the separate spheres. The doctrine of separate spheres assumes that woman's place is in the home and man's place is in the labor (Haas & Hwang, 2007: 55). Although the employment for women are seen in every field, media is the most difficult working area to be involved for women.

They are not the subject of it, they are always the object of media.

Representation of women in the media is not only the desires of audiences' desires, but also the choice of the one who exercise power. Since there are conservative tendencies in Turkey nowadays, the contradictions are derived from this tendencies. In the press one can see a news about one of the newspapers' employer and his wife. While he does not want his wife to wear mini-skirt, his first demand from his woman announcer is to wear a mini-skirt. Media is interested in women's hemline, not even more.

It is the perception of most of the feminist tutors. This means existing only in name. In the media or in the working areas women are subordinated ones. This fact is valid for years. It is because individuals are taught in this way. What a child sees in everyday life is the example of his future attitudes. This truth can be seen almost everywhere in the world. For instance as a Swedish Context, it has same understanding. Many narratives from the past tell us how women were often characterised as the saviour of the family economy.

When the boys started working, around twelve years age, girls stayed at home and helped their mothers with cooking, care of younger siblings, sewing, animal breeding and keeping, as well as the continuous washing of the boys' and husbands' working clothes (Lundqvist, 1999: 584). They are far from serious topics. Nevertheless, in Turkey one can easily observe that women are everywhere, even under the health column or under the sports columns with their half-naked bodies. At the same time, girls' education is one of the important topic in media.

There are lots of advertisements which are for supporting their education. Turkey is a two-dimensional country. It is impossible to analyze gender issues just looking unidimensional. Because, on the one hand women in Turkey face with the problems that the women from developed Western countries experienced. On the other hand, they struggle for the problems which make the life more difficult with the cultural and traditional constraints. These constraints, sometimes may cause women have any right to live and voice. In the papers and magazines the women's education rates take a broad part.

It is the way for making people aware of this issue. In Turkey, main idea on women is not about gender discrimination. It is actually about honour. The understanding of Islam, unfortunately, in some communities, it is still accepted that men superior to women. According to their view, it is inevitable to see a woman as just a mother. Before media and politics, religion confirms this. Thus, there is nothing remain. There is nothing to do for making men and women equal. Media is the supporter of government's policies. The family policies are one of them.

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Women are the mothers on the advertisements. They seem while taking care for children. Womenhood is still constructed through caring and responsibility for relationships. Women still are responsible for family life and parenthood in a more extensive way than are men, regardless of all striving for gender equality and regardless of public day care for children. Mothers who live in Sweden have to construct their motherhood within the context of a gender equality discourse, but in everyday reality that is not gender equal (Elvin-Nowak & Thomsson, 2001: 410). Turkey is in this dilemma.

In the 1930's after the foundation of Turkish Republic, the literacy among women were increased. This was one of the most important aim for the government. Actually its roots, again, comes from accepting woman as a mother. Because, being literate would make them more compatible for the childcaring-baring. So they were able to grow up smart children. Although the new state's paradigm includes modernization in all aspects of the life, the contemporary image of women are not accepted in the whole country.

Today, the representation of men and women in the mass media is one of the primary elements in the construction of femininity and masculinity (Hirdman, 1998: 225). The representation of gender can be seen as an indicator of a mental and political state and as a part of the process of historical change (Hirdman, 1998: 236). In 1930's, there are social policies on woman's body at this time. In the newspapers they are seen as the protector of the family. In 1940's these policies began to decrease.

In fact the interest on women decreased. Even in the politics there is a decline in the rates of participation of women. Nevertheless they started to

work for media at this time. 1940's fashion was based on masculinity. The image on the press was this. It can be interpreted as a result of existing in the working area. In 1950's there was a huge Migration Wave. As a result of this we can see the spread of arabesque culture and new types of women. This brought together an encounter between countrywoman and urbanwoman. This encountering occurred of course through the media, not in real life. 1960's are the ones where worldwide there is an effect of political movements. That is why women are on the stage with the politics.

There was a Bohemian culture which was inspired by the West. Again women were compared with men and they looked like men. In 1980's with the Liberal transformation, the women of some specific communities had a chance to being represented. At the beginning of 1990's women were completely an object of consumption. It was also the time in which the awareness of being a woman, political demands were brushed aside. Whilst, the women targeted consumption period were created by the magazines and the TV's. There is another problematic issue in Turkey which concerns honour killing.

In page 3 news, there are lots of honour killing news. However their rates are decreasing gradually. Turkey is in a very different position while analysing women issue, because when you start analysing, you should consider Turkey with two-sided country; with its west and its east. Eastern part of Turkey is completely different from the Western part. While Western part becomes westernized gradually, east still continues to protect traditional values especially about honour. Since the majority of the population is Muslim in Turkey. We can see its tremendous effect on women.

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Definitely the religious elements are very much effective in shaping the minds. With the effects of globalization on media, we can realize the westernization on magazines, newspapers. For instance the fashion is same with the other Western countries. The women are shown as an integral part of women in the magazines. The body of a woman is a visual part of them. However one can see the honour killing news in the same newspaper. Even in the same page. It is the self-contradictory feature of media. As a result, this example from 1930's might be summary for the place of woman in press.

Kerime Halis who was chosen as a Miss Universe in 1933 has an interesting effect on a quasi-official newspaper, Cumhuriyet. With the victory of her, Cumhuriyet switched to color-print. Although Turkey has a lot to do for reaching the social gender equality in all of aspect of life, popular culture objectifies the image of women. While there is a tremendous effect of globalization on Turkey, it is really interesting to study the position of women in Turkey. Turkey is mixed up in an affair with the effects of globalization and the effects of traditional way of life.

Today not only in the press, you can observe this affair even in the streets. It is mostly seen scene that while one couple are walking in the street, there is an effort especially for men to not to look at the billboard that is covered with a beautiful woman. This is also same in the newspaper; one should effort for not to look at the half-naked girl above the column that shows unemployment rates. Especially the media is a kind of tricky way to represent women. It is not difficult to observe this way of description, but as I cited before in everyday reality that is not gender equal at all.

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