

## Gender Norms and Popular Culture: Feminism and Masculinity Perceptions in Türkiye

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### INTRODUCTION & AIM

Gender norms are socially constructed expectations that shape identities, behaviors, and power relations in society. Popular culture plays an important role in both reflecting and reproducing these norms through media representations.

In Türkiye, television series and social media are major cultural spaces where femininity, masculinity, and feminist ideas are represented and debated. Turkish TV dramas strongly influence public perceptions of gender roles, while social media platforms provide spaces for feminist activism and criticism of patriarchal structures.

Although feminist movements increasingly challenge traditional gender expectations, mainstream media often continues to reinforce stereotypical roles. Women are frequently portrayed within domestic and sacrificial roles, whereas men are associated with authority, emotional restraint, and dominance.

This study examines how feminism and masculinity are represented in Turkish popular culture and how these representations influence societal perceptions of gender.

#### Aim of the Study

This research aims to:

- Analyze representations of femininity and masculinity in Turkish media,
- Examine how feminist discourse challenges patriarchal norms,
- Explore the role of social media in promoting feminist awareness and diverse female identities,
- Understand the impact of popular culture on gender perceptions in Türkiye.

### METHOD

#### Research Design

This study uses a qualitative research approach to examine gender representations in Turkish popular culture. Two methods were applied:

- Content Analysis
- Thematic Analysis

These methods helped identify recurring themes related to feminism, masculinity, and power relations.

#### Data Sources

##### TV Series (2019–2024)

The study analyzed selected episodes from:

- Masumlar Apartmanı*
- Kırmızı Oda*
- Camdaki Kız*

More than 20 episodes with gender-focused storylines were examined, including themes such as:

- domestic violence,
- female empowerment,
- emotional vulnerability,
- masculine authority.

#### Social Media

More than 50 posts from feminist accounts were analyzed:

- @feministtarih
- @kadinkultur

Platforms:

- Instagram
- X

The posts were selected to examine feminist discourse and alternative female representations in digital media.

#### Coding Themes

The analysis focused on:

- Feminism and resistance,
- Masculinity norms,
- Patriarchy and power relations,
- Female agency vs. subjugation.

All data were coded and analyzed using **NVivo** software.

### RESULTS & DISCUSSION

#### Female Representations

The analysis revealed two contrasting portrayals of women in Turkish popular culture. Some female characters were represented as empowered individuals who resisted patriarchal control and gained greater autonomy. These portrayals reflected feminist awareness and personal independence, particularly in *Camdaki Kız*.

However, many representations still reinforced traditional gender roles. Women were often portrayed as self-sacrificing mothers, emotionally dependent figures, and caretakers responsible for family unity. This pattern was especially visible in *Masumlar Apartmanı*.

#### Masculinity Representations

Masculinity was largely associated with:

- authority,
- dominance,
- emotional restraint,
- provider roles.

Male characters often avoided emotional vulnerability even during crises, reinforcing traditional masculine expectations. In *Kırmızı Oda*, male figures reflected rigid and patriarchal forms of masculinity.

#### Role of Social Media

Social media platforms provided space for feminist critique and alternative female representations. Feminist accounts promoted:

- gender equality,
- activism,
- diverse female identities.

Despite this, mainstream television continued to reproduce hegemonic masculinity and traditional gender hierarchies.

### CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that popular culture in Türkiye is shaped by both feminist transformation and traditional gender norms. Television series and social media platforms simultaneously challenge and reproduce dominant ideas about femininity and masculinity.

#### Key Findings

- Feminist discourse increasingly questions patriarchal values and traditional masculine expectations.
- Social media creates spaces for feminist activism, diverse female identities, and discussions on gender equality.
- Television narratives still largely reinforce traditional masculinity, emotional restraint, and patriarchal family roles.
- Female representations have become more diverse, yet stereotypical portrayals remain highly visible.

Overall, the findings highlight the significant role of media in shaping public perceptions of gender and influencing cultural debates in contemporary Turkish society.

### FUTURE WORK / REFERENCES

#### Future Work

Future research may expand this study by:

- Comparing gender representations in streaming platforms and traditional television,
- Examining audience reception and viewer interpretations of gender portrayals,
- Exploring masculinity perceptions among younger generations,
- Investigating the influence of digital activism on media production,
- Analyzing gender representations across different cultural and social groups in Türkiye.

Such studies could provide a deeper understanding of the relationship between media, identity, and social change

#### References

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