

REPRESENTATION OF GENDER IN TURKISH LULLABIES

TÜRK NİNNİLERİNDE TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYETİN TEMSİLİ

Assistant Professor. Gökçen KARA

Haliç University, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of American Culture and Literature, İstanbul/Turkey
ORCID ID: 0000-0002-6048-3644

Cite As Kara, G. (2021). "Representation Of Gender In Turkish Lullabies", International Academic Social Resources Journal, (e-ISSN: 2636-7637), Vol:6, Issue:26, pp:1059-1064

ABSTRACT

From the earlier times of history to the modern ages the culture and so the language always became masculine. Indeed, language that does not address women can be considered as a primarily masculine language. The man sees, perceives, and expresses the world through his own discourse and beliefs. In language he accepts himself as the norm, and in so doing, defines and perceives the woman as the "other"; accordingly, language is not innocent and neutral, but rather a tool well equipped with social roles for the individuals to acquire personality traits and behaviors that are appropriate to their genders. Stereotypes have been developed to express the role of women in society, as 'language' suppresses and subordinates women in the male-dominated masculine culture. These expressions are common, especially in oral folk literature such as proverbs and lullabies. Lullabies are one of the anonymous folk poetry genres, which are traditionally sung by women. They are influenced by the socio-cultural events of society and reveal a woman's thought process. In this regard, women and lullabies are influenced by each other. While lullabies express the sexist point of view in a society, they also reproduce the gender roles attributed to women by influencing the society's thought system. This study aims to examine the gender roles taught to girls from an early age through the language used in lullabies.

Key words: lullabies, gender, perception of women

ÖZET

Tarihin erken dönemlerinden modern çağlara kadar kültür ve dolayısıyla dil her zaman erkeksi hale gelmiştir. Nitekim kadınlara hitap etmeyen dil, öncelikle erkeksi bir dil olarak düşünülebilir. İnsan, dünyayı kendi söylem ve inançları ile görür, algılar ve ifade eder. Erkek, dilde kendini norm olarak kabul eder ve bunu yaparken kadını "öteki" olarak algılar ve onu bu doğrultuda tanımlar; buna göre dil masum ve tarafsız değil, daha çok bireylerin cinsiyetlerine uygun kişilik özellikleri ve davranışları kazanmaları için sosyal rollerle donatılmış bir araçtır. Erkek egemen eril kültür içerisinde 'dil' kadını baskılayıp ikincilleştirdiği için toplumda kadının rolünü ifade etmek için basmakalıp ifadeler geliştirilmiştir. Bu ifadeler özellikle de atasözleri ve ninniler gibi sözlü halk edebiyatında sıkça görülmektedir. Ninniler, geleneksel olarak kadınlar tarafından söylenen anonim halk şiiri türlerinden biridir. Toplumun sosyo-kültürel olaylarından etkilenirler ve bir kadının düşünce sürecini ortaya çıkarırlar. Bu bakımdan kadın ve ninniler birbirinden etkilenmektedir. Ninniler bir taraftan bir toplumdaki cinsiyetçi bakış açısını ifade ederken aynı zamanda da toplumun düşünce sistemini etkileyerek kadına atfedilen toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini yeniden üretir. Bu çalışma küçük yaşlardan itibaren kız çocuklarına öğretilen toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini ninnilerde kullanılan dil üzerinden incelemeyi hedeflemektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ninniler, toplumsal cinsiyet, kadın algısı

1. INTRODUCTION

In society, women have traditionally been oppressed in many ways and regarded as secondary. This secondary position has been strengthened by means of mostly male dominated tools such as television, press and literature. All these tools enforce the woman's secondary position by language intertwined with thought, which is a reflection of the experiences and perceptions of society. When we consider that it reflects existing reality and contributes to the creation of reality, language is a tool of ideology that will never be underestimated. It can be said that male-dominant ideology controls thought with language. Considering the sexist structure in the language, it can be seen that the woman is always subjugated through the language.

The concept of gender in sociolinguistics defines the very language that people use to communicate to refer to their sexual identity in relation to culture and society. Gender is a highly-complex and interactive concept whose multidimensional dynamic differs widely depending upon the context. One simply cannot underestimate the far-reaching effects of gender, especially in today's Me-Too society where gender has become so incendiary.

Language, which reflects and shapes people's relationships with the outside world and other individuals, is also a tool to influence others. In addition to its role as the most important means of communication, language has been used to manage and control people's thoughts and beliefs throughout history. In all societies, there are a set of ideologies. Gender ideology, which means appropriate roles, rights and responsibilities of men and women in society, is one of the power dynamics in a society. Language manifests itself in gender role norms that are some of the most powerful social rules taught to individuals. Men and women have been moulded into the type of person society wants them to be. Gender ideologies impose

verbal behaviors. These are often at the subconscious level so much so that the speakers and interlocutors are completely unaware of the prejudices that affect their behavior and have existed since childhood. "Language can be used to create ideology and direct the way people think" (1999:39). As Peccei claims, language teaches social norms and expectations for both genders. For example, a common idea in a male-dominated society is that childcare is a woman's job. In this instance, it is emphasized that the main priority of women is childcare and housework. This ideology is so often used in communication that it is seen as natural by women. As Whorf stated "Language is not neutral. It is not merely a vehicle which carries ideas. It is itself a shaper of ideas. It is the programme for mental activity" (1976: 272). By examining the language, it is possible to observe gender roles, power distribution and prejudices of a society

Lullabies, one of the important genres of folk literature, are important not only for oral culture but also for women's literature, as they are folk poems that are sung with a "feminine" voice. In other words, lullabies can be seen as the first anonymous examples of this type of literature, as they reflect subjective women's issues and the women's world in a "feminine" voice. This study will focus on how gender roles are reproduced in lullabies. The gender roles that dominate the identities of men and women will be exemplified by lullabies where they are reproduced.

The parent factor is very important in the perception of gender roles. Children acquire their gender-related identity through relationships with their parents. Social gender roles, attitudes and thoughts gained from this perspective are learned in the family, the first site of socialization. In this way, the basis of behavior is formed in line with the gender perspective. Gender stereotypes and biases are rife in Turkish society. Parents reward their children for gender-typed behavior related to traditional gender roles. For example, parents use phrases like "aslan oğlum" for their sons, "prens kızım" for their daughters. Such approaches teach gender to children through the language. As the child grows, society teaches this child rules and behavior patterns appropriate to their gender: "Gender learning by infants is almost certainly unconscious" (Giddens, 2006:170). As Giddens states, children receive signals that cannot be expressed by a series of words before they correctly call themselves boys or girls. By the age of two, children have an understanding of gender. They do not, however, know that the differences between girls and boys are anatomically-based until they are five to six years old. Toys, picture books, and television programs that young children see tend to emphasize the differences between male and female characteristics.

Sociolinguistics, which emphasizes the fact that language is a social and cultural phenomenon and examines the relationship between language and society, has an important place in social sciences. Sociolinguistics aims to obtain data on social structure by examining the relationship between society and language with age, class, ethnic identity and gender components. The use of language in lullaby, which is one of the examples of anonymous poetry created and transferred in the oral cultural environment, can be evaluated in terms of sociolinguistics. The language used by women in lullabies cannot be independent from social structure and cultural values. For this reason, the quality of the metaphors frequently seen in lullabies reveals the preferences, wishes and values of women.

There are no official records that have been found that detail the very first lullaby, therefore it is hard to determine when the first lullaby was first sung. A tiny clay tablet records a Babylonian lullaby, in which a baby is scolded for causing havoc with his screaming.

Little baby in the dark house,

You have seen the sun rise.

Why are you crying? Why are you screaming?

You have disturbed the house god.

"Who has disturbed me?" says the house god.

It is the baby who has disturbed you.

"Who scared me?" says the house god.

The baby has disturbed you. The baby has scared you,

making noises like a drunkard who cannot sit still on his stool,

he has disturbed your sleep.

"Call the baby now!" says the house god. (Perry, 2013)

Although lullabies for baby songs are said to help soothe a newborn or child to sleep, they also serve as an expression of mother's feelings. For thousands of years, mothers used lullabies to convey their emotions. In the above example, the child's sobbing is compared to an alcoholic, whose voice may well be an allusion to her spouse. It may be deduced that even in ancient times, lullabies were used to convey mothers' feelings. In a sense, lullabies also describe the society in which the mother lives and the rules of this society. In Turkish lullabies, which are the subject of this article, the theme of gender is mostly seen.

It is possible to see that men and women are positioned differently in lullabies. Lullabies, which are the transmitter of cultural memory, carry cultural codes from generation to generation with cultural elements. When it comes to the positioning of women and men, the difference between private and public spaces is revealed. While men's place is seen as a public space, women's exit from the private space dates back to a very recent past. The family is kept separate from the public sphere, where equal rights and freedoms are valid, and where production relations are intense, including business life. The family, which is the basic living space of women, is separated from the public space and restricted to the private space can also lead to the confinement of women in the private space.

2. REPRESENTATION OF GENDER IN TURKISH LULLABIES

Mothers from all backgrounds can relate to their children while singing lullabies. Even mothers who are confronted with the most terrible conditions might find a moment of calm and serenity by singing a lullaby. Each element, which is the transmitter of cultural memory, is very effective in the construction of the future and in the transfer of values to each generation in the same way. The lullabies that make it easier to fall asleep reveal the society's view of events/phenomena. In this context, lullabies are not only melodies sung to put babies to sleep, but also memory spaces that form the cornerstone of the cultural structure of future generations because they reflect the values of the society. Identity formation required to ensure intergenerational cultural continuity occurs through memory. Cultural memory provides continuity by feeding on tradition and communication. Elements that provide cultural continuity in societies such as marriage, wedding, birth, circumcision, military service, home life, business life, kinship relations and death, and the elements that provide cultural continuity in societies such as education are carried to the future through lullabies and proverbs. Thus, it can be said that the projections of the cultural texture can be obtained from the lullabies and proverbs that are the transmitters of cultural memory.

The social status, perceptions, and roles of women vary in relation to the conditions of each period. As stated in the literature, a father is the leader of a house and a state. The Dede Korkut Book states that "atam anam evine dönsem" (I wish I returned to my father's and mother's home). It can be perceived that the word "father" is written before "mother;" so the leader and the owner of the house is a father. After Islam in the 18th century, Turkish society underwent significant changes in terms of structure, value judgments, and family understandings. Consequently, social institutions, especially the family, have been influenced by Islamic norms to a great extent. In the introduction of The Book of Dede Korkut, women are mentioned with respect to the following two aspects: family and home. As this point indicates, a woman is the founder and the caretaker in a family. In the Turkish family system, women set up the home. A woman's maternity tasks make her the cornerstone of a family. She gives birth to a baby and looks after it. It is the woman who spends time with the baby, and a lullaby is the first melody that the baby hears from the mother. Lullabies have several functions besides putting a baby to sleep; good wishes, as well as a mother's thoughts and feelings, are conveyed to babies through lullabies. In this study, the gender roles reflected in lullabies will be examined. The lullabies selected within the scope of this study were compiled from many different regions of Turkey. In the study, resource persons (RP-1, RP-2, RP-3 ...) are specified. Detailed information about the people. Name, surname, place and date of birth, education, profession, interview date) is given at the end of the article.

In Turkey, especially in rural areas, the expectations of society are very different for the male and the female child. While concepts such as "honor", "shame" and "obedience" are associated with female children, "power" is expected from the male children. From this point of view, it is noteworthy that the concept of honor is often expressed in the lullabies for female children. The female children are expected to stay away from any action that would harm the honor of her family. In the lullabies sung to the female children, there are some messages on the issue that she should stay away from the boys.

Canım kızım ak kızım	My dear daughter, beautiful daughter
Ailemizin namusu kızım	Red cheeked white daughter
Tertemiz kızım ak kızım	You are the honor of our family, my daughter.
Gelinliğini giymeden	Immaculate daughter white daughter
Erkeklerle konuşma kızım	Without wearing your wedding dress
Ailemimizin namusu kızım (RP-1)	Don't hold a man's hand my daughter
	The honor of our family, my daughter

One of a girl's most important tasks is to save her honor—otherwise, she can expect to be punished. There are many lullabies about this:

Uyusun da büyüsün ninni	Sleep and grow lullaby
Gelin olsun yürüsün ninni	Be the bride and walk lullaby
Babasının başını öne eğdirmesin	Don't let your father bow his head
Sevmesin kötü yiğitleri (RP-2)	Don't love the bad guys

The lullabies sung to female children prepare them for their female identity, which is admired by society. The female child is raised with her mother as her role model, especially when it comes to housework. She is expected to be hardworking and domestic like her mother. She should always love her family and keep her loyalty to her husband:

Aman kızım can kızım	Oh my daughter, my daughter
Bu sözüme kulak ver kızım	Listen to my words, my daughter
Öğlene kadar yatandan	Don't be a woman who stays in bed until noon. Don't be a woman who doesn't clean her home. Don't be a woman who doesn't take her mother as an example. Listen to my words, my daughter
Evini kirli tutandan	
Anasını örnek almayandan	
Olma kızım ninni ninni	
Sözümü dinle kızım ninni (RP-3)	

In Turkish society, the most important thing in marriage is to have children. Children give an important social status to their parents. Society looks down on families without children. A mother wants her daughter to give birth to healthy babies and take her as a model. In other words, she is an example when she conveys her gender role to her daughter:

Kavak gibi uzayasın,	Be tall like a poplar
Söğüt gibi dal yayasın,	Extend your branches like a willow tree.
Anne gibi çocuk doğurasın,	Give birth to children, like your mother.
Uyu yavrum uyu ninni (Çelebioğlu, 1995: 159)	Lullaby, my little baby

A woman proves her fertility by giving birth to a child. People who are engaged in agriculture and livestock breeding want male children more than female children. Several factors account for this. One of them is the inadequacy of the female's physical power. Another is that male children are thought to keep the family name alive. These assumptions are expressed in the lullabies sung by mothers to their daughters—and if the mother does not have a male child, she sees this as an injustice and shares this with her daughter.

Oğlum benim erimdir	My son is my man
Soyumuzu devam ettirendir	Continuing our lineage
Ocağımın ateşini yakandır	Kindle the fire of my hearth
Anayı babayı bakandır (RP-4)	He looks after mother and father

As can be seen in the examples, women who play important roles in almost every phase of social life use lullabies as a means of gendering children. The female child who listens to these lullabies from the time she was born learns about traditional gender roles. For women and men, society encourages different gender roles. Whether in traditional society or in modern society, the task of raising a child belongs to the woman / mother.

The mother is most often responsible for teaching gender roles expected in society. In lullabies mothers give advice to children. In other words, lullabies are the first words to teach women's and men's roles in traditional society.

It is possible to see some expectations of the mother of the children in the lullabies. From this point of view, the mothers expect their daughters to get a good education and have a respected role in society.

Acıları sineye çekerim Gözyaşlarımı gizlice silerim, Beni okutmadılar kızım Sen oku da öğretmen, hemşire ol Beni saymadılar kızım Sen saygın ol güçlü ol (RP-5)	I take the pain I secretly wipe my tears They didn't send me to school, my daughter You go to school and become a teacher or nurse. They didn't respect me my daughter Be respectful be strong
--	---

In a traditional society a woman who could not attend to her schooling and have a profession is economically dependent on her husband. Some of the lullabies convey the message of being an independent woman. In Turkish society, military service is regarded as an important period in a man's life. The man who fulfills his military service is respected in society. The desire for the male child to behave in accordance with the male gender role determined by the society is clear in the lullabies.

Derelerin çakıl taşları, Yavrumun kalem kaşları, Oğlum büyüüp okuyacak, Olacak Cumhurbaşkanı! Ninni oğlum ninni (Çelebioğlu, 1995: 168)	Pebbles of streams, My baby's pencil eyebrows, My son will grow up and go to school, He will be President! Lullaby my son
---	---

As can be seen above in the lullaby examples, different jobs are expected from male and female children. Female children are thought to become teachers and male children are thought to be presidents, doctors and soldiers. In addition to conveying gender roles to female and male children, lullabies reveal women's perception of men.

Uyusun da büyüsün Asker olsun yürüsün Vatanını korusun Ninni oğlum ninni (RP-6)	Sleep and grow up Be a soldier and March Save your country Lullaby my son lullaby
--	--

In Anatolia, especially in rural areas, women were suppressed by the men in the family. Before marriage the women were suppressed by brothers and fathers; after marriage they were suppressed by husbands, fathers-in-law and other men in the family. Some lullabies reveal this situation:

Ninni yavrum ninni Ananın hali kalmadı Geldi huysuz deden Merhameti kalmadı (RP-7)	Lullaby my baby lullaby Your mother has no strength left Your bad-tempered grandfather came He showed no mercy
---	---

Traditionally Turkish society assigned indoor roles to women and outdoor roles to men. This characteristic structure of Turkish society is seen in the lullabies. In certain lullabies, the father is portrayed as outside the home and the mother mentions presents that the father will bring to the child:

Evimde bereket var Benim güzel oğlum var, Babası şimdi gelir çarşıdan Çantasında şeker var, Ninni yavrucağım ninni (RP-8)	I have abundance in my house I have a handsome son His father is now coming from the bazaar There is candy in his bag Lullaby my little baby lullaby
---	--

The lullabies portray the father as a person who should be respected. In many traditional societies, fathers' decisions are accepted without question. The lullabies also show how, in the eyes of a woman, a father is a person worthy of respect:

Sıvamış ak kollarını Kahve verir babasına (Çelebioğlu, 1995: 234)	She rolls up her sleeves And gives coffee to her father
--	--

Despite the fact lullabies reinforce the traditions of respecting men, they also reveal the power of women within the boundaries set by society. Women sing the lullabies. Men do not have a close relationship with the baby as much as the mother because they are not busy with baby care and housework and do not spend much time at home. Lullabies reveal the gender roles that the women have. Emotions and thoughts such as distress, difficulty, sadness, resentment, tension and fear that a woman lives in daily life are expressed through the

lullabies. In other words, lullabies give an opportunity to a woman to escape from the pressure of society and express herself.

3. CONCLUSION

While individual memories appear as memories created based on experiences; social memory is formed and developed through what is transmitted. Memories cannot survive individually; each memory needs the testimony or support of another memory. Thus, social, and cultural memories emerge, and these form the cultural identity. Cultural memory can sometimes be formed as a reconstructed memory and sometimes through elements formed and transferred as a result of the general dynamics of society. The biggest example of the transfer of cultural memory and its acceptance by the masses is the fact that the elements in the role of transmitter are still used. Because repetitions ensure the continuity of cultural memory, lullabies are still sung while babies are put to sleep today. It is seen that the subjects covered in lullabies that carry the cultural traces of the past are still valid today. As seen in the lullabies that are the subject of the study, the positioning of women and men in society and the family, the praise of military service and religious teachings that developed due to nationalism are transmitted from generation to generation through these products.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Çelebioğlu Âmil. (1995). *Türk Ninniler Hazînesi*. İstanbul, Kitabevi Yayınları.

Peccei, J. S. (1999). *The language, Society and Power Reader*. New York, Routledge.

Giddens, A. (2006). *Sociology*. Cambridge, Polity Press.

Perry, N. (2013, January 21). The Universal Language of Lullabies. BBC News. <https://www.bbc.com/news/magazine-21035103>.

Whorf, B. L., Carroll, J. B., & Chase, S. (1967). *Language, Thought, and Reality: Selected Writings*. M.I.T. Press.

ORAL RESOURCES

RP-1: Fadime YILMAZ, Arhavi/Artvin, 1958, primary school graduate, (19. 12.2018)

RP-2: Naciye BAYIR, Merkez/Kars, 1965, primary school graduate, (20.08.2018)

RP-3: Şadiye BÜLBÜL, 1953, Vakfikebir/Trabzon, primary school graduate, (12.01.2019)

RP-4: Nazmiye USTA, 1959, Çayeli/Rize, primary school graduate, (11.05.2019)

RP-5: Hatice NARMANLI, 1967, Merkez/Erzurum, primary school graduate, (09.08.2018)

RP-6: Emine SÖNGÜT, 1965, Merkez/Çorum, primary school graduate, (05.06.2018)

RP-7: Nezire YAMAN, 1958, Çarşıbaşı/Trabzon, primary school graduate, (10. 01.2019)

RP-8: Fahriye KOÇABAŞ, 1975, Merkez/Karabük, high school graduate, (15.06.2019)