

PRESENTATION OF VIOLENCE IN LOVE THEMED TV SERIES IN TURKEY

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ABSTRACT

Violence is an inseparable part of our lives. Mass media is the public domain in which the violence is widely presented. Among all the mass media mediums which have numerous functions in our daily lives such as informing, entertaining, educating, etc.; television, without a doubt, takes the highest amount of time. In recent years, the number of television series on channels has increased and the fact of violence has been presented in these programs. Here in this research it has been questioned whether physical, psychological and verbal violence are used in love-themed TV series or not; and if yes, it has been questioned who is inflicting violence towards whom. In this context four love-themed TV series which were broadcasted in four Turkish channels with the highest rating record between the years of 2006 and 2010 were studied by using content analysis method in accordance with the violence categories. The data gathered by the analysis has shown that not only the series based on action; but also the series based on human affairs such as family, friendship, love, etc. include violence.

Key Words: TV Series, Violence, Physical Violence, Psychological Violence and Verbal Violence.

1. Literature and Framework

1.1. Violence

Defining “violence” which is the main concept of this research will make it easier to be understood. Etymologically the term “violence” derives from the Latin word “volentia” which means aggressiveness or hard and ruthless personality/power. Latin verb “violare” means to violate, to profane and to break. All these terms are related with “vis” which means power, force, capability and violence. However, when we look into the daily usage of the word violence, we see that it is multidimensional (Polat, 2001: 4).

There are a lot of definitions for the violence. The main reason behind the differences among these definitions is the variety of socio-economic and cultural origins. In fact violence means; rage, murder, torture, beat and effective action, war, pressure, terrorism... Core concept of violence is “power”. Therefore; when people talk about violence, bodily actions come to mind in the first place. However, there are various norms which define power as violence and it is accepted that there are violence types as much as the number of these norms (Yves, 1991: 7-8). It is possible to find interpretations of the violence norm in terms of physiological, anthropological, sociological, psychological, historical, economical and political aspects (Türkdoğan, 1996: 13).

According to the definition in social psychology, violence is a feature of an action made by force with an intense power. Violence includes extreme physical power and all the other behaviors containing

the usage of weapons as well as unbounded aggressiveness manifestations. "All kinds of actions and behaviors performed by one or more than one person which violence one or more than one person physically or psychologically can be considered within the concept of violence." (Bilgin, 2003: 374).

Sociologist Robin Williams defines violence as follows: "The most evident examples of violence contain physically harmful, intentional, active and direct actions." (Sclesinger, Tr: Mehmet Küçük, 1994: 33).

N.Z. Nieburg interprets violence as, "Actions which aim at harming or destroying people or materials." N. D. Graham and Gurr define violence as, "A behavior performed with the aim of causing damage to people or properties" (Yves, Tr: Cem Muratoğlu, 1991: 8).

Turkish Language Association Dictionary makes a similar definition and stated that: "Violence is using force to make people believe or act in cooperation with the people with opposite ideas" (Türk Dil Kurumu Sözlüğü, tdk.org.tr).

The most interesting point is that in all of the definitions, violence is described upon the use of physical power. However, "in a mutual relationship, one of the partners can perform violence against the other partner's bodily functions as well as his moral integrity, his commodity, symbolic and cultural values directly or indirectly" (Polat, 2001, pg.6). Therefore, violence should not be restricted with mere physical force. Apart from the actions of physical violence, it creates fear among individuals and makes them worry in case of disagreement. In society's mind, violence becomes a possible action towards human beings and other living creatures. In consequence of this possibility, people live in fear of being victims. Creating this way of thinking is called "psychological violence". Psychological violence is a form of abuse performed by a person in a more powerful condition than the other person in a lesser position. This involves acts of humiliation, abasement, irrision, insulting, belittlement, swearing and abashing. The aim of using psychological violence is to make the other party become less powerful. Therefore his own power will be certified (Suğur et.al, 2006:158).

There are other types of violence apart from physical and psychological violence an done of them is called "verbal violence". Verbal violence is using humiliating, offending and derisive words to another person; reviling him directly or indirectly, violating his personal rights, destroying his hopes and expectations, making rumors about him and setting obstacles with harsh words. "A teacher's yelling at students, a mother's stern warning and a friend's swearing are some examples of verbal violence. A person can use verbal violence as a warning of any possible physical violence. A statement like "I'll get you down!" is an example of these warnings." (Köknel, 1983:187).

Numerous definitions of violence have been accepted into the literature such as legal-illegal violence, political abuse, open-implied violence, etc. However, within the concept of the research only physical, psychological and verbal violence are used.

1.2. Television and Violence

Development of mass media technologies has made the mass media mediums a part of our daily lives. As a result of this process, the society has become the main target of intense message bombardment (Çakır, 1997:44). The constant change and development of media in the recent years has increased the amount of virtual and real violence messages. Especially developments at electronic media have made it easier to send messages to the audience in a faster and frequent way. On the other hand, the number of the audience that is susceptible to reach these mediums has increased in multiples (Morgan, 1993:391).

In the field of communication, studies based on the presentation of violence mostly focused on the products of audio-visual mediums. Studies about the use of violence in printed media were relatively less in number. Most of the studies about printed media used pornographic materials; women's publishing, newspapers and magazines (Kalaycı, 1993:53). Television has been the most effective and path-breaking medium amongst all of the mass media mediums which have been used all through the history of humanity. Thanks to this device, humans live in a "global village" as McLuhan's expression. Now we can listen and see every part of our planet. Outer world and reality, which are separated in parts by printed media, have become a whole on television. Imperative era created by hot media (publishing, radio, etc.) ended and together with television, a new tribal life has begun (Özkök, 1978: 90-91).

According to Roland Barthes, television has reached the status of "myth". By using the term "myth", Barthes meant that we don't see the things as in their natural context. Myth is a way of thinking stored in the depth of our conscious. Television uses the same method. We don't question the reality of the things we see on TV. We don't realize the perspective behind a TV show. Questions about the effects of television on us have been ignored. Because these questions have become irrelevant like asking the effects of having ears and eyes. Twenty years ago, most of the researchers and social scientists found this question quite interesting: "Does television shape the culture or does it only reflect the culture?" However, as television has become a part of our culture, this question lost its validity. The content of our daily dialogues doesn't contain television. It contains what is being shown on television. We accept the definitions of reality, information and actuality made by television without questioning them. Obliviousness is a positive behavior and incoherency is a wise move for us. As a result, television caused structural changes in our culture and turned it into a perfect stage. Television's presenting entertaining shows is not a problem; but television's presenting every thing as an entertainment is a problem (Balci, 1997:55).

Television channels need exciting events to survive; so violence is one of their staple foods. Television is not a secret power in terms of violence but it is important to preserve and legalize the power of permanent system and settlement. From this point of view, "television is the most simple and dramatic way of reflecting violent acts, showing the rules of power games and consolidating the current social system." Constant acts of violence lose its effect in time; so television uses different types of violence and changes them frequently. Therefore we accept them as a part of daily life and get used to them. People's knowledge of outer world is indirect and inefficient; so violence becomes common in their eyes (Büker, 1999:30).

Studies have been made about the relationship between television and violence in the field of social science since 1950s. The methods used in these studies contain laboratory studies, field researches and interrelation studies. "Studies about the effects of violence presented on television focused on four theories. First one of these theories is called "Purification Theory". Purification Theory introduced by Aristotle puts forward that aggressive instincts can be reduced by unveiling this aggressiveness. So according to this theory, people watch violence on television and gets purified by feeding his instinct through television. On the other hand another theory called "Aggressiveness Theory" claims that violence on television has a negative effect on humans in terms of awakening and quickening their aggressive instincts. As a result, people perform these acts of violence in their daily lives. Another theory supporting the idea that violence in media inciting the violence in real life is called "Reinforced Aggressiveness Theory". According to this theory, an individual whose tendency to violence is high, perceive the violence on television as a new experience that can be performed in real life. "Experimental Learning Theory" claims that television programs containing violence is effective in people's perception of violence. In accordance with this theory which is mostly treatable on children, violence on the visual media is effective in process of learning behaviors and shaping their characters." (Suat, 1996:558).

It is possible to see the elements of violence in different kinds of television programs such as news, advertorials, movies, cartoons, video clips, TV series, etc. For example when TV channel owners realized that they could gain a massive amount of money from the news programs, they changed their perspective and focus of interest. The standards of reporting have been forgotten and horrible images of murders, rapes and other violent acts have become ordinary events of the news. Lots of news programs on television follow this principle: "If there is blood, it works." The news whose focus isn't on any kind of crime can be presented on arguments by emphasizing the differences between the parties involved (Stuber, Tr: Yonca Karakılıç, 1998:44). The aim of this approach is to excite the audience. Because excitement increases the rating of news. The whole world watched the Gulf War (1990) as a war movie thanks to CNN (Rigel, 1996:571).

TV series constitute a major amount of television broadcasts. TV series present a dramatic narration of different events based on same leading characters performing on constant locations. These series are made of episodes which can be defined as short TV movies and they have integrity in itself (Mutlu, 1991:197). There are different types of TV series in accordance with their themes.

Violence can be seen in both violence themed series such as blood revenge stories and in love themed series. However it is interesting that if the good characters of these series use violence against the villains, these acts of abuse are presented as "legitimate" actions. For instance, in one of the series a villainous character performed violence against a hero and this behavior wasn't accepted as legitimate. On the other hand, the good characters of the story acted against the villain without consulting the legal authorities; nevertheless this counter attack was accepted as a legitimate reaction. The same perspective is admissible for the abusive acts of leading characters (Özer, 2005: 127-160). This way of thinking sends the audience a subliminal message which states that violence is acceptable under some conditions. As a result of this approach, the audience becomes desensitized.

TV series about mafia relationships encourage illegal actions with its violent images and both open and implied messages. Also in these kinds of violence based stories smoking, drinking and using stimulant/narcotic drugs are pictured as acceptable habits. Audio-visual messages including abusive acts are sent repetitively and frequently. Thus, in recent years as a result of these messages teenagers in Turkey have started to imitate the characters of TV series and openly declared this truth to printed media after injuring or killing their friends (See Turkish national newspapers dated March 25-26, 2003; Fatih Altaylı, Hürriyet, April 9, 2005). According to Köknel, the youth embrace the behaviors of characters in TV series consciously or unconsciously. They want to share their style, talk and behave like them. Therefore positive role models support raising positive character developments but, villainous characters cause negative effects on the audience (Köknel, 1986: 441).

Violence is not limited with the TV series whose plotline is based on abusive acts. Series whose main theme is related with touching subjects like family, friendship, love, etc. have violent elements. There hasn't been a research and article on this subject in Turkey. Therefore this research on "violence presented in love themed TV series in Turkey" has been prepared. The answers to the question whether physical, psychological and verbal violence are used in love themed TV series have been researched.

2. Method

Here in this research, categories about the types of violence was defined in accordance with the aim of the research. Content analysis of the chosen TV series was made based on the categories of physical, verbal and psychological violence. Categories of violence are stated below;

- Physical Violence: Pushing, slapping, biting, kicking, throwing things, wounding, killing, etc.
- Verbal Violence: Insulting, scolding, yelling, swearing, threatening, etc.
- Psychological Violence: Calling bad names, making fun of, scaring, causing worry, stalking, embarrassing, etc.

The target of the research was comprised of TV series called "Sıla" (Home), "Yabancı Damat" (Foreigner Son-in-Law), "İki Aile" (Two Families) and "Acı Hayat" (Hard Life). These series were chosen because according to October 2006 reports, they had the highest ratings records on the most popular four TV channels in Turkey stated respectively as Kanal D, Atv, Star and Show Tv. The other reason for them to be chosen was the fact that despite their finals between the years of 2006 and 2010, TV channels began the reruns of these series in 2011 during the daytime shows. Sıla is a love story between an urban girl and the son of a chieftain who made a compensation wedding by force but fell in love in time.

Yabancı Damat tells us the story of a Greek guy and a Turkish girl's love in spite of the dispute between their families.

İki Aile is the story of Eda and Oğuz, two widowers with their own children. Eda and Oğuz were defrauded and bought the same house from a confidence man. In the end, they had to live in the same house and fell in love.

Acı Hayat is a story of loving somebody to death. It is the love story of welder Mehmet and manicurist Nermin; both living in the suburbs of İstanbul. They want to get married and live their happily ever after but due to monetary problems, they cannot make their dreams come true.

It was difficult to work on all of the episodes of the series in order to define research samples. Therefore; sectioning method was used to gather the samples. "The data collected by using sectioning is generalizable and it also provides saving of time and cost." (Karasar, 1998:86). The research was carried on by using sectioning method on the four episodes of each series weekly broadcasted between the dates of 13.11.2006 and 11.12.2006.

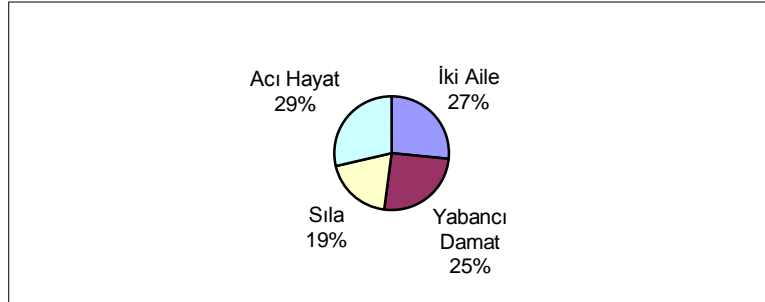
2.1. Questions of the Research

Within the concept of TV series Yabancı Damat, Sıla, İki Aile and Acı Hayat;

- Is there any "physical violence"?
- Is there any "psychological violence"?
- Is there any "verbal violence"?
- If yes, who are the sources of violence and who are exposed to these abusive acts?

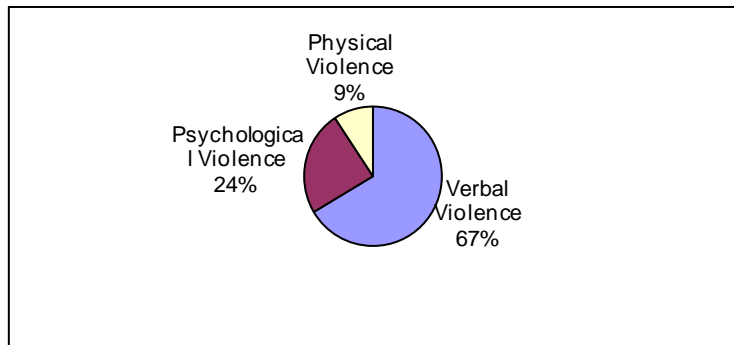
3. The Findings and Evaluations

The content analysis method was used in the four episodes of *Yabancı Damat*, *Sıla*, *İki Aile* and *Acı Hayat* to observe whether any physical, psychological or verbal violence was applied. As a result of these observations it was concluded that all of the types of violence were used in the above mentioned TV series in each episode. The application ratings of violence in these series are shown in the graphic below:

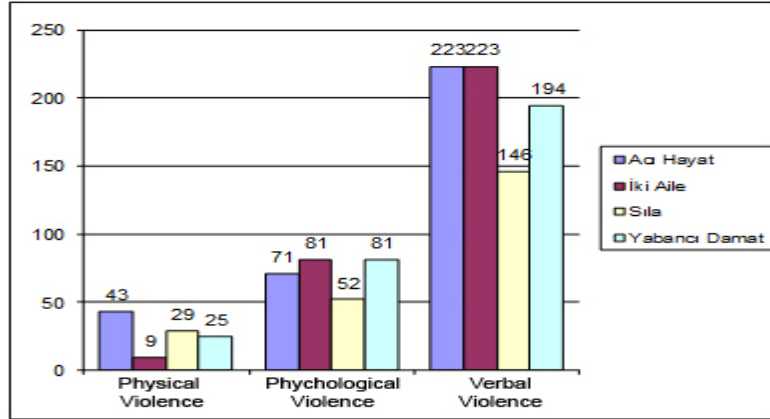


According to these results “Acı Hayat” with the rate of 29% has the highest amount of violence in its context. “İki Aile” is the second with the rate of 27%, “Yabancı Damat” is the third with 25% and “Sıla” is the fourth with 19%.

The data gathered from the four episodes of the series proved that the most applied type of violence in all of the series was verbal violence following respectively by psychological and physical violence. The distribution of types of violence in 16 episodes of the series is shown in the graphic below:



In all of the series 67% of verbal violence, 24% of psychological violence and 9% of physical violence were used in total. When we look at the types of violence in numbers, we see the table below:

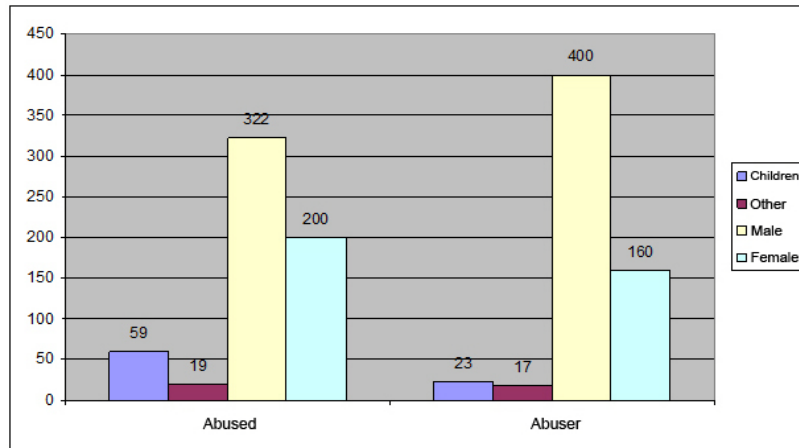


As it is seen from the graphic above, in “Acı Hayat” physical violence was used 43 times, psychological violence was used 71 times and verbal violence was used 223 times. In “İki Aile” the numbers goes respectively as 9, 81 and 223. In “Sıla” the numbers are 29, 52 and 146. Finally in “Yabancı Damat” the usage of types of violence is in the numbers of 25, 81 and 194.

The forms of violence used in the series are listed below:

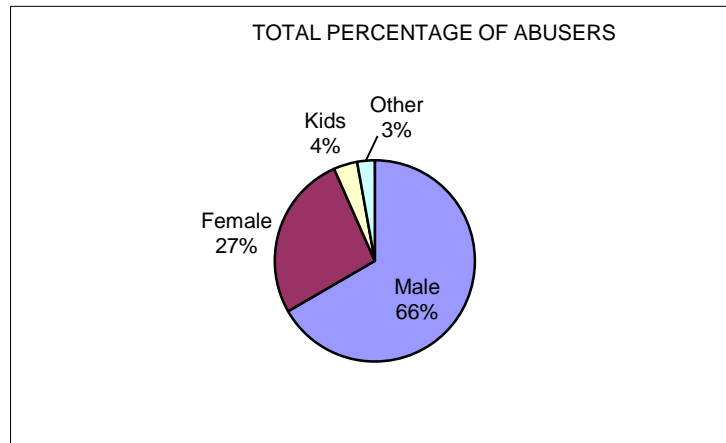
Forms of Violence	%
Yelling	27
Scolding	23
Other	12
Threatening	9
Making people worry	5
Insulting	5
Making fun of somebody	5
Scaring	3
Pushing	2.5
Calling bad names	2
Stalking	1.5
Throwing objects	1.3
Swearing	1.2
Kicking	1
Embarrassing	0.7
Wounding	0.6
Slapping	0.3
Biting	0.1
Killing	0.1
Total	100.0

The general distribution of the parties performing violence and the parties exposed to violence in the series are shown below:

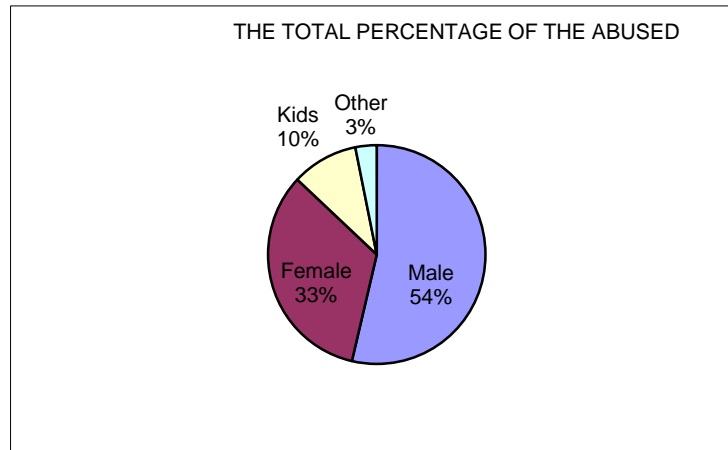


As it is seen in this graphic that 322 of the abusers were male, 200 of them were female, 59 of them were kids and 19 of them were under the category fo other. When we look at the abused parties we see that 400 of them were male, 160 were female, 23 were kids and 17 were under the category of other. Violence was mostly performed by a male to another. It was mostly physical. The second most applied violence was performed by a male to a female. Men mostly applied verbal and psychological violence to women. Females performed abusive acts mostly to other females and kids. They also performed verbal violence against men by a majority. Abusive acts performed by kids were largely towards females and kids. It was observed that kids used verbal and psychological violence. Both men and women applied physical, psychological and verbal violence to kids. The category called as other group consists of bodyguards, men, journalists, women and kids. Here in this group women and kids were exposed to psychological and verbal violence performed by male characters. Journalists were exposed to physical and verbal violence of bodyguards (“Sıla” Episode 9, Journalists who wanted to make interview with Sila and Boran).

The total percentage of abusers in all of the series is shown below:



66% were male, 27% were female, 4% were kids and 3% were the category called other. The percentage of the abused is shown in the following graphic:



54% were male, 33% were female, 10% were kids and 3% were the group called as other. The numbers and percentage defined based on the episodes of all of the four selected TV series and the distributions of percentages are the same in context of each series.

As a result 16 episodes of four selected TV series took 1140 minutes including physical, verbal and psychological violence. When compared by the frequency of usage, types of violence can be rated respectively as verbal, psychological and physical violence. It was determined that males apply violence more and they get exposed to violence more. Then come females, kids and others in terms of causing and subjecting types of violence.

4. Conclusion

Regardless of its reason and aim, violence which is defined as abuse, using abusive acts as a threat and expressing it verbally (threat, profanity, insulting, etc.) is one of the most important problems of our time. The exposure to violence through mass media mediums in real life is non-ignorable.

There have been numerous studies published about the negative effects of violence presented on TV on the mental health of the audience since 1950s. These studies have mostly focused on the relation between TV shows reflecting violence and the offensive attitudes and behaviors of children that have been watching those programs. Even though media includes television, radio, books, magazines, newspapers, movies, video-games, internet and other various channels; television is the most important medium of all thanks to its enormous place in our daily lives and its colorful visuality.

Television has a privileged place among all mediums due to its audio and visual features. Being easy to be watched, television has stood out amongst others and become the most time-consuming mass media medium. Television is an entertainment box which turns every single thing into a theatrical object. It has created a human type living at extreme borders with the visuals reflecting violence and porn. "Life is not a road surrounded by flowers. We see some flowers scattered randomly on our way and they make our journey more bearable. However I'd like to express my concern about television: Television is not only entertaining but also presents every experience in an entertaining context. Watching every theme as humorous programs is a problem on its own. Entertainment is the upper ideology of all the discourses on television. What is being showed or which perspective is being used has no importance in terms of broadcasting. Our entertainment and the pleasure of audience are the most important criteria." (Postman, 1996:100)

Violence has become a “recreational merriment” on television just because of the notion that “it gets high ratings and makes money”. News, movies, TV series, cartoons, entertainment and gossip shows, video clips and most of the other programs have contents including violence. Therefore it becomes an ordinary act.

TV series are an important part of television broadcasts. Series are the dramatic expositions including different plotlines and starring same characters on mostly same locations. Each episode is a short TV play or movie and has integrity in itself (Mutlu, 1991:197). It is expected to see violence themes in TV series based on stories including blood revenge or mafia-authority wars; however, we see the elements of violence and violence in love themed shows.

Here in this research it has been questioned whether physical, psychological and verbal violence have been used in “love themed” TV series and if yes, who performs abusive acts against whom. Focusing on this goal four TV series, broadcasted on top four TV channels according to AB rating scores in October 2006 have been analyzed with content analysis method. These series are “Acı Hayat” on Show TV, “İki Aile” on Star TV, “Yabancı Damat” on Kanal D and “Sıla” on Atv. It has been confirmed that physical, psychological and verbal violence have been used on these series based on love, family and friendship themes.

Based on the analysis carried on four episodes of these series, it has been determined that 1277 abusive elements were used in 1145 minutes. The distribution of abusive acts was as follows: 67% of them were verbal, 24% of them were psychological and 9% of them were physical violence (see Part 4.5).

According to the distribution of usage of violence in these series “Acı Hayat” had the highest rate with 29%, “İki Aile” was the second by 27%, “Yabancı Damat” was the third by 25% and “Sıla” was the fourth by 19%. The most used type of violence in all of these series was verbal violence followed respectively by psychological and physical violence.

One of the most important findings of this research showed that the scenes presenting a character pulling out a gun (psychological violence) and shooting another character (physical violence) took place in each series. Using weapons and carrying guns were turned into ordinary acts. Also there wasn't any legal sanction after these shooting scenes and there wasn't any police officer investigating these events. These images reflected on TV series cause certain changes in our social norms. Carrying guns, bodily harms, fighting and other abusive acts have become normal behaviors and have been accepted by the audience.

Amongst the TV series, “Acı Hayat” had the highest rate of abusive acts. Kicking, bodily harms with weapons, punching, knocking, pushing, choking, head butting were mostly used types of violence. The theme of the show was based on two young people that were in love with each other but couldn't come together. Different types of violence were used in this show. Verbal and psychological violence were frequently used. Profanities, threats, scaring, stalking, scolding, yelling, staring, etc. were mostly performed by male towards both male and female characters. Even the screen credits of the show included violence.

“Yabancı Damat” and “İki Aile” had intense usage of violence which was an interesting finding in terms of the research. In both of these series verbal violence was mostly used. Also pulling out a gun and bodily harms with shooting were among physical violence. The reason for using violence in these family themed series was entertaining the audience with abusive acts. Competition between the characters was presented as yelling and bickering which were considered as comic elements. For instance in “Yabancı Damat”, one of the main characters called “Kahraman” always insulted and scolded his son-in-love Ruşen. After a while the situation of Ruşen had become a comic part of the show. Another example was from “İki Aile”. In this show Mrs.Eda and Mr.Oğuz were always in an

argument. However these two characters were attracted to each other; so their gestures and facial expressions during these arguments turned verbal violence into a form of entertainment. In these TV series abusive acts were used to transform their miserable situations into more funny and enjoyable scenes.

In “Sıla”, in addition to verbal, physical and psychological violence, sexual violence was used. The leading male character Boran, forced leading female character Sıla into a relationship and this relationship ended with an unwanted sexual intercourse.

In most of the TV series we watch as a family, elements of violence are presented both openly and stealthily. The characters use violence as the only solution of the current problem. In most of the scenes aggressiveness are being awarded and seen as the natural outcome of power. The abusive characters are portrayed as kindhearted and caring people that have a right to perform those acts.

It was determined that male characters were both the most abusers and the most exposed parties. 66% of the performers of abusive acts were male; whereas 54% of the victims of violence were male as well. Following the male characters came respectively female, kids and other (group) categories. Whenever the leading character found himself as a victim of injustice, he/she performed abusive acts as a solution and this situation was narrated as if it was his only alternative to overcome the problem. In the end the good always win which makes using abusive acts is right for the good characters. The audience accepts these behaviors as normal ways of dealing with problems.

The leading female characters (such as Sıla in “Sıla”, Nazlı in “Yabancı Damat”, Eda in “İki Aile” and Nermin in “Acı Hayat”) were independent, ambitious and stubborn; leading male characters (such as Boran in “Sıla”, Niko in “Yabancı Damat”, Oğuz in “İki Aile” and Mehmet in “Acı Hayat”) were portrayed as macho men even though they were weak in nature. Some women were presented as weak, passive and waiting to be rescued whose main aim was to win a man’s heart (such as Feride and Eleni in “Yabancı Damat” and Narin in “Sıla”). Some men were shaped as offensive, competitive, powerful and always demanding service (such as Kahraman in “Yabancı Damat” and Azad in “Sıla”). The characters which supported traditional values were portrayed as uneducated (such as Ruşen in “Yabancı Damat” and Azad and Boran in “Sıla”) while educated and charismatic characters supported Western values (such as Niko in “Yabancı Damat” and Oğuz in “İki Aile”). The common trait of these characters was their abusive acts to solve their problems.

In TV series both men and women make decisions with their emotions, passions and ambitions instead of reason and conscience. Therefore they take risks for their ambitions and emotions. As a result of these behaviors, violence becomes a natural and legitimate reaction.

As a result violence is not only used in TV series whose themes are based on violent acts but also in “love themed” TV series. Violence takes place as problem solving method as well as an entertaining part of stories. Illegal acts such as using guns become legitimate and turn into ordinary events of our lives. The audience accepts violence and become desensitized to violent and abusive acts. Thus; abusive acts and behaviors are encoded in the minds of audience and they instinctively perform offensive reactions in case of a problem.

In order to raise individuals with strong characters with a good mental health, social norm and values should be stable and social role models should perform conventional behaviors. Visual media has an important role to create these social conditions. Considering the broadcasting ethics, all of the negative effects should be eliminated. All of the members of media including media company owners, producer and directors should discharge their responsibilities.

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