

RAPE DISCOURSES IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF TURKISH TELEVISION  
SERIES *FATMAGÜL'ÜN SUÇU NE?*

A Master's Thesis

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Ankara  
January 2013



To my family...

RAPE DISCOURSES IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF TURKISH TELEVISION  
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Graduate School of Economics and Social Sciences  
of  
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by

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in

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IHSAN DOĞRAMACI BILKENT UNIVERSITY  
ANKARA

January 2013

I certify that I have read this thesis and have found that it is fully adequate, in scope and in quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Communication and Design.

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## ABSTRACT

### RAPE DISCOURSES IN TURKEY: THE CASE OF TURKISH TELEVISION SERIES *FATMAGÜL'ÜN SUÇU NE?*

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January, 2013

The television series *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*, which first aired in September 2010, turned in to a phenomenon. The rape scene in the first episode was anticipated for months and after it aired, scene was talked about for very long time. In mass media, series was addressed widely. There were many different criticisms regarding the rape scene. Mainly, it was blamed for vividly representing the act of rape, thus encouraging and rape and humiliating women in various newspaper articles. However, while doing so, newspapers employed a number of rhetoric that may be elucidated as normalization of rape discourse through concealing by deceiving and trivializing rape. In this study, newspaper articles related to *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* published in *Zaman*, *Hürriyet*, *Posta*, *Radikal* and *Cumhuriyet* newspapers are studied and evaluated in terms of discourse they employ in order to determine rape discourses in Turkish newspapers.

Key Words: Rape, Sexual Violence, Rape Myths, Rape on Television, Normalization, Discourse, Women.

## ÖZET

### TÜRKİYEDE TECAVÜZ SÖYLEMLERİ: TÜRK TELEVİZYON DİZİSİ *FATMAGÜL'ÜN SUÇU NE?* ÖRNEĞİ

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2010 yılının Eylül ayında yayınlanmaya başlayan *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* isimli televizyon dizisi fenomene dönüştü. Birinci bölümünde yer alan tecavüz sahnesi aylarca merakla beklendi; yayımlandıktan sonar da aynı sahne uzun zaman konuşuldu. Medyada da diziden oldukça bahsedildi. Tecavüz sahnesi hakkında pek çok farklı eleştiri yapıldı. Çeşitli gazetlerde ağırlıklı olarak tecavüzün açıkça temsil edilmesi ve tecavüzün imrendirililmesi, kadınların küçük düşürülmesi sebepleriyle suçlandı. Fakat bu şekilde eleştirirlerken, gazeteler, üstünü örtme ve önemsizleştirme yöntemleriyle tecavüzü normalleştirme söylemini olarak nitelendirilebilecek retoriklere başvurdular. Bu çalışmada Türkiye'deki tecavüz söylemlerinin belirlemek için *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* dizisi hakkında *Zaman*, *Hürriyet*, *Posta*, *Radikal* ve *Cumhuriyet* gazetelerinde çıkan haberler, izledikleri söylemler bakımından ele alınmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Tecavüz, Cinsel Şiddet, Tecavüz Mitleri, Televizyonda Tecavüz, Normalleştirmek, Söylem, Kadın.

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT.....	iii
ÖZET.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .....	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	vi
LIST OF TABLES .....	ix
LIST OF FIGURES.....	x
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION .....	1
1.1. Statement of Purpose.....	5
1.2. Methodology.....	7
1.3. Definition of Basic Terms .....	11
1.3.1. Sexual Violence .....	11
1.3.2. Rape .....	14
1.3.3. Rape Myth.....	17
1.4. Study Overview .....	20
CHAPTER 2: EVALUATION OF RAPE REPRESENTATION ON TELEVISION .....	22
2.1. Aestheticization of Violence .....	23
2.2. Generation of Rape Plot on Earlier Television Series.....	25
2.2.1. Rape Reform and Feminism .....	27

2.3. Rape on Turkish Television Series.....	29
CHAPTER 3: <i>FATMAGÜL'ÜN SUÇU NE?</i> .....	33
3.1. The Original Script .....	34
3.2. Rape Scene In The Movie .....	37
3.3. Rape Scene In The Television Series .....	38
3.4. After the Rape Scene: First Ten Episodes .....	41
3.5. Rape Myths.....	43
3.6. Patriarchal Discourse.....	44
CHAPTER 4: RAPE DISCOURSES: <i>FATMAGÜL'ÜN SUÇU NE?</i> ON TURKISH NEWSPAPERS.....	47
4.1. Sonorous Voice of Patriarchy: Silencing Rape .....	48
4.1.1. Distorting Feminist Discourse: Reproducing Patriarchal Discourse .....	49
4.1.1.1. Question of Two Feminist Rhetoric: To Represent or Not to Represent.....	50
4.1.2. Encouraging Rape.....	54
4.1.3. Conditioning Audience: You Should Complain!.....	60
4.2. Trivializing Rape: Sensationalizing, Fictionalizing and Commodifying Rape Representation .....	65
4.2.1. Sensationalizing Rape.....	66
4.2.1.1. Building Up To The Series: Previous On Screen Sex Scenes .....	67
4.2.1.2. Building Up To The Series: Promoting Curiosity.....	68
4.2.1.3. Who is Raped Better?.....	68
4.2.2. Fictionalizing Rape .....	70
4.2.2.1. Being Raped Just Like Fatmagül .....	70
4.2.2.2. Rapists Just Like Fatmagül's Rapists.....	72

4.2.2.3. Beren and Fatmagül: On Screen Off Screen Characters Tangled Up	73
4.2.3. Commodification of Rape Representation.....	74
4.2.3.1. No Business Like Rape Business .....	76
CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION.....	78
BIBLIOGRAPHY .....	80
APPENDICES.....	100

## **LIST OF TABLES**

Table 1 – Sexual Violence by Nomenclature Unites Territorial Statistic, 2008....	104
Table 2 – Sexual Violence By Place of Residence, 2008 .....	104

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 – Newspapers Used in The Study .....	100
Figure 2 – Article Distribution Among Sections in Hürriyet Newspaper.....	101
Figure 3 – Article Distribution Among Sections in Zaman Newspaper .....	101
Figure 4 – Article Distribution Among Sections in Posta Newspaper.....	102
Figure 5 – Article Distribution Among Sections in Radikal Newspaper.....	102
Figure 6 – Article Distribution Among Sections in Cumhuriyet Newspaper .....	103
Figure 7 – Distribution of Articles Used in the Study Among News Sections.....	103

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

It is important to recognize the part mass media plays in people's lives. It is apparent that texts represented in media have an odd and inscrutable impact on audiences. These odd and inscrutable effects of mass media on people's perception, how people utilize information they acquire from media, how they respond to texts in mass media are long discussed issues. But perhaps a much more valid and essential question on mass media is what media represents and why and how media represents specific texts.

For one thing, it cannot be expected for media texts to be utterly impartial and for the writer of a media text to be completely objective. In fact Ivy Lee – who is considered to be the founder of modern public relations and also known as a reporter and a press agent (Ingham, 1983: 776) – argued that “The effort to state an absolute fact is simply an attempt to achieve what is humanly impossible; all I can do is to give you my interpretation of the facts.” (Brown, 1937: 325) Therefore, a media text is constructed by one's interpretation of certain facts and this formation is ultimately affected by political views, public beliefs and personal biases. The word chosen to represent a certain event, whether negative or positive sentences are used and even the complexity or simplicity of a sentence may create difference between two

media texts on the same event. That is to say, there are tendentious meanings, views, judgments and justifications encoded in media texts either on purpose or unintentionally.

In the light of the fact that every single media text is created with a certain amount of bias due to the fact that every human being is a political being and has its own unique way of representing a certain event, handling every piece with the same awareness may lead to forming an idea on how media texts are created and why and how they are represented.

The fact that every media text has its own way of representing and handling certain events is apparent in political and social news. For instance, media texts on sexual violence against women in Turkey bear this certain fact.

Fictional or factual images of violence against women are represented in media texts quite frequently. That is to say, it is very easy to come across images of physical, emotional and sexual violence against women on television, newspaper and other mass media texts. Furthermore, some of these images of violence have become so common that they go by without being recognized as violence by the audience anymore. It should be, however, noted that mass media by its own cannot be blamed for acceptance of violence against women. Sezen Ünlü and her colleagues point out that violence against women is not only an apparent problem in Turkey but rather all around the world and it is more and often based on hierarchical relations within the society and family rather than simple aggression. (Ünlü, Bayram, Uluyağcı, Bayçu, 2009; 96) They also point out that violence against women is weaponized to ensure women's position in society and family. (Ünlü, Bayram, Uluyağcı, Bayçu, 2009; 96) Therefore, in a way, images of violence against women

portrayed by media texts are only reproductions of the high occurrence of violence against women in reality. On the other hand, it can be argued that through patriarchal discourses embedded into media texts, mass media normalizes violence against women.

In the simplest terms 'normalization' - in this case 'sociological normalization' is inferred- refers to a social process in which a specific idea or action turns into a socially accepted instance and as a matter of fact evolves into a 'normal' state. At this point the normalized idea or action is taken for granted and accepted as it is. Normalization of violence against women, therefore, refers to accepting violence against women as it is and responding to this action as if it is a normal and even expected behavior.

Sexual violence against women, such as rape, is one of the types of violence against women that is on the verge of being normalized by mass media. Rape is a type of sexual violence and one of the most degrading, damaging and dramatically violent acts practiced on women and the normalization of this violence refers to accepting rape as if it is a normal and even expected type of behavior in certain types of scenarios. Recently, in Turkey, the subject of rape on television series has become a very controversial issue. After the release of a number of television series utilizing a rape theme in Turkish television channels, a series of disputes on the ethics, implications and consequences of representing these images arose in the Turkish media such as how it affected women in Turkey, how family structure in Turkey is damaged and so forth. Nevertheless, intentionally or unintentionally, these disputes in mass media led to a number of normalization of rape discourses. These discourses – in the case of this thesis written media texts - are in fact contributing to a social



process in which rape is considered normal or acceptable in various scenarios. One of these normalization of rape discourses distorted feminist discourse and utilized feminist discourse to reinforce patriarchal rhetoric. Another normalization of rape discourse ultimately utilized rape myths to endorse dominant patriarchal rhetoric, as well. Even those mass media texts criticizing television series for normalizing rape reproduced normalization of rape discourses.

One of the most recent Turkish television series that utilized the rape issue is *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*. The first season started on September 16, 2010 and its second season aired in September 2011. The series ended on June 21, 2012. The series is an adaptation of an earlier movie with the same title. The television series' scenario which is written by Ece Yörenç and Melek Gençoğlu is based on Vedat Türkali's<sup>1</sup> screenplay, which was adapted to a Yeşilçam movie with few alterations in the original script in 1986 by Süreyya Duru<sup>2</sup>. The original movie is about a woman who was gang raped by five strangers and later was forced to marry one of the assailants. The television series is based on this event as well but the story is altered and extended by sub-stories. The rape scene in the series provoked a number of disputes on the ethics of representation of violence and sexuality; implications of the series on Turkish society and consequences arising from such a vivid representation of gang rape of Fatmagül, the lead female character.

The initial approach to *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* in Turkish newspapers was intricate. While some newspapers praised and applauded the people who took part in the series and the script writers, others slammed the series. While some news items sup-

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<sup>1</sup> Vedat Türkali is a two times Golden Orange Award for best screenplay winner and he is a famous and talented author.

<sup>2</sup> Süreyya Duru was also a Golden Orange Award winner.

ported the series for courageously representing such a serious and widespread issue, others argued that the representation of such an image of violence on television was outrageous. A variety of rhetoric on the series emerged. Unfortunately, both the negative and the positive criticisms of the series employed a discourse that normalized rape.

To sum up, mass media is an essential and an inseparable component of people's lives and it is a potent tool in shaping public opinion. Today, the discourses employed in newspapers on *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* are both reflections of public opinion, political views and personal biases and regeneration of certain patriarchal discourses that shape public opinion. That is to say, normalization of rape process is produced and reproduced in Turkish society by dominant patriarchal rhetoric that is stretched both in society and media.

### **1.1. Statement of Purpose**

The main intention of this thesis is to identify how rape is normalized through discourses employed by Turkish newspapers regarding *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*. On the one hand, I will argue against the dominant claim which alleges that *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* reproduces violence against women and encourages desensitization, on the other hand, I will attempt to represent how the discourses employed in newspapers normalize rape, distorts the series' main argument and reproduces a patriarchal rhetoric. To support this argument, how rape is represented in *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*, what is the claim of the series and how *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* is represented in Turkish newspapers will be studied.

Certain effects studies theories are utilized to oppose certain rape discourses. Various approaches in reception studies are utilized to justify the stand of this thesis regarding how audiences decoded the rape represented in the series and how it led to misperception. Feminist film studies theories are utilized to investigate female and male approaches to rape on television series and movies.

The main reason why this subject matter was selected as a thesis topic is because violence against women is disregarded in terms of normalization in Turkey. Patriarchal discourse constructed upon this short-coming strengthens violence against women furthermore which then expands into a vicious cycle. When a media text attempts to break this vicious cycle by offering a new interpretation, it is either challenged or its argument is distorted. That may as well be the case with *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*. The series attempted to present another side of sexual violence against women, to attract attention to rape victims and rape myths which devastate rape victims' lives. Some newspapers openly and consciously challenged the series; the rhetoric they employed attempted to cover up the reality of rape in Turkey, alleged that it was unethical, hazardous for children and even claimed that the series encouraged sexual violence against women. Some others trivialized the sexual violence subject in *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* by sensationalizing, fictionalizing and commoditizing it. At one point all these newspapers normalized rape. If the press reflects what the public believes in and also contributes to the shaping of public opinion (Ericson et al. in Benedict, 1992: 3), then it can be argued that the Turkish public also believes in the normalization of rape discourses employed in newspapers. It is outrageous how carelessly, recklessly and constantly violence against women is normalized in Turkish media. Therefore, the main reason why this subject

matter was selected as the scope of this thesis is to put forth the existing discourse of normalization by distortion, silencing or trivializing rape in Turkish newspapers.

By carrying out this study, this thesis intends to remark how news items regarding *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* on newspapers in Turkey intentionally or unintentionally endorsed sexual violence against women by employing normalization discourses. This thesis will contribute to the limited literature on the critical discourse analysis of Turkish newspapers regarding rape.

## **1.2. Methodology**

To conduct this study, a case concerning rape and a medium to observe the formation and progress of discourses in the media texts were designated. Newspapers are chosen as the medium to determine the normalization discourses of rape employed in Turkish media due to the fact that they are published daily and everyone has access to this medium. A television series covering sexual violence theme is chosen as the case, to study discourses constructed and /or reconstructed to normalize rape around its theme by newspapers. In the process of determining the case, the fact that it airs weekly and a large number of individuals have access to it were taken in to consideration as well as other characteristics that will be specified further on.

Among a number of recent Turkish television series with a theme of sexual violence, considering its popularity, the controversy it created, and the wide range of news reports published on this series, *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* is designated as the subject of the case. Other than the series' rising position in popular culture, the questions it raised and how the rape theme is covered are taken in to account. The

research covers the time between the announcements of the television series in April 2010 till the end of November 2010. During the nine month period that this study includes, ten episodes of television series were telecasted. The first ten episodes are designated as the time span of this study because rape occurs in the first episode and in the tenth episode Fatmagül expresses her frustration and anger for the first time. Between the first and tenth episodes, Fatmagül is both treated as a victim and a Jesebel at the same time and surrounded by rape myths. She takes a stand for the first time in episode ten. Therefore it is imperative for this thesis to exemplify how a rape victim is treated and repressed by society until she takes a stand and how this period reflected onto discourses in newspapers. For the purpose of an accurate observation of the discourses employed in the newspapers, *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* is examined at a length. Cinematography of the rape scene is studied, as well.

The Turkish newspapers chosen for this research are *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Radikal*, *Posta* and *Zaman*. *Hürriyet*, *Radikal* and *Posta* newspapers are owned by Doğan Media Group. *Cumhuriyet* is owned by Cumhuriyet Foundation. *Zaman* is owned by Feza Journalism Inc.. Each and every newspaper has a different target reader. *Hürriyet* is a nationalist and secular newspaper. It appeals to every reader group except conservatives. *Radikal* is a social liberal newspaper and most recently comes forwards on arts and culture. *Posta* newspaper is more like a tabloid and mostly runs magazine news. *Cumhuriyet* is a secular newspaper and appeals to central leftists and Kemalist. *Zaman* has a more conservative tone and appeals to a more conservative/ religious reader group in Turkey. Thus, the five newspapers chosen for this research differ from each other in terms of their political tendencies and content preferences.

The key word used in the newspaper content search was “Fatmagül”. Upon the search of this key word, a total of one hundred and ninety (190) news item published between April 2010 and November 2010 were found on the online archives of these five newspapers. One hundred and seventy two (172) news items were related to the case of this study, *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?*. Within these related news items, ten (10) were exclusively web content and have consequently been excluded from the research. Therefore only one hundred and sixty two (162) of these related news items are utilized in the study. As the remaining eighteen (18) news items were not directly related to the case study<sup>3</sup>.

In *Hürriyet* newspaper’s online archive, there are a total of hundred and fifteen (114) news items, including the key word, between April 2010 and November 2010. One hundred and six (106) of these news items are related to the case study and ten (10) of these related news studies are exclusively web content. Those ten (10) web content include the rape scene from the movie version, rape scene from the television series and various trailers. Ten (10) exclusively web content and eight (8) unrelated news items are excluded from this study.<sup>4</sup>

In *Zaman* newspaper’s online archive, there are a total of twenty one (21) news items, including the key word, between April 2010 and November 2010. Eighteen (18) of these news items are related to the case study. The remaining three (3) unrelated news items are not included in this study.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For further information see Figure 1

<sup>4</sup> For further information see figure 2.

<sup>5</sup> For further information see figure 3.

In *Posta* newspaper's online archive, there are a total of thirty three (33) news items, including the key word, between April 2010 and November 2010. Thirty (30) of these news items are related to the case study. The remaining three (3) unrelated news items are excluded from this study.<sup>6</sup>

In *Radikal* newspaper's online archives, there are a total of eleven (11) news items, including the key word, between April 2010 and November 2010. Ten (10) of these news items are related to the case study. The remaining unrelated news item is excluded from this study.<sup>7</sup>

In *Cumhuriyet* newspaper's online archives, there are a total of eleven (11) news items, including the key word, between April 2010 and November 2010. Eight (8) of these news items are related to the case study. The remaining three (3) unrelated news items are excluded from this study.<sup>8</sup>

It can be stated that (for example, Paltridge, 2008: 181) a particular discourse reflects a particular ideology and offers a particular representation of the 'other'. Thus, how the representation of women, representation of a rape victim, representation of rape are offered, under which ideologies these discourses are produced and what rhetoric they reproduce are very important for this study. As a result, to determine the discourses employed in these newspapers, the art of rhetoric in the Aristotelian (Aristotle, 2004) sense was utilized. Aristotle refers to the art of rhetoric as an art of discourse in which audience is persuaded and/ or motivated as well as informed in certain issues which is apparent in rape myths and patriarchal rhetoric of

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<sup>6</sup> For further information see figure 4.

<sup>7</sup> For further information see figure 5.

<sup>8</sup> For further information see figure 6.

normalization of rape. Also dialogical discourse analysis is utilized. Per Linell points out that dialogical theory refers to “human sense making” (1944; 7) through human interaction and within this theory “change, emergence, adaptation and accommodation, to sensitive attunements and modulations of meaning in context and to the emergence of new meanings across contexts” (1944; 432) is possible which is apparent in distortion of feminist discourse. Also, interaction of readers with the news items can be seen as a part of dialogical theory which further leads to new formations of news items as well as adaptation and normalization. Finally genres of discourses are studied at a length. Therefore these discourse analysis methods are the most suitable methods for a study to examine normalization of rape discourses.

To sum up, based on the first ten episodes of *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?* and one hundred and seventy two (172) related news items published between April 2010 and November 2010 on online archives of five Turkish newspapers and by employing critical discourse analysis method this study is conducted.

### **1.3. Definition of Basic Terms**

#### **1.3.1. Sexual Violence**

Sexual violence is a very serious and common problem all around the world. This type of violence is performed on women, teenage girls, teenage boys, men and even infants in various ways and in various occasions. World Health Organization (2002: 149) defines sexual violence as:

Any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic, or otherwise directed, against a person’s sexuality using coercion, by any person regardless of their rela-



tionship to the victim, in any setting, including but not limited to home and work.

This definition suggests that any unwanted verbal, psychological and/ or physical sexual behavior performed against a person is considered sexual violence. It is important to underline that the definition suggests that the relationship between the offender and the offended is not important as long as the behavior is unwanted, undesired and/ or forced. This means that any verbal, psychological and/ or physical sexual behavior performed by a family member, friend or acquaintance is also considered sexual violence. WHO (2002: 149- 150) include various forms and contexts in which one's behavior is considered sexual violence: rape by a spouse; rape by boyfriend or girlfriend; rape by stranger; rape during armed conflict; "unwanted sexual advances or sexual harassment, including demanding sex in return for favors"; sexual abuse of disabled people; sexual abuse of children, "forced marriage or cohabitation, including the marriage of children"; obstructing of protection and or contraception; "forced abortion"; "violent acts against the sexual integrity of women, including female genital mutilation and obligatory inspection for virginity"; sexual exploitation by forced prostitution and white slave trade.

In Turkish law number 6284 article 2(ç) regarding The Protection of Family and Prevention of Violence against Women, violence against women is defined as any kind of violence against women performed on the basis of gender discrimination or just because the victim is a women – which is an unclear statement due to the fact that gender discrimination and being a women indicates similar things but might be indicating inferiority of female victims. (The Ministry of Family and Social Policies, 2012) Sexual violence against women is not defined apart from article 2(d) which includes all types of violence under the definition of violence. However it does not specify what sexual violence is and what it is not other than referring to all

violence as preventers of an individual's freedom. (The Ministry of Family and Social Policies, 2012) This particular law only regards domestic violence. On the other hand, in the Turkish Criminal Law which was revised in 2004, sexual violence was defined as any behavior that penetrates a human body without consent or violates a human beings' body in subsection 102 article 1 (Turkish Criminal Law, 2004)

Sexual violence is stigmatized and has consequently become a taboo. Therefore those who fall victim to this crime do not always come forward. Accordingly, those who report being subjected to this crime constitute only the tip of the iceberg. The reason why sexual violence is stigmatized is because there are social consequences. Those who fall victim to this kind of violence are often excluded from society. Even in some cultures, victims are blamed for not preventing it. As a result, victims are afraid to admit being sexually violated due to intimidation, blackmailing or fear of being smothered under social pressure once society becomes aware of this situation. Because, as a result of sexual violence, victims may be victimized further by being forced into unwanted marriages in order to restore their and their family's honor or denied by their spouses because they lost their honor and purity. On the one hand, it should be noted that because of the social consequences, sexually violated victims cannot come forward and not all the necessary actions can be taken against sexual violence. On the other hand, stigmatization of sexual violence is also another kind of violence – psychological violence - against victims.

At the same time, there are those who do not believe that coming forward will change anything. Lack of appropriate laws against sexual violence in various countries also dissuade victims from coming forward. There are/ were even laws that encourage or allow sexual violence. For instance, in United States, it was not until

1993 that all the states accepted that marital rape is a crime. (National Clearinghouse on Marital & Date Rape, 2005) Until then, a husband “could not be charged with raping his wife because, under seventeenth- century British common laws, she was his to have whenever he wanted.” (Benedict, 1993: 43) Another social and legal problem presented in the sexual violence cases is the marrying of the victim to the assailant. For instance until 2004, according to the Code of 434 of Turkish Criminal Laws, if the assailant married his victim, he would not be sentenced. In Morocco, Code 475 of Moroccan Criminal Law still allows the assailant to go free if he marries his victim. (“Fas’ta Tecavüzcüyle Evlendirmeye Tepki”, *Sabah*, 2012) Thus, even laws are not sufficient enough to protect sexual violence victims.

To sum up, World Health Organization defines sexual violence as any sexual behavior performed despite opposition and/ or disability to oppose. Although it is a crime, it is more often the victims who suffer than the assailants and in some countries laws are insufficient to protect victims.

### **1.3.2. Rape**

Rape is perhaps one of the most painful, violent and a terrible type of sexual violence. Moreover, this crime is very widespread. For instance, according to studies, a woman is raped every six minutes in the United States. (UN Department of Public Information, 1996) That is to say, rape is a very common, global crime.

One of the biggest problems on rape issues is its definition. Because, what are included and what are not included defines if a person is a rape victim and if the other person is a rapist or not. WHO (2002: 149) defines it as “physically forced or otherwise coerced penetration –even if slightly- of the vulva or anus, using a penis,

other body parts or an object.” While the definition lacks the victim specification, it is an accurate definition of what is rape. There are less definite, inadequate and misleading definitions of rape as well. For instance, United States of America’s Uniform Crime Report’s definition of rape was “The carnal knowledge of a female forcibly and against her will” which was established in 1927 and used until 2012. (FBI National Press Release, 2012) This definition excluded various aspects of rape such as “oral and anal penetration; rape of males; penetration of the vagina and anus with an object or body part other than the penis; rape of females by females; and non-forcible rape.” (FBI National Press Release, 2012) Therefore, the definition was revised and reconstructed in 2012. The new rape definition revised by Attorney General (in FBI National Press Release, 2012), defines rape as “the penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body parts or objects, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.”

Assailants define rape much differently. In a study conducted between convicted rapists, Diana Scully points out that every assailant perceives what rape is and define it differently. According to assailants, there are three major definitions:

- (1) no physical force is necessary- anything against woman’s will;
- (2) physical force is necessary – no mention of weapons or injury as a prerequisite;
- and (3) a weapon must be used or beating and injury must occur for a rape to have taken place. (Scully, 1990: 87)

Assailants – especially those who deny rape- claim that unless there is physical violence or weapons used to persuade or intimidate the victim, rape can be avoided by the victim and if there is no physical violence and/ or weapons, it is not rape at all. (Scully, 1990: 87) To sum up, there is no one specific rape definition accepted worldwide.

There are various types of rape. United Nations Department of Public Information (1996) states that rape can occur in the family, by stranger(s) in the community and during any armed conflicts. In family, incest or marital rape may occur. Marital rape, as it has been argued before, is being raped by one's spouse. Incest rape is being raped by a parent or a sibling. One can also be raped by a partner such as boyfriend or girlfriend; it is called date rape. In the community, if a person falls victim to a rape by one single person it is called rape by a stranger and if there are two or more assailants involved in rape, it is called gang rape. Rape during wars and any kind of armed conflict is called war rape. "Rape is used as a weapon of war causing trauma to individuals, families and communities, even after the conflict." (United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, 2011) It is not only an act of sexual violence but also a war crime. Another type of rape is corrective rape and it is used to correct sexual behaviors of non-heterosexual women by raping them. (Mieses, 2009: 2)

Turkish Criminal Law section 6 subsection 102 titled Crimes against Sexual Immunity article 1 defines rape as a crime provided that the victim reports the crime and her/his body is violated in any way. This crime results in two to seven years of imprisonment. According to article 2 of the same law, if there is penetration via a bodily organ or any other material to the victim's body, and given that the victim reports the crime, the assailant is imprisoned for seven to twelve years. It is underlined that if this is a marital rape, the spouse has to report it. According to article 3(1) if the rape victim is not physically or mentally capable of protecting himself/herself; according to article 3(2) if the assailant is exploiting his public service position; according to article 3(3) if there is a up to a third degree kinship between assailant and the victim; and according to 3(4) if there is a weapon involved in the act

of rape the imprisonment period is increased. Also according to article 4, if more than necessary violence is exercised on the victim, the assailant is also penalized for felonious wounding. According to article 5, if the victim's mental and bodily functions are deteriorated, the assailant is imprisoned for at least ten years. Finally, according to article 6, if the victim dies or deteriorates to a vegetative state, the assailant is sentenced to aggravated life time imprisonment.

To sum up, while rape does not have a global definition, penetration of male/ female body through vagina, anus or mouth with a sexual organ, any other body part or any object without the consent of the victim under any circumstances with no exceptions and with physical force or otherwise is called rape. The circumstances in which rape is committed and the relationship between the victim and the assailant(s) do not alter the vehemence of the crime, let alone justifying the act.

### **1.3.3. Rape Myth**

One of that rhetoric that stigmatizes sexual violence and makes it a taboo is rape myths. Myths are commonly exaggerated or misrepresented, fictitious or imperfect beliefs that tend to address society. Myths are constructions of society, their meanings and readings perceived by society are very similar; myth signifies the very meaning it was intended for all. Rape myths are not different than any kind of myth. They signify a message that is constructed by society and then again accepted by the same community. Thus, rape myths are a series of stereotypes subsumed by society to accuse rape victims and somehow justify sexual violence. Martha R. Burt (2003: 129) defines rape myths as “prejudicial, stereotyped, or false beliefs about rape, rape victims, or rapists”. As it is pointed out, myth itself is a false message, a

constructed message; rape myths are not different than this, however their implications on society are much stronger than most of the myths and more universal and lasting than most others.

Most of the rape myths consist of blaming the rape victim. Koss et al. (in Buddie and Miller 2001: 140) divide rape myth, into three parts: “victim masochism... victim precipitation... victim fabrication.” Because, as it is pointed out, there is a serious prejudice against rape victims. It is regularly argued (for example, Scully, 1991: 42) that women are considered to have masochistic behaviors and “what the woman secretly desires in intercourse is rape and violence.” It is nothing but a rape myth that women are less of rape victims and more of masochists who are asking for it. However, as this particular rape myth – as it is evident in all myths- blames rape victims, it is not unusual to encounter with rape victims who blame themselves. Thus, “Societal stereotypes surrounding sexual violence” (Buddie, Miller, 2001: 139) dictate that victim “asked to be raped, secretly enjoyed the experience or lied about it.” It is argued that as a result of these stereotypes, (Buddie, Miller, 2001: 139) most of the rape victims neither refer to themselves as victims nor report the crime. Due to common beliefs attributed to gender roles, society cannot treat sexual violence and especially rape open-mindedly. Helen Benedict (1993:3) points out that even the most liberal individuals might accuse the rape victim instead of the rapist himself. On other cases, victims are accused of precipitating rape in phrases such as (Burt, 1980: 217) “only bad girls get raped... women ask for it”. Koss et al.’s (in Burt, 1980: 217) last rape myth argues that victims fabricate rape because “women cry rape only when they’ve been jilted or have something to cover up” thus indicating, there was no rape in the first place.

Offenders are justified in various explanations but especially by claiming that the offender is not capable of controlling oneself, mentally ill or having idiosyncratic problems. (Scully, 1991: 45 – 46) On the grounds that such men cannot be claimed guilty for their actions – since an offender is not capable of behaving otherwise and that the offender is not a psychologically ‘normal man’ - “attention is focused on the behavior and motives of the victim rather than on the offender. Thus, responsibility is also shifted to the victim. ... it is often the rape victim who is on trial.”(Scully, 1991: 45 – 46) As a result of this perception, men can never be charged of being guilty of rape; but only of being mentally impaired. However, society puts real blame on to women who are either ‘asking for it’ or do not avoid these unstable men who cannot control their urges. Men also justify their sexually violent behavior either by claiming that it is a result of “minor emotional problems and drunkenness or disinhibition” (Scully, 1991: 163) or that “their value system provides no compelling reason not to [rape].” (Scully, 1991: 164) In the first case, offender says that he is normally a nice guy and that if he was not in such a condition preventing him from behaving responsibly, he would not commit rape. In the second case, offender does not accept that he is actually a rapist but rather argues that rape was actually desired by the victim or that the victim was not “a nice girl” (Scully, 1991: 164) to begin with thus he is not really a rapist.

Overall, rape myths are commonly used either to justify the rape action or to blame the victim herself. In a patriarchal social system, blaming women for attracting men, asking for being raped or lying about being raped is a way of weakening women while justifying any action performed by men. On the other hand, it should be noted that those rape myths indicating women desire violence and rape actually



encourages men. Therefore, rape myths are not only degrading, but they also constitute the danger of misleading men. Not to mention misleading for women who also blame a rape victim for being responsible for what happened.

#### **1.4. Study Overview**

Chapter 2 examines the visual representation of rape. The chapter gives an insight on the history of rape representations and rape narratives offered in television series. After, the sexual violence against women in Turkish television series is discussed.

In the Chapter 3, the recent television phenomenon *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* is addressed. Rape scenes in the book, movie and television series versions of *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* are discussed at a length. The cinematographic form of the series is discussed. The discourse and rape myths employed in three different versions are shortly discussed.

In Chapter 4, newspaper items on *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* published in *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Posta*, *Zaman* and *Radikal* newspapers are examined in order to determine the discourses employed. This chapter will be the back bone of the entire thesis and will observe how newspapers discuss rape on television and reconstruct the understanding of rape. In the first part, feminist discourse verses patriarchal discourse regarding silencing rape by distorting feminist discourses and rhetoric on encouraging rape and in the second part normalization of rape discourse through trivializing rape by sensationalizing, fictionalizing and commoditizing will be observed.

The conclusive chapter will summarize the argument built up in the thesis and conclude with results of this study.

## CHAPTER 2

### EVALUATION OF RAPE REPRESENTATION ON TELEVISION

Violence on mass media is such a mainstream theme that it is banal to even point out its existence. Michel Mourlet (in Bruder, 1998) claims that cinema is the most suitable art form for violence representation and violence itself. Perhaps television is a close second to cinema. Violence cannot be separated from everyday life; hence the television violence from television. Violence is demonstrated on newscasts, represented on television shows, in television movies, in television series, even in documentaries and so on.

All the images of violence represented in mass media do not have the same characteristics. There are two different images of violence represented in media texts: (1) factual violence and (2) fictional violence. Factual violence is the reflective image of real life violence demonstrated on newscasts, newspapers and sometimes in documentaries. Images of war, fights, disputes, murder and so on are factual violence. Fictional violence is an entirely different concept. John Fiske and John Hartley mention fictional violence as 'television violence'. They point out that "television does not present the manifest actuality of our society, but rather reflects, symboli-

cally, the structure of values and relationships beneath the surface.” (Fiske and Hartley, 1978: 24) Hence they argue that television violence and real violence are different. By television, they mean shows, movies, series and any other production that utilize fictional violence. To sum up, television violence is not a manifestation of real violence but rather a representation of it. George Gerbner (in Fiske and Hartley, 1978: 23) also underlines that if these violence representations exceed fiction and attempt to employ a ‘true to life’ approach, they will “falsify the deeper truth of cultural and social values.” Thus, fictional violence should be addressed as a symbolic representation; and, factual violence should be addressed as reality.

In the following chapter, aesthetics of filmic representation of rape is discussed. In an attempt to unveil the history of rape representation on television series and aestheticization techniques, various plot forms and how characters are created are argued. Under the light of these arguments, rape narratives on Turkish television will be criticized.

### **2.1. Aestheticization of Violence**

Aestheticization is an artistic mode that attempts to emphasize aesthetic values of a text whilst clouding the socio-cultural values it contains. Any text can be aestheticized by eliminating concepts that do not concern aesthetic values. For instance, Lilie Chouliaraki (2006: 261) explains how an image of violence is aestheticized in these words: “The Aestheticization of suffering on television is [...] produced by a visual and linguistic complex that eliminates the human pain aspect of suffering, whilst retaining the phantasmagoric effects of a tableau vivant.” Visual aestheticization and linguistic aestheticization of an image of violence normalize

and legitimize socio-cultural implications embedded into the text by shadowing them. On the other hand, it should be noted that, neither does the aestheticization of violence solely achieved by over use of violence (Bruder, 1998), nor does the aestheticization of violence renders a media text artistic.

There is a certain distinction between pleasure of aesthetic representation and apprehension of symbolic representation. David Thomson and Linda Williams (in Bruder, 1998) argue that there is a certain aesthetic value in these fictional images of violence that gives pleasure to an audience. While it is extremely problematic to justify why other people's pain gives pleasure to audience, one approach is that, it is "the pleasure of rational critique" or "serious pleasure" (Rutsky and Wyatt in Bruder, 1998) which suggests that there is a deeper meaning under the violence representations: a significance that renders images of violence necessary, well placed and perhaps well represented.

On the other hand, images of violence that offer "non- serious pleasure" do not incorporate any of the characteristics of images of violence that offer 'serious pleasure'. These images have no depth what so ever; they only offer fun and constitute shallow meanings. Audiences do not feel any engagement neither with the characters nor with their pain. Images fly by whilst audiences enjoy it. However, if a representation of violence gives an 'unserious pleasure', audiences might become uncomfortable and questions this pleasure (Thomas and Williams in Bruder, 1998) due to "anxiety in accepting violence on "purely" aesthetic grounds." (Rutsky and Wyatt in Bruder, 1998) Realization of symbolic representation of reality in these images of violence horrifies audience. Cinematic pleasure achieved by aestheticization of violence is destroyed by apprehension of symbolic representation.

Offering a level of violence which offers both serious and non-serious pleasure which is neither strong nor weak abolishes the distinction between cinematic pleasure and socio-cultural context. Representation of violence in current media texts attempt to eliminate this distinction by aestheticizing violence.

## **2.2. Generation of Rape Plot on Earlier Television Series**

Patriarchal ideology shapes many aspects of mass media because mass media is one of the major social domains in which patriarchal ideology is reproduced and reinforced in an Althusserian sense. Patriarchal rhetoric and images embedded in media texts reproduce and affirm this ideology. This was how a visual pleasure and satisfaction was offered to male audience and how these images become subconscious reminders of the dominant ideology to female audience during the earlier periods of representation of rape on television by utilization of psychoanalysis. In overall, earlier representations of rape on television series were based on offering fun and endorsing patriarchal ideology.

Television series, which have been an essential part of mass media for a long time, employed a straight forward patriarchal discourse. Audiences frequently encountered a male hero character. This male hero character was depicted as a perfect role model whom male audience could relate to whilst female audience could desire. In such contexts, a female character was represented as the prize of the hero. Since female audiences desired this hero character, they could easily relate to the female character that was ultimately offered as the prize. This aesthetic representation of a male hero was legitimized by his desirability for female audiences.

Cuklanz (3: 2000) points out that television series' discourse on rape was heavily shaped on dominant ideology between 1970's and 90's. According to a mainstream rape plot formula adopted in earlier television series, the male hero was generally the detective who assumed the role of savior and comforted the victim. (Cuklanz, 6: 2000) This hero's role was to punish the assailant in any way possible – including violence against the assailant. The mainstream rape plots formula demanded glorifying the savior hence taking revenge and punishing the assailant was a necessity. Thus, earlier discourse of rape on television aestheticized rape by introducing a desirable male hero and transforming the entire genre to romance or action.

In the early representations of rape on television series, the plot focused on the savior who avenged the crime rather than the rape problem itself or the experience of the rape victim. (Cuklanz, 6: 2000) "Patriarchy controls the image of woman, assigning it a function and value determined by and for men" (Cowie, 1997: 19) and this notion was utilized in these earlier rape representations by representing rape victims as inferior, vulnerable, helpless women. (Cuklanz, 99: 2000) Furthermore, these rape victims were depicted as antisocial, shy and single women. (Cuklanz, 102: 2000) Since these stories were more concerned with the heroism of the male character rather than the experience of the rape victim, the victims didn't take part in most of the scenes. The "victim's character and dialogue are structured to enhance a general focus on masculinity as the central plot theme." (Cuklanz, 99: 2000) Thus, as Chouliaraki pointed out, an aestheticization was achieved by eliminating visual representation of victim's pain.

### **2.2.1. Rape Reform and Feminism**

Hence the earlier representations of rape on television failed to paint a full picture which would urge a serious pleasure and solely focused on aestheticization and normalization; there was a gap to be filled in these representations. The actuality of rape was not even slightly represented in the earlier rape plot. In actuality, rape victims, unlike in the earlier rape plot employed in television series, suffered gravely. Myths encircling rape were built up by patriarchal society; moreover, these rape myths were the social norms before the rape reform.

Men's perspective on the subject was biased in various ways. Some men did not see rape as violence but rather as sex; they claimed that violence during sex was something a woman actually desired thus it was not a crime. (Scully, 1991: 164) Legally, situations which constituted rapes were very limited. Due to limited legal and social definitions of rape, many assailants escaped conviction. Also date rape and marital rape were not recognized as rape. In most cases date rape claims were weakened by argument that suggested victims knew their assailant prior to the attack, thus invalidating the claim. In other cases, women were accused of being provocative, drunk or under the influence of recreational drugs. Another normalized rape myth, before the rape reform, was that assailants were mentally disturbed or outcasts. It was assumed that no normal man would attempt to rape a woman.

Police forces believed that women fabricated most of the rape claims or attempted to take advantage of their excruciating experience. (Cuklanz, 2000:8) In some cases society blamed the victims instead of the assailants. For instance, in a rape case in the 1950's, Rosalee McGee, wife of the assailant, claimed that she was almost cer-



tain that it was not possible to rape a woman if she did not give her consent and that it was actually the so-called-victim who raped her husband. (Benedict, 1992: 32) In other cases, victims were accused of framing men. Furthermore, victims were accused by society of spending time with disturbed men. Women blamed themselves. Socially, victims were considered to be soiled. Out of shame, women could not even report the crimes against them. In overall, the general tendency in society was to blame the victim instead of the assailant and to justify assailant's actions.

Feminist rape reform offered an opposite perspective to this dominant rape discourse. According to feminists, rape is a humiliating and excruciating experience and victims are stigmatized once they come forward. Therefore, a woman would not want to be an outcast by accusing someone for rape. (Cuklanz, 2000:10) They also underline that no woman would ask to be raped. At this point, feminists claim that rape is not a natural formation, which would suggest that rape is not sexually motivated, but rather arises out of violent tendencies in men nourished by sexism and inequality in society. For instance, men want to punish women by raping them because they believe that some 'bad' women deserved this punishment. (Scully, 1991: 164) Another example is to conserve male dominance over females. For instance, in 1940's in United States, rape rates increased rapidly due to the fact that women started becoming a part of the public sphere and challenged men in the work place. (Benedict, 1992: 29) Feminists also point out that, unlike the social belief, assailants are not solely disturbed men. Cuklanz argues that many men, who would be considered to be normal in so many ways, also commit rape. (Cuklanz, 2000:10) Thus, justifying an assailant's actions by suggesting that he is an exception because he is not mentally 'normal' is highly criticized by feminists. Therefore, feminists claim

that rape is one of the various patriarchal agents used to reproduce patriarchal dominance over women and nourish sexism.

The feminist rape reform attempted to revolutionize rape discourse and this attempt also affected mainstream rape representations. Prior to the rape reform, rape representations nourishing from these rape myths- mainstream rape plot formula- were dominant rape representations on television. As discussed previously, there was a mainstream rape plot formula adopted in earlier rape representations in television series. This plot formula was not an accurate representation of rape on television but rather utilizing rape as a sub-plot to represent the heroism of the male character. Later representations of rape were not well-rounded, as well. They not only reproduced rape myths, but also act of rape remained invisible and a taboo. (Moorti in Projansky,2001: 90)

### **2.3. Rape on Turkish Television Series**

Gender is a very significant socio-cultural phenomenon. It plays a crucial role in the formation of both civil and political society. Initially, none of the genders are discardable because they are equally important in the organization of society; however in dominant social system all around the world called patriarchy, there is a male dominance over females. Michelle Meager explains that “Originally used to describe autocratic rule by a male head of family, patriarch has been extended to describe a more general system in which power is secured in the hands of adult men” (2011: 441). In other words, in the patriarch, women are dominated by men in every aspect of life. This is also the case in Turkey.

The dominant social system in Turkey is patriarchy and women suffer vastly from this system. When Güler Okman Fifek (1993:439) described the developing Turkey in 1993, she highlighted that “the culture can still be described as somewhat traditional, authoritarian, and patriarchal” in Turkey and there was a “gender hierarchy” in which “women are lower in value, prestige and power than men.” In 2012, nearly two decades after Fifek’s description, while Turkey is considerably developed in terms of politics and economics, gender inequality and discrimination still continue to exist. This socio-cultural underdevelopment nourishes from gender discrimination in workplace, socio-economic factors, education level and many more social inequalities between genders. (USAK Report, 2012: no 12-1)

One of the most common outcomes of this inequality between genders is violence. It has been verified by various studies that one out of three women in Turkey is subjected to physical and/ or sexual violence. (USAK Report, 2012: no 12-1) According to another study conducted by General Directorate of the Status of Women in 2008, 15,3% of women in Turkey encountered with sexual violence throughout their lives and 7,0% of them encountered with sexual violence in the last twelve months<sup>9</sup>. (Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey, 2008)

An increasing problem of sexual violence against women is reflected on television series, as well. There can be two featured reasons considered: either sexual violence against women has become normalized, thus embedding sexual violence into a television series’ plot; or, sexual violence against women context has become a frequently featured subject to attract attention to violence against women subject in

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<sup>9</sup> For further information see table 1 and table 2.

Turkey and to criticize it. Fiske and Hartley (1990: 29) point out that while murder is less frequent than rape in real life, media texts utilize murder in fictional productions more often. Thus, perhaps the latter is more plausible than the former.

A recent study by Sezen Ünlü and her colleagues observed the types of violence against women on contemporary Turkish television series. (Ünlü, Bayram, Uluyağcı, Bayçu, 2009) According to this study, sexual violence against women depicted on television series is 3,1 %. Ünlü and her colleagues (2009:100) define sexual violence varying from sexual implications to rape. According to the study, rape only constituted the 33,3 % of the sexual violence demonstrated on Turkish television series while sexual implications constitute 66, and 7% of the sexual violence. (Ünlü, Bayram, Uluyağcı, Bayçu, 2009: 100) But in the last three years (2009- 2012) what Ünlü and her colleagues have found might have been rendered insufficient because sexual violence against women on Turkish television series increased considerably.

In the recent years, sexual violence against women – especially rape- on Turkish television series became much more common. Various types of rape are demonstrated in Turkish television series: marital rape, date rape, gang rape. Also teenage girls being married for various reasons can also be counted as rape. For instance, a recent popular Turkish television series titled *Öyle Bir Geçer Zaman Ki* (2010), depicted a marital rape where ex-husband raped his ex-wife to take revenge after she refused to surrender. Again in another Turkish television series called *Ay Tutulması* (2011), there was an attempted marital rape scene. Husband was drunk and he attempted to rape his wife. In the remake of a movie first shot in 1982 *İffet* (2011), date rape was depicted. *İffet*, a young girl was raped by her boyfriend out of

lust. In another example, which is also the case study of this thesis, in the remake of a movie first shot in 1967, *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*(2010), the entire story is built up on gang rape. A peasant girl was gang raped by four strangers. In another television series, *Hayat Devam Ediyor* (2011) a teenage girl is married to a much older men. She is not only raped by his so-called old husband but her husband also beats him for not being 'eager' during sex/ rape.

To sum up, violence against women was and is still a problem in Turkish culture and there are a number of violence against women representations in Turkish mass media. It would be extremely wrong to assume that these representations solely reproduce, aestheticized, normalize or legitimize violence against women; these representations also make rape reality visible. *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* is one of these representations that makes rape reality visible and criticizes dominant rhetoric.

## CHAPTER 3

### *FATMAGÜL'ÜN SUÇU NE?*

*Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* is a Turkish television series which is also a remake of an earlier movie shot by Süreyya Duru in 1967 based on Vedat Türkali's screenplay. It aired between 2010 and 2012 on Kanal D, a Turkish television channel with one of the highest viewership, on every other Thursday for two seasons. Television series first aired on September 16, 2010. Within the time span this studies covers – since rape discourses studied in Turkish Newspapers was based on the rape scene in the first episode, further analysis of the rest of the series was not required – ten episodes aired. Director of the television series is Hilal Saral. Script of the television series are written by Ece Yörenç and Melek Gençoğlu.

The television series *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* became such a hot topic on newspapers and attracted media attention due to the gang rape scene in the first episode. Since rape discourses covered in this study originates from this scene, a detailed analysis of this scene in Vedat Türkali's screen play, Süreyya Duru's movie and finally in Hilal Saral's television series is rendered necessary.

First of all, it should be noted that the violence threshold of audience escalates throughout time. One cannot be expected to respond to an image of mild slap as

much after being exposed to an image of violent and bloody murder scene. According to the cultivation theory of George Gerbner (Trend, 2008: 13), audience get accustomed to highly violent depictions after years of exposure to violence and therefore their violence threshold increases. Thus, expecting similar responses to the depiction of Türkali's script in 60's and in 2010 would be an oversight. For one thing, Türkali barely describes the rape event. As it is noted previously, Türkali's main focus is not the rape event itself but its implications afterwards and as a criticism of the criminal code of Turkey. As a result, to compete with escalating violence threshold, to produce a much critical and striking argument and to prevent normalization of the event, film version and later on the television series version depict gang rape differently. Duru directs a bit more detailed, longer and graphic rape scene in the movie version. Finally, Saral's rape scene is the longest and most detailed depiction of them all, which initially triggered the discourses surrounding the television series.

### **3.1. The Original Script**

The rape event in the original script is not very detailed. A half-naked Fatmagül tempts the drunken boys. Without any notable difficulty, boys knock her down and one by one they rape her while singing rigmarole. (Türkali 2011: 21)

Türkali's main focus was on legal sanctions in Turkey in the 1960's. According to Turkish Criminal Law, code number 434, before it was revised, if an assailant married his victim, the punishment of the assailant for the crime of rape was postponed. Türkali, in his work, criticized this code. Due to this code, after Kerim and his four other friends gang rape Fatmagül, they are imprisoned. Three of the assailants –

Selim, Erdoğan and Vural- are sons of rich and influential families. The other assailant – Mahmut- is half witted. Therefore, the lawyers of three rich assailants convince Kerim that he has to marry Fatmagül so both him and the other assailants can be freed. It should be noted that while families of three rich boys are ashamed of what their sons did, they don't hesitate tricking Kerim into taking the blame and marrying his victim. It is also inferred that while Kerim is poor and apparently in debt (Türkali 2011: 28), he values his pride more than anything<sup>10</sup>. Thus, morality of poor versus rich is also underlined.

Fatmagül character is created based on stereotypes and dominant patriarchal ideology. Fatmagül does not act out, she does not rebel or condemn Kerim. She does not protest against the situation or try to get out of it. Fatmagül is portrayed as a weak, withdrawn, timid woman. After she is raped, she thinks of killing herself a few times; however it is pointed out that she gets scared and gives up. (Türkali 2011: 35) Without any further explanation, reader learns that Fatmagül accepted to marry one of her rapists. It is indicated that Fatmagül sees Kerim as a savior. During their marriage ceremony she thinks that he saved her (Türkali, 2011: 49) – probably from humiliation and being the woman who was raped and not wanted by her fiancé any more. Furthermore, she does not hold a grudge against Kerim. She believes that she became a burden for him and that he will make her life to hell for this reason. (Türkali, 2011: 49)

Kerim, on the other hand, reminds audiences of the male heroes in the earlier television series argued previously: he is the savior. He has to stand up to public humilia-

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<sup>10</sup> Lawyer does not bribe Kerim. Instead, he talks to Kerim's senses and tells him that out of five boys, he is the only one man enough to take responsibility and save his friends. (Türkali, 2011: 40)



tion for marrying a girl who was raped and soiled. For instance, after Kerim is released from jail, no one talks to him. He wonders whether it is because he raped Fatmagül or because he married her. (Türkali, 2011:50) At first he hates Fatmagül for being raped, being weak and being a burden on his shoulders. Later on, after raping Fatmagül again in a weak moment, he comes to his senses and employs the savior- hero role protecting Fatmagül from other people who also attempt to rape her<sup>11</sup> or harm her. So, in the end of the story, Kerim gets over humiliation, falls in love with Fatmagül and assumes the role of Fatmagül's savior and protector.

Türkali also utilizes rape myths. Psychoanalysis argues that women have a hidden masochistic tendency, seeking to be raped. (Scully, 1991: 42) This belief rationalizes male aggression during sex and justifies rape. Many men believe that rape is actually something the victim wants and desires. "Force is... a technique of seduction." (Scully, 1991: 164) After Fatmagül and Kerim are married, Kerim attempts to rape her a few more time – mostly out of hatred. One time, Kerim wants to have sex with Fatmagül, and she refuses, this behavior sexually arouses Kerim. (Türkali, 2011:90) Fatmagül's attempt to stop Kerim arouses lust; violence is used as a tool to instigate desire. Sexual violence is associated with romance and mutual desire.

In overall, the mainstream rape plot formula, which was argued previous, is employed, in the rape narrative in the original work of Türkali. Kerim and masculinity is the focus of the story while Fatmagül's character remains passive most of the time. Kerim is the savior and Fatmagül is depicted as weak, vulnerable and helpless.

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<sup>11</sup> In the original script, a number of people attempt to rape Fatmagül or say that they will also rape her because she is already soiled. It emphasizes that once Fatmagül publicly lost her virginity, she became somehow a public property and it is not important whether other villagers also rape her or not.

Assailants are unknown to her and throughout the entire work, she remains antisocial. It is the story of Kerim not Fatmagül. The rape victim and her experience is not the focus. Marital rape is normalized; rape is barely criticized. The entire work is based on former penalty code and its effects on Kerim's life; how he has to bear the outcomes and overcome the humiliation while other assailants break free.

### **3.2. Rape Scene In The Movie**

Rape event described in Türkali's script and the scene directed by Duru are different from each other; Duru shot a more detailed scene. Since the 'gang rape' event is the starting point of the whole story, Duru directed a more detailed and violent rape scene. Türkali says that at the time they shot the movie, the influence of Turkish porn industry was increasing. (Kızıldemir, 2010) Perhaps it is one of the reasons why movie depicted the rape event more graphically<sup>12</sup>.

At the beginning of the scene, five teenagers are sailing through inlets, drinking heavily. Meanwhile, Fatmagül is washing some rugs at the sea side by herself at one of the inlets. Her long skirt is lifted and tied up to her waist to keep it dry. But, as a result of this, her legs are bared, her white underpants are visible. Drunken teenagers come across Fatmagül while sailing. Her image whets their appetite. One after another, boys jump into the sea and start swimming towards her. When she realize she is in danger, Fatmagül tries to escape but one of the boys catches up with

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<sup>12</sup> Staring in the late 1960's with the increase of production costs, in the early 1970's, Turkish cinema was hit with economic crises which reduced the number of movies shot and lack of audience increased the extent of the problem (Arslan 2011: 21). Therefore, producers targeted a different kind of audience and soft-core comedies and porn movies were increased in late 60s and 70s. (Arslan 2011: 22) In an attempt to raise movies popularity and reach out to a variety of audiences, Duru might have chose to expand this rape scene by going into further detail.

her, pulling from her skirt, consequently knocking her down. Then, the same teenager takes of her skirt while she is struggling on the ground. She screams, but it only motivates the other four teenagers to jump in, as well. Boiling up in lust and excitement, they tear up all her clothes. While she begs them to stop, boys manage to take of her underwear. One of the boys start raping her... the audience is assured that the other four are in the line.

Beginning from the moment when one of the boys spots half-naked Fatmagül to the close up shot of the first rapist enjoying himself followed by a final aerial shot framing the whole situation, the entire rape scene lasts for one and a half minute while in the original script it no more than few lines.

Other than few alterations in the original script, the entire story is intact. Patriarchal discourse and stereotypes employed by Türkali are also employed by Duru. Also rape myths are put in to good use, such as the half-naked image of Fatmagül. Arguably, this image justifies her rape by reproducing rape myths because her half naked body seduces drunken boys. Another rape myth incorporated into this scene is that of drunkenness. The fact that boys rape Fatmagül under the influence of alcohol might justify the act; in their right minds, maybe they wouldn't have raped Fatmagül.

### **3.3. Rape Scene In The Television Series**

In the television series version directed by Hilal Saral, Fatmagül's rape scene is depicted much longer and extremely violent. In the series, rape scene of Fatmagül has extended from Türkali's few scripted lines to four minutes and forty seconds of depicted action. Perhaps, one of the most intriguing aspects of rape scene in the

series' was its length. Also, while there was less nudity in the television series version, there was definitely more violence. It can be argued that, as a whole, these aspects triggered *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*'s fame on Turkish newspapers and resulted in different rape discourse approaches. However, unlike Türkali and Duru, Saral is not deceived by patriarchal discourse while being unable to avoid reproducing rape myths.

In the television series, rape takes place in a different setting; Mahmut character is entirely removed; and the entire rape event is depicted in a very detailed way. After Selim's engagement party, Kerim, Selim, Erdoğan and Vural get drunk and take recreational drugs – which in terms of rape myths give them an excuse in advance. Four teenagers, drunk and under the influence of drugs, hang out at the beach in the middle of the night. Meanwhile, Fatmagül is rushing to the beach to see her fiancé Mustafa off to fishing – which in terms of rape myth offers an excuse to blame her. Fatmagül arrives to beach where drunken boys are hanging out. Kerim is the first one to spot her and shows her to his friends. When Fatmagül notices their presence, she realizes that something is wrong; feels threatened and starts running back. Laughing and shouting at her, boys start chasing after her. Selim waylays and the others surround her. Finally Kerim catches her. In an attempt to escape, Fatmagül bites his arms and starts running again. But this time Erdoğan catches her and pins her down while she screams and yells at him to let go of her. He covers her mouth with his hand and tells her to be quiet. At this moment, Fatmagül is terrified to death but boys are joking and laughing, not grasping the seriousness of the event yet. They pour alcoholic beverage all over her chest, grope her breasts and tear the top of her dress. They pour a second bottle of drink on her, while laughing and making jokes. But right after this moment, they become serious. Selim asks what

they are going to do with her and Erdoğan, with a determined expression, tears her underwear, unbuttons his trousers and rapes her. Fatmagül screams with terror which gives goose bumps. She cries for help. In the meantime, a very disappointed Mustafa is departing in a fishing boat. He looks for Fatmagül but cannot spot her. While Erdoğan rapes Fatmagül, the others stand right next to him watching without a sign of disgust or regret. They don't attempt to stop Erdoğan. She cries while Erdoğan looks into her eyes enjoying himself. Then, Selim climbs on top of her. His face is red and sweaty. He rapes her, as well. Next, it's Vural's turn. She cries, moans and gags while Vural rapes her. After each rapist is done with her, he cleans up in the sea. Fatmagül cannot move, her eyes are fixed at the sky. Kerim approaches Fatmagül, kneels down, she moans one last time and the scene fades out.

Television series' cinematographic preferences also establish a distinction from movie and script versions. One of the most important cinematographic aspects of the scene is: camera never forces the audience to see through assailant's eyes. Close ups and medium shots to Fatmagül's face are shot from the opposite side of assailants. There are only two point of view shots taken. One is from Fatmagül's perspective. In these shots, lust, violence and pleasure of the assailants are captured. Audience shares the experience of victim but not the assailant. Audience is forced to feel the extremity, horror and pain of the victim but not the pleasure of the assailants. The other point of view shot taken is from Kerim's perspective at the end of the scene. The shot is blurred and does not imply any sexual attraction to Fatmagül or desire to rape her. In most of the remaining shots, a low, tilted camera angle captures both Fatmagül and her assailants. These medium shots set the scene and offer a third person point of view. Entire rape scene consists of extremely short

cuts. Bruder (1998) points out that aggressive use of cinematography emphasizes the extreme violence occurring on screen. Thus, these extreme short cuts can be associated with extreme violence occurring on the scene. Also cross cutting is used to show a disappointed Mustafa leaving shore, thinking of Fatmagül. He remembers an earlier event. In the flashback Fatmagül smiles at him; a cross cut interrupts this scene with Fatmagül screaming while her assailant rapes her. Mustafa's flashback is like a reminder of Fatmagül's happy days, which are long gone now, in comparison to her present situation. It is like a tribute to her innocence in the eyes of her beloved for one last time. In overall, it can be argued that the rape scene in the television series is cinematographically very distinct from earlier movie production. To set the scene and represent violence, fear and pain Saral employs various cinematographic techniques. But most of all, Saral's version is far from visual aestheticization of rape. Instead of eliminating pain, disgust and terror, she confronts audience with these feelings.

### **3.4. After the Rape Scene: First Ten Episodes**

The time span of this study covers a time period in which only the first ten episodes of *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* aired. While the sole focus of newspaper pieces utilized in this study is the rape scene, for the sake of unity, these ten episodes will be summarized briefly, as well.

In the first episode, Fatmagül is violently gang raped by four strangers. In the morning, Meryem, who adopted Kerim after his mother killed herself and his father abandoned him, find Fatmagül lying at the beach in a comatose state. They don't know each other but Meryem is horrified by the sight she come across. She takes

Fatmagül to hospital. Fatmagül is traumatized; she cannot talk, she only cries. Military police starts an investigation. Doctors state that she was brutally raped. In the meantime, assailants start realizing the horrific crime they committed and fear strikes. At that point, Fatmagül's family is still in the dark. Fatmagül's sister-in-law, Mukaddes, who is an extremely inappropriate, indiscreet, malevolent woman, wakes up and realizes that Fatmagül is gone. She starts complaining about inappropriate behaviors of Fatmagül: how she has become disobedient, how neighbors will start gossiping about her and how this will soil their honor and so on. Fatmagül's brother is half withed and he does not approve what his wife has to say about Fatmagül. In short, after her family discovers that Fatmagül is in the hospital and that she was raped, Mukaddes generally blames Fatmagül. Fatmagül's brother protects her against Mukaddes. But in an attempt to find out the assailants, Mukaddes starts her own investigation. She finds out that three of the assailants are rich. She blackmails them and demands a huge sum of money in exchange for her silence. Meanwhile Fatmagül's fiancé Mustafa learns what happened. Benedict (1992: 17) points out "Among Muslims [...] a woman who has been raped is sometimes disowned by her fiancé or family for having brought them shame by becoming sullied and thus unmarriageable." While it is not always the case, it is partially the case in the television series: Mustafa cannot bear it and breaks the engagement. Thus, in the following three episodes, Fatmagül is disowned by her fiancé, blamed by Mukaddes and in addition the entire village starts talking behind her back.

Also how Kerim and Fatmagül accept to marry is explained in this version. Since Turkish Criminal Laws were already revised by the time the series aired, even if an assailant marries his victim, he is punished and since it is a gang rape, the rest of the

assailants would be punished as well. Therefore, rich assailants' lawyer convinces Mukaddes by bribing her as well as convincing Kerim by promising to send him to Germany and bribing him. Fatmagül realizes that she has lost the love of her life and now that she has been soiled, she will be rejected by society, as well. To stop the investigation, Kerim and Fatmagül tell that they were lovers, that it was not a rape case. They are married hastily and move to Istanbul so no one – especially Mustafa- can disturb them. In the fifth episode, Kerim and Fatmagül come to Istanbul and in the following five episodes, they start a life in Istanbul. Their families also move to Istanbul. Mukkades keeps making snide comments about Fatmagül even though she knows the reality. Fatmagül despises and hates Kerim. Meryem tries to understand why Kerim and Fatmagül lied; she realizes that Selim, Erdoğan and Vural are an also part of this but she cannot fully comprehend what happened. In the meantime, Mustafa is furious because he believes that Fatmagül fooled him and cheated on him. Therefore he makes plans to take revenge.

To sum up, in the episodes concerning this study, Fatmagül is gang raped, abandoned by her fiancé, forced to marry with one of her assailants, move to another city away from her previous life and obliged to live with her assailant and her unbearable sister-in-law.

### **3.5. Rape Myths**

Rape myths constitute a huge space in the story. Türkali, Duru and Saral all make use of rape myths in various occasions.

Duru's movie is based on Türkali's screen play, thus rape myths justified in both version are very similar. In Türkali's original screen play, recurring rape events link



sexuality, desire and lust to violence which ultimately lead to love. This eventually justifies one of the rape myths which suggest that women seek violence and take pleasure out of it and another which claims that rape is an expression of sexuality and desire. Also, the fact that initial gang rape occurs whilst boys are under the influence of alcohol ultimately justifies their action. This justification is also backed by rape myth that claims that no healthy man in his right mind would rape an innocent woman. The term innocent is the key in this claim because after Fatmagül is raped once, society sees no obstacles hindering them from raping her again. In Duru's extended version, the image of Fatmagül's half naked body reinforces a rape myth which claims that Fatmagül is the guilty party since her body seduced drunken boys. This gives them another excuse, other than being drunk, for raping her. In addition, she is at an isolated part of the town by herself and what happens to her can be justified based on her careless behavior, as well.

Television series version also fails to overcome rape myths. This time assailants are not also drunk but also under the influence of recreational drugs. In terms of rape myths, their actions can be justified. Also, Fatmagül is not at the beach in the middle of the day; she is there in the middle of the night which makes it convenient to criticize her actions furthermore and argue that her inappropriate and careless behavior justify what had happened. This change of setting in the series version intensifies the outcomes of her presence at the beach in the middle of the night.

### **3.6. Patriarchal Discourse**

Both in Türkali's original screenplay and in Duru's movie version, a straight forward patriarchal discourse is followed. Rape victim's story is overshadowed by

Kerim's story. As it is discussed at a length while Türkali's original screenplay is introduced, it should be noted further again that victim plays a little role in the entire plot. All the crucial events surround Kerim: he is forced to marry his victim, he is forced to live with her, he is humiliated and mocked by society, he has to bear all snide comments and fight back any rape attempt against Fatmagül, and so on and so forth. Fatmagül's character is a representation of the withdrawn, passive, innocent woman who doesn't have any power over her life, or a right to make decisions on her behalf.

In the television series version, however, patriarchal discourse which allows power to Kerim over Fatmagül is avoided. From the very beginning of the series, Fatmagül makes her own decision, never sees Kerim as a hero or her savior. Television series is determined to tell Fatmagül's story<sup>13</sup>, not Kerim's. Television series focused on the rape event and its aftermath in a different way than the original screen play and movie did; it focused on Fatmagül's experience, her feelings and her determination to overcome everything. Anna Marie Taylor (in Citron et al., 1978: 103) states that "feminist kind of filmmaking is the process of making the invisible visible." That is to say, a media text utilizing feminist approach attempts to make an issue visible, thinkable which is covered by dominant ideology. In Taylor's perspective feminist expression strives to expose dominant ideology by making hushed up issues visible and thinkable. While television series' approach to rape cannot be ultimately labeled as feminist<sup>1415</sup>, it can be claimed that the series attempt to make rape reality

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<sup>13</sup> When this study was concluded, television series had already ended. Therefore, this hypothesis that television series is telling Fatmagül's story is proven to be right.

<sup>14</sup> Also, it is not the concern of this thesis, which is why this issue is not discussed any further.

<sup>15</sup> It would be an oversight to argue that *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* is a feminist television series solely because the producer and the script writers are females. Series' "relationship to the mainstream is in

visible and thinkable. Instead of avoiding Fatmagül's story just like Türkali and Duru did, Saral focuses on Fatmagül's side of the story. In the television series it is attempted to unveil what happens to Fatmagül, unlike in the earlier basic mainstream rape plots which focused on male characters.

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part determined by who makes it but also by such factors as who it is made for, who finances it, who distributes it, and who exhibits it." (Lehman and Luhr, 2010: 304) Therefore, while Saral employs different aesthetic values, in overall her work is a part of mainstream media.

## CHAPTER 4

### RAPE DISCOURSES: *FATMAGÜL'ÜN SUÇU NE?* ON TURKISH NEWSPAPERS

All the news items used in this study are based on the same television series however; they employ different rhetoric and arguments because television series represent a different meaning for every newspaper, every reporter and every columnist. They all have different approaches because there is no one right meaning and one right approach to any media text. (Lehman and Luhr, 2010: 177) Their approaches might be affected by their “background, desires, and biases to it, and the cultural climate.” (Lehman and Luhr, 2010: 177) Therefore, the influence of patriarchal discourse, religious or patriarchal biases, feminist or masculine desires and backgrounds of newspapers are not overlooked during the process of discourse analysis. Not only the motives but also the factors that built up to the discourse of normalization of rape are regarded as evidence.

News items from *Hürriyet*, *Cumhuriyet*, *Posta*, *Radikal* and *Zaman* newspapers utilized in this study arise various questions: What should be represented on television, what should be written in newspapers and who should be responsible from monitoring all these? What are the boundaries of television and newspapers? Sky is not the

limit for sure, but then what is? Is there any aspect of life that is sensitive or private? In other words, is it morally and socially right to represent rape in television series or argue these images on newspaper; what are the boundaries in representing rape? Is rape a sensitive issue and if it is, than should it be a private issue that should not be viewed or argued publicly? As a result of these questions, there are various approaches employed on covering *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* in the newspapers.

#### **4.1. Sonorous Voice of Patriarchy: Silencing Rape**

In their introduction to *Rape and Representation*, Lynn A. Higgins and Brenda R. Silver claim that it is important to observe who talks about rape and who is silenced. Indeed it is very important to take into consideration who is talking about rape, what is their point of view, how they cover this subject as well as who is silent or silenced.

Feminist discourse encourages women to raise their voices in order to be heard. Also, feminist expression attempts to make invisible subjects visible. (Citron et al., 1978: 103) On the other hand, masculine perspective attempts to stigmatize representations that challenge patriarchal authority by rendering these subjects unspeakable and invisible issues. Rape is one of these issues that have been transformed in to a subject that is invisible, nay an unspeakable subject. Literary and visual representations of unaestheticized rape influence social positioning of genders in the society and allow the subject of rape to be thinkable. (Higgins and Silver, 1991: 3) Therefore, such representations of rape challenge patriarchal ideology in terms of existing rape myths and question their validity.

This clash between feminine and masculine discourses is also apparent in the case of *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*. Although television series fails to fully strip its narrative of rape myths, cinematographically speaking, it does not attempt to aestheticize rape and plot wise it does not fall in the mainstream rape representation plots. Saral attempts to speak about rape problem in Turkey through the television series. On the other hand, one of the dominant methods employed in media texts against *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*'s attempt to visualize and talk about rape is silencing rape reality by distorting feminist discourse, blaming the television series for encouraging rape and being disturbing and unhealthy for children.

#### **4.1.1. Distorting Feminist Discourse: Reproducing Patriarchal Discourse**

The main frame of the television series is based on a gang rape and its implications on the rape victim, assailants and all their friends and family. Television series attempts to shed a light to perception of rape in Turkey, justice system on rape, social conventions and attitudes towards rape victims. On the other hand it should be noted that it is a television series, a fiction. The violence of rape, the physiological violence towards Fatmagül and any other images of violence embedded into the series are television violence. As it has been argued before, it cannot and should not be mistaken for real violence. However, one of the rhetorical lines generated by some newspapers suggests otherwise. It is argued that *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* actually exploits women's body, presents and encourages a perverted sexuality and showing these images that are degrading for women is not only an attack to moral values of Turkish society but also offensive for women.

#### **4.1.1.1. Question of Two Feminist Rhetoric: To Represent or Not to Represent**

There are two distinct feminist rhetorical arguments on the subject of the representation of the act of rape: (1) representing the act of rape is crucial in feminist discourse; (2) this representation humiliates women and reproduces sexism. Taylor (in Citron et al., 1978: 103) argues that feminist approach attempts to make invisible, unspeakable subjects visible and speakable. Projansky have a similar approach to the case; she claims that lack of representing the act of rape hinders feminist perspective. However, Holly Henderson (2007: 227), in her article, questions whether feminist discourse reproduces normalization of rape discourse employed by patriarchy instead of offering a new point of view. Rene Heberle (in Henderson 2007: 227) suggests “what if emphasizing the strategy of piecing together our reality of rape culture through speak outs and detailed descriptions of experience [...] furthers the reification of masculinist dominance?” The underlying reservations in this loaded question are speaking about how rape shatters a woman’s life and how it is inevitable for many women might strengthen masculine power over women. Yet, Heberle and Henderson’s arguments fail to take into consideration those victims who were silences in many communities and therefore could not express themselves. Also, Heberle and Henderson’s arguments are solely based on female victims that consequently monopolize rape as a problem of women. Therefore, while Henderson’s (2007: 250) claim that speaking about rape does not prevent rape, not speaking about rape, victims and their experience may as well cover the existing reality. Thus, when both rhetorical strands are taken into consideration, it is not only a question of representing rape; how it is represented is also crucial. In terms of

*Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* case, how rape is represented and whether it reproduced patriarchal ideology are much negotiated issues.

After *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* started airing, various women's organizations started petitioning against the series due to the rape representation employed in the series. According to Zaman's news, Women's Culture and Solidarity Association of Turkey President Ayşe Serap Şahiner stated that it is rather disturbing that the television series defies the traditional family structure of Turkey, encourages a perception of women only as sex objects and forefronts sexuality. ("STK'lardan Bazı Dizilere," *Zaman*, 2010) Their main claim was that series was humiliating women and encouraging rape by representing act of rape. As Sujata Moorti in Projansky's book criticized the lack of the act of rape in earlier rape representations, this women's organization criticized *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* for representing the act of rape. Furthermore, act of rape was received as sexuality and a portrayal of a rape victim was – most problematically- interpreted as sexual objectification of women. Şahiner is a psychologist and therefore she might have attempted to discuss the television series in terms of its implications for real rape victims watching the series or perverted audiences taking pleasure out of such a scene. Although, it should be noted that there are no apparent indicators that this was her perspective.

It should be noted that audiences were already preoccupied with existing media texts advertising rape to attract attention to the series. Even before the television series aired, internet was overflowed with the rape scene from the Duru's movie and later on with the trailers of the upcoming television series. Newspapers – at least the ones utilized in this study – were also flooded with news items speculating on long anticipated rape scene. Thus, audiences were prepared to watch the television series



with curiosity and excitement. They were entirely unaware of the serious social problem the series were about to introduce and exhibit. Therefore the initial response of women's organizations may be considered as a response to these texts rather than the series itself.

Furthermore, before women's organizations started petitioning, two episodes of the series were already aired. During this period of time, newspapers paraded how it was wrong to represent act of rape on television, how it was hurtful for women's image in the society and that it was destructive for children. The denoted meanings in these news items were that any act of rape depicted on television were offensive for women; it was not ethical to represent these images, and so on. Thus the connoted meaning was, rape representation will encourage sexism; stimulate gender inequality; "your children are in danger"; and, "rape will become something normal in the society". In a way, newspapers employed distorted feminist discourse for two weeks until women's organizations in Turkey started raging against the television series.

In another instance, in the end of October 2010, *Hürriyet*, *Zaman*, *Radikal* and *Cumhuriyet* featured a news article regarding another women's organization. According to all three articles, Adana Women's Platform members demanded television series to be canceled. ("Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne? Meclis'te," *Hürriyet*, 2010; "Fatmagül'ü Meclis'e Şikayet Etiler," *Cumhuriyet*, 2010; "Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne Dizisi TBMM'ye Şikayet Edilecek," *Zaman*, 2010; "Kadınların 'Fatmagül' İsyanı," *Radikal*, 2010) Their poster read "Don't remain silent to rape; don't become a part of the crime". ("Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne? Meclis'te," *Hürriyet*, 2010; "Fatmagül'ü Meclis'e Şikayet Etiler," *Cumhuriyet*, 2010; "Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne Dizisi

TBMM'ye Şikayet Edilecek," *Zaman*, 2010; "Kadınların 'Fatmagül' İsyanı," *Radikal*, 2010) According to the articles, Adana Women's Platform members argued that after *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* started airing, rates of rape crime against women increased<sup>16</sup>; therefore they claimed that series was responsible for this increase and that series legitimized this crime. ("Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne? Meclis'te," *Hürriyet*, 2010; "Fatmagül'ü Meclis'e Şikayet Etiler," *Cumhuriyet*, 2010; "Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne Dizisi TBMM'ye Şikayet Edilecek," *Zaman*, 2010; "Kadınların 'Fatmagül' İsyanı," *Radikal*, 2010) After protesting the series, members of the women's organization wrote a letter to the Turkish National Assembly requesting series' cancelation. ("Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne? Meclis'te," *Hürriyet*, 2010; "Fatmagül'ü Meclis'e Şikayet Etiler," *Cumhuriyet*, 2010; "Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne Dizisi TBMM'ye Şikayet Edilecek," *Zaman*, 2010; "Kadınların 'Fatmagül' İsyanı," *Radikal*, 2010)

The articles featuring Adana Women's Platform's protest in *Hürriyet* and *Zaman* newspapers ends here, but the article in *Cumhuriyet* newspaper continues with an additional news subject. Nazan Sakallı, a female lawyer in İzmir, organized a press conference and argued that act of rape representation on *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* was transformed in to a sexist attack in mass media. ("Fatmagül'ün Meclis'e Şikayet Etiler," *Cumhuriyet*, 2010) She pointed out that they were not against depictions of violence against women on television series and films. She claimed that visibility of an act of rape representation on television was confused with sexuality by society and mass media is responsible for this confusion. ("Fatmagül'ün Meclis'e Şikayet

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<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that there are not any physical evidence that television series contributed to sexual aggression and rape events occurring in the aftermath of the rape scene. Also, there is not any evidence that number of rapes actually increased after the television series aired. Therefore, at best, it can be argued that existing incident became visible in the mass media or started to stand out.

Ettiler,” *Cumhuriyet*, 2010) She also asked the producer, script writers and actors involved in the production of *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?* to speak up and stand up to distorted messages circulating in the mass media (“Fatmagül’ün Meclis’e Şikayet Ettiler,” *Cumhuriyet*, 2010)

The resource of all three news articles featured in *Zaman*, *Cumhuriyet* and *Hürriyet* is Anadolu Agency, an independent news agency. Therefore, while each newspaper used their own title, articles are same. Yet, the additional news featuring lawyer Nazan Sakallı’s press conference is only reported in *Cumhuriyet*. While it is not likely to determine why *Zaman* and *Hürriyet* excluded this news, it is an evidence to how newspapers shape and distort the message of *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?*. Throughout the news items examined in this research, the sole news item regarding how a women’ organization or an individual woman support the series is this one on *Cumhuriyet*.

To sum up, rather than how rape is represented in the television series, arguments of women’s organizations are based on – rather problematic - perception of rape as sexuality and on the representation of the television series in other media texts. Therefore the initial response of women’s organizations cannot be attributed to any of the two feminist rhetorical arguments outlined in the beginning of the section; they don’t concern themselves with whether representation of rape reproduces patriarchal discourse or bears a feminist point of view.

#### **4.1.2. Encouraging Rape**

Representations of violence on the TV screen ‘are not violence but messages about violence’: but we [...] continue to research the ques-

tion of violence, for example, as if we were unable to comprehend this epistemological distinction (Hall, 1973: 131).

There is a significant disagreement within media studies on the effects of media on the watching audience. Those who adopt the effects model claim that media have a considerable effect on audience's behavior and way of thinking. Those who oppose to effects model claim that there are no conclusive results. British media theorist David Gauntlett (1998: 120) in his *Ten Things Wrong with the 'Effects Model'* goes even further and claims that "after over sixty years of a considerable amount of research effort, direct effects of media upon behavior have not been clearly identified, then we should conclude that they are simply not there to be found." While television violence has an ad hoc effect of arousal on audience, there are no long term results of this arousal. For one thing, "violent television fare contains little personally relevant content." (Gans, 1980: 61) Therefore, lack of direct relation between aggression and media points out that, violence should be studied within the context of society and social issues. (Gans, 1980: 58) Thus, while some claim that mass media increases and nourishes violence there are no specific results that prove this hypothesis to be true.

One of the questions frequently raised by news articles and columns regarding the television series is whether the *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* encourages rape or not. The main claim, especially employed by Zaman newspaper is that series does in fact encourage rape. There are a variety of articles featuring how *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* increases rape desire and corrupts society's ethical and moral values. A number of these articles quote psychology doctors and researchers which would confirm their claims further. In overall, newspaper articles claim that the television series has a

very hazardous effect on audience and act of rape should not be represented on television for the sake of mental health of audience.

Gans (1980: 58) suggests that violence should be examined in the context of society. Feminist rape reform claims that rape is not an outcome of sexual desire but rather “a political act that indicates nothing about male sexuality.” (Symons in Palmer, 1988: 512) The general feminist claim is that rape is used as a means of dominating women but it is not solely due to sexism or masculinity but also due to a desire of attaining a woman whom they cannot attain in conventional methods. (Bercovitch in Palmer, 1988: 515) Due to Gans’ suggestion and feminist rhetoric’s claim, rape is not an act of lust or sexuality. However, some of the news articles criticizing *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?* mistake rape for sexuality, as in the case of women’s organizations discussed previously.

Yusuf Bülbül (2010c), in his article published in Zaman newspaper argued how *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?* and similar television series affect audience. In the article, he quotes a number of audiences. One of the audiences, when he is asked if it is right to present such images on television, says that violent and sexual content should be filtered. (Bülbül, 2010c) Another audience answers the same question by stating that the concept of privacy is violated. (Bülbül, 2010c) These audience responses also demonstrate that rape is mistaken for sexuality by audiences as well.

Another article in Zaman newspaper by Naci Bostancı (2010), who is a media scholar, claims that rape representation in *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?* was pornographic. Bostancı (2010) claims that audiences employ a voyeuristic point of view. He questions if the television series is attempting to encourage audiences to relate to their darkest pornographic and sexual desires. (Bostancı, 2010) He claims that

*Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* is an odd sexual story and perhaps society has an appetite for such stories. (Bostancı, 2010) Finally Bostancı (2010) claims that if the actress in the television series is beautiful, attractive and innocent looking, then there is certainly a connotation to perverted sexual desires such as rape.

In another news article, a guest who attended a television program on Turkish Radio Television channel is quoted. Prof. Dr. Nilüfer Narlı (in “Sosyolog Nilüfer Narlı,” *Zaman*, 2010) criticizes rape representation on *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*. She claims that one or two decades ago, rape was presented in media texts as if it was a positive and desirable thing but now she thought that approach to rape representation would had changed, but she found out otherwise. (“Sosyolog Nilüfer Narlı,” *Zaman*, 2010) The most striking claim of Narlı is that the television series creates an assumption that rape is also desired by women and rape is perceived as a sexual fantasy. (“Sosyolog Nilüfer Narlı,” *Zaman*, 2010) Likewise, women’s organizations protesting against *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*, argue that the television series is commodifying women body and putting sexuality forward. (“STK'lardan Bazı Dizilere,” *Zaman*, 2010)

Approaches in all three articles claim that there is an apparent sexuality promoted in the rape scene and it may encourage sexual misbehaviors or rape. Arguably, all three articles unite on the idea that rape scene is not a representation of violence but rather a representation of morbid sexuality. While discourses employed in the television series are not a concern of this study, in various occasions, it has been argued that rape is not sexuality. Furthermore, as it is apparent in the detailed cinematographic and context descriptions of the rape scene in the third chapter, rape scene

does not constitute sexuality or encourage rape by arousing audiences' appetite in any ways.

Deniz Ülkütekin (2010a) in her column in Cumhuriyet newspaper explains the reason why rape is mistaken for sexuality and why the scene is criticized for encouraging rape. She sheds light on why Turkish society became restless over a rape representation on television. She points out that while some of the audiences perceive rape as violence, there are others who perceive it as the sexuality missing in their lives. Therefore, she underlines that those who took pleasure from the rape representation in *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* or attracted attention to the possibility of a pleasure component embedded in the series is most likely to suffer from lack of sexuality or a repressed sexuality. (Ülkütekin, 2010a)

While Ülkütekin's approach to the situation may be a little too harsh and a bit of an overgeneralization which accuses every audience who interpreted rape scene as sexuality, her ultimate point about hunger for sexuality repressed by attacking any image evoke sexual feelings may be accurate. Because, interpreting rape as sexuality and rape victim as a portrayal of a beautiful woman who evokes sexual desire cannot be justified without overlooking the underlying sexual desires the commenter has.

In an interview with Buğra Gülsoy, who plays one of the assailants in the television series, Gülsoy underlines that rape representation in the television series was not erotic. (Turgud, 2010d) In the interviews published in Hürriyet newspaper, Gülsoy argues that they attempted to portray the horribleness and disgustingness of rape. (Turgud, 2010d) He also notes that the reason why Fatmagül is raped in the televi-

sion series is not out of lust but because of mental instability of the assailants who were under the influence of alcohol and drugs<sup>17</sup> at that moment. (Turgud, 2010d)

Although news articles and reader comments are more than enough to exhibit how a particular rape representation on television is received as a grave threat to religion, Turkish family structure and mental health, the most striking of all is claims of Halide Incekara, member of Turkish National Assembly. In one of her speeches, she claimed that the screen writers of *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* cannot be mentally healthy and sane because only a mentally disturbed person could attempt to write about such perverted and dark events. (“Akıl ve Ruh Sağlığımız,” *Hürriyet*, 2010) She also claimed that Beren Saat must be mentally disturbed to portray a rape victim on screen. (Semercioğlu, 2010h) Of course her claims were highly criticized by columnists and the screen writers themselves. (“Akıl ve Ruh Sağlığımız,” *Hürriyet*, 2010; Semercioğlu, 2010h) Nevertheless arguing that the writers of a fictional work which actually attempts to discuss rape reality in Turkey are perverted and mentally unstable not only silences feminist rape discourse but also legitimizes arguments on whether the television series encourages perversion and rape.

In overall, while some newspaper articles claim that *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* encourages rape, media studies show that there are no apparent relation between violence on television and violent behavior of individual. Television plays a much smaller role in nourishing violence than it would be expected by effects studies. (Gans, 1980:58) Because violence is not something that can solely be encouraged by me-

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<sup>17</sup> While attempting to avoid the rape myth which claims rape is a manifestation of sexual desires either on the side of the victim or the assailant or both, Gülsoy falls back to another rape myth which claims that no man in his right mind would rape a woman. Since rape myths utilized in the television series is not a concern of the study, this won't be argued further more. But for rape myths utilized in the television series, see page 43.



dia. (Gauntlett, 1998: 121) Claiming that a single act of rape representation on a television series has increased the number of rapes is absurd. Fiske states that “social change does occur, ideological values do shift, and television is part of this movement. It is wrong to see it as an originator of social change, or even to claim that it ought to be so.” (Fiske in Cuklanz, 2000: 13) Furthermore, claims regarding how the series tempts audience’ sexual desires and encourages rape are also invalidated due to the fact that rape is not sex, it is a crime and therefore it is not and cannot be sexual. Thus, it can be argued that neither by sexually tempting nor by implanting violence, audience is encouraged to rape.

#### **4.1.3. Conditioning Audience: You Should Complain!**

Between 16<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> of September 2010, *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?* received two thousand and nine hundred twenty (2920) complaints. ( “Tecavüz ve Eşcinsel İlişkiye,” *Radikal*, 2010; “RTÜK’ten İki Diziye Uyarı,” *Cumhuriyet*, 2010; “İki Diziye Uyarı,” *Hürriyet*, 2010; “RTÜK’ten İki Diziye Uyarı,” *Zaman*, 2010) While it is possible that audience misjudged the pilot episode or that they made a *negotiated reading* but there is also one other possible reason why television series received so many complaints: audiences were conditioned to complain.

It should be noted that the assumption that audience was conditioned to complain is solely based on rhetoric present in news items. Therefore, it does not go further than a hypothesis.

In the simplest terms, social conditioning is altering or modifying how individual or society behaves or responds in specific situations. It has been found out that “subliminal presentation of emotionally charged messages can trigger unconscious

thoughts and feelings and thus alter behavior.” (Silverman in D’Angelor, 1986: 162) It is also pointed out that ‘motivation’ and ‘ability’ are the most important factors in conditioning. (Anastasio, Rose and Chapman, 1999: 154) As it will be seen in the following argument, newspapers generate emotionally charged messages, motivate the audience by giving them various reasons to complain and those who are open to conditioning – which means who are able to modify or alter their reactions and behaviors- complained about the television series<sup>18</sup>. Cengiz Semerci (2010j) in one of his columns points out that the number one promoters who urge audience to complain about Turkish television series are columnists themselves.

Zaman newspaper is the number one advocate of Radio and Television Supreme Council when it comes to *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?*. When the news items regarding *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?* in Zaman newspaper were examined, it has been found out that, in four different articles the telephone number of Radio and Television Supreme Council is mentioned. (Oruç, 2010; Cüvelek, 2010; “STK’lardan Bazı Dizilere,” *Zaman*, 2010; “TBMM Dilekçe Komisyonu,” *Zaman*, 2010) In these news items, audiences are cautioned and motivated to complain about the series. In the first news item, Oruç (2010) asks ‘sensible citizens’ to complain about the series. In the second item, Cüvelek (2010) points out that, even broadcasting organizations are complaining. In the third item, it is states that ‘families’ should complain. (“STK’lardan Bazı Dizilere,” *Zaman*, 2010) In the last item, telephone number is given as information about the call center of Radio and Television Supreme Council. (“TBMM Dilekçe Komisyonu,” *Zaman*, 2010) Out of eighteen (18) news items

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<sup>18</sup> This argument does not contradict with the argument in the previous section which dismisses effects model due to lack of evidence. Conditioning utilizes emotionally charged messages – which in many cases address to a certain already existing idea in the mind of the audience- to motivate people into behaving in a particular way.

utilized from Zaman newspaper, ten (10) articles mention Radio and Television Supreme Council. In these ten (10) articles, the word RTÜK (Radio and Television Supreme Council) is used forty three (43) times.

One of the most significant news items on Zaman newspaper that contributes conditioning audience is published right before Radio and Television Supreme Council declared complaint rates and numbers. The title of the news item is “Radio and Television Supreme Council Should Immediately Take Action Against Television Series that Praise Rape.” (2010) In the article, Zaman claims that Radio and Television Supreme Council does not have jurisdiction therefore, they cannot prevent act of rape representations on television. (“Tecavüzü Öven Dizilere,” *Zaman*, 2010) Zaman newspaper quotes Prof. Dr. Cahide Aydın, head of Ege University department of Children’s Mental and Physical Health. Aydın argues that extensive exposure to such images affects perception of children negatively. (“Tecavüzü Öven Dizilere,” *Zaman*, 2010) Later on in the article, head of İzmir division of Turkish Women’s Union is quoted. She claims that act of rape representation was too severe that airing and circulating such images should be controlled constantly. (“Tecavüzü Öven Dizilere,” *Zaman*, 2010) Finally, an unnamed senior Radio and Television Supreme Council personal is quoted. According to the unnamed personal, they cannot take any actions because laws are hindering them. If they want to take action, they have to invoke the Disagreeable to Turkish Family Structure code but they cannot because “there are some people who live freely and there are others who are trying to fulfill their religious duties.” (“Tecavüzü Öven Dizilere,” *Zaman*, 2010) Finally, he asks from sensible citizens to call the call center of Radio and Television Supreme Council and complain. (“Tecavüzü Öven Dizilere,” *Zaman*, 2010)

When this particular news item is studied closely, a number of highly charged messages encoded into the text become visible. For instance, quotations are taken from a doctor, a women's organization head and a Radio and Television Supreme Council personal. Thus, people quoted in the article are reputable, influential and trustworthy people. Furthermore, doctor claims that rape representation is harmful for children. This triggers maternal instincts. Than a women's organization head claims that the image in the television series was disturbing. Audiences are led to make a connection between disturbing rape image and women which in return motivates the audience to oppose to the sexism and gender inequality utilized and promoted in the television series. Finally, unnamed Radio and Television Supreme Council personal makes a distinction between religious people and those who do not live up to religion. At this point, it would not be an oversight to argue that, this person actually points out religious people would object to act of rape representation. Thus, in one single article, children, women and religion objects are used to motivate and condition audience to complain.

No longer than a week later, Radio and Television Supreme council imposed a penalty to Kanal D for broadcasting *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*. According to the news article published in Zaman, Hürriyet, Radikal and Cumhuriyet, television series was penalized for violating the article 4 of code 3984. According to this code, promoting violence and discrimination against women, weak, disabled and children and broadcasting programs that might damage physical, mental and moral development of children and youth on family time is forbidden. ("Tecavüz ve Eşcinsel İlişkiye," *Radikal*, 2010; "RTÜK'ten İki Diziye Uyarı," *Cumhuriyet*, 2010; "İki Diziye Uyarı," *Hürriyet*, 2010; "RTÜK'ten İki Diziye Uyarı," *Zaman*, 2010)

As a result, conditioning audience into complaining about the television series to Radio and Television Supreme Council is, thus, achieved. According to Zaman, Radikal and Cumhuriyet newspaper's articles, *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* was one of the three most complained television series. ("İşte RTÜK'ün Belalı," *Radikal*, 2010; "RTÜK'e En Çok Bihter," *Zaman*, 2010; "Bihter, Fatmagül, Türkan," *Cumhuriyet*, 2010) According to the articles, the results reported concerns the time between January 2010 and September 2010. ("İşte RTÜK'ün Belalı," *Radikal*, 2010; "RTÜK'e En Çok Bihter," *Zaman*, 2010; "Bihter, Fatmagül, Türkan," *Cumhuriyet*, 2010) Since *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* aired in September, results are only including the first three episodes broadcasted on the first month. Radio and Television Supreme Council received four thousand eight hundred and eight(4808) complaints regarding the television series. ("İşte RTÜK'ün Belalı," *Radikal*, 2010; "RTÜK'e En Çok Bihter," *Zaman*, 2010; "Bihter, Fatmagül, Türkan," *Cumhuriyet*, 2010) 26% of these complaints demanded the series to be canceled; 24% claimed series was derogative to Turkish Family Structure and Morals; 17% of the complaints claimed that series was damaging for children and youth. ("İşte RTÜK'ün Belalı," *Radikal*, 2010; "RTÜK'e En Çok Bihter," *Zaman*, 2010; "Bihter, Fatmagül, Türkan," *Cumhuriyet*, 2010) News articles also underline that for the first time in broadcasting history in Turkey, complaints regarding violence against women in television series criteria hit 99%. ("İşte RTÜK'ün Belalı," *Radikal*, 2010; "RTÜK'e En Çok Bihter," *Zaman*, 2010; "Bihter, Fatmagül, Türkan," *Cumhuriyet*, 2010)

## 4.2. Trivializing Rape: Sensationalizing, Fictionalizing and Commodifying Rape Representation

Trivializing an important subject is, in the simplest terms, rendering the subject in question insignificant. By minimizing the significance of the subject at hand, a certain level of denial and euphemism are achieved. Trivializing manipulates the perception of the subject at hand and somehow normalizes it.

Trivialization of rape is “ignoring bite marks, the knife, the rope, the broken glass, hands that choke and the tyranny of uncontrolled power.” (Kitzinger, 2002: 207) Therefore, the horrors of violence involved in rape as well as its consequences are rendered insignificant by ignoring these facts. Trivialization of rape representation is not very different than trivialization of rape itself. Rape representations that criticize patriarchal rape discourse, that vividly represent the violence, that shades light to experiences of rape victims and points out ridiculous rape myths promoted in society are ignored in trivializing rape representation. Ignorance and trivialization of rape encourage assailants to continue their actions “in a conspiracy of silence.” (Kitzinger, 2002: 208) The same is applicable to rape representations. Ignorance and trivialization of rape representations encourage patriarchal rape discourse<sup>19</sup> to dominate society in a conspiracy of power and silence.

In an attempt to market the television series, some newspapers trivialized rape representation. 59, 25% of the news featuring *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* are published in the magazine sections of newspapers. In other words, ninety six (96) news items out

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<sup>19</sup> Rape myths utilized in the television series which favor patriarchal rape discourse and trivializes rape by offering excuses won't be taken into consideration, since only the discourses of newspapers are this study's concerns.

of one hundred and sixty two (162) news items used in this research were magazine news. That is to say, *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* became a magazine product. By doing so, rape is trivialized and normalized.

In the following sections, how rape is trivialized by sensationalizing, fictionalizing and commodification in an attempt to market the series will be discussed. It should be noted that whether normalization of rape discourse is employed in a conscious or an unconscious level in these news articles are questionable. It can be argued that the sole aim is marketing the television series or it can be argued that there are connoted messages of normalization of rape. In either ways, these news articles trivialize rape by sensationalizing, fictionalizing and commodification.

#### **4.2.1. Sensationalizing Rape**

Sensationalism is defined as “a commercial product, built on the exploitation of modern mass media” (Wiltenburg, 2004: 1378); “market driven journalism” (Vettehen, Noijten and Beentjes, 2005: 283) and “attention grabbing and emotionally arousing” media texts. (Grabe et al. in Vettehen, Noijten and Beentjes, 2005: 283) The key concepts in sensationalism are marketing and emotionally charged messages that grab attention. Emotion is one of the most important components of reception and especially crime related news appeal to emotions of audiences rather than their ration. (Wiltenburg, 2004: 1378) As it was argued previously, emotionally charged messages also easily modify behavior and responses towards any media text. As a result, sensationalism of an event in media texts is seen as an emotionally charged, manipulative, biased and a commercial practice. “Tabloid packaging” is

one of the categories that constitutes sensationalism and attracts attention. (Vettehen, Noijten and Beentjes, 2005: 284, 285)

Sex, violence, crimes and scandals are considered to be the most sensationalized pieces of news. (Vettehen, Noijten and Beentjes, 2005: 288; Wiltenburg, 2004: 1379) Therefore, *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* is sensationalized in so many levels by newspapers due to its act of rape representation. Throughout the time the series was promoted – before the pilot episode aired- especially *Hürriyet* and *Posta* sensationalized the series to build up to the rape scene and to attract attention to the series.

#### **4.2.1.1. Building Up To The Series: Previous On Screen Sex Scenes**

During the building up period before the pilot episode of *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* aired, some newspapers features articles about Saat's previous sex scenes in various productions. For instance, the earliest news item regarding *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* newspaper is about Beren Saat's earlier on screen sex scenes in various other movies and television series and how they were already popular and now audience will talk about her new gang rape scene. (“Bu Kez de Tecavüz,” *Hürriyet*, 2010; “Bu Kez de Tecavüz,” *Posta*, 2010) The news article also underlines that one of her earlier sex scenes was so explicit that Radio and Television Supreme Council warned the producers. Another news article released in April 27, 2010 *Hürriyet* calls attention to Saat's earlier role as Bihter on one of the most popular Turkish television series. (“Beren'in Yeni Rolü,” *Hürriyet*, 2010) In this television series, Saat was playing the part of a young married woman who falls in love with his husband's nephew and cheats on her husband with him. The sex scene in this series became a huge sensation at the time it aired. By referring to Saat's earlier on screen sex



scenes and sensationalizing them, the upcoming rape scene was promoted in Hürriyet and Posta newspapers.

#### **4.2.1.2. Building Up To The Series: Promoting Curiosity**

Apart from previous on screen sex scenes of the lead actress, words and phrases such as “audience are curiously waiting the series”, “most anticipated series”, “next hit on television” are widely used in news articles regarding *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?*. As discussed previously, these phrases also situate audience and condition them to be curious and watch the pilot episode. In all the news articles published in Hürriyet, Zaman and Posta before the release of the pilot episode, it is mentioned that Fatmagül is going to be raped. Even though the series is a remake of a previous movie, audiences were curious to watch Fatmagül being raped. Rape scene was sensationalized by raising expectations, by attracting attention to rape event and by referring to the rape scene in the movie.

#### **4.2.1.3. Who is Raped Better?**

Perhaps the most sensational piece of news published in the newspapers is about determining the best rape scene. As it was pointed out earlier, a movie version of Türkali’s screen play was released in 1967. In this production, Hülya Avşar played Fatmagül. In the television series released in 2010, Beren Saat plays Fatmagül. Both Avşar and Saat are popular actresses of their times. Even before the television series aired, rape scene in the movie was re-released in various web sites, including Hürriyet. Hülya Avşar - perhaps in an attempt to take part in *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?* discussions and add up to suspense- made a comment about how her rape scene was

much better than Saat's. ( "Ben Daha Güzel Oynadım," *Hürriyet*, 2010; Turgud, 2010b) Previously, Avşar commented that during the time she took part in movies, they did not put a pillow between the actors in sex and kissing scenes. ("Benim Zamanımda Yastık," *Hürriyet*, 2010; "Benim Zamanımda Yastık," *Posta*, 2010) Avşar also stated that rape scene in the movie was not really violent but much more exciting and it was not hard for her to take part in that scene – which ultimately belittles the rape event all together as well as ignoring the patriarchal rape discourse employed in the movie. ("Benim Zamanımda Yastık," *Hürriyet*, 2010; "Benim Zamanımda Yastık," *Posta*, 2010) Later on Avşar's comment on how her rape scene was better transformed in to a very sensational and highly debated subject in mass media. Avşar's comment and debates on whose rape scene was better became viral in a short time and it was generally criticized and mocked in many news articles. (Baştürk, 2010a; Gedik, 2010; Sökmensüer, 2010; Hakan, 2010a) On the other hand, at one point even Vedat Türkali participated in these debates and claimed that Saat was okay but Avşar was much better. (Kızıldemir, 2010)

Especially during the building up period, rape representation in *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* was highly sensationalized. Representation of the act of rape itself is already emotionally charged, let alone gang rape. Also by embedding sexual connotations into news articles about *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*, its sensational components were marketed. However, by sensationalizing it, violence of rape was brilliantly concealed in the tabloid packaging. Therefore, audience's expectations were built up based on previous sexual scenes of the leading actress, previous rape scene on the movie and how this scene is raising the curiosity of audience. Rape was normalized in the context of sensationalism and therefore trivialized. However, it should be noted that the sensationalizing rape was not an attempt to attack feminist discourse

by favoring patriarchal discourse or the render the issue of rape trivial. It was an attempt to advertize the upcoming television series.

#### **4.2.2. Fictionalizing Rape**

Fictionalism is an approach to theoretical matters in a given area which treats the claims in that area as being in some sense analogous to fictional claims: claims we do not literally accept at face value. (Nolan, 2011). Previously fictional and factual representations of violence on television were discussed. As Fiske and Hartley (1978: 24) argued, fictional violence is television violence which is not real but only a symbolic reflection of reality. But it should be noted that there is a significant difference between fictional representation of rape and fictionalization of rape. Fictionalization is transforming an event based on facts to a fictional form. Fictionalizing it is not only trivializes rape but also silences rape and renders act of rape fictional.

##### **4.2.2.1. Being Raped Just Like Fatmagül**

Television series attempts to discuss the rape reality in Turkey while news items regarding real rape events to cover its urgency or trivializes rape reality by comparing the real event to the fictional rape in the television series. Any girl who was gang raped is compared to Fatmagül. The real rape victim is refers to as ‘another Fatmagül’. In Hürriyet, Posta and Radikal newspapers, this kind of phrases were regularly used especially in articles between September and November 2010. One of the striking points of this issue is that sometimes there are not any resemblances between the real events and the television series at all. Also, while there are many Turkish television series depicting rape, none of the real rape victims are referred by other series characters’ name. Furthermore, morality of generalizing rape victims by

calling them ‘another Fatmagül’ which strips them from their identities and uniting them as ‘rape victims’ are also questionable.

“Just like Fatmagül” a half-wit girl living in Aydın was raped by three assailants. (Anter and Yıldırım, 2010a; Anter and Yıldırım, 2010b; “Fatmagül’ün Hikayesi Gerçek,” *Radika*, 2010) This news article circulated by an independent news agent and published in *Hürriyet*, *Radikal* and *Posta* newspapers. According to the news article, there were solely two resemblances between the event and the television series: victim was engaged and she was gang raped. Other details of the rape were significantly different from the television series: she was kidnapped, repeatedly raped and beaten up. While there are no significant resemblance between the series and the event, news agency preferred to title the event as “Just like Fatmagül”. The rape event is an independent event apart from the series. But by comparing it to the series, the event is fictionalized as if it is not reality but an example to a fictional claim.

The following day “Another Fatmagül Event From Adana” and “Fatmagül’s Story Became Real” were published in *Hürriyet* and *Radikal* newspapers. (Kaymak, 2010; “Her Gün Yeni,” *Radikal*, 2010) The same event titled differently in two newspapers depicted another rape event in Adana. There are no other similarity between the television series and the event other than it being a gang rape. A girl who sleeps with her boyfriend is denied by her parents due to being ‘soiled’. She runs away to her boyfriend. Her boyfriend along with three of his friends rapes her repeatedly. The horrific and disgusting aspects of the girl’s gang rape are compared to Fatmagül’s rape scene which not only vulgarize the event but also trivialized it by fictionalizing it.

While there should be further research on how these news articles normalize rape, it is apparent that by comparing a real event to a fictional rape scene, the enormous horror involved is decreased considerably. Instead of taking these news into consideration as real rape events in its entire horrific frame, fictionalization of the event creates a notion that that these events are rip-offs of the television series.

#### **4.2.2.2. Rapists Just Like Fatmagül's Rapists**

Perhaps the most striking fictionalizing rape example is encountered on Güzin Abla's column. Güzin Abla is one of the most popular columns in Turkish newspapers. Readers send her letter regarding their problems and she gives them advises.

In one of the letters, a reader explains that whilst attempting to prove that she was raped, she was put in trial. (Güzin Abla, 2010) She complains about how someone covered up the evidence and how forensics was given a manipulated report, and so on. Güzin Abla approaches the subject from a very different perspective. She compares the reader's situation to Fatmagül's. She points out that no one pays attention to Fatmagül's trauma just like no one cares about reader's horrific experience and the outcomes. Güzin Abla concludes claiming that the perpetrator who raped the reader must also be a member of a wealthy and influential family just like in the television series. While there are no apparent similarities between reader's situation and the television series, Güzin Abla somehow compares them to each other and concludes that what happened in reality should be just like what happened in the television series.

#### 4.2.2.3. Beren and Fatmagül: On Screen Off Screen Characters Tangled Up

Another significant example to fictionalization is how the character Fatmagül and the actor Beren Saat are tangled up. Verina Glaessner (1990: 115) states that “popular press both celebrates and exploits soap operas for their news value – witness the manner in which the personal lives of the stars become mixed almost inextricably with those of the characters they play.” Perhaps it is the case in *Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?*, as well. The line between fiction and reality might have been blurry for audience for many reasons such as television series’ persuasiveness, awfulness of rape in real life and its representation in the series. But the line has really been purposefully eliminated by newspapers. Beren Saat – the leading woman who plays Fatmagül- and her character in the series are tangled up.

Harassment of Beren Saat is the most significant example to how fictional and factual violence as well as fiction and reality have become entwined. According to the news articles Beren Saat was harassed by a group of young men in a bar. (“Beren’in Suçu Ne?,” *Hürriyet*, 2010; “Beren’e Taciz Şoku,” *Posta*, 2010; “Beren Saat’e Şok Taciz,” *Cumhuriyet*, 2010) It is mentioned in the articles that men asked sexual favors from Saat by referring to the rape scene in the television. This incident raises the question of how much factual and fictional violence are tangled up that in the end factual violence is ignored while fictional violence is accepted.

To sum up, in these four examples, rape is trivialized by fictionalizing and alienating audience from reality. It might be even considered as another example of sensationalizing and silencing rape. Moreover, it should be pointed out that the rape scene in the series has been debated more than the real rape events are. Semerci

(2010g) argues that, while television series attempts to talk about rape reality in Turkey, audiences deny real events and only focus on the television series. Fictional and factual violence tangle up due to mistranslations and fictionalization.

#### **4.2.3. Commodification of Rape Representation**

In the simplest sense, commodification is transforming a non-commodity into a commodity. But in a broader sense, attributing use and exchange value to goods and ideas in order to make them commodities. Karl Marx (1993) defines commodity in economics as “anything necessary, useful or pleasant in life.” Use value of a commodity is determined by its function and exchange value is determined by finance and profit. (Marx, 1993) Neither use nor exchange value may solely render an object a commodity; a combination of use and exchange value renders an object a commodity. Thus, commodification of an object is possible when the object involves both of these values. On the other hand, from a Capitalist point of view, anything and everything can be commoditized. Capitalist market meets demand or creates new markets and new demands; therefore, in a capitalistic production and consumption economy anything can be commoditized.

Representation of rape has become a commodity in this morbid capitalist system, as well. Commodification of rape representation is not different from commodification defined by Marx. It is not necessary, useful or pleasant per se, but capitalist market created a demand and commoditized rape representation in mass media. Furthermore, this demand flourished a new market: rape themed merchandise. By transforming rape to a commodity, market not only increased its profit but also legitimized and normalized rape act itself.

This is also the case with *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*. As discussed previously, series is a feminist criticism of patriarchal rape discourse, but it cannot be denied that it is also a commercial success. One of the reasons why series became a commercial success is how a number of newspaper items started building up an excitement and curiosity months before series aired. Evidently, viewing the rape scene on television was on demand in Turkey. This does not say anything about the series, but about television consumers. Newspaper items featuring up and coming Fatmagül themed merchandise are also evidences of how rape is commoditized in Turkey. Therefore, by attracting attention to rape representation in the series and by featuring rape and Fatmagül themed merchandise, *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* and rape are commoditized.

After the pilot episode of *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* aired, nearly every following Thursday, series became the most watched program between eight (8) and eleven (11) pm on Thursdays. (“Bihter Devri Fatmagül’le,” *Hürriyet*, 2010; “İkisi de Zirvede,” *Hürriyet*, 2010; “Fatmagül Zirvede,” *Hürriyet*, 2010; “Perşembe Birincisi,” *Hürriyet*, 2010; “Fatmagül Zirvede,” *Hürriyet*, 2010; “Perşembe Birincisi,” *Hürriyet*, 2010) At the same time, because of these high ratings, television series was blamed for using rape representation for attracting attention and raising ratings by using this scene. Zaman newspaper is one of the most critical newspapers on the television series. It is argued that rape is commercialized and commoditized in order to make profit. (“Reyting için Tecavüze Övgü,” *Zaman*, 2010; “Reyting Çılgınlığı Sürüyor,” *Zaman*, 2010; “Sosyolog Nilüfer Narlı,” *Zaman*, 2010) On the other hand, as mentioned previously, *Hürriyet* and *Posta* newspapers promoted the television series by attracting attention to the rape scene and sensationalizing rape.



#### 4.2.3.1. No Business Like Rape Business

The commercial opportunity the television series *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* provided for entrepreneurs are undeniable, as well. Whenever a television series becomes a phenomenon, manufacturers start competing to take their share from the new market by introducing interesting and odd products. However, when the television series in question is built up on 'rape' issue, it becomes a sensitive issue. Yet, from the newspaper articles, it has become clear that manufacturers in Turkey exploited *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* unmitigatedly.

Especially after “Fatmagül’ün Suçu Ne?” was aired for the first time in September 2010, interesting products started to appear in the market. Everyone was after making money out of the rape scene. One of the most discussed product that appeared after *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* was inflatable Fatmagül doll.

According to Posta Newspaper’s report, the inflatable Fatmagül dolls were advertised as “if you like, you can rape Fatmagül, too.” (“Türkiye Nereye Gidiyor,” *Posta*, 2010) It is stated that the inflatable doll looks like Fatmagül (Beren Saat) and the company that is manufacturing this product applied for its patent. Two months later, another news article on the same newspaper appears on the same subject.

Banu Tuna (2010b), in her column points out as well that sex sells but apparently in Turkey rape sells more. She criticizes the inflatable Fatmagül doll. But she points out another essential problem of the inflatable doll. Beren Saat is the one who portrays Fatmagül, thus inflatable Fatmagül doll is actually inflatable Beren doll. As discussed previously, Fatmagül character and Beren Saat who plays the role are tangled up in many cases. Now because of her roles, she has also become an inflat-

able doll. Tuna (2010b) argues that after watching Beren as Fatmagül, audience have commoditized her identity and Beren became nothing more than any other commodity audiences consume. Beren Saat, (in Baştürk, 2010c) in of the newspaper interviews, point out that she could not have guessed that television series would trigger such sick ideas and a manufacturer would actually sell Fatmagül inflatable dolls.

It should be noted that the products based on the *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* are highly criticized in the media and by the cast and crew of the series, but the fact that these products were outcome of discourses employed in media regarding the television series cannot be denied, as well. Weeks before inflatable doll appeared in the market, Hürriyet and Posta were promoting previous onscreen sex scenes of Beren Saat. Thus, solely criticizing manufacturers for these products would be an oversight.

To sum up, commodification of Beren Saat, Fatmagül image and rape are made possible through previously published media texts and through consumption of these commodities based on the television series. Instead of employing a rape prevention and awareness approach in these products, manufactures employed the understanding of sex sells, or rather rape sells.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

The main concern of this study was to determine rape discourses in Turkish newspapers in the light of *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* case. Therefore, after briefly focusing on visual rape representations and analyzing rape representations in script, movie and television series version of *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* , Discussing visual rape representations in some detail was rendered necessary in order to further analyze three versions of *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?*. The analysis of rape scenes in three *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* versions as well as shortly discussing rape myths and patriarchal discourses they utilized were also necessary to understand a variety of approaches in newspapers. However, it should be noted that studies on *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* didn't go as further to study rape discourses it incorporated.

Ultimately, two main themes were determined, after different rape myths, rhetoric and feminist and patriarchal discourses were studied and a close discourse analysis study was conducted on hundred and sixty two (162) news articles from *Hürriyet*, *Zaman*, *Radikal*, *Posta* and *Cumhuriyet*.

One was the clash between patriarchal and feminist rape discourses in terms of representing rape. Patriarchal rape discourse, with the reinforcement of rape myths,

attempted to diminish any effect of feminist discourses – by publicly arguing the rape reality and challenging male dominance. Patriarchal discourse distorted feminist discourse by arguing humiliation the rape scene brought on the entire women population and urging society that representation of the act of rape encourages rape. In response, feminist rape discourse attempted to criticize existing rape myths and invited society to discuss the rape reality instead of covering it up.

Second theme was normalization of rape discourse through various trivialization methods. Normalization of rape discourse highly favors patriarchal rape discourse and rape myths. Normalization of rape discourse was not entirely an attempt to overcome feminist rape discourse but to promote the television series. Therefore, normalization of rape discourse through trivialization was more apparent in newspapers owned by Doğan media. However, methods utilized in this discourse also highly promoted patriarchal discourse.

The initial starting point of this study was whether rape was normalized in rape discourses utilized by newspapers. The initial hypothesis was that reactions in response to the rape scene were highly motivated by patriarchal rape discourse and rape myths. In the end of the study, both the initial hypothesis and the initial starting point of this thesis were proven to be true.

However, it should be noted that there are various subject that this thesis does not concern itself with or lacks information for further investigation. Since this study only focuses the newspaper articles regarding rape scene and therefore have a short time span, a further study regarding the following episodes and how newspaper discourses regarding these episodes expand and/or change can be investigated.

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- ? September 16, 2010. “Heyecanla Beklenen Dizide Neler Olacak?” (What Will Happen in the most Anticipated Television Series), *Posta*, Tabloid Section.
- ? September 16, 2010. “İşte Fatmagül’ün Tecavüzcüleri!” (Here Are Fatmagül’s Rapists), *Posta*, Tabloid Section.
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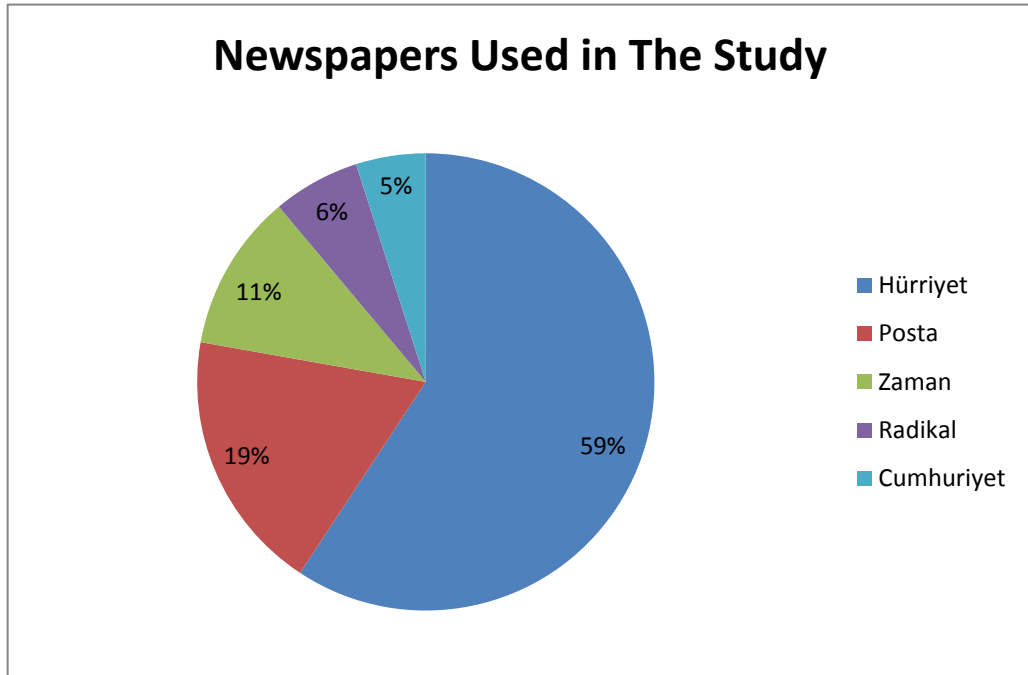
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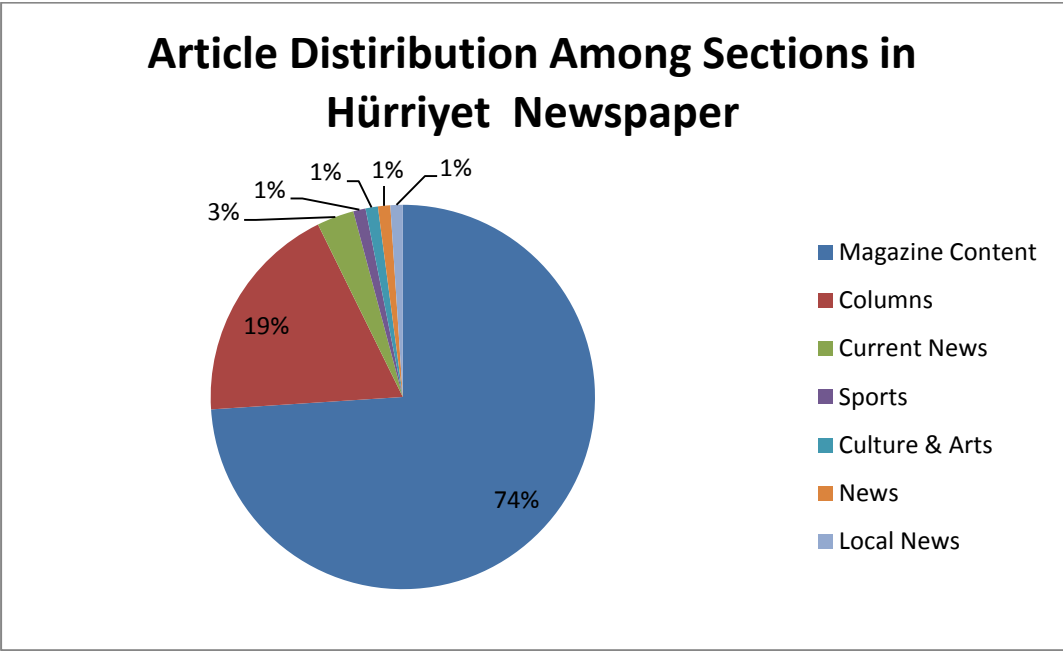
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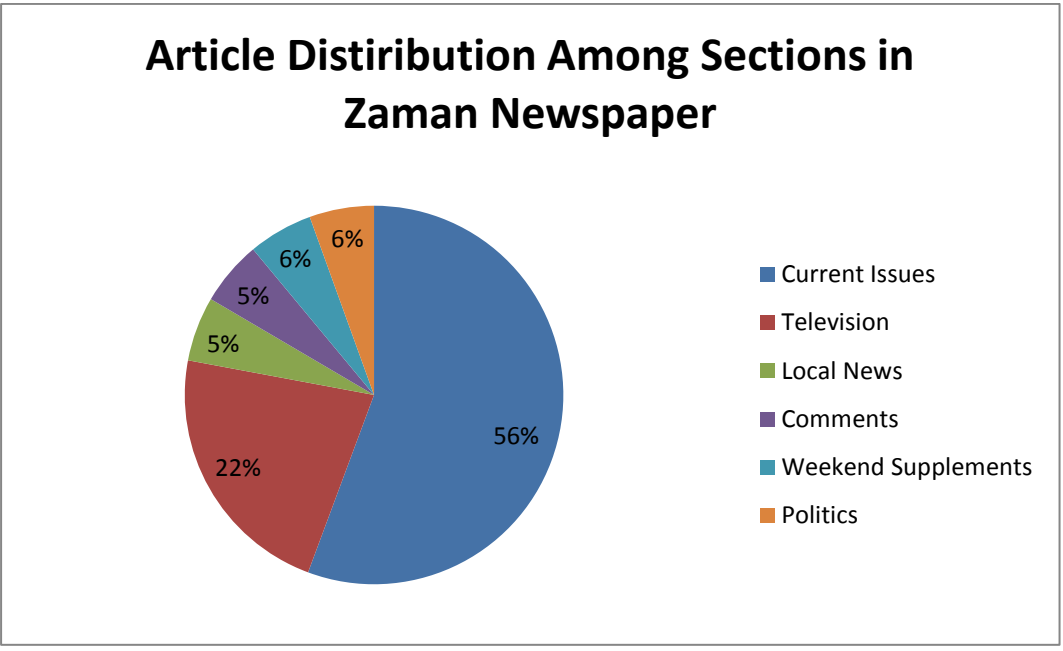
## APPENDICES



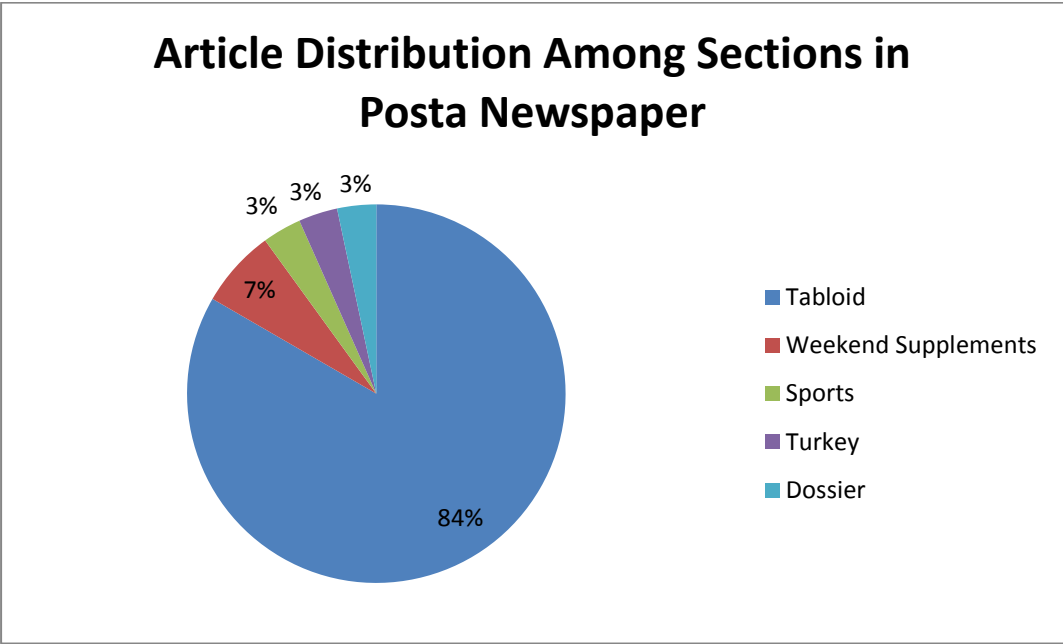
**Figure 1 – Newspapers Used in The Study**



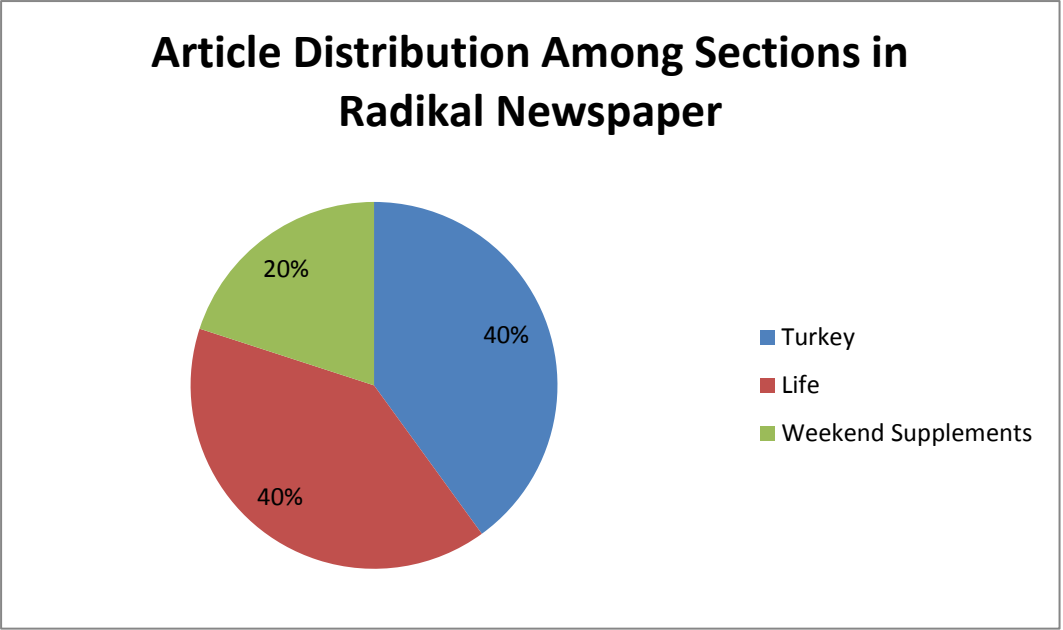
**Figure 2 – Article Distribution Among Sections in Hürriyet Newspaper**



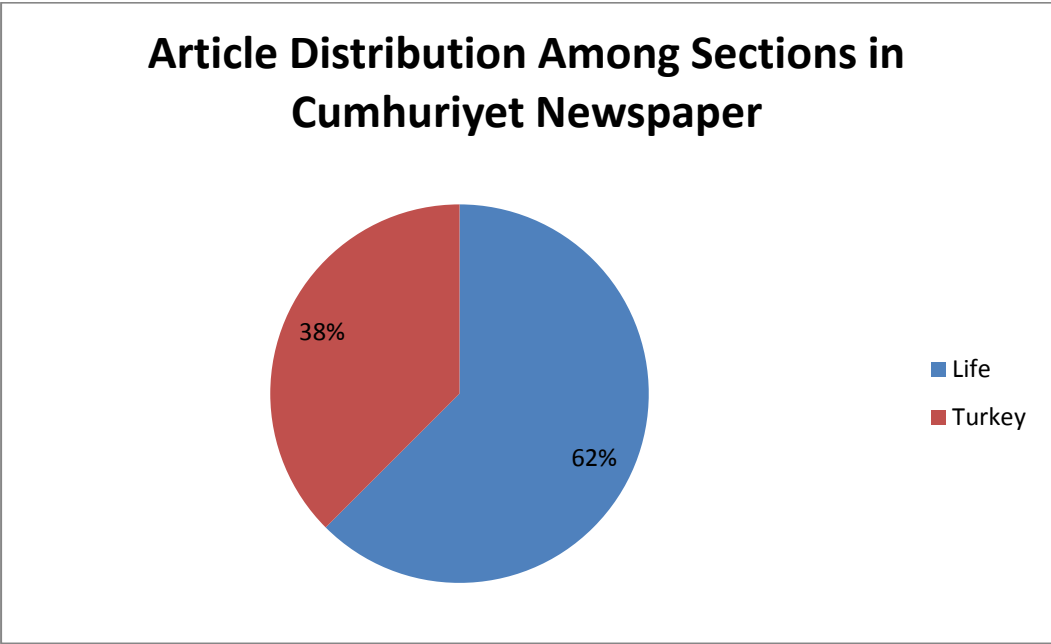
**Figure 3 – Article Distribution Among Sections in Zaman Newspaper**



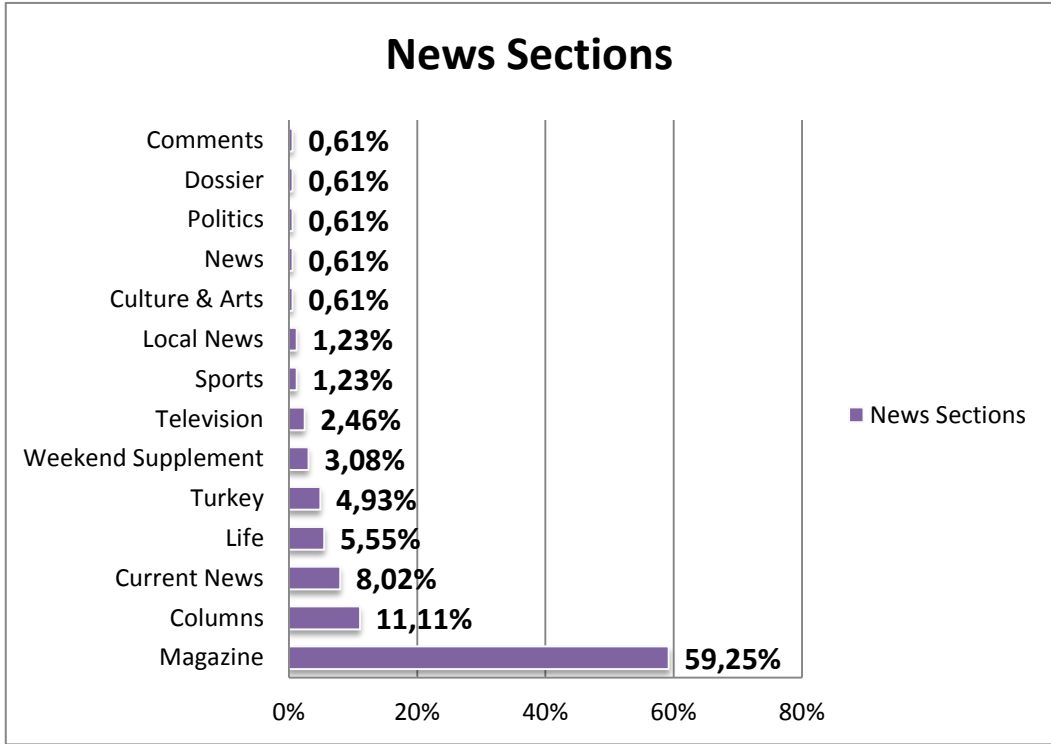
**Figure 4 – Article Distribution Among Sections in Posta Newspaper**



**Figure 5 – Article Distribution Among Sections in Radikal Newspaper**



**Figure 6 – Article Distribution Among Sections in Cumhuriyet Newspaper**



**Figure 7 – Distribution of Articles Used in the Study Among News Sections**

**Table 1 – Sexual Violence by Nomenclature Unites Territorial Statistic, 2008**

<b>Territories</b>	<b>Life Time</b>	<b>Last 12 Months</b>
Turkey Over All	15,3	7,0
İstanbul	11,2	4,7
West Marmara	8,7	4,3
Aegean	13,9	4,1
East Marmara	12,8	5,8
West Anatolia	15,5	6,5
Mediterranean	16,1	6,5
Central Anatolia	22,8	11
West Black Sea	17,5	6,7
West Black Sea	17,6	7,8
North East Anatolia	29,5	19,4
Central East Anatolia	19,7	12,1
South East Anatolia	19,7	13

**Table 2 – Sexual Violence By Place of Residence, 2008**

<b>Place of Residence</b>	<b>Life Time</b>	<b>Last 12 Months</b>
Turkey	15,3	7,0
Urban	14,3	6,7
Rural	18,3	7,9