



THE INFLUENCE OF MEDIA ON MORAL VALUES: EXAMINATION OF THE SERIES NAMED UFAK TEFEK CINAYETLER THROUGH COMMENTS OF EKŞİ SOZLUK

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Abstract

This study aims to show how morale values are directed and reproduced through media tools. For this purpose, a series of "Ufak Tefek Cinayetler" broadcasted on prime time on a national television has been considered, and the approaches of the users of the Ekşi Sözlük have been examined against the two cases of cheating which on that series. The importance of research is the ability to reveal the changes in the moral perception that the media creates in individuals. Accordingly, important communication and interaction tools such as the media can change the universal values of the individuals, soften it and facilitate the adoption of other aspects. The aim of this study is not to judge the moral conception of the fictional characters but to put forward how the audience is guided by the media and how to reproduce the moral values in the desired way by the media. Because the media is not only producer moral values but also many vital institutions such as democracy, government forms, public opinion and so that the importance of the power of the media and the importance of interaction between the media and the audience is hidden at this point.

Keywords: Media, Moral Values, Ekşi Sözlük.

1. Moral Values and Media

Media is the fourth power of democracy apart from the legislative, executive and judicial powers (Türk, 2013: 55). In fulfilling such an important task, democratic countries also take the responsibility of supervising the power on behalf of the people and of ensuring that these authorities are accountable. Furthermore, except for these contributions to the democracy the media have the power to support the powers and manipulate the people. The leading power of the media is hidden in the public opinion which it creates and transforms. As a determining element of political life, public opinion is composed of crystallized ideas generated in the public which was deemed worthy of the free space by Habermas and titled as the supremacy scene by Arendt. Especially newspapers for Tarde and Habermas (Habermas, 2012b: 100; Clark, 1969; Katz, 2006) and the media in general is what uniting those who think of these ideas and what communicates these crystallized ideas to the authorities. At this respect, the power of which the media holds the reins reserves the right to transform the audience and determine what to think. The audience, which is considered inactive before Katz's approach of "Uses and Gratifications" is now in a position to interact and produce, and the concepts and contexts in which the media interacts are still about what is produced and presented to itself. Therefore, firstly determining what we should think and discuss, the media then whispers us how we should think and what outcomes we will acquire. These whispers include economic and political elements, along with the moral systems and virtue perceptions as a consequence of cultural changes and global interactions.

"The word moral has passed from French to Turkish ... refers to the decency in Turkish and it has an Arabic origin. Morality is the plural of the hulk which means habit and character"(Turan, 2015: 654). During the historical process when the moral values are accepted as a norm, it has been observed that these values refer to compatibility to the Ideas for Plato, to the transcendence for Sokrates, to the most appropriate way in the pursuit of happiness for Aristoteles and that moral philosophy evolved based on the mental development of the individual.

"According to Socrates, St. Augustine, Montaigne, who give priority to conscience in the definition of morality, it is an inseparable part of the conscience staying on its own. Jean Jacques Rousseau has argued that the conscience is an incomprehensible judge in the face of good and evil. According to Aristotle, 'only a right person could know what is right'. The subject of morality is to make man virtuous. Mind is a guide of morality... According to Descartes, it would be sufficient to think right to reject the feeling of taking the possession of someone else; and to offer a hand to someone else in a difficult situation" (Beard and Bookshop, 2009: 33-34).

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The sense of morality is shaped by the struggle of the individual, who is a social entity wishing to form a society and to realize the demands to be free and happy at the same time. The rules minimizing the conflict between individual morality and social ethics are the ones that make the civilized life permanent (Çiftçi, 2003: 47), depending on the understanding of "moral consciousness and moral behaviour would develop in the process of mutual interaction between the individual and the society".

At the very core of moral philosophy, there are approaches denying the existence of ethics and examining on what justifications a moral behaviour is generated (Özturan, 2015: 2). Accordingly, the subjects such as the origin and universality of the morality create the theoretical morals; and topics such as working ethics, professional ethics, create the practical morality. Theoretical morality is divided into categories such as descriptive (root and development of morality), normative (good and ideal morality understanding) and meta-moral (philosophy of moral philosophy, eg questioning of concept of good etc.) based on the way of examining the events (Özturan, 2015: 5).

2. On the Power of the Media

Media has gained dominance in post-industrial societies in cultural fields and accordingly, the focus of communication researches in recent years has evolved as "media effects" (Meder ve Çeğin, 2004: 103). One of the reasons behind this orientation is the power of the media, which regenerates social structures and shapes the masses that follow. The media creates a lifestyle and discourse, and these discourses lead to sovereignty arising from certain power relations. While the role of the active audience develops both as a result of the social media and the subject-based understanding of social change, it is not possible that the subject can escape completely from the sovereign discourses produced in the social media, a kind of public space. "Therefore... groups of power can control the various forms of distribution of media-related discourse and condition the manners of influence of public text and speech" (Meder and Çeğin, 2004: 103). Given the position of social media that motivates and directs new social movements, it becomes clear that the interaction of the relatively liberated subject with the media tools has eventually changed and evolved.

"I believe it's important to go out there and talk on the TV, but under some circumstances. Today I'm benefiting from the extraordinary conditions of the College de France's audio-visual department: firstly my time is not limited, secondly the position of speech is not imposed on me, but I could freely choose and even change it, and thirdly there is no one to adjust me in the name of technique, the spectators who would not understand me or morality etc., as in ordinary publications. It's totally a unique case, because I have an unusual mastery of the means of production to put it in an obsolete way. Pointing that the conditions that have been presented to me are completely unusual, I actually say something on the ordinary condition when spoken on television"(Bourdieu, 1997: 18).

Bourdieu describes the preliminary preparations and conditions under which the opinions and thoughts put forward on television are presented in his work "On Television", and reveals the discursive side of this presentation that serves certain purposes and bears a meaning in every statement. No one declares ideas on any subject, and certain subjects are processed in certain forms.

If we are to look at the example of Turkey, it has been observed that the first trial broadcast started in 1952; The Turkish spectators watched daily average of 3.9 hours of television and consequently the share of total media investment in television advertising in Turkey, which is much higher compared to Western countries, and TV series were found to be the most watched television programs (<https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/Deloitte/tr/Documents/technology-media-telecommunications/tr-media-tv-report.pdf>). There are many studies examining the effects of the lifestyles and modes of understanding presented television series on the spectators (Büyükbaykal, 2007; Yapıcı,2006; Karacoşkun, 2002;Kaya,2012;Genel,2014;Arslan,2004).

3. Purpose, Importance and Method of Research

a. Purpose and Importance

This study aims to determine whether there is relativity in moral values, and if so under what conditions this change could realize. To do this, a series of "Ufak Tefek Cinayetler" broadcasted on prime time on a national television has been considered, and the approaches of the users of the Ekşi Sözlük have been examined against the two cases of cheating events which on that series.

The importance of research is the ability to reveal the changes in the moral perception that the media creates in individuals. Accordingly, important communication and interaction tools such as the media can change the universal values of the individual, soften it and facilitate the adoption of other aspects. As seen in the example examined in this study, deception is eased by the appreciation and endearing of the cheating



man by supporting the idea with elements such as being romantic, charismatic and rich. As explained in more detail in the results of the study, the most basic universal values are interpreted based on how those values are presented and by whom they are violated. This, in turn, raises the conclusion that all kinds of moral values have become relative by the media removing the universality.

b. Method, Scope and Limitations

Content analysis is the process of decomposing, classifying, comparing and interpreting the texts in a particular order. The data obtained in this qualitative research method are evaluated based on the templates prepared. While the frequency of use of positive and negative expressions by thematic analysis is shown in Figure 1; frequencies and analysed expressions are showed in Figure 2. Van Dijk's discourse analysis, which is appropriate for the media contents, was chosen as the main point of view in the micro-structure analysis based on the selection of thematic analysis and words.

"Ekşi Sözlük operating at the link of [www. eksisozluk.com](http://www.eksisozluk.com) -sozluk.sourtimes.org- since February 1999; can be defined as an interactive platform and database containing knowledge, experience, observation, joke, comment, questionnaire, link and source related to words, terms, concepts and persons. This webpage which is amongst the most followed web sites in Turkey and plays an important role in the formation of cyber culture, is drawing attention as a successful and pioneering Internet formation. Ekşi Sözlük which is a virtual formation that mediates the questioning of the patterns of what the moral is and processes it on the basis of the spontaneous order, can be studied in the context of postmodern electronic culture because it defines a form of communication specific to the contemporary world" (Gürel ve Yakın, 2007: 203).

In this study Ekşi Sözlük is preferred since there is no text restriction in written comments, it is possible to share instantly, to support expressions by adding visual imaginary links, and it is accessible for everyone. In addition, this platform where Wikipedia-like participants can produce content, is one of the most free examples of virtual public space.

The first deception case examined resulted in a divorce of the couple "Mehmet" and "Arzu" in the series and examined the 198 entries that were taken into account in the interpretation of the divorce (ninth episode) of the couple. The second deception characteristic or the deception attempt is the relationship of "Serhan" who is married and "Oya" who is a single doctor, which the series presents supporting with romantic elements, and 206 entries related to the episode which these two show their interests to one another the most (the seventh episode) were examined. While excluding comments on the topics and characters other than the related couples examined for content analysis in the research, slang expressions related to characters were not included, as well. Apart from these limitations, the Ekşi Sözlük is a public platform that is open to everyone and serves as the public domain of social media. The reason behind the selection of this area to examine moral values is to include both personal and academic knowledge-based evaluations and interpretations in a complete honest area without any character and text restrictions.

4. Evaluation of Findings

Figure 1. Thematic analysis

Case Study		Expressions Based on Physical Qualifications		Expressions Based on Characteristics	
		Positive	Negative	Positive	Negative
Case Study 1	Male Spouse (Mehmet)	0	7	1	15
	Female wife (Arzu)	3	0	13	13
	Other Female Character (Burcu)	1	2	0	12
Case Study 2	Male Spouse (Serhan)	17	0	17	3
	Female spouse(Merve)	3	0	6	11
	Other Female Character (Oya)	1	3	7	4
TOTAL		25	12	44	58

The first case to be investigated is the divorce case, resulting in divorce of the couple who stars in the show. The other female character is a sports teacher who has reached a sincerity allowing her to come home, randomly, of the friends of the deceived spouse. The 198 entries based on the interpretations made on this divorce of the couple (the ninth episode), were examined and the characteristics of the related character were analysed as follows.



Figure 2. Case Study 1

Case Study 1: Examination of interpretations made on the cheating case one: it ended up with divorce because of the other female character				
		Expressions	Frequency	%
Male Spouse	Positive	A typical man	1	1,49
	Negative	Slang expressions	9	13,41
Easy pickings		1	1,49	
Not to be able to see to be deceived		2	2,98	
Negative statements towards his physical qualities		4	5,96	
The mirror of middle aged		1	1,49	
Necklace		2	2,98	
Expressions claiming there should be more regret		3	4,47	
Female Spouse	Positive	Beginning to work (expressions regarding the appreciation of economic independence)	2	2,98
		Dressing style (minimalist, natural etc.)	3	4,47
		Motherly characteristics (self-sacrificing)	4	5,96
		Doing housework on her own	2	2,98
		Expressions supporting the potential love relationships at work	5	7,45
	Negative	Not claiming an alimony	2	2,98
		Not to be able to recognize her spouse	1	1,49
		Feeling low	1	1,49
		Low self-confidence	2	2,98
		Pure	4	5,96
The Other Female Character	Positive	Positive statements on the physical characteristics	1	1,49
	Negative	Evil	1	1,49
		Rich man-eater	1	1,49
		Repellent	1	1,49
		Ugly	1	1,49
		Commons	1	1,49
		Slang expressions	9	13,41
		TOTAL	67	100

Based on the data above and the comments examined, it has been observed that no one supports the male character, no one approves the deception and everybody considers the other female character as a homewrecker. Accordingly, a common attitude has been adapted in this case, the deceiving spouse has been condemned, the mother role of the woman left behind has been put forward, and her work life and new relationship has been supported. It is also often emphasized that the cheating spouse would regret in the coming episodes and the woman for whom he left his wife is a man-eater.

At this point, it should be noted that whatever the deceived woman's economic and social position, she has support from social media -Ekşi Sözlük- as an example of a virtual society. Deception is not seen as an excuse for any reason. The expressions used for the characters integrated with the roles of the fiction and the performers and the physical qualities of them so that the roles are criticized in a way both physical and qualitative features.

Figure 3. Case Study 2

Case Study 2: Examination of interpretations made on the cheating case two: it may be end up with divorce because of the other female character (it is a relationship in the beginning)				
		Expressions	Frequency	%
Male Spouse	Positive	Expressions showing admiration (tone of voice, gaze etc.)	13	17,94
		Expressions about physical characteristics	4	5,52
		Rich	1	1,38
		Sensitive	1	1,38
		Gentleman	3	4,14
		Singing in French	2	2,76
		Admiration statements about the drunk scene	10	13,8
	Negative	Repellent	2	2,76
		Selfish	1	1,38
Female Spouse	Positive	Self-confident	2	2,76
		Lucky	1	1,38



		Leader	1	1,38
		Attractive	2	2,76
		Loveable	1	1,38
		Planned	1	1,38
		Pretty	1	1,38
	Negative	Jealous	1	1,38
		Evilness	1	1,38
		Manipulator	1	1,38
		Bad	2	2,76
		Heartless	1	1,38
		Schemer	2	2,76
		Annoying	2	2,76
		Fake	1	1,38
		The Other Female Character	Positive	The career woman
Sensitive	1			1,38
Charismatic	1			1,38
Elite	1			1,38
Angelic	2			2,76
Victim	1			1,38
Negative	Emotional		1	1,38
	Uninspiring		1	1,38
	Dull		2	2,76
	Repellent		1	1,38
	Boring		1	1,38
	Unresponsive		1	1,38
	Control freak		1	1,38
	TOTAL		72	100

Based on the data above and interpretations examined in the entries, it has been observed that this deception was not criticized as the previous one. On the contrary, the romantic scenes of the deceiving husband and the other female character were appreciated, it has been demanded to include more of these scenes, and the timid attitude of the other female character was criticized. There are several reasons for this different approach. These are the physical qualities of the cheating male character, the fair pursuit for love created by the unloved child, the negative qualities of his wife, the lack of communication between him and his wife and the case between his wife and the other female character. (This case is about a trauma the other female character had since there was a claim of the wife and her friends about her in the high school years and as a result, the other woman attempted to commit suicide and damage in a way that she would not be able to get pregnant again.) Depending on what happened in the past, the feeling of revenge that the other woman gained is presented as another element that justifies this relationship. There are also entries among the examined ones where these different attitudes against the same deception are criticized. But ultimately the social positions, physical qualities and character traits of the people influence the attitudes towards deception. There are also a few entries where this attitude is criticized in the *Ekşi Sözlük*, but generally the interpretations made about this case are seemed affect by the exhibition of the roles as a result integrates with the physical qualities of the performers.

Conclusion

The media has a power that can easily affect all our lives. The time spent on social media, on television, on smartphones has become more and more than the time spent when people communicate directly with each other. Every social situation presented in the media includes specific messages and referrals. These guidance create various influences on society, whether consciously pursuing ideological or political goals or not consciously but as the necessities of commercial concerns. For example, people who watching the television show "Yemekteyiz" (the Turkey version of "Dine With Me") may learn something about food presentations or people who following the Instagram page "Yeni Gelin Evleri" thinking about decorating the their house like them and this influence is inevitable. So the media whispers us indirectly and politely what we should think about. The subsequent cognitive process may give different results depending on the cultural and social structure of the individual, but it is necessary to consider that these cultural and social structures are reproduced exactly by the same media.

The aim of this study is not to question if the characters of a fiction-based series is appropriate for the universal morality. On the contrary, it is to express the consequences of the interaction of the media, which can easily reach audiences, with the spectators. The power of the media is so great that deception might be legitimized, polygamy could be found sympathetic, crimes might be blessed, weapons become



mercy, justice becomes a matter created by a few street gangs, and beyond all of this, and the reproduction would make the individual accustomed to the values presented. Even if being accustomed is not the same with the adoption, it is an important beginning. Firstly we will hear, then and within a certain time we will get used to and make it usual, and finally we accept. Values are shaped and changed by the representations presented to the individual over time. The awareness is in a minimum level as it is carried out within a simulation, and it can be seen that individuals who live with a minimum wage and take two vehicles to get up to go to work speak more about the troubles of those who live in million dollar houses and ride in luxury cars rather than their own reality. The actual simulation is that the individual who has moved away from his own reality is busy and satisfied with other lives.

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