

**DRAMATIZATION OF MORALITY AND LEGALITY IN TURKISH MEDIA: THE WORLD OF TV SERIES AND CRIME REALITY SHOWS**

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**ABSTRACT**

Understanding the representations of justice and law in different media texts requires evaluating a web of multidimensional themes and issues, and their intersections, in a relational manner. Media portrayal of the world of law-making, as well as forms of 'doing the right thing', vary across media genres. The representations of law are revelatory products of political and popular cultural practices which intersect in unexpected ways. Codes of morality and legality in media are two 'worlds of evaluation' (Dromi and Illouz, 2010) where such a complicated intersection can be observed. Due to the ways in which narratives on formal legal criteria of judgements and moral argumentation styles are intertwined, one can clearly derive a series of validity claims (Habermas) in different genres in popular culture. This paper tackles the question of moral reasoning embedded in two genres in an evaluation of the representations of legality as part of moral universe.

**Keywords:** Sociology of Television, TV Series, Crime Reality Shows

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## TÜRK MEDYASINDA AHLAK VE YASALLIĞIN DRAMATİZE EDİLMESİ: TV DİZİLERİ VE SUÇ REALİTE ŞOVLARI DÜNYASI

### ÖZ

Farklı medya metinlerindeki adalet ve hukuk temsillerini anlamak, çok boyutlu olan tema ve konular ağını ve bunların kesişim noktalarını ilişkisel bir şekilde değerlendirmeyi gerektirir. Kanun yapma dünyasının medya tasvirleri ve 'doğru olanı yapma' biçimleri medya türleri arasında farklılık gösterir. Hukukun temsilleri, beklenmedik şekillerde birbiriyle kesişen siyasi ve popüler kültür pratiklerinin ifşa edici ürünleridir. Medyadaki ahlak ve yasallık kodları, böylesine karmaşık bir kesişmenin gözlemlenebileceği iki 'değerlendirme dünyasıdır' (Dromi ve Illouz, 2010). Hukuki yargıların resmi kriterlerine ilişkin anlatıların ve ahlaki argümantasyon tarzlarının iç içe geçmesi nedeniyle, popüler kültürdeki farklı türlerde bir dizi geçerlilik iddiası (Habermas) açıkça türetilir. Bu makale, ahlaki evrenin bir parçası olarak yasallığın temsillerinin değerlendirilmesinde iki türdeki ahlaki akıl yürütme meselesini ele almaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Televizyon sosyolojisi, TV dizileri, suç reality şovları.

## **Introduction**

The concepts of right and wrong clearly belong to an ambiguous area located in mythical, social, rational and political symbols of our lives. The role of media institutions in terms of mediating such amorphous discourses of choirs attempting to find a harmony has been immensely differentiated in recent years. Media institutions have become a powerful tool to mediate commonsense knowledge, belief systems, ideologies, everyday life survival strategies by producing a web of symbols and discursive markers, most of which flow and reform themselves in an unexpected dynamism.

In this context, analyzing media discourses through the lenses of narrativity and discursivity hinges on understanding media outlets as active agents. Genres such as reality shows and dramas necessitate an examination of their narrative characteristics, which serve as potent tools for shaping meaning-making processes. Recent studies on narrative complexity (Mittell, 2006; Sideri, 2017; Robertson, 2001) explore how elements of narrative structures are contextually and historically adapted. Moreover, the analysis of narrative elements across different discursive levels should be complemented by an interdisciplinary approach.

However, as Dawson and Makela (2023) observe, the growing body of studies on narrative texts in the media should remain cautious of the potential for narrative analyses to devolve into clichés within public discourse. Instead, as this paper aims to highlight, the integration of narratives, rhetorical features, and discursive practices across genres offers a valuable lens for exploring intersections such as the portrayal of legal subjects in reality shows and the specific stories woven into TV dramas. As Bond (2012) underscores, the narratives of legality embedded in reality TV and the construction of legal subjects form a complex web that enriches contemporary TV studies.

Rather than producing legal drama series as a prioritized lens, the Turkish TV industry opted for a range of TV dramas or dramas (*dizi*, in Turkish), with a variety of focuses. These include issues such as on gendered family sagas, heavy dramatization of folkloric stories, mafia organizations embedded in everyday life, adaption of foreign productions, and popularized versions of classical fiction. Nevertheless, the absence of legal drama in the Western sense did not mean the absence of representations of law and justice. Rather, the world of Turkish-produced TV dramas reproduced unique discursive and rhetorical tools, which can be clearly differentiated in terms of their underlying ideologies, beliefs, mythologized and/or moralized versions of right or wrong, and their methods of reproducing certain types of moral reasoning. The negotiation of identities between the traditional and the modern cultural markers, the venues where different voices are provided certain symbolic spaces are sociological indicators of positions, if not directly on legality, certainly on morality.

Another genre in Turkish society is the Crime Reality Show entitled *Muge Anlı ile Tatlı Sert* (MATS) (Sweet and Bitter with Muge Anlı). Highly popularized subjects are represented as actors of an (un)just world, in which the media producers make a moral judgement based on their own idiosyncratic interpretations on '(il)legality.' We explore the issue of moralization in terms of mediatization in everyday life: How do crime reality shows establish a cultural platform where confessors, interrogators, offenders, victims, and vigilantes are given roles to justify, admit, and express their actions? What are the dominant types of moral reasoning used by the producers? The issues of legality and morality, we argue, are highly dramatized in the Turkish media, where such discursive tools are important for understanding complex interactions on the boundaries of justice, legality, and morality.

"Media Representations of Law" is a significant theme among various cultural markers, by which our overall experiences of life is shaped and reconfigured. The media's contribution to our sense of familiarity with the law is commensurate with their various abilities to structure our everyday life maps of meanings. We not only find ourselves familiar with the normative principles of everyday life through

the news stories, talking heads and highly ritualized versions of political conventions, but we also are influenced by TV dramas, movies, and reality shows, most of which transmit and construct a wide variety of images and narratives about citizenry, law and justice. The analyses made in this paper aims at understanding the ways in which the Turkish media construct images, normative dispositive (Foucault), and narratives in TV dramas and Crime Reality Shows. In order to analyze the ways in which agency is rendered unreflective, we assume, it is necessary to decipher the validity claims embedded in textual and visual data. It is also important to observe the ways in which these two genres indirectly depoliticize the audiences' aspirations by trivializing them by submersion in pool of cynicism and cacophony. Accordingly, the following paper will examine carefully selected moralizing claims of TV narratives. Secondly, the role of a crime reality show in shaping the image of justice will be evaluated.

### **General Outlook of Turkish Media(tized) World of Culture**

Recent years have witnessed rapid changes in political, social and cultural spheres in terms of creating highly polarized and divided world of voices in the so called 'modernization' process of Turkish society. The rise of Islam, newly sacralized forms of everyday life practices, the disputed territory of the EU membership process, conflicting identity claims, collective inquiries for authenticity markers, the chorus of neoliberal, nationalist, secular, non-secular voices are among the outstanding sociological touchstones which guide us while navigating the territories of different moral identity claims.

The claim-making process in politics and popular culture certainly influenced the ambiguous territories of popular historiography which are revealed in strategies used in politics of memory. TV dramas and their narratives have been providing a significant discursive area of cultural vocabulary where different voices tested configuring an area of contest and consensus. In other words, storytelling practices they included had had a function of revealing a sphere of negotiation, if there is, for a series of ideological cleavages. The pre-modern, modern and postmodern cultural markers have been heavily used in characterizing these voices among which arguments on conflict resolution, negotiation or polarization have been reproduced in a discursive world of different ethical claims.

Naturally, the proliferations of these divisions reflect upon the ways in which popular historiography is reproduced in different identity markers and moral claims. It is our contention that the approaches to the construction of law and justice enlighten the major characteristics of our different understandings of the conflicts in history and culture. Narrations, rhetorical devices, discursive practices are tools to delineate the forces and actors of agency, over which different claims and voices are prioritized and highlighted. Whether or not these voices, for example, de-mystify certain ideologies and power games help us to understand if and how justice claims are dialogically reflected and negotiated. It is presumed that storytelling in TV dramas has the power to either reveal or conceal these inner tensions of negotiations in creating, let's say, a dialogical self. The actions and utterances of individuals reflect upon different moral claims, and the constant evolution and thriving of these keep audiences alert. The scenario of TV dramas, thus, provide substantial clues and keys to decipher societal formations formed through diverse characteristics of individuals and cultures.

Thus, narratives on law and justice are sociological devices, because justice and morality derive from the sphere of intersubjectivity, from participating in and observing the effects of behavior on the feelings of others and through command of one's own feelings and desires (Dant, 2010). The narrative structure of TV dramas plays a crucial role in shaping perceptions of individuals, cultures, and historical traumas, while also reflecting dominant narrative techniques and collective memory practices. As such, they provide a moral space for examining key sociological divisions and ideological leanings. These dramas are often composed of complex, multi-layered stories that contribute to the politics of memory, a field marked by significant debate and contestation. Themes such as the lives of historical figures like Ottoman sultans, ideological conflicts, and love stories symbolizing societal unity as a remedy for fragile

relationships, have all been portrayed in a discursive space where popular historiography serves meaning making core of the validity claims and other practices. The storytelling practices, for instance, aesthetically and literarily construct a realm of agency, shaping a space of discursive possibilities. If, “narratability means that events and lives are affirmed as being worth telling and thus worth living” (Frank 2002: pp.111), lives of people characterized as heroes or ordinary people also amplify the ways in which describing these lives also means the worthiness of their actions.

Storytelling, narrative strategies, emplotments and other discursive devices are used in TV drama, therefore, serve constructing a web of strategies, which can be accepted as discourses denouncing or reproducing the violation of common norms and values. These not only help us to understand the proliferation of an intensive struggle over moral evaluations, but also constitute important heuristic tools for defining TV as a medium for the sociology of morality. Representations of law and justice, we assume, can be deciphered through genres which include textual material where negotiations over what is good and bad are done in everyday life. It is not only the existence of such negotiations via verbal configurations, but positioning the roles of audiences, strategies for prioritizing values and ideologies, empowering or disempowering tendencies for certain voices can lead us to characterize a sphere where due process in law, as an institution, is elevated or obfuscated. Deriving and analyzing claims and actors in seeking justice, defining the boundaries of legality and morality can be a delicate evaluation which requires to take a look at genres beyond court dramas. The popularity of TV dramas in Turkish society brought about a methodological design which brought about an association between TV series and crime reality shows, due to the ways in which claims to morality, emphasized above, are often seen and naturalized as part of everyday language among people. Even although storytelling practices do not necessarily include a confrontation between people and courts, lawyers and judges, these genres include suggestions, discursive markers, strategies and “worlds of evaluation”<sup>1</sup>(Dromi and Illouz, 2010) on normative boundaries of justice and morality. The struggle over what is right and wrong in these genres is clearly a window of opportunity for exploring the intersection between culture and politics.

In this context, our paper focuses on two genres: TV dramas and crime reality shows, which gained popularity with the emergence of private channels in Turkish media world. As is emphasized below, Turkish media culture adopted melodramatic and dramatic language of the world in movie productions and TV dramas also accommodated the genre of crime reality shows by injecting highly traumatic-dramatic language. The claims to morality in these two different genres, then, can direct us to evaluate the ways in which representing the world of justice and law, including its sociological implications. What is worth living and telling, we assume, can be relocated through analyzing the discursive process of making valid claims, which oscillates between different types of reasoning.

### **Major Themes and Rhetorical Characteristics of TV Drama**

Storytelling is an important cultural marker in Turkish popular wisdom. Turkish folk culture has traditionally provided a rich narrative pool, in which authors of different genres navigate and re-appropriate well-known stories and parables, impacting not only modern fiction and literature, but also TV productions such as advertising, TV drama, movies, news stories, and others (Erol-Işik, 2013). The moral direction stories provide for the audiences has been significant in integrating and articulating a wide variety of discourses in Turkish culture. These discourses, which combine traditional, modern and postmodern markers at different aesthetic and narrative levels, all attempt to borrow from the moral

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<sup>1</sup> Dromi and Illouz (2010) borrows this term from Boltanski and Thévenot who defines the worlds of evaluation as follows: These worlds are systems of logics which are used to establish what is to be considered worthy in a repertoire of evaluation, allowing actors to evaluate the merit of a person, an object, or an abstract value. See: Luc Boltanski and Laurent Thévenot, *On Justification: Economies of Worth*, trans. Catherine Porter (Princeton, NJ: Princeton, 2016).

power of traditional and modern storytelling practices, which present themselves in a new bricolage in cultural sphere.

Thus, a society succumbing to a social change process known as Westernization, calls out for a savior or saviors, due to highly visible and traumatic past experience of the transformation from an empire into a republic. Highly dramatized TV dramas include various different levels of sentimental, melodramatic and mythical storytelling practices which, from time to time, derive their power from popular historiography and popularized versions of folk stories. The ways in which the storytelling practices overlap with the struggle over defining and debating a series of ideological cleavages (secular vs de-secular, traditional and modern, essentialist and constructivist, etc.) led us to configure TV dramas in relation to worldviews and their incorporated. Thus, the evaluations made in the following part include a short inventory about the linkages between examples of Turkish TV dramas and ideologies their narratives reveal. One can clearly see the storylines and logics of evaluation embedded in each TV serial allow for a narrative opportunity to define claims to morality. As Rorty (2012) notes, “moral convictions and conventions direct us to refining and applying the questions that turn attention to the many different dimensions of what make choice, character and action admirably worthy or despicably wrong” (pp.7). The world of TV dramas, which plays a tremendous role in TV productions in Turkey, depicts representations about making choices, character building and action which direct us into the currents of moral and immoral waves of deception, redemption, guilt making, compensation, and glorification. Ideological characterizations of gendered lives, ancestors’ adventures, bravado of male heroes all contribute to self-righteousness, moral narcissism (Rorty, 2012) which are unwanted qualities for building a community based on ethics of autonomy. Accordingly, in order to evaluate the arguments on moral power of TV narratives which has a tremendous impact on representations of law and justice, the following themes and issues will be exemplified to highlight arguments: neo-liberalism, tribalism, patrimonialism, prudentialism, and hypermasculinism.

Since 1980’s, Turkish society has been in close contact with forces and actors of globalization, which led to an immense transformation in everyday life practices, influenced by privatization, higher levels of consumption, market oriented attitudes, and the tension between individualism and collectivism. In this context, TV dramas, started adopting the discursive markers of waves of neo-liberalism as part of a process of democratization and freedom. Since the 1990’s, there have been numerous TV dramas on public tv (TRT) and private channels, triggered by the impact of globalized trade partnerships on production companies. Turkish TV dramas depict highly unique characteristics which are not seen in Western counterparts in terms of the duration of each episode, narrative strategies, and others. The variations of these productions can be classified into: Turkish fiction adaptations, mafia drama, military drama, romantic comedies, neighborhood stories, family drama, and foreign production adaptations. The ways in which each type coalesce into overlapping narratives would highlight the logics of evaluation emphasized earlier. The mafia stories have been portraying inter-mafia conflicts and their so-called power over the political institutions and leaders. The ways in which they blend traditional folkloric storytelling strategies into the scenario have been prioritizing a self-righteous angle of managing the world without relying on political institutions, thus de-legitimizing the role of citizens with rights and responsibilities. Mystification of powerful mafia leaders have been accompanied by hypermasculine characters who also adore a militaristic culture.

A bastardized version of social darwinism accompanied by traditional ‘family values’ is seen in highly popular TV dramas such as *Kartallar Yüksek Uçar* (Eagles Fly High) (1983) where two families from urban and parochial origins evolve together in their profit-making business enterprises<sup>2</sup>. The clash between urban capital and parochial capital is narrated in highly interlocking stories of the two families, who increase their power in legitimate ways. In addition, activities such as mafia relationships and

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<sup>2</sup> Rather than providing a historical inventory, we opted for providing short exemplars of TV series produced at different historical periods.

smuggling become highly visible in everyday struggle of individuals. This has been the first TV serial production where seeking and finding justice in a criminalized world has been narrated in a context whereby a negotiation of liberalism and traditionalism has been aestheticized. This serial defined the world of mafia and illegitimate relationships as having a significant role in a society which is evolving through the forces of globalization and localization.

The world of 'ragione' has been frequently narrated in Turkish TV dramas, so as to articulate the honor culture of a savior, a strong man with a certain bravado, and the current mundane world of injustices and illegalities. These 'men of honor' present themselves as warriors and protectors of their community, providing moral guidance in times of crises. There are scenes where these men form a committee of referees, headed by a wise man. The crises stem from family feuds, love entanglements, financial competition and territorial power struggles. These kinds of resolutions in a patrimonial cultural structure never resort to a world of secular law where lawyers, judges, and other officials to provide justice. Instead, the audience are shown different versions of mafia relationships, as well as ancestral networks of power, worshipped via aestheticized shots and storytelling practices. These stories are usually based on rhetorical strategies, which are recontextualized in a world of aphorisms and parables. Such a discursive mix of different literary and rhetorical methods exclude any possibility of dialogical talk or markers of negotiation. The lack of moral ambiguities or dialogical selves, then, complement the cultural scenery where the world of justice is heavily based on essentialist and parochial claims, rather than universal ethical debates. The most well-known examples of mafia drama are *Delî Yürek* (Crazy Heart), *Kurtlar Vadisi* (The Volley of the Wolves), *Eşkiya Dünyaya Hükümdar Olmaz* (No Reign over the Bandit World).

The moral claims reflect the ambivalent nature of modernization, which, from time to time allowed for discourses of emancipation. The stories of women who raise voices for emancipation have become an area of moral autonomy in the world of TV drama, as exemplified in neighborhood stories depicted in different periods. In a rare case, due to her husband's suicide, a modern upper class woman and her daughter find themselves in a lower class neighborhood of Istanbul, struggling to understand what has happened to them. She attempts to find a job instead of conforming the social institutional structure in the serial called *Yeditepe İstanbul* (Seven Hills İstanbul). The storytelling allows each character in this drama to have a reflection on events, problems, and personalities. This TV serial is distinguished by a sophisticated narrative strategy, portraying the story of a group who constantly negotiate their agency. Such high levels of self-reflexivity is rare in the scenarios of TV dramas, which, to a large extent, do not allow for ethics of autonomy (Shweder, Much, Mahapatra, Park, 1997).

The political cultural characteristics of Turkish society has been heavily affecting the narratives in delineating a contested area of ideological markers: the rise of Islam, secularism, re-sacralization, and neo-liberalization. Stories of collectivist political voices have been expressed through tv dramas in the form of old ancient leadership. *Diriliş, Ertugrul* (Ertugrul, The Resurrection) emerged in the process of Neo-Ottomanism, symbolizing an essentialist storyline to understand Turkic culture and identity. This serial, which has been exported to more than fifty countries, narrates the story of an empire in an epic way and represents a transformation of a small tribe into a strong empire. The warriors in Anatolia are believed to have omnipotent powers which derive from a faith based on war (*gaza*), as well as an Islamic command. Therefore, the serial symbolizes the formation of an omnipotent and potentially unresistable Empire, spreading outwards. Historical figures like Ottoman sultans, ideological tensions, and love stories symbolizing societal unity as a solution for fragile relationships have been depicted in a series of mediatized acts in Turkish society. These narrative practices, both aesthetic and literary, create a world of agency, opening up a space for discursive possibilities. What this tv serial offers as a narrative argumentation can amplify the aforementioned idea about the abuse of morality in enforcing its own moral narcissism, reproducing an ethic of community and elevating a retributivist culture over others.

The evolution of the TV dramas, as is noted above, amplified a popular cultural gateway where articulation of a series of ideologies have been based on markers with symbolic power where the cultural and political vicissitudes in Turkish society become more visible. The clash between secular and non-secular cultural markers, for example, has been creating its own rhetorical games to legitimize specific strategies which become fluid and intricate in making ideological argumentations. The rise of Islam and /or re-sacralization of everyday culture, for example, has been accompanied by certain ways of injecting neoliberal values into everyday life practices, which revealed themselves in interesting combinations of symbols which had been defined in a contesting relationships. TV dramas which promote politics of tribalism and parochialism were produced at the same time when stories about the members of power elite living in huge mansions at Bosphorus were narrated in an unprecedented discourse about the innuendos of moral games *Ask-I Memnu* (Forbidden Love). The worlds of evaluation, then, were comprised of both reinterpreting the codes of morality for national and international audiences. The ways in which product placement in these dramas have been used to lure different groups of audiences as consumers also created an opportunity to blend different kinds of cultural symbols which could be seen in their rhetorical and ideological discourses. Thus, productions which include epic stories, family sagas, neighborhood stories, ethics of divinity have been observed in the same pool where neoliberal, modern, postmodern typology of characters played their own roles in the world of tv series

Recently, two different TV series, *Kızılık Şerbeti* (Cranberry Sorbet) and *Kızıl Goncalar* (Red Buds), depicted a world of values and ideologies where struggles over family feuds, secularism vs. Islamism, and distinctions within Islamic and secular identities unfold in an urban setting. In particular, the clash between secular and pious moral claims in *Kızılık Şerbeti* is narrated through a process of negotiation revealed in romantic relationships, the role of gender identities, and more. When the children of a wealthy Islamic family and a secular family in Istanbul fall in love and get married, a world of ideological and moral tensions becomes visible, providing an opportunity to clarify how secular and religious lifeworlds are negotiated, despite the recent "soapoperafication" of the TV serial.

On the other hand, the tragedies narrated in a highly pious way of storytelling, rituals, and identities in *Kızıl Goncalar* amplify a discursive space where different moral claims are justified in a world of contesting Islamic claim making process. These claims are reflected upon daily political debates as well. A community of believers, organized as a *tarikât* (religious order) in Istanbul, is exposed to secular culture, which reproduces the well-known fault line between laicism and Islamism in Turkish society. When members of the secular and religious families interact, the TV serial employs a narrative exploring the possibility of constructing nuanced worldviews.

In short, TV dramas in Turkey have been offering us a rich data for interpreting the representations of law and justice, values and lifeworlds, which are highlighted through narrative mechanisms based on different political cultural trends and ideologies. They also construct their storytelling patterns where sentimentalism becomes a major marker which attract audiences' attention based on emotions rather than reasoning. At this point, we need to analyze another important genre playing on sentiment rather than appealing to reasonable, rational arguments, namely, the crime reality show.

### **Crime Reality Show as a Moral Framework<sup>3</sup>**

In Turkey the experience started with the privatization of broadcasting in the beginning of 1990s, and evolved with the various formats, ranging from crime-based programs, talent shows, surveillance-based shows, and makeover shows (Yaman, 2013). Of these examples, crime-based reality programs

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<sup>3</sup> The analysis of MATS, the crime reality show, in this paper is based on the data collected in the following work: (Master's thesis, İzmir University of Economics)



are one of the most controversial sub-genres, deriving their significance from the seriousness of their content, as it has a distinct and intense social impact on audiences' crime-related attitudes from tendency to violent to fear of being a crime victim (Uluç Küçükcan, 2019). Although the cultural significance of reality television lies in its claim to represent social reality (Stiernstedt and Jakobsson, 2017), all such shows shared a common concern about authenticity or truthfulness – specifically, whether what is presented can truly be considered 'reality' (Lavie, 2016). In the midst of the debates on truthfulness, different forms of reality shows started storifying and narrating crime related phenomena in such a way that the core principle of modern, liberal cultural sphere, that is, the distinction between private/public, has been de-emphasized. Along with other genres, such as talk shows, crime reality has also begun to invert and subvert boundaries between the immoral and the moral. In this regard, Farias et al. (2004) argue that while reality shows, rooted in the intersection of reality and fiction, make the construction of moral narratives more prominent, they simultaneously engage with morally charged subjects without fostering moral reflexivity, instead framing their content merely as "reality". The media outlets started covering the stories of such self-made super-subjects as part of the process in which governmentality was considered to take account of the vulnerability of others. The subject of crime has been always appealing for Turkish TV producers and their audience.

The program under consideration is one of the popular shows on TV, on air since 2008: MATS, anchored by an ex-magazine reporter, Müge Anlı, was first broadcasted on ATV in 2008. The program, which could be considered as a crime-based reality show, focuses on unsolved criminal cases, such as murder, fraud or kidnapping. The program also presents itself as a service for those victimized by the actions of others. From time to time, the producers collaborate with the authorities to find missing babies, children, teenagers and even adults. We asked the following questions: How do the crime reality shows form a cultural forum in which discussants, audiences, participants, guests, and others take the overlapping roles of confessors, interrogators, offenders, victims, and vigilantes? Is it possible to diagnose the priority of morality over ethics by referring to the abundance of statements portrayed as the main ingredient of the so called public forum? (Erol-Işık and Yaman-Akyar, 2017).

The ambiance of the program is designed to provide a strong visual impression, which is supported by strategies, such as a testimonial structure, in which all are encourage to participate, whether ordinary individuals (victims, protagonists, transgressors, and lay people) or experts (one lawyer, one psychiatrist). Müge Anlı, the anchorwoman, is never hesitant about expressing her own views, when it comes to warning her guests against comments critical of the government, reminding the audience that she is never 'objective', and telling that the show is providing a public service. She justifies revealing immoral acts or social ills of the society, which she blames, not on police negligence, but on moral decadence and irresponsible behavior. From time to time, she allows guests cry on camera, expresses anger with participants who object to the way in which the case is elaborated, and uses innovative methods to instruct the public, using the case as an example, even disclosing private information, e.g. victims' financial transactions. She invites people who claim to have witnessed a certain incident to help resolve the case.

The sociological profile of participants is usually lower class or lower-middle class, with a low level of education, which increases their vulnerability during interrogations and testimonials. During these lengthy discussions about misdeeds and moral dilemmas dramatized events and stories, the witnesses are invited to 'confess' what 'actually' occurred; that is, there is always a possibility that they are not telling the complete truth. In a self-celebratory mood, the host of the show constantly reminds the audience and the viewers that they should 'get a grip of themselves to know what is really happening out there.' The audience is never allowed to criticize the officials responsible for resolving the cases of missing people or other suspicious acts. On the contrary, the participants and the audience are invited to show their respect for the government authorities, are portrayed as doing their best to serve the people. In other words, the show does not present itself as a forum where different ethical positions can be entertained or evaluated by the guests or participants.

In one of the episodes, Müge Anlı states that *“The state cannot be kept busy for just two chickens; we should solve some problems by ourselves.”* (01.04.2013). In another scene, the relationship between individuals and the State, and the extent of their respective responsibility, are constructed discursively. A victim asks, *“Where is the state?”*, but Müge Anlı responds with the argument that *“If we all do our share, then the state would help us”* (01.04.2013). In 2011, after the earthquake in Van, a city in the Eastern Anatolia with a large Kurdish population, significant donations from the Western regions of Turkey started pouring in. On 4 October 2011, the host started making comments about the significance of philanthropic efforts in support of the earthquake victims, defined as essential to the ‘unity of people’. The host also thanked the police and other local authorities for helping the victims. At one point speech, she commented that *“those hands who throw stones at the police should be broken”*, a reference to the Kurdish youth anti-government protests in cities in Eastern Anatolia. She added that *“some people attack the police with stones, but when they are in trouble, they expect our army to help them. Let’s establish the balance here. On the one hand they do that, on the other hand they expect to get help. One must not cross the line!”* Such a comment, formulated through a Manichean distinction, was also a racial slur, reflecting the relationship between the two events indicated above. She referred to the Kurdish population, demeaning them as a dependent and deviant group, who expect Turks to appear whenever problems occur. This comment reflected the non-normative, by re-activating a racial marker, which helps to buttress the culture of fear on which the show is based. Also, *“one must not cross the line”* is one of the statements which function to remind those people about of their positions. What they are considered to be subjected to does not depend on their own free will, but someone else’s. After criticisms from the media and the public, she issued an apology, which seemed to have been made under pressure. This was clearly seen the next day in her apology to *“those people who were genuinely offended”*, which was accompanied with a discourse of unity and camaraderie. *“Today is the day to think about unity. Those who think the opposite should be condemned as traitors”* she said. These comments also reflected a culture of vengeance and fear, reproducing the non-normative as alien, sub-human and dysfunctional (Pinseler, 2010). Instead of employing a wide array of ethical claims, the MATS opts to rationalize a sensibility-guided moral reasoning (Gilligan, 1998) based on the ethics of care. That is, instead of using a rule-governed style of moral reasoning, which presents individuals as independent, the sensibility-guided style moral reasoning presents individuals as interdependent. The interactions direct what is to be done, while the welfare of others, and preventing others from coming to harm are central considerations (Krijnen and Meijer, 2005). Therefore, the persona who takes the responsibility of his/her life course dominates the screens through programs such as the one evaluated in this paper.

In addition, approved and idealized lifestyles have been prescribed by the media, new ‘techniques’ to improve or heal ‘selves’ have become more visible in the world of consumption and new self-help methodologies have become more legitimate through different beliefs and ideologies, including liberal, Islamic, and other pastiche languages. The media outlets, which became more pluralistic after 1990’s, invited people to reason with weak or vulnerable elements of themselves and society so as to discover personal ways to define problems as major illnesses. Thus, one of the most important juxtapositions produced by the new regimes of governmentality and also polity is the emergence of a self-sufficient individual looking for a place in the free market system versus the citizen protected by the welfare state.

The formation of a persona to counsel for everything, including sex, religion, family, and other crucial issues in life, became important, therefore media outlets started opening up venues for storytellers who recommended daily affirmations for those who felt vulnerable and unprotected. The new person of this new age could choose his/her own destiny, it is claimed, unlike those who were dependent on their traditions and communities. Embedded within the notion of prudential decision making has been a moral discourse. The new person of this new age ought to be prepared for the best and the worst to happen. That is, the lack of a state/a formal organization responding to his/her demands for rights seems to have rendered obsolete clear cut solutions. In this framework of

moralization, supported by different cultural scripts, making choices in life as a discursive strategy has been juxtaposed against the given-ness of family, community, and the nation-state. The moralization of everyday life (Hunt, 2003) was a part of a process where the 'social may be giving way to the community as a new territory for the administration of individual and collective existence, a new place, or surface, upon which micro-moral relations among persons are conceptualized and administered' (Rose: 1996: 331). The increasing visibility of poverty, crime, and deviance through the media brought about discussions of 'protection' and 'securitization'. The need for security led to giving priority to discourses which emphasize the themes such as 'you feel insecure because of criminals out there', instead of messages such as 'feeling insecure is an outcome of low wages'. It was easier and less political for the media outlets to portray outcasts, potential criminals, various kinds of transgression, and constant voyeuristic scenes from everyday life. The mediatization of morality, in this context, emerged as a major reflection of the processes, which included different strategies including fear, confession, crime, and risk (Erol Işık and Yaman, 2017).

'Moralization as a routine feature of social life, is not so much about 'strategic' as it is processual: it involves myriad discourses, symbols, feelings, actors, and truth claims' (Hier, 2008: 181). It should be noted that, the transition from welfare systems into regimes of governance and prudentialism should be understood within the framework of the public culture it creates; that is, pseudo media forums, infotainment which advise us about how to cultivate ourselves, programs and texts which do not include an outlook for multilayered forms of being, and/or a search for an ethical understanding.

The media genre such as talk shows, for example, are a symbolic pollution of the pure categories of liberal political philosophy, such as reason, objectivity, neutrality, due to their tendency to bring to the public sphere the spectacle of tears, heart breaking reunions, broken families, addictions, uncontrollable drives, anger, revenge, categories which should have no place in the ideal public sphere guided by critical reason (Illouz, 1999). In addition, sensational talk shows become the stages for increasing moral panics because of the way they sensationalize and feed off moral panics as their daily fare. The rituals of shaming and communal cleansing also produce the uncomfortable spectacle of pain and suffering, rage, and recrimination. However, such pain and suffering arises from the conflicts and contradictions of everyday life, from the way hopes are thwarted and dreams exploited (Tavener, 1999). The processes of sensationalism and tabloidization are completely at odds with the reflection of an autonomous self. The mediatization of fear also becomes an important part of social life, to the extent that fear is decreasingly experienced first-hand and increasingly experienced on a discursive and abstract level (Grupp, 2003).

The ways in which the crime reality show called MATs rearrange a set of discourses where moral panic, culture of fear and pop criminology provide a cognitive map for a cathartic moment aiming to glorify a community without non-normative elements (Yaman, 2013). As Young (1990) states, the ideal of community participates in what Adorno calls the logic of identity, a metaphysics that denies difference. Also, the ideal of community totalizes and detemporalizes its conception of social life by setting up an opposition between authentic and inauthentic social relations (Young, 1990). The divide between normative versus non-normative subjects, who need to be warned about the social ills of everyday life, is used to authenticate a moral order through a rhetorical energy and melodramatic performances. This is done in such a way that those who are subjected to such an aura of transfiguration would never question the situation in which their subjection should be transformed into a subjectivity.

Thus, the divide between normative subjects, on one hand, and on the other, non-normative subjects who need to be warned about the social ills of everyday life, is used to authenticate a moral order based on a rhetorical energy and melodramatic performances. This is done in such a compelling way that those subjected to such an aura of transfiguration would never think to question the situation in which their subjection should be transformed into a subjectivity.

## Conclusion

Media representations of legality require a thorough evaluation on different genres which may not necessarily present themselves in the process of characterizing law. In this article, it is assumed that deriving argumentation structures of different kinds would reveal us the ways in which certain actors criticize and justify their positions. The genres in question, TV dramas and crime reality shows, offered a wide variety of opportunities in delineating different perceptions on common good. Orchestrating narrative strategies as claims to morality provide us how certain value systems, ideologies are given special function to define a sphere of ethic, which may be based on autonomy or community. The analysis, therefore, attempts to tackle sociological trends which have been associated with tv practices by providing examples about Turkish TV dramas as well as crime reality show.

The secular and non-secular divide in Turkish political culture has been resonating the AKP government's positioning itself in relation to its counterpart, that is, secular values of non-AKP groups or parties. Since the culture of victimhood played a major role in defining the major identity of party politics in pre-2010's, popular cultural texts also borrowed from the master narrative of the AKP, entangling victimized selves and politics of emotion in their productions. The ways in which party politics elevated the resentment and grudge against those who do not conform their own track also effected a common sentiment about punishing those who are responsible about their failure. Retributivist party politics had been intertwined with the celebratory mood of Neo-Ottomanism which presented itself through grandeur projects, glory, victory, absolute power, pride, and arrogance (Tokdoğan, 2019). Revengeful inclinations which encompassed the discourses of daily political debates also became significant and legitimate markers of media texts where a certain type of moral reasoning have been becoming more visible. Thus, defining an actor as having reasonable mental capacities, self-reflexive abilities to differentiate the impact of other actors on creating common good became an elusive and utopic aim. The strengthening of claims to morality by ideologies such as prudentialism, neoliberalism, tribalism and others emphasized earlier has been vividly observed in 'worlds of evaluation' produced in TV dramas as well as crime reality shows, which, themselves are stern genres with distinguished place among other genres in Turkish media. The ways in which these genres promote and elevate attitudes such as 'take action for yourself', 'be prudent', and 'trust no one' serve the formation of self-righteousness which does not allow for existence of diverse political projects or voices. The narrative formulae to accommodate these values has been codified in carefully coded melodramatic texts in which the roles of victims, villains and heroes were clearly defined.

In this context, as is emphasized above, moralization of TV cultural discourses has been intensified in ethics of community where autonomous subjects cannot make their own decisions, divine duties of heroes as tribal chiefs, the so called 'men of wisdom', self-made victims and saviors, whose rhetorical gestures are heavily characterized by sensibility guided moral reasoning. Banalization of a series of ideologies these media texts, the abundance of mottos which emphasize glorification of certain values and excluding others all serve for producing dramatic or melodramatic strategies.

As the aforementioned TV dramas and crime reality show depict, the moral evaluations and storylines used in argumentative structures clearly refer to the dramatic configurations embedded in these tv productions. The world of legality and morality, then, becomes an issue of (lack of) justification. Describing and evaluating balancing acts of actors and ideologies exemplified in this paper aims at illuminating this process in terms of linking the mundane verbosity and politics of interpretation and agency. Portraying practices and actions of justice or injustice, then, is a multilayered sociological problem, where the duality of tragedy and drama becomes the core historical moments of what is just and/or harmful.

### **Information on Cited TV Series**

#### **Kartallar Yüksek Uçar**

Producer: İbrahim Başar

Date: 7 October 1984-23 December 1984

Director: Hüseyin Karakaş

#### **Aşkı Memnu**

Producer: Kerem Çatay/Ay Yapım

Date: 4 September 2008 - 24 June 2010

Director: Hilal Saral

#### **Deli Yürek**

Producer: Mustafa Şevki Doğan/Sinegraf

Date: 5 October 1998 - 24 June 2002

Director: Osman Sınav

#### **Kurtlar Vadisi**

Producer: Osman Sınav/Sinegraf (2003-2004), Raci Şaşmaz/Pana Film (2004-2005)

Date: 15 January 2003 - 29 December 2005

Director: Osman Sınav (1-55), Mustafa Şevki Doğan (21-55), Serdar Akar (56-97)

#### **Eşkiya Dünyaya Hükümdar Olmaz**

Producer: Raci Şaşmaz (1-123), ATV İç Yapımlar (124-199)

Date: 8 September 2015 - 15 June 2021

Director: Onur Tan (1-199), Zübeyr Şaşmaz (140-199), Baran Özçaylan (140-199)

#### **Yeditepe İstanbul**

Producer: Kaan Erturan

Date: 18 May 2001- 24 June 2002

Director: Türkan Derya, Aydın Bulut

#### **Diriliş Ertuğrul**

Producer: Mehmet Bozdağ (Tekden Film)

Date: 10 December 2014 - 29 May 2019

Director: Metin Günay

**Kızılıcık Şerbeti**

Producer: Faruk Turgut (Gold Film)

Date: 28 Ekim 2022-

Director: Hakan Kırvavaç

**Kızıl Goncalar**

Producer: Faruk Turgut (Gold Film)

Date: 18 Aralık 2023.

Director: Ömür Atay, Özgür Sevimli

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