

## **Representation of Women from Two Different Economical Statuses in Çocuklar Duymasın Serial**

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### **Abstract**

Women have been struggling to get equal life standards as men in the last few centuries. Currently, women have the chance to get education and can get leadership positions. Yet, the responsibility of domestic work is still considered as a part of women's duties making the women work both outside to earn their bread and inside to serve their husbands and children. In Turkey, women from higher socio-economical status get aid from lower socio-economic level. Most of these women have very little or no education. While educated women lead rather more comfortable lives, the uneducated women have the burden of working outside and in their own houses.

The present study is based on the Turkish television serial "Don't Let Children Hear" (Çocuklar Duymasın) and explores the contents of the messages given by women from higher and lower socio-economical status.

**Keywords:** Women, Socio-Economical Status, Çocuklar Duymasın, TV Serials.

## **Introduction**

In the last decade, Turkish television serials have gained international popularity and are broadcasted in a variety of countries. TV serials present mediated realities from real life (Türkoğlu, 2012). Women in patriarchal societies mostly take upon jobs that are supplementary. Women are hardly given any administrative positions. Administrators are still mostly men. The serial chosen for the present study takes upon a contemporary look at the modern Turkish society. Within this frame, the present study seeks to explore the women represented in the popular Turkish TV sitcom *Çocuklar Duymasın* (Don't Let Children Hear). According to Thumim (2005), television makes women appear in the public sphere. When they are shown on television, women can reject orders from others or obligations towards in their lives by rejecting ideas and messages of the characters. Women can also challenge the prevailing patriarchal hegemony through the characters; In the '*Çocuklar Duymasın*' serial this is done through female characters such as Meltem, İdil and Gönül.

According to Çaha (2010), there has been positive attitude towards women's nature as well as their social and political roles in Turkish culture. This attitude is defined as a support of equality for women. For Çaha (2010), the modernization project, which has been introduced since 1923 imposes western values for Turkish women. Therefore, in *Çocuklar Duymasın*, Meltem, İdil and Gönül are represented as modern women who have self-esteem and act towards self-realization. These women work professionally and represent themselves freely in public sphere. However, women from lower economical status in the serial, Hatice and Emine work to earn the breads of their families and have different and tougher life standards.

## **Scenario**

*Çocuklar Duymasın* is a sitcom about Turkish families. The scenarist aims at presenting Turkish family's lifestyles, traditions and culture. The scenario revolves around Meltem and Haluk's family in the serial, Western life standards are represented by Meltem and Eastern, rather oriental values are represented by Haluk. Despite their deep love towards each other, the difference in values creates a tension and conflict. Meltem is a very positive woman. She has a positive attitude towards and has good conflict resolution strategies. She faces the problems in her life. She trusts herself when she expresses her own ideas about any topic. Even though she is a workingwoman, she takes care of her children: Duygu and Emre. Duygu

is Meltem's daughter. She has a baby. Thus, she doesn't work to take care of her baby. She acts like Meltem to be an ideal mother for her family. Emre, the son, is a university student. He doesn't want to take any responsibility in his life. Haluk, the father of the family, looks like a strict partner but Meltem politely changes the way that Haluk wants to act according to her wishes. When Meltem and Haluk have problems in their lives; they would like to solve their problems through interactions between them. Meltem and Haluk live next to their neighbors, Idil and Tansel. Idil is the wife of Tansel who is a psychologist. Tansel is a gourmet. He is a very modern man and can speak fluently. Idil is the wife of Tansel who is a psychologist.

Both Idil and Tansel respect each other's ideas when they discuss anything about life. They have two daughters who are Melis and Ece. They are university students. Teo who is the closest friend of Emre organizes the meetings with Ece and Melis. Idil and Tansel are modern family members who let their daughters meet outside with boys. Shortly, their daughters can express themselves freely. Gönül who represents strong dominant women is Meltem's close friend. They always share their problems in their lives to resolve the problems they face. Tuna is Gönül's husband. He is a very passive man who is under the control of his wife. He cannot reject Gönül's wishes even if he doesn't share the same ideas with Gönül. Orçun (with nickname, Cement) is Gönül's son. Tuna is his step-father. He imitates Haluk when he communicates with others. He has a brave heart and he says what he thinks explicitly.

In a nutshell, all these women who are Meltem, Idil, Gönül and Duygu are educated women. They satisfy their needs in their lives. Meltem and Idil have servants in their houses. These servants are Emine and Hatice. They are barely literate-women. They are restricted by their husbands in their social lives. These women give their income to their husbands called Hüseyin and Şükrü. Hüseyin is Emine's husband. He generally uses Emine's money for gambling. Hatice is a very calm woman. She never rejects her husband's impositions. Hatice's husband is Emine's husband's bestfriend.

Women's participation in every public sphere of life creates suitable conditions for women's development (Grygorovyth, 2002). Through the characters of Meltem, İdil and Gönül, the scenarist aims to demonstrate the importance of the empowerment of women's social, economic and political status in modern Turkey. According to Grygorovyth (2002),

women's development is associated with the incorporation of them at all levels of decision-making in modern Turkey. Thus, these characters depict the freedom of speech and confidence in a modern Turkish lifestyle.

Kâhyaoğlu (2013) says that both men and women act through the social roles. They have to take their own responsibilities by accepting the social roles and orders in any society. For instance, men should be strict individuals to be respected by other men. On the other hand, women should be ideal women for their children. Women should also be sexy women to satisfy their husbands' needs and desires. However, their social roles are created by society. These roles should not be accepted as they are given. For example, in *Çocuklar Duymasın*, Meltem, Idil and Gönül represent women who have their self-esteem. Therefore, these women are suitable examples to enlighten women about their own capacity and capability.

On the other hand, the scenarist of *Çocuklar Duymasın* uses the characters from lower economical status such as Emine and Hatice to demonstrate unjust conditions amongst women in Turkey. In other words, there are women in Turkey like Emine and Hatice who do suffer from working hard both in and out of the house and who do not lead the life they deserve. As it has been mentioned earlier, in this particular TV serial, there are ultimately two types of women coming from different socio-economical status: educated ones who work in challenging jobs; and the ones with little or no-education (at the level of basic literacy) who help the educated women in their housework. The present study seeks to explore how the scenarist creates comedy by the misunderstandings of these two types of workingwomen in their jobs, and family lives. To sum up, in the serial, three women, Meltem, Gönül and İdil represent the self-sufficient and well-educated women. On the other hand, Emine works for Meltem and Hatice works for İdil and they help these two professional women with higher socio-economical status with their housework. Emine and Hatice represent women from lower socio-economical status.

In the serial, one of the main characters Meltem is responsible for Human Resource Development manager. This is an administrative job carrying the responsibility of other workers. Gönül also holds a significant position in the same company. Later in the serial, she resigns and becomes the partner of Meltem's husband in a restaurant. Idil is a free lance

psychologist. In the serial, the scenarist creates humor by touching the social levels and difference in understanding social issues. Throughout the serial, these women who are Meltem, İdil and Gönül earn well, are well groomed, and need aid in housework. They live and dress like western women. They spend their time for their jobs and looking after themselves. They have ladies (Hatice and Emine) who help them with housework so they literally do nothing at home. On the other hand, Hatice and Emine wear traditional clothes. They earn money but the money the yearn is taken by their husbands. Since Hatice and Emine do not belong to higher socio-economical status, they cannot develop their skills and abilities in social life. In other words, they cannot fulfill their own potential because they always spend their time for taking care of housework in modern women's houses.

When the environments of these women are compared, it is obvious that Emine and Hatice spend most of their time in their employers' houses. They are only surrounded with social, cultural and economical events that have happened in their work places. They think that the reality that they observe only exist in these houses. However, Meltem and İdil who are having higher socio-economical status can easily analyze the facts and resolve the problems in social life.

Shortly, the two different socio-economical statuses presented in *Çocuklar Duymasın* demonstrate the lives of women from two socio-economical statuses. For example, there is a misunderstanding between Emine and Hatice for İdil and Tansel's marriage status. These ladies misunderstand the speech of this couple while they are talking about getting married again. Emine and Hatice suppose that they would get married for the first time after they have spent 20 years together. Since they are not well educated and their background does not allow them to think comprehensively. This situation not only makes the audience laugh but also makes the audience aware of the social class distinctions in the society. At the same time, the producer of this serial earns money by including this type of funny stories in the scenario.

When the interfamily roles of the women are taken into consideration, the women from higher socio-economical status, such as Meltem, Gönül and İdil exhibit behaviors that are more powerful and confident than the women who are Emine and Hatice. For example, instead of doing housework, Meltem and İdil prefer to work in the office and present themselves as intelligent women. However, Emine and Hatice do housework not only for their employers'

houses but also for their own houses. Thus, these women are prevented from expressing themselves freely in social life due to the lack of economic dependence to modern women who are Meltem and Idil in *Çocuklar Duymasın*.

Through the characters of Emine and Hatice, the scenarist aims to show that there is a population of women who work as a servant in others' houses in Turkey. Emine and Hatice give their income to their husbands, in one way or another. These two women are relatives and they are belonging to lower socio-economical status. They work in the houses of women with higher socio-economical status. They are both married to two men who are mostly unemployed and who are very good friends. In addition, the scenarist creates two different economical statuses to criticize the system of society in Turkey in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it. For example, Hatice and Emine are forced to marry Şükrü and Hüseyin. The characteristics of these men are generally repulsive especially in appearance. Their behaviors are also rude and selfish. This situation shows how patriarchy plays the key role for women who don't have economic freedom in society. Since women are not able to consider themselves equal to men in a patriarchal society, their rights and control over every social fact and lives are violated. In this situation, women are not represented equally in patriarchal families because these families are based on the stable exercise of male domination over women. On the other hand, Meltem and İdil who belong to higher socio-economical status get married to men (Haluk and Tansel), who are handsome educated with different skills and abilities. Thus, it is implied that patriarchal impositions don't work for the women who are independent in Turkish society.

### **Methodology**

For the present study, messages given by five female characters have been collected for 100 episodes from 2013 to 2014. The messages given by these women are divided into two broad categories (Tören and Özad 2015) and then classified under themes.

### **Findings**

It is found that Idil gives 106, Meltem gives 57, and Gönül gives 27 overt messages. This makes a total of 190 direct messages. On the other hand, parallel to their weak roles in the society, Emine gives 13 and Hatice gives 1 direct messages. This makes a total of 14 direct messages. With respect to in-direct messages, Meltem gives 15, Gönül gives 4 and Idil gives

15 in-direct messages. On the other hand, Hatice gives 1 in-direct message whereas Emine does not give any in-direct message (Tören and Özad, 2015).

The messages given by the higher socio-economical status women can be classified under eight themes. These themes are beauty, ageing and health, personal development, occupation, idioms, famous people's sayings, women, men and information giving (Tören and Özad, 2015). Meltem generally prefers to give overt messages to the audience based on beauty, ageing and health. For example, in episode 9, she emphasizes that eating fruit is more beneficial for people instead of drinking fruit juices. In episode 40, Meltem also says that a person cannot easily stop eating if his/her blood sugar falls. The scenarist gives this overt messages through the character of Meltem to raise consciousness of the audience about health and beauty. Meltem also gives information giving messages to the audience. For example, in episode 65, she informs the audience about the European Union (EU). She notices that the capital city of EU is Brussels. On the other hand, Idil who is belonging to higher socio-economical status discusses the overt messages based on personal development and idioms in Turkish Culture. For example, in episode 72, she says that an independent person is an individual who rejects the control of others on his/her life.

In addition to this, in episode 99, Idil suggests that an individual should face his/her own mistakes in order to prevent others from teasing him/her. Idil also uses one of the idioms in episode 80. For Idil, "even in the smallest of matters one neighbor can help another". Through the use of idioms, the scenarist aims to reflect customs and values of Turkish people.

Another character which is Gönül provides overt messages based on women's issues and information giving. For example, in episode 19, Gönül defends that Turkish men never accept disapproval of someone or something. For Gönül, the characteristics of Turkish men depend on patriarchal rules. Thus, they avoid the potential of Turkish women in real life. Gönül also uses covert messages based on famous people's sayings. For example, in episode 6, Gönül uses Einstein's saying "insanity is doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results" in her speech. When the covert messages of Meltem, Idil and Gönül are taken into consideration, their in-direct messages are based on information giving. These in-direct messages are about self-esteem, self-realization, freedom of speech, success, discoveries, cultural interactions, peace, friendship, etc.

The messages given by lower socio-economical status women can be categorized under the title of role of domestic chores on health. The direct messages of Emine and Hatice are not as various as the direct messages of Meltem, Idil and Gönül. Since Emine is so traditional, her direct messages are generally about cooking, cleaning the house, taking care of sick people, looking after a baby, etc. For example, in episode 98, Emine expresses that the chicken soup avoids getting cold in winter. In addition, Hatice's direct and indirect messages are not so much because she is portrayed as a woman who obeys the rules of her husband Çocuklar Duymasın.

### **Conclusion**

In Çocuklar Duymasın, the scenarist aims to provide an ideal life to the audience. Thus, the characters in the sitcom are created to give direct or in-direct messages to the audience. The results confirm that Idil and Meltem are the women who give the most direct and in-direct messages in the sitcom. For instance, Emel Müftüoğlu who plays Idil in this sitcom is a famous pop singer. She is admired by her fans for a long time in Turkey. Since the audience loves Emel Müftüoğlu in real life, the scenarist gives most of the direct and in-direct messages through this character. She sounds with a soft voice and sounds like the sensible sound of society. Thus, this character automatically influences the audience because they are also familiar with this character in their lives. Furthermore, the scenarist creates women characters to show how two different socio-economical statuses lead to variations in social life. Educated workingwomen are strong and do have a word to say. They stand on their own feet. They are confident. Barely-literate women earn their lives but they give all they earn to their husbands. Through the characters of Meltem, Idil and Gönül, the scenarist contends that women with higher socio-economical status not only cope with the problems they face in real life, but also can express freely whatever they want to declare. Women who are well educated are aware of their own potential. Thus, they represent themselves successfully in every sphere of their lives. However, some women are prevented from having opportunities because of the patriarchal system. In this system, men hold the power hence women are not allowed to do things that they like. In addition, women with higher socio-economical status also restrain the development of women with lower socio-economical status.



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