

# An Alternative for Turkish Serials: Uses and Gratifications of Watching Indian Soap Operas by Turkish Female Viewers

Türk Dizileri İçin Bir Alternatif: Hint Dizilerinin Türk Kadın İzleyicileri Tarafından İzlenmesinin Kullanımlar ve Doyumlar Yaklaşımı Bağlamında İncelenmesi

Yeliz YÜCEL\* 

Yeşim Ceren ÇAPRAZ\*\* 

## Abstract

In the past few years, the popularity of Indian soap operas has skyrocketed in Turkey, especially in 2016 due to *Is Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon?* (*Bir Garip Aşk*). The present article investigates female viewers' motivations for watching Indian soap operas in Turkey. The study was conducted through qualitative research with semi-structured in-depth interviews with 30 female viewers between the ages of 22-60, who were primarily homemakers. This article has revealed five uses and gratifications of Turkish female viewers for watching Indian soaps: Identification, Guilty Pleasure, Relaxation and Escape, Moral Support, and Idealization. Results show that watching Indian soap operas is affected directly by participants' favorability toward keeping social order (religious, traditional, and familial values) in the right way, their perceived concept of female power, and their willingness to live traditionally. The most unexpected and remarkable finding of this research is the use of watching Indian soaps as a protest against Turkish serials that include sexually explicit content and morally corruptive scenes. Unlike watching Westerner soaps, resistance cannot be found in the uses and gratifications of watching Indian soaps.

**Keywords:** Soap Operas, Indian Soap Operas, Uses and Gratifications, Female Viewers, Female Homemakers

\* PhC., Yeliz Yücel, Galatasaray University, İstanbul, Türkiye, E-mail: lizyucel@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000 – 0002-4327-3303

\*\* PhC., Yeşim Ceren Çapraz, Galatasaray University, İstanbul, Türkiye. E-mail: yesimcapraz@gmail.com, ORCID: 0000-0001-5801-4163

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## Öz

Son yıllarda, özellikle 2016 yılında “Is Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon” (*Bir Garip Aşk*) dizisinin yayınlanmasıyla birlikte, Türkiye’de Hint dizilerine olan ilginin oldukça arttığı görülmektedir. Bu makale, Türkiye’deki kadın izleyicilerin Hint dizilerini izleme motivasyonlarını ele almaktadır. Çalışma, çoğunlukla ev kadını olan 22-60 yaş arası 30 kadın izleyici ile nitel çalışmaların araştırma metodlarından yararlanılarak yapılandırılmış derinlemesine görüşmelerden oluşmaktadır. Bu makale, Türk kadın izleyicilerinin Hint dizilerini izleme yönündeki motivasyonlarını özdeşleşme, suçlu zevk, rahatlama ve kaçış, ahlaki destek ve idealleştirmek olarak ele almaktadır. Sonuçlar, Hint pembe dizilerini izlemenin, katılımcıların sosyal düzeni (dini, geleneksel ve ailesel değerler) muhafaza etmeye eğilimli olmalarından, algılanan kadın gücü kavramından ve geleneksel değerlerini koruyup sürdürerek yaşama isteklerinden doğrudan etkilendiğini göstermektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Pembe Diziler, Hint Pembe Dizileri, Kullanımlar ve Doyumlar, Kadın İzleyiciler, Ev Kadınları

## Introduction

Like “Ramayan” (*Künye*), Hindu soap operas became very successful in India and South Asia, Turkey, and beyond. Cultural proximity played a vital role to understand why viewers embraced these soap operas. Cultural proximity theory underlined that viewers prefer media that reflect a similar culture to their own (Burch, 2002). Recently, Indian soap opera broadcasting has become famous among female Turkish viewers, primarily homemakers. Since 2016, Indian serials have been broadcasted on Channel 7, and 19 Indian series<sup>1</sup> have been shown. Especially “Is Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon?” (*Bir Garip Aşk*) was among the top 20 in the rating results since it was first broadcasted in 2016.

This popularity made us think about the television watching habits of these women since female viewers mostly consumed their Western counterparts. It motivated us to research this new, rarely studied soap operas to associate links between the female sample group and their relationship with Indian soap operas. In Indian soap operas, as their Western equals, the plots are predominated by problem-solving and conflict resolution to perpetuate moral binaries. The notable Indian soap opera characteristics are very different from their Western equals. It is represented as usual to have avunculate marriages, and there is intense vilification in plots for having a pre-marital romantic relationship (Stanley, 2012).

According to Matheswaran (2017), Indian serials have certain characteristic features: 1) The female characters are central in the storyline but not represented as powerful and independent heroines. The only power that a female heroine may keep is her patience. 2) The degree of suffering and patience that a person undergoes is directly proportional to their character’s “goodness”, and

1 İss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon? (*Bir Garip Ask*), Beintehaa (*Benimsin*), Qubool Hai (*Zor Sevda*), Rang Rasiya (*Sensiz Olmaz*), Madhubala Ek Ishq Ek Junoon (*Yalancı Bahar*), Sapna Babul Ka Bidaai (*Deli Divane*), Saraswathichandra (*İki Yabancı*), İss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam (*Tatlı Bela*), Doon Ek Baar Phir, (*Bir Garip Aşk 2*), Kum Kum Bhagya (*Ah Kalbim*), Uttaran (*Kördüğüm*), Yeh Hai Muhabatian, (*Sev Yeter*), Balika Vadhu (*İkimizin Yerine*), Swaragini – Jodein Rishton Ke Sur, (*Bıçak Sırtı*) Thapki Pyar Ki Hint Dizisi (*Aşk Bir Rüya*), Saath Nibhaana Saathiya (*Masum*), Dil Se Di Dua (*Güz Masalı*), Geet Hui Sabse Parayi (*Yaralı Kalbim*), Pavitra Rishta (*Baş Tacım*), Diya Aur Baati Hum (*Can yoldaşım*).

people are either entirely good or altogether evil. Suffering is a must before getting something meaningful and essential. 3) A dichotomy is mainly represented between “good Indian women” and “the vamp” to empower the good ones. People are classified as either good or evil. A dichotomy is mainly represented between ‘good Indian women’ and ‘the vamp’ to empower the good ones. People are classified as either good or evil. 4) Mother law figure is the bedrock of an Indian soap plot, issuing orders, giving advice, and setting the rhythm of acceptable change. Extended family representation is widespread in plots. 5) Female heroine is a guide for maintaining traditions and religious obligations and teaches hero how to love and care. These characteristics mentioned above showed that Indian soaps have different characteristics than their western counterparts. The next chapter will discuss the concept of soap operas and the differences between Indian serials and their worldwide equals.

### **Definition of Westerner Soap Operas and Their Differences Between Its Equals**

Soap operas are similar to magazines which also come at scheduled times and create expectations. This repetitiousness and continuity can develop a feeling of security for audiences (Brown, 1994, p. 42). Hobson (1982) defined soap operas as “an ongoing drama serial which should be transmitted daily”. Umberto Eco (1990) has traced the historical background of these series even further to sagas told orally for many generations. Unlike stories, sagas have no end; the heroes and heroines are nearly immortal, like soap opera plots (Czarniawska, Eriksson-Zetterquist, & Renemark, 2013). Regardless of the cultural context of their production and reception, irrespective of their plot or themes, in her book on television serials and women, Geraghty (1991) described soap operas’ defining quality as follows:

Soap operas can now be denned not purely by daytime scheduling or even by a clear appeal to a female audience but by the presence of stories that engage an audience in such a way that they become the subject for public interest and interrogation (Geraghty, 1991, p. 4).

These definitions may differ between American and British soap operas and their counterparts worldwide. Apart from the difference by production, the American soap opera is defined as daytime serials and stretched to include prime-time serials, such as *Dallas*, *Dynasty*, and *Falcon Crest* (Seiter, Borchers, Kreutzer, & Warth 1989, p. 51). British soap operas (for example, *Crossroads*, *Days of Our Lives*) and American ones, like *Dallas*, are entirely different production and presentation of daily life. British soap operas do not necessarily present a glamorous image of life in their contents and production style like their American counterparts in prime time (Seiter et al., 1989, p. 51). In Westerner soap operas, traditional female stereotypes (passive, patient, continually suffering, modest, naïve, and conforming) may be seen as trivialized or associated with being a dork. Indian soap opera viewers, unlike their Westerner counterparts, can transform traditional feminine stereotypes as a source of strength and associate these kinds of characteristics with being love-filled.

It also seems essential to mention the difference between Western and Turkish soap operas. Concerning the storylines, Western soap operas vigorously include pre-marital sex, nudity, adultery, and love triangles, which are taboo themes for easterner conservative audiences. Turkish soap opera

has intertwined traditional Islamic roles and Western influence within a contextual symbolism of patriarchy, love, sex, and dress more impliedly than its Western counterparts (Cevik 2014; Hajjaj 2013).

With the rise in television popularity by the 1980s, soap operas became one of the most popular entertainment programs for Indian viewers. Indigenous soap operas began with *Hum Log (We People)* (1984-85) and followed with *Buniyaad* (1986-87) and *Ramayana* (1987-89)<sup>2</sup>. They cannot be defined as a simple entertainment program. Instead, they emphasized critical social issues such as family harmony, urban life problems, women's status, the maintenance of traditional culture, dowry, and alcoholism.

In modern Indian soap operas, unlike Western modernity, the extended family is ubiquitous in Indian society; it is widespread to see many examples of houses in which three generations live under the same roof. That means that wives live with their mothers-in-law and join the husband's family. The mother-in-law figure is the bedrock of an Indian soap plot, issuing orders, giving advice, and setting the rhythm of pleasant change (Matheswaran, 2017). The producer of the serial highlighted that "women like to see their favourite characters express their feelings, so the mother-in-law identifies with the mother-in-law, the daughter-in-law with the daughter-in-law."<sup>3</sup> (Cited in Stanley, 2012).

Furthermore, Indian soap operas generally represent the family situations and struggles of Indian society. The female characters are central in the storyline but not represented as powerful and independent heroines. The only power that a female heroine may keep is her patience. The degree of suffering and patience that "a person undergoes directly proportional to the goodness of their character, and people are either entirely good or altogether evil"<sup>3</sup> (Matheswaran, 2017). Female characters are categorized as 'good Indian women' and 'the vamp' or 'less fortune' (if the girl passes a marriageable age).

Unfortunately, there are gender stereotypes, family hierarchies, and violence. Despite being women-centric, Indian soaps reinforce binary oppositions and archaic beliefs about a woman's modesty and place in the household and society. For example, the slapping of a woman by a man is easily shown on television. However, in all circumstances, female heroines have to maintain their dignity, keep their heads down, and endure humiliation as a testament to their character strength. On the other hand, soap operas can also be seen as an instrument for social change in Indian society since some soap operas stress critical social issues. It can be said that they have an edutainment type of content, which combines education with entertainment (Sherring, 2010, pp. 35-36).<sup>4</sup>

Indian soap operas represent their vibrant, colourful and different culture juxtaposed to the West. The characters wear their traditional and lavish costumes with flashy and heavy jewellery (Matheswaran, 2017). In addition to the family concept, festivals and rituals belonging to their religion and culture are shown in plots. Also, the Indian songs and dances are a significant and unique part of these serials. Appadurai et al. argued, "tradition is reflective and reflexive of their histories,

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2 It should be noted that these soap operas do not have Turkish names.

3 The viewer mother-in-law identifies herself with the mother-in-law on screen, etc.

4 There are no Turkish names of these soap operas except for *Baalika Vadhu*.

and replay the point of tension in these histories. It is a metadiscourse, which allows the past to cease to be a ‘scarce resource’” (as cited in Munshi, 2010). Generally, there is no sexual affection or representation. It is usual to have avunculate marriages, and there is intense vilification in plots for having a pre-marital romantic relationship (Stanley, 2012). According to the actor Sonali Sachdev, “while Bollywood films are based on escapism, Indian soap operas play on identification: everybody finds – through the family stories that are told, analyzed, and taken apart as the episodes unfold – situations that reflect his or her own experience.” (Cited in Lecuyer, 2013).

Indian soap operas are being watched now more than ever in many countries, with audiences reaching from Kenya to Serbia (Nandini, 2013). North America, most parts of Asia, Australia, and many more African markets consume Indian content (Gaurav, 2015). In Turkey, the first Indian soap opera was *Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon (Bir Garip Aşk)*, imported by Channel 7 in 2015, representing a conservative Muslim culture. In the following years, several different Indian soaps were broadcasted in Turkey. According to Channel 7 website, Madhubala, *Iss Pyaar Ko Kya Naam Doon?*, *Beinteea* were the three favourite Indian soaps to ratings. Only one specific channel, Channel 7, broadcasts Indian soap operas. Unlike Turkish prime-time soap operas, which are broadcast once a week, Indian series are broadcast every day on weekdays. In addition to the TV channel, it is possible to find Indian TV series with Turkish subtitles and Turkish dubbing on the internet.

## **Aim and Methodology**

### **Uses and Gratifications**

Employing the uses and gratifications approach, this study aims to identify audiences’ motivations for watching Indian Soap Operas and develop typologies of how audiences used these soap operas to gratify their social and psychological needs. Researchers categorized and developed the typologies of gratifications to identify the audience’s motivations for using the media and understand how people used it to gratify their social and psychological needs. For example, McQuail, Blumler, and Brown (1972) categorized the gratifications people seek from watching television. They observed that people are motivated to watch television for integration and social interaction (including substitute companionship as well as social utility), personal identity (including personal reference, reality exploration, role models, and value reinforcement), entertainment (including escape from the constraints of routine and the burdens of everyday life problems and emotional release), and information (keeping up-to-date, provision of subjects for conversation). Other researchers have found the following gratifications sought from watching TV; social interaction (Graney & Graney, 1974), personal interaction (Rosengren & Windhal, 1972), identification (Cohen, 2001; Cohen & Metzger, 1998; Shanahan & Morgan, 1999), entertainment (Greenberg, 1974), and information seeking (Greenberg, 1974; Rubin 1983).

Several studies have focused on soap operas’ content (Carveth & Alexander 1985; Livingstone 1988; Rubin & Perse 1987). Carveth & Alexander (1985) categorized the types of gratifications people seek from watching soap operas and found five factors that explain how people used soap operas to gratify their social and psychological needs: enjoyment, boredom, reality exploration,

escape, and character identification. On the other hand, Rubin & Perse (1987) found six factors on the motivations of watching soap operas in their study: exciting entertainment, to pass the time, voyeurism, escapist relaxation, information, and social utility.

*“Uses and gratification is a psychological communication perspective as it shifts the focus of the research from a mechanistic perspective that postulates that the media directly affects receivers in assessing how and for what purposes people use the media”* (Rubin, 2009, p. 167). U&G is an audience-based approach, which supposes that audiences consciously make their own choices to gratify their social and psychological needs and desires. People employ different media tools strategically for different purposes and, more importantly, make media choices to meet specific needs or goals. (Katz, Haas & Gurevitch, 1973; Katz, Blumler & Gurevitch, 1974; McQuail, Blumler & Brown, 1972).

### **Methodology**

This research examines Turkish female viewers’ motives for watching Indian soap operas, their daily television consumption, and their attitude toward religion, traditions, family values, and romantic love. Derived from the uses and gratifications theory, this research aims to demonstrate which uses and gratifications are associated with watching Indian soap operas among Turkish female viewers. This study investigated their expectations while watching soap operas, such as their ideal romantic love, female/male protagonist, and family bonds. We observed during the study which paradigms make a cross-cultural adaptation possible of Indian soap operas in Turkey.

Based on semi-structured interviews, the authors interviewed 30 female participants, the youngest of whom was 22 years old, whereas the oldest was 60. Since soap operas are consumed by women worldwide (Brown, 1994; Brundson, 1992; Geraghty, 1991; Sherring, 2010), authors found it appropriate to explore women’ perspectives in Turkey while watching Indian soap operas. Secondly, they are primarily broadcasted in the daytime, which pointed out that they targeted female homemakers, not men. The research took place during the period between November 2017 and May 2018. Since the population under examination is difficult to reach out to or might be hidden, authors benefited from interpersonal relations and connections to find suitable participants. Participants involved in this study were recruited using snowball sampling, which allowed authors to contact one participant via another. The standard of living and socioeconomic status of all participants were quite similar, and they were living in the peripheral districts of İstanbul such as Bağcılar, Sultanbeyli, Sultangazi, Bayrampaşa, Ümraniye, and Dudullu. All interviews took place in the participants’ home environments to ease participants and make them more willing to build up a conversation. Interviewees participated voluntarily and even invited the authors into their own houses.

Firstly, participants were asked to give information on their age, job, education, and religious belief. They had primarily high school degrees and were homemakers. Secondly, the interviewees were asked general questions about their daily life. Thirdly, the interviewees were asked questions about their television and Indian soap opera viewing habits. The questionnaire consisted of 33 questions about the respondents to understand their exposure to Indian soap operas, their motives for

watching these soaps, attitudes toward Indian culture, Turkish TV serials, and the ideal relationship between men and women.

The research questions of this article are primarily about understanding the motivations of Turkish female viewers for watching Indian soap operas:

RQ1: What are Turkish female viewers' uses and gratifications for watching Indian soap operas?

RQ2: Why do Turkish female viewers prefer watching Indian soaps instead of their Turkish counterparts? What are their differences and similarities?

RQ3: What are their expectations while watching soap operas?

Based on the initial review of the literature and the beforehand interviews, the current study assumes that there are relationships between Turkish female audiences' viewing of Indian soap operas, their attitudes toward Indian culture, their religious beliefs, and their negative attitude toward other series broadcast in Turkey. A large body of literature has investigated the uses and gratifications of watching Western soap operas; however, no study has yet examined the effects of conservative soap operas on its audiences. Thus, this study revealed different gratifications such as romantic fantasy and protest form, unlike Westerner soap operas. The participants use Indian soap operas as a reminder to confirm themselves for keeping their religious, traditional, and familial values in the right way.

## **Findings**

Derived from the data, five gratifications were revealed: Identification, guilty pleasure, moral support, relaxation and escape, and idealization. While some of the findings are consistent with previous studies on the basic types of gratifications such as identification, social interaction, and escape as determined by Rubin (1983) and Cohen & Metzger (1998), the other findings of the study showed that there are with a great variety of additional gratifications can be investigated comparing to previous studies such as guilty pleasure, moral support, relaxation and idealization.

## **Identification**

Indian soaps work as a reminder of social order for viewers. Women are asked to identify with female heroines as committed guardians of ethics who maintain social order (traditions, religious values). The heroine is the one who teaches the hero how to love and care and makes him keep God's word and find the right way. They are neither independent nor spunky, but the discourse of power works differently on the world's east side:

The mother is "powerful", as much as she combines the sacred task of upholding "Hindu culture" by nurturing the right Hindu values in her children. Such power does not, of course, cause any disturbance in the overall arrangement and distribution of social and economic power (Sherring, 2010, p. 58).

In this study, all participants indicated that the heroines in soaps must be patient, naive, pure, respectful, and obedient, and she does not have to be independent at all. Participants did not emphasize the intelligence and beauty of a female heroine. Participants firmly believe that the heroine (in some Indian soaps) conquered everybody's heart with her naiveté and soft-heartedness:

Male heroes become better people when they fall in love with Indian soaps. I call this "women's power" because women teach them how to love and wait patiently until they become mature, like fruit. (AK, Age 23, and Part-Time Worker)

I like problematic and challenging guys and Indian soap operas are full of them. You can think of men like wolves and women as lambs; what else can a wolf do if it has fallen in love with a lamb which also wants it? Men have a dark side to their characters and can get angry quickly; however, they find peace and love in women. Women's love and patience soften their tough side. (Ç.S., Age 35, and Homemaker)

Women fight back against authoritarian and despotic men, and in the end, they prevail by teaching these men how to love. I believe this is sacred and holy in a way. Men are like children; you always have to educate them and make them happy. Grudgeful and spiteful men turn into loving creatures thanks to the efforts of women. (A.Ş., Age 29, and Homemaker)

Identification is seen in terms of culture and identification with the heroine characters. Mattelart (2009) argued that viewers could recreate new cultural forms by synthesizing their local realities with foreign cultural norms. In Indian soap operas, for example, Turkish female viewers share human values like love, caring, hate, etc., and enjoy sharing similarities with Indian people's cultural and religious values whether they are Muslim or Hindu.

We found positive associations with participants' social identities and their exposure to morally ethical Indian soap operas, motivating them to become Indian soap opera fans and watch them regularly. None of the participants had any connections with Indian people. None of them had ever visited India; however, they found their culture very similar to Turkish culture, and they admire their morally committed behaviours. One of the participants indicated, "their familial structure (Indian) is very similar to the Turkish counterpart" (İ.Y., Age 22, and Part-Time Worker).

Their cultures are very close to ours, but our culture has degenerated, but they live their religion and culture beautifully and correctly. (AO, Age 36, and Homemaker)

For example, people in Indian soaps take off their shoes as they enter the house, as Turkish people do. In Turkish serials, they even go to bed with their shoes. It does not reflect us. (SR, Age 36, and Homemaker)

Indian soaps sometimes offer Turkish female viewers some particular positions to empathize with cultural figures in their countries, such as daughters-in-law or mothers-in-law. If a viewer is a daughter-in-law in her real life, she can quickly identify with her suffering or achievement. The same is also applicable for a mother-in-law.

I am learning about their culture. I realized that the enthusiasm for having ‘a boy’ was specific to the Turks and Indians. Plus, mothers-in-law are witches there, too. (NS, Age 20, and Homemaker)

I especially like the families and their dynamics. The culture of gift-giving reminds me of our own culture. Women have to struggle with their mothers – and sisters-in-law, which I can empathize with personally from my marriage (Ç.S., Age 35, and Homemaker).

As Cohen & Metzger (1998) pointed out, people can identify themselves with characters on television that reflect similar values and adopt or compare the perspective of fictional characters to gratify their need for identification. The main characteristic point of soap operas all around the world is the centrality of female characters, and viewers may be asked to identify with a woman who will find her right man eventually and to participate in her process to find enough hope and patience to make him fall in love with her. As Radway indicated, romance reading (which seems similar activity to consuming soaps) provides women with many possibilities to be able to identify with female characters: “They believe it is possible to pursue their pleasure by serving as a witness to a romantic heroine’s achievement” (Radway, 1991, p. 14). On the other hand, Mary Ellen Brown (1994) views women’s talk based on soap operas as a resistance site and the soap opera consumer as empowered and rebellious. The heroine’s independence, intelligence, and spunkiness are the characteristics that female viewers would like to see while watching soaps and identifying themselves with this kind of power. With the dominant woman’s discourse, Westerner soap operas may lead female viewers to internalize this representative of power in soap plots and create the possibility of female resistance (Brown, 1994).

### **Guilty Pleasure**

We have found reliable results about the participants’ fear of being silly, childish, and time-wasting television viewers. They tended to defend themselves by saying they also enjoy watching documentaries and quiz shows. Their program preferences were also belittled and ridiculed by their husbands. They also declared that they experienced a kind of reaction from their relatives when those relatives knew of their habit of watching Indian soaps:

It is fascinating that my family and relatives are always surprised about my interest in watching Indian soaps as I am an educated and high-achieving woman. They find these two things to be irrelevant. However, whatever they say, I am a very emotional person; I enjoy watching them personally. (NO, Age 40, and Full-Time Worker)

I cannot watch them regularly, only in the daytime, because my husband always gets angry or makes fun of me when he sees me watching Indian series, depending on his mood. (AO, Age 36, and Homemaker)

The series is about dramas and moments that make us laugh. I laugh and have fun at home alone. My friends make fun of me when I say I like those series, but I cannot help myself and spy on them. (SR, Age 36, and Homemaker)

In this study, social interaction was not a relevant motivation for people to watch Indian Soap Operas. The participants stated that they watch Indian Soap operas mostly when they have free time at home and are alone at home. The data appear to be contrasted with social interaction motivation in the early television U&G studies. When considering social interaction motivation in the early television U&G studies of Rubin (1983), participants' statements were like: "I can have the possibility to be together with other members of the family or friends who are watching the same show." Therefore, it would be appropriate to examine the interviewees' motives for watching Indian soap operas with the concept of 'guilty pleasure.'

The negative stereotypes concerning the banality of soaps, regarded as trash, have strongly affected the participants. These popular texts form an essential part of their friendships and associations in their everyday lives and focus on an almost separate female culture that they can share within the constraints of their positions as wives and mothers (Gray, 1989, p. 149). However, the experienced pleasures are constrained by feelings of guilt and obligation. Taking their time to satisfy their own choices undermines the sense of being a good wife and mother, defined as the all-time available, happy, and self-sacrificing housewife/mother. Furthermore, their husbands often despised their particular program preferences, many of whom think their wives watch silly or trash programs (Morley, 1992). Domestic power relations also include the definition of bad taste and force women to spy on their favourite programs. Similarly, watching their favourite television programs bears the same feelings of guilt that Radway found among romance readers (Radway, 1991).

### **Relaxation and Escape**

According to the findings, Indian soap opera watching habits create a feeling of hope about the men in their lives. They will eventually love the viewers if they keep their patience and suffer enough for them. Constant belief and confidence in patriarchal marriage remain the same as their Western counterparts. Men can be loving even when they do not always show such emotion in both of them. However, in Indian soap operas, the process is harrowing compared to their Western counterparts. According to Islam, the concept of glorification of misery must originate from their religion since those who patiently preserve will indeed receive a reward. Endurance and patience are highly rewarded attitudes in the Islamic religion. The participants mostly find their painful waiting process in which their faith and patience are tested tirelessly to be admirable. These characteristics of female characters are defined by sacrifice and are a kind of inner power. This morally reconsidered 'fantasy resolution' (Radway, 1991, p. 14-15) of Indian soap operas makes viewers believe that if they suffer long enough with patience and resignation, they will eventually be rewarded with what they have been waiting for. However, this fantasy is anything but sexual; a fantasy of a 'morally correct' happy ending offered by Indian soaps works as a tool for them to overcome some daily issues and verify again and again their role as committed guardians of ethics in society. As one of the participants stated her belief that love could be experienced purely if sexual contact is not involved:

If you want to see real love, you have to look at this series. In the beginning, the scenes of Arnav and Kushi<sup>5</sup> looking at each other for a long time, the scenes seemed ridiculous and funny. Now I look at them, saying, “how can I find a man to look at me like he does to her.” Once, their house was demolished while they were in it; they ignored everything and held each other. It may be funny, but I still love them. It was a very romantic love; they are crazily in love. (GB, Age 31, and Homemaker)

The relaxation and escape were significant motivations that led the participants to watch Indian Soap Operas. In the early television U&G studies of Rubin (1983), people who said that their motivation for television viewing is relaxation and escape stated their reasons such as “so I can forget about school or other things,” “so I can get away from the rest of the family or others,” “so I can get away from what I am doing” (Rubin, 1983, p. 41). The participants’ gratification for watching Indian Soaps was about forgetting their problems and associated hope for solving them.

### **Moral Support**

According to the research results, it has been revealed that Indian TV series are watched with moral support motivation. Moral support can be explained as the audience affirming their own moral and ethical values, reinforcing their principles, and guiding them to feel right about others (Abelman, Atkin & Rand 1997). According to Henry Jenkins (1992, p. 126), television fans may be seen as an interpretive community that can construct their own culture and values, reshapes them to serve their own needs, interests, and pleasures. They cannot be seen as passive viewers who accept what they have been offered; instead, they react and protest some of them.

Similarly, the participants indicated that Indian soaps have something in common with their moral and ethical values. In addition, they had complained vigorously when they came across sexually explicit content and corruption of traditional, religious & familial values, especially in Turkish television broadcasting. They criticized Turkish serials in which characters do not behave, as the participants deemed morally appropriate. The participants declared very openly about their attitude toward Turkish serials:

I cannot find any suitable words about how I was impressed by their religious beliefs. They have their moral values, and they never leave them. They reflect the purest and the most innocent way of experiencing love. I always come across nudity in our Turkish TV series that has become very common. Why do we have to banalize everything in our series? (AO, Age 36, and Homemaker)

Our participants do not want to see any kissing, erotic, and sexually suggestive scenes while watching television; they presume that this kind of content might cause moral damage. Our participants defined characters taking part in such scenes as morally corrupted. They declared that they wanted to preserve their ‘namus’<sup>6</sup>, honour and decency. Turkish soap operas represent a

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5 The characters of Iss Pyar Ko Kya Naam Doon (Bir Garip Aşk).

6 The notion of ‘namus’ is not existent in English but this notion finds its meaning in a patriarchal system where binary gender patterns are available as an obligation for a healthy society and a woman must follow certain type of values, rules in terms of religion, moral and tradition. If not she can be stigmatized as not having enough decency, honor and “namus” to be a good, pure woman.

relatively Westernised yet Eastern lifestyle. Although Turkish soap operas are famous worldwide for their implied sexuality, they might be perceived as degenerating, threatening, and taboo by the more conservative eastern lifestyle participants. For example, one key characteristic of female heroines of Turkish series is that they are all career-oriented and aware of their sexuality (Yalkin & Veer, 2018). Turkish soap operas present an image of stability wherein contemporary practices and Western lifestyles coexist with Islamic and Arab identities and cultures. However, their western focus is criticized and found unacceptable by the participants:

The first thing I like about Indian soaps is that they are suitable for watching near children. We never watch Turkish serials because they have mastered violence, rudeness, and immorality. We were once so similar with Indians, respecting the elderly and living with norms, etc., but now we degenerate. Even though it is not appropriate for our family and culture, we watch these Turkish series without breathing. It has to end. I, personally, do not prefer to feed this degeneration. Instead of this, I watch Indian soaps with my children, and my husband watches his thing in the evening. (EZ, Age 25, and Homemaker)

In Turkish serials, most of the relationship is too explicit and demonstrative. We become irritated when we see close ties' excessive presentation, but I feel very comfortable watching Indian soaps. (İ.Y., Age 22, and Part-Time Worker)

I have not seen that scene (sexually explicit, nudity, kissing) in any Indian plots. Even in the bridal night scene, we did not see any kissing since it was strictly forbidden in India. I wish we (Turkey) have a regulation like them (India). We immediately start kissing in our series; we seem to have internalized immorality as a whole society. It bothers me. (GB, Age 31, and Homemaker)

Nearly all of the participants are very clear about their expectations from a television broadcast which, according to them, must be morally educative:

Indian soaps are an excellent way to educate people; I can find many things to take an example from in Indian soaps. I became very impressed by the dialogues between the characters. (E, H., Age 60, and Homemaker)

The participants seem to protest Turkish serials for not only containing sexually explicit scenes but also not showing Islamic prayers that they wish to see on TV:

We do not even see the Ramadan Feast in the Turkish series. In the Indian series, some people fast, some pray, and you see them following God's path. However, you cannot know whose way they are heading in the Turkish series. (SA, Age 45, and Part-Time Worker)

I love to see people fasting on TV; they also give details about their religious activities. I can learn something and get inspired by them. There are no religious activities in our series. (SR, Age 36, and Homemaker)

The research's most remarkable finding is their negative attitude toward Turkish serials and reversing the negative opinion as a motive for watching Indian soap operas as a form of protest. Hence, all the participants indicated that television broadcasts must respect decency and morals

### **Idealization**

All participants indicated that they are impressed by Indian soap opera characters for perpetuating their cultural heritage (family values, respect for the elderly, extended family, religious attitudes, traditions, national costumes, etc.). They declared their longing for a kind of extended family who eats family dinners together, in which older family members work as advisors and are always respected by their children. Older participants declared experiencing a nostalgia that reminds them of Turkish cultural values disregarded by society a while ago:

In Indian soaps, the family concept is fundamental; I like to watch full dinner tables full of people, which reminds me of my childhood. Everyone is looking out for each other, wondering, helping each other, and understanding. Cultural commitment and the protection of faith are always dominant, which also reminds me of the past. (SA, Age 45, and Part-Time Worker)

They are not the kind of people I am used to coming across in my daily life. They are ideal, and it is clear that they have a mission. They show us the right way and behave appropriately in our lives. (EH, Age 60, and Homemaker)

Indian soap opera characters represent an ideal typology for Turkish female Indian soap opera viewers. Participants think that the series represents an ideal way of life and love and use these series to relax.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The focus of this study was to investigate the motives of Turkish women for watching Indian Soap Operas. To determine the uses and gratifications, the study examined the associations between Indian soap opera viewing and the respondents' favorability toward Indian culture, their attitude toward current Turkish serials, and their point of view about romantic love, family, religion, and tradition. The present study also explored the link between female viewers' religious attitude and their perceptions of power. Employing a uses and gratifications approach, we found five factors that explain their motives for watching Indian soap operas: moral support, identification, relaxation and escape, romantic fantasy, and idealization. The most unexpected and remarkable finding of the research is watching Indian soaps as a protest against Turkish serials, which include sexually explicit content and morally corruptive scenes. The participants can be defined as an "interpretative community" (Jenkins, 1992, p. 126) who prefer Indian serials instead of their Turkish counterparts as a form of protest. This negative opinion about Turkish serials becomes a motive for them to the extent that they create online groups to discuss the Indian soaps and criticize Turkish ones.

Unlike watching Westerner soaps, escape and resistance cannot be found in use and gratifications of watching Indian soaps. The study revealed the link between being a true believer and the watching

preference of Indian Soaps. The link originates from their belief and how they evaluate Indian Soaps: They see them as an education tool, representing an ideal way of life and the female heroine as a committed guardian of ethics. Western soap operas operate as a site for challenging the stereotypes, as Brown (1994) revealed; however, Indian soaps function for Turkish female audiences as a source of strength to endure and maintain traditional female stereotypes. Indian soaps work as a social order, and women are asked to identify with females who maintain social order and reproduce cultural and religious values. The participants identify and feel close culturally with the conservative heroine who teaches the hero how to love and care and makes him keep God's word and find the right way.

Moreover, the participants preferred to spy on Indian soaps to belittle their relatives and husbands as being seen as silly or dorky. They do not feel comfortable while watching Indian soaps since the soaps take up their private time, and they are not maintaining their role as a martyred wife or mother as previously revealed by Gray (1989), Radway (1991), and Morley (1992). Patience and the female heroine's endurance are a must, and patience must be used as a tool to achieve specific goals as a similar process to resignation (tevekkül) for the participants. The participants confirm themselves as they see the heroine find the perfect love by enduring and being patient and reproducing a morally reconsidered romantic fantasy similar to Radway (1991). Indian soap opera characters represent an ideal typology for Turkish female Indian soap opera viewers since they still preserve their conservative cultural heritage. In summary, all the results show that watching Indian soap operas is related directly to participants' favorability toward keeping conservative social order (religious, traditional, and familial values) in the right way, their motive to maintain traditional female stereotypes, and their longing to live traditionally.

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