

“An Analysis over Social Media Regarding Domestic Violence against Women in Turkey”

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Abstract

In this study, that covers an assessment on Turkey regarding “domestic violence against women”, an analysis was performed by the content analysis method based on the fact that the women use social media channel for their confessions especially regarding being subject of domestic violence. The thing intended with this study, that is based on categorization of data obtained from the web site called “itiraf.com” –which frequently gives place to confessions of women regarding being subject of domestic violence- and on analysis through content analysis, is to perform a different “domestic violence” analysis with the help of data to be obtained from social media where the women can express themselves without being ashamed and without feeling under pressure by the presupposition that it is hard to confess violence even to closest ones in countries such as Turkey where traditional patriarchal structure prevails. By the study, in addition to some demographical data, results relevant to the type of domestic violence against women, the source of violence and the attitudes of women as the result of violence were obtained.

Keywords: Violence, violence against women, domestic violence, violence in social media

1. Introduction

As violence is a multidimensional concept, it is not possible to make a single definition. There are many forms of violence such as physical, psychological, social, sexual etc. Despite violence has many different forms and has different dimensions and types in each society, it is basically being encountered as a universal fact (Senol and Yildiz, 2013:1). Despite all types of violence are problematic fields, it is being observed that problems regarding “domestic violence” and “domestic violence against women” had increased especially in the recent 10 years period in Turkey and had became more apparent on media (Ministry of Family and Social Policies, 2015). Violence against women had first been defined in 1993 in the Declaration of United Nations Regarding Elimination of Violence Against Women. In the declaration, the violence against women had been defined as “all kinds of violent acts based on gender which results in or possible to result in physical, sexual or psychological damage or pain against women including threatening women with such acts, compelling them or arbitrarily depriving them from freedom either in public or private life” (United Nations, 1993), and according to the data of World Health Organization, about 35% of women living in the world are subject to violence from their immediate surroundings (World Health Organization, 2015).

And according to research of “domestic violence against women in Turkey” performed in 2009, it is being specified that while 39% of women in the country are subject to physical violence and 15% of them are subject to sexual violence, 42% of women are subject to at least one of the two violence types. According to statement of Ministry of Justice made in August 2010, women's murders had increased by 1400% in the recent 7 years. And according to the information provided to press by General Directorate of Security and Commandership of Gendarmerie, 226 women had been murdered only in the first 7 months of 2010. Similarly, according to the unofficial press search results of Independent Communication Network (Bianet) of 2011, 257 women had been murdered in 2011, and at least 102 women and 59 girls had been raped (Karal & Aydemir, 2012:46).

Even if it is specified that violence against women has four dimensions as being physical, psychological, sexual and economic, the fact which shouldn't be overlooked is that such dimensions of violence don't arise alone but as including more than one dimension (Karal & Aydemir, 2012:22).. In other words, in an act of physical violence, sexual violence or psychological violence are also able to arise. No matter which type it is, the culture of violence becoming widespread is one of the most basic and significant problematic field of today. But in this study, the subject of "domestic violence" and especially "domestic violence against women" was assessed. Generally the most significant obstacles encountered by ones performing research regarding domestic violence are the concepts of "privacy of family" and "sacred family" (Mor Cati Women Foundation Shelter, 1996:1) Sharing of things encountered within the family with the ones from outside the family becomes difficult through this admittance, and difficulties arise in accessing data regarding domestic violence. It is not being easy for women to reveal the acts of violence they encounter within the family in countries such as Turkey where traditional patriarchal structure prevails. In Turkey, domestic problems are generally not shared with anyone except very close ones, because first of all it is being deemed as a disgraceful problem. The woman tends to blame herself regarding the violence she encounters, and keeps quiet with the notion that the environment would construe it that she deserves violence due to not fulfilling her duties of womanhood. Domestic violence being inured and lack of women – being subject of domestic violence- to complain of this fact constitute the main triangulation point of the subject. For this reason, the figures based on national researches on the subject of domestic violence significantly remain below the reality (Prime Ministry, Family and Research Institution, 1995: 3-4).

Despite increase of studies in recent 10 years in Turkey regarding domestic violence against women, it is possible to think that this silence has a share for it to be a field that is relatively being spoken less. In this study, it was intended to perform a different reading of the subject of domestic violence against women through social media. Social media is an environment where people participate completely by their own preference and interest and which includes the opinions of people that are voluntarily shared. This free structure of social media provides the women the facility to share –even if by hiding their identities- their experiences on domestic violence which they generally remain silent about. This study is based on the analysis of confessions regarding violence –which are gathered from a web site called "itiraf.com" that is established for the people for confess their hidden secrets-performed by the content analysis method. For this purpose, scanning was performed on the archive of "itiraf.com" (in between 2005-2015) by deriving key words regarding the 4 dimensions of violence against women (physical, sexual, psychological, economic), and the obtained confessions were assessed through the "IBM SPSS STATISTIC 20" program by performing content analysis over 5 dimensions. The number of assessed contents was 302.

2. Domestic Violence against Women

In the Violence and Health Subjected World Report, violence had been classified under three main categories in respect of individuals to whom the act is being directed. According to these categories, violence has three types as being violence towards the individual himself, violence in between individuals and collective violence. And as domestic violence, which is the most widespread form of violence in the whole world and in Turkey, arises within the frame of private relations, it is included in the classification of violence in between individuals (Arin, 1996; WHO, 2002). In this context, "violence in between spouses and family members and mostly within the household" is being understood from "domestic violence". Domestic violence against women is a problem at global level beyond cultural religious, social and economic borders. The fact of domestic violence against women, which is being deemed as breach of human rights and freedom on the basis of social gender, doesn't just limit the participation of women in social and economic life or doesn't just deprive them from such participation, it also impacts the physical and psychological health of women, and is able to cause them to become permanently disabled or cause their death (Prime Ministry General Directorate of Women's Status, 1996, p:19).

In the life cycle, violence against women starts even before the birth of women or as from their infancy. It arises in numerous forms such as wishing male babies, killing of female babies, their sexual abuse, beating them, honor killings, rape, economic and psychological pressure, sexual violence, violence at workplace, women trafficking, forcing to prostitution, murder etc (Heise et al., 1994:3-5). Today, domestic violence is mostly being deemed in the form of violence directed to women by men. Domestic violence can generally be defined as "endangering the life, body, psychological integrity or freedom of a family member by the use of force" (Stewart and Robinson, 1998:83).

In the fact of domestic violence arising in private area, the effect of habits, learning manners and traditions is important. But as the violence in private area arises from mother, father, spouse or close relative, it was an invisible fact until expresses by the movements of women. Interfering the things occurring within the family was impossible as it was deemed as private area or privacy of families. The idiom of “don’t let it out of this room” was being used. Thus, the fact of domestic violence against women wasn’t being included in any international contract since 30 years ago (Ozturk, 2014:47). Patriarchal structure of Turkish society, which is based on the priority of men, encounters difficulties in keeping up with the change in the world, and it causes the arise of burst at individual or social levels. The resistance of one or more of family members to the change in the world is being effective in the increase of domestic violence. The violence within the family and especially in between the spouses starts to become legitimate after a while such as differentiation arising from gender roles, and it negatively affects the endeavors for generation of solutions by beginning to perceive it as normal (Senol and Yildiz, 2013:6). But today, it is being deemed possible to assert that violence against women basically arise within “sacred” family both in the world and in Turkey and that it had become more visible.

3. Method and Findings

In the analyses of confessions, it was observed that demographic data such as gender, age, city was included among information required to be provided to the web site for membership. Even if the initiative to provide such information accurately belongs to the user, keeping of the identities hidden makes us think that there is no significant drawback in entering such data. When this data was analyzed, it was observed that the women making confessions about violence were mostly below the age of 30 (72.6%). It was observed that the confessions about violence was mostly from the cities in Marmara Region (42.4%) as Istanbul being ahead, and then that Central Anatolia Region was following it by 20.5%. The impression obtained from the confessions regarding the type of violence was mostly defined as physical violence (39.1%), and then it was observed that all violence types were available together at a rate of 25.2%. And sexual violence has a rate of about 19.9%.

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Physical	118	39.1	39.1
	Psychological	36	11.9	51.0
	Sexual	60	19.9	70.9
	Economic	6	2.0	72.8
	Indefinite	6	2.0	74.8
	More than one	76	25.2	100.0
	Total	302	100.0	

Information obtained from the confessions regarding the direction of violence mostly shows that it arises from the husband (44.7%). And as can be seen in Table-2, partner-fiancé follows it by 21.9%, father follows it by 11.3% and mother follows it by 10.9%.

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Husband	135	44.7	44.7
	Partner-Fiancé	66	21.9	66.6
	Father	34	11.3	77.8
	Mother	33	10.9	88.7
	Other	22	7.3	96.0
	Indefinite	4	1.3	97.4
	More than one	6	2.0	99.3
	Son/Daughter	2	.7	100.0
	Total	302	100.0	

And in the assessment performed regarding what the women do as the result of violence except writing on confession web site, it was observed that women mostly make confessions indicating the continuation of marriage or togetherness (53.9%) through crying, remaining silent or assuming a humble attitude and forgiving. And 18.2% of women specify that they leave the house or get divorced as the result of violence (Table-3).

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid			
-Physical or verbal response	8	2.6	2.6
-Crying, remaining silent	101	33.4	36.1
-Assuming a humble attitude, forgiving	62	20.5	56.6
-Leaving the house, getting divorced/separated	55	18.2	74.8
-Depression, thought of suicide	35	11.6	86.4
-Complaints to official institutions and NGOs	16	5.3	91.7
-Complaints to family/family of spouse/friend	6	2.0	93.7
-Indefinite	9	3.0	96.7
-Other	10	3.3	100.0
Total	302	100.0	

4. Conclusion

Despite violence against women is not a new fact, it is being observed that its importance and visibility increased more in recent years. It is being estimated that acts of violence may have different reasons besides the significant increase in the recent 10 years in Turkey. But the thing intended in this research is to perform a different analysis of violence by the presupposition that the use of social media increases gradually and that the women feel closer to make confessions in such environments with the convenience of hiding their identities in traditional countries such as Turkey where women have difficulty to confess their condition of being the subject of violence even to the ones closest to them.

As the result of the analysis performed; it was observed that the women –who may be deemed as relatively educated (in respect of literacy and computer use)- confessing their condition of being subject of violence in social media are mainly located in regions such as Marmara and Central Anatolia, that their ages were mostly below 30 (another important reason of that may be deemed as prevalence of use of internet among young generations), that the violence is arising mostly from the men in their lives such as spouse, partners, fiancé etc as well as other members of the family such as mother, that all types of violence are able to be seen together as well as physical violence, and that they tend to assume a humble attitude and remain silent as the result of violence.

Even if it is accepted that the information obtained from the web site named “itiraf.com” –regarding the type of violence directed to women, the one from whom it arises and what is being done by the women as a result- may not be very extensive, when the scarcity of studies made regarding the field is considered and by the anticipation that the women –who are already having difficulty in making confession to their closest ones- may have difficulty in making confession to researchers applying methods such as questionnaire and by considering the facilitating effect of social media in this field, it is being thought that this study may provide a different perspective regarding field and that it can be a different example for the researches on social media regarding violence against women. It can be recommended to researchers to perform studies by a different method and by expanding the scope for addressing on social media the violence against women.

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