Chapter 6
Gender Representations in Cartoons: Niloya and Biz Ikimiz

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ABSTRACT

The concept of gender refers to the roles, learned behaviors and expectations determined by the society for women and men, apart from the biological differences between women and men. These expectations differ from society to society and even within different sections of the same society; based on such distinctions as rural/urban, class and ethnicity, etc., they may vary depending on the distinctions. It is important how these roles are offered in terms of shaping the children’s views on gender roles at very young ages. The aim of this study is to analyze the cartoons within the frame of rural and urban life in terms of gender representations. In this study, 30 episodes of cartoons were analyzed by using the content analysis technique. The study strives to reveal how male and female characters are represented within the context of gender. The findings have shown that despite the existence of egalitarian representations in terms of gender, the contents emphasizing inequality are more dominant.

INTRODUCTION

The difference between men and women has been presented as a contradiction since the early ages. This contradiction has been reproduced and brought to the present through myths and stereotypes. The presentation of the difference between women and men in the form of a contradiction is important in the sense that an unequal structure in favor of the men has been brought to the present in social life.

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The gender roles and the resulting division of labor within this unequal structure determined the place and limitations of women and men in society. In this process, discrimination based on gender served the reproduction of stereotypes about women and men. While women were considered belonging to home, in other words, the private space; men were considered belonging to outside the home, that is, the public space (Becerikli, 2005, 978).

In industrialized societies, it might be thought at first glance that this picture has changed and both genders share the roles inside and outside the home in a more equal manner due to changes in the family structure and the fact that women begin to take more part in the work life. However, studies show that this is not the case, and that the role of businesswoman is added to women’s role of a housewife as a new role (Bora, 2011). Although the spread of the core family structure in the urban life contrary to rural life, as well as the working conditions bring into question the men’s undertaking a more active role in the house, the house responsibility again seems to be falling to women.

Gender refers to the definitions of femininity and masculinity that the society wants to see. The individual basic characteristics of women or men are expected to be in line with the norms of society. Social institutions and practices become important in the creation and maintenance of such harmony. While social institutions such as family, friends and school convey the roles of masculinity and femininity they want to see to individuals, they also provide the continuity of this information among generations.

The media, which has an important place in our daily life, is as important as the family, school and friends in terms of shaping the individuals’ perceptions of gender. The media contents and the representations in these contents provide clues to social life and culture. In media, the ways in which gender roles are presented play an important role in shaping the perceptions of children about gender roles.

As with other media content, the cartoons also encompass many codes regarding social life. As cartoon viewers, children tend to directly accept the contents that are offered, because they have not reached the cognitive level through which they can critically read and interpret media (Keloğlu İşler, 2014, 68). The individuals’ perceptions of gender start to form at early ages and continue to take shape throughout their lives, which makes the role of media more understandable in terms of providing children with egalitarian perspectives as from childhood. In this respect, the main problem of this research is that the sex roles in cartoons are presented mostly on the basis of gender inequality. The aim of this study is to analyze the cartoons “Niloya” and “Biz İkimiz” within the frame of rural and urban life in terms of gender representations.
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