Social Representations of Foreign & Turkish Women on the New Turkish Media: A Thematic Discourse Analysis Through Masculinity Ideology

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Abstract

Past research has laid bare the determining role of media content on people's gender stereotypic beliefs. In this article, we aimed to examine social media content, which is one of the most influential causal factors in producing social representations in terms of masculinity ideology. We collected the written materials about women in various online collaborative dictionaries written by anonymous writers. We analyzed the entries using thematic discourse analysis, and obtained four themes consisting of (1) the woman as a body, (2) the woman as a persona, (3) the woman as a sexual partner, and (4) the woman as a wife. We discussed these themes in the frames of social representations and masculinity ideology, and the analysis clearly shows the new media's role in reproducing traditional gender representations via masculinity ideology. This study extends the knowledge about the mechanism between stereotypic representations of women and masculinity ideology in Turkey. The paper contributes to the growing literature on the discursive construction of feminine identity by exploring the dictionary writers' use of language and how these are complicit in the reproduction of masculinity ideology.

Keywords: social representations, masculinity, gender, thematic discourse analysis, new media

Türkiye Yeni Medyasında Yabancı ve Türk Kadınların Sosyal Temsilleri: Erkeklik İdeolojisi Üzerinden Bir Tematik Söylem Analizi

Öz

Geçmiş araştırmalar, medya içeriğinin insanların toplumsal cinsiyet kalıp yargıları üzerindeki belirleyici etkisini açıkça ortaya koymuştur. Bu makalede, sosyal temsillerin en etkili belirleyicilerinden biri olan sosyal medya içeriğini, erkeklik ideolojisi açısından incelemeyi amaçladık. Bu amaçla, çevrimiçi katılımcı sözlüklerde anonim yazarlar tarafından kadınlar hakkında yazılan girdileri topladık. Girdileri tematik söylem analizi kullanarak analiz ettik ve analiz sonucunda dört tema elde ettik: (1) bir beden olarak kadın, (2) bir karakter olarak kadın, (3) bir cinsel partner olarak kadın ve (4) bir eş olarak kadın. Temaları, sosyal temsiller ve erkeklik ideolojisi çerçevesinde tartıştık ve analiz sonucunda, geleneksel toplumsal cinsiyet temsillerinin erkeklik ideolojisi aracılığıyla yeniden üretilmesinde yeni medyanın rolünü ortaya koyduk. Bu çalışma, Türkiye'de kadınların kalıp yargısal sosyal temsilleri ve erkeklik ideolojisi arasındaki mekanizmanın daha iyi anlaşılmasına katkı sunmaktadır. Makale, sözlük yazarlarının dil kullanımını ve bunların erkeklik ideolojisinin yeniden üretilmesine nasıl katkıda bulunduklarını keşfederek, kadın temsilinin söylemsel inşası ile ilişkili literatüre katkı sağlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: sosyal temsiller, erkeklik, toplumsal cinsiyet, tematik söylem analizi, yeni medya

Introduction

Undoubtedly, the content of the media breeds stereotypes. Gender is one of the strongest and most hard-wired stereotypes resources (Kurzban et al., 2001; Schneider, 2005), and so gender stereotype is extensively used by media across the world (Kitsa & Mudra, 2020; Neto & Pinto, 1998; Ter Bogt et al., 2010). In the mainstream media, women are represented as sexual objects or in the frame of motherhood, whereas men are portrayed as sex-driven, aggressive, and dominant (Feasey, 2013; Giaccardi et al., 2016). In recent years, with the increase in internet accessibility, social media and online collaborative dictionaries attained the place of mainstream media in resourcing social representations. As a coin with the two sides, on the one side, this new kind of media gives feminism a new way to raise a voice, and on the other side, this new media reshaped the gender stereotypes (Strouse et al., 1995; Tortajada-Giménez et al., 2013; Ward, 2002).

To examine the reflections of gender stereotypes, masculinity ideology, and the two-way relationship between them in the new media, this study is grounded on Social Representations Theory (SRT; Moscovici, 1963; 1984). Because SRT has a discursive approach and a social constructivist perspective (Wagner, 1996, 1998), it gives a solid case to investigate the stereotypical content of the new media. The present study aims to (1) reveal how Turkish people describe women in the new media, (2) how the dominant masculinity ideology in Turkish culture shapes the perceptions about women and contributes to the subordination of women, (3) and the role of the new media in reproducing the traditional gender stereotypes. It is essential to reveal these relations because, in the current political climate of Turkey, the traditional gender roles are promoted, the violence against women is elevated, and recently Turkey has withdrawn from the Istanbul Convention. Additionally, Ukrainian women are positioned as spoils of war in current Russia's attack on Ukraine (Bakht & Kenber, 2022). This reveals the critical role of social media in the spread and maintenance of masculinity ideology. The study may be helpful to the researchers who study gender roles, masculinity, and femininity and evaluate these concepts, especially in the context of the traditional masculinity ideologies rule over.

Social Representations Theory

SRT proposes a social psychological theoretical framework to understand the meaning-making process of the social objects. It explains how collective understandings of a particular concept are constructed, communicated, and practiced as a shared understanding within a culture or social group (Moscovici, 1984). Moscovici (1963, p. 251) defined social representations as "the elaboration of a social object by the community for the purpose of behaving and communicating". Social representations are formed via mundane interactions and communications between people in a group and function as an information package for social realities (Moscovici, 1984; 1988).

According to SRT, people talk about a social object and attribute some features to the object. Then, by these attributes, a social object becomes a meaningful object for the group (Wagner et al., 1999; Wagner

& Hayes, 2005). By giving meaning to an unknown and novel social object, social representations allow people to communicate and exchange knowledge about the object (Moscovici, 1984). Since social representations give meaning to people's daily conversations and practices, it is crucial for ingroup and intergroup behaviors and people's daily communication and actions (Howart, 2006; Wagner & Hayes, 2005). They provide a consensus about concepts, and the representation of a social phenomenon could shape the perceptions associated with it. Social representations enable individuals to understand an object, communicate about it, share and transform knowledge, to construct identities (Moscovici, 1963, 1984, Moscovici & Hewstone, 1983). Given that gender identities are socially constructed (Butler, 2012), evaluating gender identities from the framework of SRT is critical. The common understanding of gender relations, gender norms, and gender roles implies the existence of relevant social representations. The traditional gender ideology serves as a coherent system of social representations based on the social constructions of gender identities (Flores-Palacios & Oswald, 2019).

Höijer (2011) depicted social representations as a collective mean-making process and stressed the media's role in social thinking and collective cognition. According to Höijer (2011), studying the media, which both reflects and generates collective thoughts, makes valuable contributions to understanding social representations because nowadays, the collective meaning-making happens through media instead of personal communications (Wagner et al., 1999). Therefore, media content regarding gender might contribute to people's representations of masculinity and femininity, and these representations, in turn, influence their real-world beliefs and behaviors.

Masculinity Ideology and Its Reproduction in The New Media

Masculinity ideology refers to socially constructed beliefs about being a man in society. It contains expectations for men to perform socially approved masculine behaviors and avoid proscribed ones (Levant & Richmond, 2007). It parallels prescriptive and proscriptive gender stereotypes (Sakallı & Türkoğlu, 2019), defines ideal masculinity, and dictates specific patterns of behaviors and thoughts (Pleck et al., 1993). Just as there is no single form of masculinity, one cannot speak of an unvarying masculinity ideology. Hence, masculinity ideology consists of various values, beliefs, and norms that influence men's lifestyles. It is a cultural structure that can be changed according to historical periods, different social structures, and men's groups (Thompson & Bennett, 2015; Thompson et al., 1992). It is not possible to talk about one type of masculinity since masculinity varies according to power relations between genders, relationships that individual men develop with femininities, and other masculinities. However, some masculinity styles could be accepted more widely in each culture and time. This style of masculinity is called hegemonic masculinity (Connell, 2005). It has similar meanings to traditional masculinity ideology (Levant & Richmond, 2007; Sakallı & Türkoğlu, 2019). Hegemonic masculinity refers to the culturally dominant, advantageous, and privileged forms of masculinity (Connell, 2005) and comprehends specific characteristics such as aggression, power, dominance, heterosexuality, and risk-taking (Hinojosa, 2010). Hegemonic masculinity

distinguishes itself in discourses about physical appearance, sexuality, profession, and authority over women, children, and other men (Connell, 2005).

In the Turkish context, masculinity is constructed compatible with roles and stereotypes defined by traditional masculinity ideology, such as toughness, power, competition (Lease et al., 2009), breadwinner role (Peker-Dural, 2021), head of the household role (Bolak-Boratav et al., 2017; see Sakallı & Türkoğlu, 2019 for a review). Masculinity ideology determines certain socially sanctioned masculine behaviors in a given culture (Levant & Richmond, 2007), and these "appropriate behaviors" are maintained and supported by families, peer groups, mass media, and social institutions (Connell, 1987; Kimmel, 2011). Media is an essential medium for communicating cultural norms and values (Giaccardi et al., 2016), and the new media (e.g., the internet) functions as an extension of real-life interactions and creates an environment for mundane and everyday practices (Hine, 2012, as cited in Drakett et al., 2018). Language has a vital role in interpreting the social world and is crucial in interpersonal relationships (Gergen, 1985). It carries out specific actions, and the action of language has some social, psychological, and political consequences (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Additionally, the culture we were born into provides various repertoires to talk about a phenomenon or object. Some are more accessible than others in the meaning-making process (Edley, 2001). Texts or talks never have a neutral meaning; on the contrary, they construct a particular form of reality (Seymour-Smith, 2017). Therefore, both masculinity ideologies and social media content might play a role in forming social representations of femininity (and masculinity).

The representations of men in the Turkish media are compatible with hegemonic masculinity. Especially since Turkish television series reach a broad audience, the representation of Turkish men in television series plays a significant role in building the understanding of masculinity in society. Different types of masculinities appeared in popular series such as "Aynalı Tahir", "Deli Yürek", and "Kuzey Güney". These men vary in their education, class, and economic situation, but the shared image of "honesty and bravery," which is compatible with hegemonic masculinity, is prevalent in these men's representations (Baştürk-Akça & Ergül, 2014). In "Survivor", one of the most popular reality tv shows in Turkey, the representations of men consist of logic, strength, power, bravery, and protector roles (Karaduman & Adalı-Aydın, 2017). Besides, Gedik and Turgut's (2019) research which examines men's explanations about using Tinder, revealed the discourse of hegemonic masculinity. According to this, using Tinder is "normal" for men to fulfill their "sexual needs"; however, women using Tinder are blamed for "unchastity". Women's sexual need is being trivialized, and women are portrayed as sexual objects to fulfill men's needs.

Of particular interest to the current investigation is the masculinity ideology specifies images of masculinity and femininity. These images are represented in media with a stylized and simplified form and serve to construct the social realities for people to believe and behave.

The Media Representations of Femininity

Gender and media literature showed that media had adverse effects on heterosexual relationships and male-female interactions (Dill & Thill, 2007). In their review of gender and media, Greenwood and Lippman (2010) indicated that representations of gender norms in media are considerably stereotypical. Women are generally sexualized, subordinated, and identified with traditionally feminine roles (e.g., homemakers, wives, sexual gatekeepers) (Collins, 2011). Early media studies showed that women were pictured to be domestic, dependent, housewives, and mothers (e.g., Courtney & Lockeretz, 1971; Dominik & Rauch, 1972; Friedan, 1963). Nothing much has changed today – women are represented as housewives and nurses on Ukrainian TV channels (Kitsa & Mudra, 2020), are masculinized in sports organizations in Colombia (Mina & Goellner, 2015), are portrayed with subordinated roles in US magazines (Ferguson et al., 1990), are depicted as decorative, recreational, attractive, and sexual objects in Italy and Netherlands newspapers (Tartaglia & Rollero, 2015).

In the context of Turkey, stereotypes of women coincide with traditional gender ideologies such as beauty, weakness, dependence, motherhood, and house-related roles (Sakallı-Uğurlu et al., 2018a). In this extensive study about stereotypes of men and women, Sakallı-Uğurlu and colleagues (2018a) clustered gender stereotypes under appearance, personality traits, gender roles, and power. Women in Turkey are seen as sexual objects to gaze on, and they are depicted as being "extremely emotional" with a blaming tone, both in everyday real-life interaction and in media (Batı, 2010; Bulut, 2008; Minibas-Poussard et al., 2011; Yılmaz, 2014). Foreign and immigrant women are even more disadvantaged compared to local women. Racist and xenophobic attitudes accompanied sexist depictions of migrant and foreign women (Marciniak, 2008; Monde, 2018), which subject them to double subordination. For example, foreign sex workers have become the target of discrimination and derogation in the newspapers of Malaysia (Suppiah et al., 2019); refugee women in Malawi have less income than men despite working heavier (Ager et al., 1995). As regards Turkey, immigrant women are represented as passive and victimized individuals, and this view is grounded on their migrant status and their exposed sexual violence in the patriarchal system (Şeker & Uçan, 2016). Most migrated women in Turkey were seen as sex workers because the media used the Russian name "Natasha" as a slang word instead of "sex worker" for all women coming from the former USSR countries (Erder, 2007, 2011; Gülçür & İlkaracan, 2002; Kaşka, 2007, as cited in Demirdizen, 2013). In other words, social representations of women from former USSR countries become a basis of those kinds of prejudice and discrimination instances. As a result, being a foreign and immigrant woman brings representations both from being a woman and from the otherness of foreigners and immigrants.

The Current Study

Previous research has shown that being exposed to gendered media content could result in more traditional and stereotypical gender beliefs (e.g., Dill & Thill, 2007, Giaccardi et al., 2016; Ward et al., 2006). Furthermore, men's depictions of women and femininity affect men's interactional behavior with

women (Ward et al., 2006). Thus, literature findings indicate that these media contents lead men to adopt traditional gender ideologies and regard women as sexual objects.

Online collaborative dictionaries are a new era public sphere in scope and organization (Akca, 2010). The dynamic interaction between authors constantly changes, updates, and produces a meaning related to the social world (Gürel & Yakın, 2007). In this regard, online collaborative dictionaries are a rich source for examining the mean-making process for psychological phenomena. Various psychological phenomena were investigated in the literature using the Ekşi Sözlük -one of the online collaborative dictionaries- as a source. For example, hate speech toward different groups such as Chinese (Tunçer, 2020), Armenians (Akkılıç, 2018), gypsies (Alp, 2016), Syrians (Yaşa, 2017), and Jews (Öztekin, 2015), representations of significant people (Erdem & Bardak, 2010), reactions to current events such as murders of women (Kekeç Gören & Taşçıoğlu, 2018) or acceptance of the women writers to the Ekşi Sözlük (Aslantürk & Turgut, 2015). There is a couple of research on gender on Ekşi Sözlük. These studies focus on issues such as women body and sexism (e.g., Aslantürk & Turgut, 2015; Bilgin Ülken & Yüce, 2020). As a distinguishing aspect, in the current study, our focus is more than the women's body as well as we include foreign women together with Turkish women as a subject of the study. Similarly, we also investigated different online collaborative dictionaries to get a more comprehensive understanding. Although none of the existing research looked at links between representations of women on online collaborative media and masculinity ideology directly, they did show the links between traditional gender roles, women's sexual objectification, and hegemonic masculinity. Besides, the vast majority of the existing literature has been based on Western samples (Giaccardi et al., 2016). Not much is known about new media content created and distributed by users (Collins, 2011). Thus, we aim to extend past research by examining women's representations in Turkish new media and reveal its link with masculinity ideology. In line with this purpose, we examined popular Turkish online collaborative dictionaries to picture the representations of foreign women and Turkish women. We suggest that media contents construct particular beliefs about masculinity and beliefs about women and gender relations, and these representations work mainly through masculinity ideology.

Method and Analytic Strategy

Social media is an interactive setting where people who have various characteristics can share their ideas and beliefs. It constitutes a rich source for achieving extensive data. Thus, we used a sampling strategy parallels with previous work conducted on the online collaborative dictionary (e.g., Yıldırım & Tekdemir-Yurttaş, 2016), except we obtained the data based on years (between 2000 and 2016). The data comprised the entries from Ekşi Sözlük (eksisozluk.com), Uludağ Sözlük (uludagsozluk.com), İnci Sözlük (incisozluk.com.tr), and Instela (tr.instela.com) which are the most-used online collaborative dictionaries in Turkey. These are virtual platforms in which users/writers can open a title about anything and generate content under an opened title. Thus, we used these virtual platforms similar to the related literature to obtain our sampling (e.g., Açer, 2020; Gedik & Turgut, 2019; Bilgin Ülken & Yüce, 2020). Although there is no

official resource about the demographics of the writers, the writer's gender is not our primary concern because masculinity is not something produced only by men; it is also produced, supported, and idealized by society as well as women (Hearn, 2004; Jewkes et al., 2015).

We carried out the research process by carefully considering ethical principles. Online collaborative dictionaries provide an online environment where content is shared publicly, pseudonyms are used to ensure anonymity, and personal information is not shared publicly. Although the writers themselves chose the pseudonyms, we removed all the pseudonyms in the quotations to ensure their anonymity.

We recruited a pilot examination on online collaborative dictionaries to observe the titles related to "foreign women" and "Turkish women". Accordingly, the most common titles were about Russian and Syrian women. Consistently, these are the most common titles in relevant literature involving international marriage and migrant women in Turkey (e.g., Bloch, 2011; Deniz & Özgür, 2013; Erkeç, 2017; Gönül, 2020; Harunoğulları, 2021). In addition, in quite a few of the entries, collaborative dictionary writers described women through comparisons with Asian women. Therefore, we examined the titles comprised "Turkish/Russian/Syrian/Asian women/girls/bride" words or phrases in these online collaborative dictionaries. Some of the comments – called as an entry- under these titles did not represent information about these women (such as "I have not met one of them yet"). We excluded these comments and included only those that had descriptions of women, resulting in 1122 comments included in the analysis. The number of analyzed comments for Asian women was 87, Syrian women 86, Russian women 296, and Turkish women 653. The unequal distribution of the comments for each woman might be due to the familiarity and proximity effect. Namely, the users contacted mostly Turkish women because of the locality; Russian women hold second place because of tourism and migration. On the other hand, Turkish people encountered Syrians, who found asylum in Turkey because of the Syrian Civil War. However, Turkish people probably did not communicate one-on-one with Asian women compared to other foreign women. These different and various experiences could be the reason for the unequal number of comments.

We employed thematic discourse analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Taylor & Ussher, 2001) to the data set due to the study's exploratory nature. We did not aim to collect evidence for a particular hypothesis; instead, we aimed to understand how women are described and made sense of in online collaborative dictionaries. Thematic discourse analysis' standing from a constructionist theoretical position (Braun & Clarke, 2006) is compatible with the feminist social constructionist approach (Burr, 2003). Furthermore, this analytical method is very similar to Potter and Wetherell's (1987) interpretive repertoire analysis in its rhetorical design and ideological interpretations of themes (Clarke, 2005).

Following the guidelines set out for thematic discourse analysis in Braun and Clarke (2006) and specific requirements stated in Taylor & Ussher (2006), we first read and re-read the data set to gain familiarity with it. Then, we administered an initial unit analysis, in which we coded each entry in terms of the characteristics or epithets that define women. We identified initial codes inductively, driven by the data.

After the initial analysis, we grouped the codes into potential themes based on their coherencies. Finally, we reviewed all the possible themes one more time for variability and consistency and identified those that cohere together meaningfully as final themes. Themes were identified at the interpretative level (not just at the semantic level). For example, we created the "woman as a body" theme based on the codes containing expressions or phrases about the female body, such as "hairy, fatty, chunky, saggy breasts, mustache." The analysis process was not linear; rather, there were movements back and forward across the stages, as Braun and Clarke (2006) recommended (see Table 1).

Table 1

Summary of the analysis process

Phase	Description of the process undertaken
familiarization with data	read and re-read the data
initial codes	systematic coding across the entire data set, collating data relevant to each code
initial themes	collate codes into potential themes
review themes	check the themes in relation to the coded extracts and the entire data set
define themes	generate clear definitions of all themes and names for each one
identifying extracts	select extract examples relate to the research questions and literature

Source: (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 87)

<div align="center">Analysis and Discussion</div>

As noted previously, we aimed to explore women's representations in Turkish new media and reveal their link with masculinity ideology. Through our thematic discourse analysis, we identified four themes: the Woman as a Body, the Woman as a Persona, the Woman as a Sexual Partner, and the Woman as a Wife. Our analysis showed that women were represented with general conceptualizations despite their different nationalities. Since Syrian women have different social statuses in Turkey, mostly as refugees, a specific theme was revealed about them: victims. In the analysis below, we present how women's representations are collaboratively constructed and also critically analyze these representations in the frame of masculinity ideology.

The Woman as a Body

Throughout our sample, reproduction of racialized gender performance and hierarchy were identified through the discourses about women's bodies. Women were juxtaposed hierarchically by their physical characteristics such as skin color, height, weight, breast size, and body hair. For example, in one of the comments, women were put in order hierarchically by their breast size "…*in addition to this, an average Russian girl has boobs which will be enough for 3 Turkish girls…*" (Extract 1: 21.06.2015).

Traditional masculinity ideology acknowledges breasts in a sexual manner, and dominant heterosexual discourse endorses the idea that breasts' primary purpose is heterosexual (Ward et al., 2006). Additionally, white and smooth skin was evaluated as a sign of a better/desirable race, and women who possessed this were placed at the top of the hierarchical position. While Russian women were evaluated as beautiful because of their white-smooth skin and tallness, Turkish women were considered ugly because of their "fat body" and "shortness". Writers compared Russian and Turkish women and mentioned. *"(Russian girls') biggest advantage is their skin. If Turkish girls shave every morning, they will have a beard and mustache every evening. In Russian girls, you can't find body hair, except eyebrows and hair; their skin is like silk. (Extract 1: 21.06.2015), and they defined Turkish girls as "the ugliest race. Short and hairy. A flock of self-righteous (Extract 2: 23.03.2010) and "her ass is usually big and hairy" (Extract 3: 27.07.2010).* The word "fat" is often used by men to insult and degrade women and to emphasize their value, for instance, in messages on online dating apps (Thompson, 2018). Besides, Asian women were depicted positively as having smooth and stretched skin ("*They are souls with their eyes and cotton-white skin*" Extract 4: 02.01.2012); on the other hand, they were negatively described as being short and having a hairy body ("*Although most of them are short and flat-bottomed, ... they appeal interesting from time to time*" Extract 5: 07.11.2011; "*As it is understood from pornography, they could not improve themselves in epilation.*" Extract 6: 13.12.2011).

Along with beauty, having white and smooth skin was determined as a necessary criterion for being classified as a woman by writers. This echoes Pyke and Johnson's study (2003), which focuses on the superiority of White femininity over Asian women. However, the situation is more like Connell's concept of "emphasized femininity". As Connell (1987, p. 185-187) states, all forms of femininity are constructed as subordination to men, and patriarchal society pressures women to perform this subordinate role. Men determine the boundary of socially acceptable femininity, and women who deviate from this boundary do not count as women. One of the writers from Ekşi Sözlük, wrote about a Russian woman that "*it is right to divorce when she loses her beauty*", (Extract 7: 22.05.2014), which signifies the idea that femininity is valuable as long as women have an excellent physical appearance. Women who deviate from these defined beauty standards threaten men's hegemonic masculinity (Schippers, 2007).

These stereotyped images reduce women to bodies rather than somebody (Hall & Crum, 1994). Women's beings are reduced to some kind of merchandise and objects of men's sexual desire (Bem, 1993, as cited in Hall & Crum, 1994). Furthermore, portraying women as bodily beings is one of the sources of oppression (Spelman, 1982). Heflick and Goldenberg (2009; p. 600) demonstrated that when women are objectified based on their appearance, they are "perceived as less competent and less fully human". As might be suggested from our data, this perception is frequently revealed in the discourse of masculinity ideology. One writer compares the Russian and the Turkish women and classifies Russian women as human and Turkish women as just women *"... just go to a village in Russia... You will find a "human" that you can share something instead of a woman born to attitudinize. The keyword here is to find "human". Turkish*

women are too much in the shadow of the "women" phenomenon… Russian women are generally human. (Extract 8: 07.10.2013). Similarly, one writer defines a Turkish woman as "a creature that thinks it is at the center of the world", but after that adds a note, "creature part is questionable" (Extract 9: 06.07.2011).

One of the studies in Turkey that examined 580 entries on Ekşi Sözlük under the title "the guy who has a fat girlfriend" was found that more than half of the comments were negative because the ideal manhood sees not having a fit girlfriend as a failure (Bilgin Ülken & Yüce, 2020). These results seem to be consistent with the present theme concerning the reduction of women to bodies, therefore, derogating them as a tool in the service of masculinity.

The Woman as a Persona

Writers' positive/negative evaluations of women's personalities vary according to women's nationalities and are diversified in each group. While Turkish women were generally evaluated with negative personality traits such as "*Most of those born in the 80s and later are greedy, seditious, aggressive, dirty, and world champions on emotional violence*" (Extract 10: 22.11.2015), Russian women were generally appraised with positive characteristics. The authors explain why Turkish men admire Russian women because they are "*truly faithful*" (Extract 11: 29.01.2015) and "*extremely loyal*" (Extract 12: 29.01.2015). To clarify, comments or evaluations under the woman as persona theme contained personality characteristics such as loyal, modest, helpful, money-grubber, capricious. Writers complained about Turkish women's seeing themselves as "princesses" and "striving for superiority"; one of the comments about Turkish women was, *"I have never seen any other creature who glorifies itself despite its uselessness"* (Extract 13: 24.03.2015). This discourse is a way of reclaiming masculinity and the dominant position of men by degrading women. Since hegemonic masculinity requires men to be dominant (Connell, 2005), Turkish women's deviance from traditional subordinated women's roles threatened their masculinity.

The word "Kezban", which indicates another characteristic feature used for Turkish women, was also remarkable. "Kezban" is a classical Turkish movie character representing a woman who migrates from a rural to an urban city. The movies are about her adventures and inappropriate behaviors in the city. "Kezban" represents the educated, urban woman but plays hard to get; modern in the manner of education but conservative when it is about sex. "Kezban" typifies the contradiction of Turkish women between conservatism and modernism (Akpınar, 2015). In the discourses of collaborative social media, this character might be treated as an anchoring process (Moscovici, 1984). Writers use the "Kezban" metaphor to transform Turkish women's qualifications into an easily understandable epithet and constitute common sense (Joffe, 2003; Moscovici, 1984). One writer defines Turkish girls as "*Turkish girls are completely psychologically problematic Kezban. Whenever I go out with a Turkish girl, there is either a marriage maniac who brings the subject to marriage after a few meetings, or a hidden diamond in her pussy, or a person who thinks she is a princess from fairy tales who is constantly waiting for words of love from me, but when she raises her arm, there is a person who smells very bad.*" (Extract 14: 02.08.2010).

The current findings are consistent with those of Açer (2020), who examined the entries titled "Turkish girl body" on Ekşi Sözlük. They revealed the theme "Kezbanlık", a derogative adjective that refers to noncompliance to the ideal woman and closeness to traditionality.

Though Turkish women were evaluated positively for being loyal and altruistic, these comments were attributed generally to traditional older "Turkish mothers". One writer describes a Turkish woman as "*She is a woman who was raised by her loyal Turkish mother, who protects. She takes care of both her man and her children. She doesn't eat but feed…* (She would give you the shirt off their back) *She works and works tirelessly, without stopping. She is devoted.*" (Extract 15: 18.07.2011). Asian women were described with negative comments such as spoiled and unfaithful. These negative features were attributed to Asian-American women, who migrated to America and "left their cultural values behind" and writers mention this situation clearly by saying *"If they were born in America, grown up or came to America at a young age, in short, if they are identified with American culture in one way or another, it is the girl you should stay away from"* (Extract 16: 13.01.2013); *"Unfortunately, not all of them are reserved and sweet. Especially those who were born and raised in America are very spoiled by the influence of the culture and are very interested in making fun of you, just like the degenerated behaviors of other American girls, they behave weird."* (Extract 17: 18.09.2008).

The personality traits affirmed by the writers are consistent with traditional feminine roles. Traditional cultures stress and celebrate female loyalty and altruism (Vandello et al., 2009; Wood, 2001). The new media functions as a tool for reproducing traditional gender roles, and it serves as reconfirming women's subordinate positions. Interestingly, even women who do not feature Turkish identity can be degraded for not confirming traditional cultural feminine roles. For instance, one writer praises a Russian woman because she "*cooks different dishes of the Russian cuisine and bring them to your door by emphasizing the r's and saying "neighbor, here you eat!"*" (Extract 18: 08.08.2009), other writer criticise a Russian woman because she does not care rules about being neighbours by saying "*never mind their beauty, they are very noisy, they are women who do not know good manners and neighborliness*" (Extract 19: 23.05.2015). Patriarchy does not distinguish cultural identity; it restrains all women. According to patriarchal values, women should be male-centered, and in such a system, men are encouraged to make women fulfill their needs (Becker, 1999).

We can interpret these findings as being altruistic, loyal, and non-capricious were important personality characteristics to be the desired woman. Traditional gender ideology portrays women who devote themselves to their men and do not complain about anything and wipe out women's autonomy and subjectivity. Consequently, new media contribute to maintaining women's secondary position and reproduce traditional masculinity ideology

The Woman as a Sexual Partner

We classified writers' comments about women's sexual appearance and sexual performance as the third theme. Russian women were generally mentioned as having good manners during sex and being sexy. Writers specifically mentioned that Russian women make them feel their manhood. Similarly, Asian women were also mentioned as good at sex; however, an outstanding description seemed: *"the sick women moaning as if they were crying while their pussies were pumped"* (Extract 20: 23.08.2012). As understood from the comments, writers had limited face-to-face interactions with Asian women; thereby, we thought that related expressions about them mainly were based on adult materials. As for Turkish women, writers indicated that Turkish women either do not have a sex life or they are bad at sex. For example, one writer defined the situation of breaking up with a Russian woman and starting dating a Turkish woman as *"Instead of having spontaneous sex, it is dealing with billions of silly rituals such as turn off the light, did you lock the door, not on the couch, no doggy style"* (Extract 21: 16.09.2013). Collaborative writers criticized Turkish women for being passive during sex. Some of the writers explained this ambivalent situation of Turkish women in terms of the conservative lifestyle in Turkish culture: *"they usually acquire the package program imposed by the society without forming their own ideas about their gender identities. Their differences from their western counterparts in terms of sexual freedom are not due to the honor chromosomes in their genes, but to the social status and remnants of the feudal society."* (Extract 22: 26.07.2004).

Findings show that the sexual objectification of women is especially prominent in the comments. Writers described Turkish women as "things to just fuck" or perceived them just as a "vagina". Within these discourses, women are positioned as passive objects to "be had", and men as the active agent to "have" (for "have/hold discourse", see Hollway, 1984). Seeing women only as objects is not unique to Turkish women. Objectification of women is also seen frequently in the entries where the authors compare women according to their nationalities. For example, writers mentioned, "*Russians have a shelf life of 24 years, Turks 40 years*" (Extract 23: 28.05.2010) and "*While the Turkish girl burns 250.000 per km, the Russian girl burns only 90.000*" (Extract 24: 29.01.2015).

Additionally, writers mentioned Russian women as prostitutes (e.g., "*There are many types of them working as prostitutes in Istanbul. While some want $50, $100, $150 and $250, some can work for $500*", Extract 25: 24.05.2004). This view might come along with the general idea that Russian and Ukrainian women were the most desired women in the sex industry (Hughes, 2000). Similarly, Asian women were sexualized as "porn stars", which might be based on the usage of adult materials. Compared to Russian and Asian women, Syrian women have a different social status in Turkey, namely as refugees, and their sexualized depictions differ from the others. Like Russian women, Syrian women were also represented as prostitutes; however, the reason for prostitution was justified by their victimized position because they had to migrate from their country, leaving all their possessions behind them (e.g., "*The city is too indebted to feed its own people, and while it does not produce, it certainly cannot feed the Syrians. Girls or young children engage in prostitution just to find 5-10 Turkish liras*", Extract 26: 09.06.2015).

Comments about women's sexual life of some contradictions reflected ideological dilemmas (Billig et a., 1988) in the context of modernism and traditionalism. Turkish women were criticized both for having sexual fantasies and wanting to keep them secret (e.g., *"She is the one who dreams of bedrooms with mirrors on the ceiling, and also the one who says, 'keep the lights off.'"* Extract 27: 09.03.2012) Also, it is criticized that Turkish women do not have a sexual life and they are described as "sluts" because they are not virgins. The dilemma related to the sexuality of Turkish women is also expressed in the comments of some authors. (e.g., *"Due to the unnecessary honor obsessions of the men around her, her settings were broken, she gave years to correct her settings, but this time she could not get rid of the stamp of a slut."* Extract 28: 19.07.2011). In the traditional view, women should protect their virginity at any cost, and loss of their virginity results in being disreputable. Turkey is a country that emphasizes honor culture, which is directly associated with female virginity (Sakallı-Uğurlu & Akbaş, 2013). As compatible with the premises of honor culture and traditional gender ideology, writers depicted women who had sexual intercourse as "skank". However, it became more and more familiar with modernization to have premarital relationships. That is why men classify women who reject to have a premarital sexual relationship as "coy". In both ways, women are subordinated to society's expectations, prescriptive and proscriptive categories of gender stereotypes (Burgess & Borgida, 1999).

These online collaborative dictionary comments contribute to producing and reproducing the heterosexual discourse and women's subordination position. In heterosexual relationships, women tend to be seen as objects; on the contrary, men tend to be seen as subjects (Becker, 1998, 1999). As exemplified by the new media, dominant gender ideologies consistently portrayed women as sexual objects and their beings as mainly for men's pleasure. For example, Cosma and Gurevich (2020) examined men's sex advice on online media. One of the repertoires they interpreted was "feminine commodities for building masculinity", which comprises the discourse that women's bodies exist for men to consume and display their masculinity through them. With these discourses, women are reduced to being body parts rather than a whole person with thoughts and feelings. Other studies conducted in Europe and Turkey also revealed findings related to seeing women as sexual objects (Tartaglia & Rollero, 2015; Yılmaz, 2014; for a review, see Waling et al., 2018). Congruent with Masculinity Ideology (Pleck et al., 1993) and traditional gender stereotypes (Ricciardelli et al., 2010), the comments on the new media maintain and contribute to the construction of women as sexual objects and men as sexual agents and initiators.

The Woman as a Wife

Across our sample, comments that identified women with wifey/maternity roles were classified under the theme of the women as a wife. Writers emphasized traditional gender stereotypes such as self-sacrificing, mothering, and nurturing while depicting women. Writers expressly indicated that marriage to Russian women is the right decision because they are good at cooking. Despite that, some comments stated the opposite argument that they do not know how to do housework. According to writers, whatever makes a Russian woman a good wife is that they devote themselves to their men and do everything for their men's

happiness. One of the comments stated that *"...a Russian girl puts her man in the center and she aims to make him happy."* (Extract 29: 25.12.2014). Similarly, Turkish women were mentioned as they would be perfect mothers and wives for devoting themselves to their families and doing everything for their family's sake. One of the writers glorifies Turkish women under the "loyal wife/mother" concept: *"I do not know any nation of women who are as loyal to their home, husband, and children as Turkish women."* (Extract 30: 21.06.2017).

When women are considered men's wives, they are transformed into cooks or mothers, complying with traditional gender roles (see Best & Williams, 1997). Hence, by perceiving a woman as a mother, men evaluate her according to androcentric norms and reconfirm patriarchal norms. Existing Turkish literature shows, women's gender role stereotypes in Turkey include obedience, family, and responsibility (Dedeoğlu, 2000; Dökmen, 1999), and married women are primarily identified with their gender roles (Sakallı-Uğurlu et al., 2018b). One of the comments explains the situation and roles of a woman as a wife very clearly: *"Do you know how many hours the man you endure at home grin and bear someone to feed you?... "We cook your food, we do your laundry, we clean the house' and I feed your hungry stomach, is it a lie? ...Add up one marriage cost plus your annual expenses. Let me see the total cost I've made for you, be sure; this expense will allow me to go to a Russian whom I can fuck without pretending to be dead like you 4-5 times a month for the rest of my life. For the rest of the money, I can contact a catering company. I am already paying you financially for all the services you can provide during the marriage... Your only function is to raise a child; if we find someone to raise our child with peace of mind, you will be reduced to zero."* (Extract 31: 26.08.2011)

Finally, Syrian women had a specific attribution: becoming co-wife or second wife was a unique description. Most of the comments about Syrian women criticized this situation. As an example, one of the writers criticized the government regarding Syrian migration politics and stated that "*they* (Syrian women) *have been forced to be a prostitute or they become a second wife or even co-wife of men*" (Extract 32: 07.02.2014). Since the beginning of the civil war, they have been forced to flee and struggle in a foreign country with economic and social problems. Their situation could lead them to marry Turkish men as co-wives since it might be the best way to stay alive in some cases (Gönül, 2020).

On the one hand, Syrian women in examined weblogs were seen as a threat to Turkish culture because of degenerating existing values, and their families were perceived as a danger that involved physical violence. On the other hand, they were evaluated as victims in the comments based on the fact that they had to migrate from their countries without any possessions: "*one of the millions of victims of the Syrian civil war that has been going on for years*" (Extract 33: 27.11.2014). Thereby, they were perceived as helpless, hopeless, miserable, and making unwanted marriages, selling their bodies, and being beggars were attributed to their victimized positions. Furthermore, writers oppose the image that presents the Syrian women as trade objects one can sell and buy. Also, in many entries, men who pay money to buy a Syrian woman as a co-wife were criticized. Keskin (2018) also showed that local and national newspapers portrayed Syrian women

as both victims and perpetrators, revealing similar discourse regarding refugee women in new and conventional media in Turkey.

Conclusion

Our objective with the current study was to reveal the social representations of women in the new media, examine the role of masculinity ideology in the formation of these representations and explain the new media's role in maintaining and reproducing traditional gender roles. We examined various online collaborative dictionaries and identified four themes about women's representations: the woman as a body, the woman as a persona, the woman as a sexual partner, and the woman as a wife. These themes generally cover comments that include some prescriptive and proscriptive stereotypes about women, which function to support and maintain traditional gender relations (Burges & Borgida, 1999). Just as in traditional media (e.g., Collins, 2011; Greenwood & Lippman, 2010), women have been redefined, sexualized, and subordinated by stereotypes about their bodies, personalities, sexualities, and social roles in online collaborative dictionaries. In addition, patriarchal ideology also works in the new media, contributing to the definition of women within reasonable limits and roles. Therefore, "the new media" space has been opened to spread the dominant masculinity ideology and maintain the patriarchal system.

Women's bodies were evaluated according to specific socially constructed standards of beauty. Women who deviated from these standards were devalued and even de-feminized because they threatened the dominant ideology of masculinity (Schippers, 2007). Also, the contents of the themes place women in a secondary position in their relations with men. The contents that reduce women's existence to an object that satisfies men's sexual desires reproduce the hierarchical gender structure. Women's bodies are depicted as objects for men to actualize manhood, and the stereotypical images of women function as positioning them outside the "human zone" (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009).

Women's personalities were also evaluated within desirable/undesirable characteristics. Women who have self-confidence and do not comply with the subordinate role are humiliated by men. These personality traits threaten the dominant role of men in the gender hierarchy. Men reassert their dominant position by using rhetorical strategies such as humiliating women or using pseudonyms (e.g., Kezban). However, in online dictionaries, men reaffirm women's identities who conform to traditional stereotypes. "Hegemonic masculinity" and "emphasized" femininity maintain the existing gender system and maintain the dominant position of men (Connell, 2005) via new media.

We observed a unique theme of "victim" among Syrian women, including expressions such as victims of war and co-wife. While Syrian women were described as victims and were evaluated empathetically by dictionary writers in some comments, they were negatively assessed based on their causing cultural corruption in some entries. Some writers depicted them as both threatened and threatening. These ambivalent sexist ideologies justify and maintain patriarchal social structures (Glick & Fiske, 1997). Additionally, the victim discourse reproduces the stereotypes of weak women and strong men (Sakallı-

Uğurlu et al., 2018a). Although men place Syrian women in a secondary position or objectify them, they criticize the purchase of co-wife with money. In other words, while benefiting from the victim position of women is evaluated negatively, it is perceived as usual for women to be victimized by men firsthand. Conflicted ideologies are considered one of the ways of maintaining the traditional masculinity ideology by complying with modern ideals (Edley & Wetherell, 1999; Dixon & Wetherell, 2004).

The most exciting point of our research is that the ideology of masculinity determines the images of masculinity and femininity. These images are represented in media with a stylized and simplified form and serve to construct the social realities for people to believe and behave. The repetitive and homogenous new media contents created and distributed by users have a critical role in reproducing and maintaining gendered discourse and masculinity ideology in the real world.

Online collaborative dictionaries consist of entries written by anonymous writers. On the one hand, this gives an advantage of depersonalization and avoiding social desirability issues. On the other hand, online writers might not be sufficient to comprehend the social representations in the whole culture because these entries are written by relatively young internet users (Gürel & Yakın, 2007). Besides, due to the writers' anonymity, we do not know any information regarding their gender. Nevertheless, this was not an essential issue because masculinity ideology was maintained not only by men but also by women. Online collaborative dictionaries play their part in reproducing, maintaining, and spreading gender inequalities accompanied by masculinity ideology.

A vast amount of literature points to the interrelationships between social representations, gender stereotypes, men's behavior toward women, and women's behavior and sense of self (e. g., Spencer et al., 1999; Ward et al., 2006). Finally, this study has beneficial results in awareness-raising about the social representations and their links with the masculinity ideology in the new media in Turkey. Because understanding the underlying mechanism of masculinity ideology might lay the foundation for spotting the target in the construction of egalitarianism. Also, given that social representations are historically constructed, they are subject to change. This is the most promising aspect of doing research based on social representations from a feminist perspective (Flores-Palacios & Serrano Oswald, 2019). Thus, researching gender from a social representation perspective enables us to deconstruct the traditional gender structure and transform the dominant gender ideologies.

Author Contributions

All authors contributed equally to the manuscript and approved the submission.

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The authors confirm they have no conflict of interest to declare.

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