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## A FEMINIST CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF WOMEN REPRESENTATION IN TURKISH SONGS

### Türk Şarkılarında Kadın Temsili Üzerine Feminist Eleştirel Söylem Analizi

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#### **Abstract**

*The purpose of this study is to explore how biased ideologies shaped and strengthened male dominance in Türkiye's patriarchal society. This study applies feminist critical discourse analysis to examine patriarchal ideologies in musical discourse. The objective is to reveal the hidden ideologies within the musical discourse. This study examines a collection of 31 songs performed by İbrahim Tatlıses using a qualitative approach and employing the principles of feminist critical discourse analysis. The selected songs were translated from Turkish to English and subjected to a comprehensive thematic analysis. Moreover, the chosen lyrics have been analyzed using three different frameworks produced by Fairclough, van Dijk and Wodak. As a consequence of this study, musical discourse provides a basis for the sustenance of male hegemony. The songs analyzed contain numerous instances of insults, sexual objectification, and violence against women, which are ingrained in daily life and social memory. It emphasizes the ideology that women should act based on the traditions, norms and values of society. The songs highlight culturally ingrained power imbalances between men and women. Considering that gender roles have been learned since childhood, patriarchal ideology has been engrained in people's subconscious minds since childhood.*

**Keywords:** Power Inequalities, Male Hegemony, Ideology, Critical Discourse Analysis, Musical Discourse.

#### **Öz**

*Bu çalışmanın amacı, Türkiye'nin ataerkil toplumunda önyargılı ideolojilerin erkek egemenliği nasıl şekillendirdiğini ve güçlendirdiğini araştırmaktır. Bu çalışma, Eleştirel Söylem Analizini kullanarak, kadınların erkek hegemonik değerleri, gelenekleri ve idealleri temelinde hareket etmesi gerektiği düşüncesine katkıda bulunmada hayati bir role sahip olan seçili müzikal söyleme odaklanmaktadır. Amaç, müzikal söylemdeki gizli ideolojileri ortaya çıkarmaktır. Bu çalışma, İbrahim Tatlıses'in 31 şarkısını nitel yaklaşıma bağlı kalarak ve eleştirel söylem analizi ile feminist eleştirel söylem analizinin temel önermelerini bir araya getirerek incelemektedir. Bu çalışmanın konusuyla ilgili şarkı sözleri, Türkçeden İngilizceye çevrilmiştir. Şarkıların içerik analizi yapıldıktan sonra seçilen sözler Fairclough, van Dijk ve Wodak'ın eleştirel söylem analizi modelleri aracılığıyla analiz edilmiştir. İlk aşamada veriler toplanıp kodlandıktan ve analiz edildikten sonra dört önemli tema ortaya çıktı: değersiz kadın, cinsel obje olarak kadın, kadına yönelik tehdit ve hakaretler ve erkeği baştan çıkaran kadın. Bu çalışmanın sonucunda, müzikal söylemin erkek hegemonyasının sürdürülmesine zemin hazırladığı tespit edilmiştir. Günlük hayatımızda bilinçli ya da bilinçsiz olarak duyduğumuz ve*

*çocukluğumuzdan beri kulağıma gelen şarkılarda kadına yönelik hakaret, cinsellik ve şiddet içeren pek çok ifadenin olduğu açıktır. Şarkılar, kadınların toplumun geleneklerine, normlarına ve değerlerine göre hareket etmesi gerektiği ideolojisine vurgu yapmaktadır. Toplumun kültür başlığı altında gündeme getirdiği kadın erkek arasındaki güç eşitsizliğini göstermektedirler. Toplumsal cinsiyet rollerinin çocukluktan itibaren öğrenildiği düşünülürse ataerkil ideoloji çocukluktan itibaren insanların bilinçaltına kazınmıştır.*

**Anahtar kelimeler:** Güç Eşitsizlikleri, Erkek Hegemonyası, İdeoloji, Eleştirel Söylem Analizi, Müzikal Söylem.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The scope of the term “gender” was initially perceived as a concept used to question power relations and inequalities between women and men. Today, the importance of the concept has gradually transcended this perception. It has expanded to include not only individual identity and personality, but also cultural ideals of masculinity and femininity and prejudice-based behavioral patterns, as well as the gendered division of labor in organizations and institutions (Kaypak, 2014: 344). It has been realized that the term “gender” plays a central role in all discourse systems, including music discourse. Musical discourse, especially arabesque, has become a tool that reproduces patriarchal discourses, positions women on the axis of victimization, sacrifice, and fatalism and romanticizes gender inequality by reinforcing a male-dominated narrative.

Every society has norms for men and women in the context of gender, and these norms can show great differences according to history, society and geography (Akbalık, 2013: 82). It is accepted that the most prominent of these norms are the roles that society imposes on men and women and gender stereotypes that vary according to each society. Traditional gender roles establish a hierarchical relationship between the sexes from the moment of birth and form the basis of the equality and inequality of the perception of men and women in social life (Akbalık, 2013: 82).

Songs are both a means of emotional expression and an ideological tool that can reinforce power imbalances and societal inequalities (Martín, 2016; Fairclough, 1996). Today, music is one of the most important factors affecting gender roles. It is stated that music has characteristics that affect social-cultural life and education process through its unique genres (Çiftçi, 2010: 149). Indeed, musical discourse includes dominant ideologies and ideas as much as other language types (Martín, 2016: 1). In addition, such a discourse, which is easily accessible to people, is used to represent different subjects in a single type of musical genre.

Reflecting social norms, ideals, values and traditions, arabesque music deals with conflicts and controversial issues that exist in society. For a while, arabesque was considered corrupt by the authorities and was banned by TRT until the mid-1980s (Taydaş & Sert, 2021: 217). On the other hand, known as the emperor of arabesque, İbrahim Tatlıses with his life spanning from outbuildings to mansions has gained a great reputation in popular culture from cinema to music. Tatlıses, whose life has inspired many movies, marks a turning point for arabesque. Kırık (2014: 91) states that Tatlıses and the other arabesque singers of that period have shaped Turkish society.

Tatlıses' music can be considered as a powerful tool that reproduces gender inequality, especially within the arabesque genre. The representations of women that are frequently encountered in his songs serve to reinforce traditional patriarchal roles; women are either idealized through loyalty and sacrifice, or they are accused of betrayal and abandonment. Men, on the other hand, are often constructed as strong, victimized or authoritarian figures, and even emotional pain is romanticized as a sign of masculine power. In this context, Tatlıses' music presents a narrative that internalizes patriarchal values through the themes of love, separation and longing, while creating a musical discourse that supports the cultural production of gender inequality by addressing male-female relations in a hierarchical framework. However, Tatlıses' songs, despite their immense importance in influencing people, are rarely approached in the field of gender studies. Therefore, the aim of this study is to specifically examine how musical discourse is used to create gender inequality and patriarchal ideology, and how women and men are represented in Tatlıses' songs. It is important for critical discourse studies to go beyond viewing music as a means of entertainment and to shed light on the ideologies it contains, such as patriarchal ideologies. Through Critical Discourse Analysis, this study centers on examining 31 selected songs by Tatlıses that have been instrumental in propagating the notion that women are controlled by dominant male beliefs, traditions, and ideas of honor. The goal is to uncover the hidden meanings within this particular discourse.

### **1.1. Research Questions**

RQ 1: How are women and men portrayed in the lyrics, themes, and narratives of selected songs, and what recurring patterns or stereotypes can be identified?

RQ 2: In what ways does the lyrical and thematic content of these songs reinforce, or perpetuate patriarchal ideology within a specific cultural and social context?

## **2. LITERATURE REVIEW**

While the term “discourse” is used in various fields, its meaning differs significantly. On occasion, discourse is regarded merely as a term for any language (Brown & Yule, 1983). Alternatively, at times, discourse is conceptualized as a linguistic entity or language beyond the sentence (Martin & Rose, 2007). Furthermore, from Foucault’s perspective (1977), discourse pertains to the methods through which language is employed to build and strengthen meaning, knowledge, and power. In general terms, discourse is the linguistic unit produced by the speaker in his personal thought (Günay, 2018: 25). Günay (2018: 28) limits the different definitions of discourse and defines discourse as “linguistic and non-linguistic structures created in terms of spatial, temporal and person-dependent variables”. Fairclough (1992: 138) also defines discourse as “the written or spoken language produced in a discursive event.” Briefly, discourse extends beyond just language and can be applicable to any way in which humans generate meaning.

Foucault also is the founder of the idea of discourse in the human sciences of our century (Sözen, 2017: 18). Discourse, according to Foucauldian view, means “an extremely complex reality, the production of knowledge and power through language”. Discourse “mobilizes and produces power; discourse strengthens power, but at the same time wears the power out and ensures its erasure”. Discourse is “the mode that organizes truth, knowledge and power” (Sözen, 2017: 60-68). Discourse also serves an ideological function, which means that ideologies frequently arise through discourse. To grasp the process of ideological formation, merely scrutinizing texts is insufficient; it's crucial to examine the discursive practices, which involve how texts are perceived, received and what their social impacts are (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). According to Howarth & Stavrakakis (2000), the discourse analysis emerged as a direct reaction to the neglect of studying nationalist ideology, social movements, and the political influence on social identities. The necessity to examine both gender and identity, together with socioeconomic contexts, underscores the vital need for the development of discourse analysis. According to Howarth & Stavrakakis (2000: 1-2), “issues of identity formation, the production of novel ideologies, the logics of social movements and the structuring of societies by a plurality of social

imaginaries are central objects of investigation for discourse theory". This method, which works at the boundaries of linguistics and has increasing importance in social sciences, is "a method within social research and has the feature of reproducing, changing, transforming discourses or revealing the features of discourses" (Sözen, 2017: 79-81).

According to Fairclough (1995), "like every research, discourse analysis is based on data, analysis and results". Discourse is the structuring of language according to different patterns as a result of the utterances produced by individuals in different social areas. Similar patterns come together to form discourses such as political discourse, sexist discourse, hate speech or medical discourse. "Examination/analysis of these patterns takes place through discourse analysis" (cited in Sözen, 2017). The purpose of discourse analysis is "to examine the language and reveal the structures related to the knowledge and knowledge/power mode produced with different meanings, their changes and transformations" (Sözen, 2017: 80). "Discourse analysis is interdisciplinary and different approaches can be used in different types of studies to examine different social areas" (cited in Ercan & Danış, 2018). This study focuses on critical discourse analysis, which is one of the theories formed in the context of sociology and ethnology.

According to Aleshinskaya (2013), musical discourse, viewed as a social practice, encompasses ways of representing specific facets of musical existence. However, it's widely acknowledged that musical discourse extends beyond the scope of the music itself (Roy, 2010). In examining musical discourse, numerous scholars propose considering additional elements like personal influences, artistic intentions, social and historical contexts, psychological factors, stylistic norms and more (Blacking, 1982; Morgan, 1982; Roy, 2010). Consequently, investigating musical discourse necessarily becomes a multidisciplinary endeavor, necessitating the inclusion of historical, psychological, social, ritualistic, visual, and linguistic dimensions (Tagg, 2003). Therefore, in order to elucidate the particular ideology that the lyrics advocate for and to determine the specific concept that the language in these songs primarily conveys, a concrete method of analysis is required. Indeed, the linguistic field's evolution over the past few decades has demonstrated that critical discourse analysis (CDA) is the most suitable instrument for carrying out this mission. Critical discourse analysis aims to interpret and identify power abuse and the ideologic elements in a discourse by examining the linguistic mechanisms in a text and relating them to sociocultural issues. Furthermore, Norman Fairclough (1995: 4), a prominent figure in this field, confirmed that any text, including "a piece of

music”, is appropriate for CDA. Furthermore, songs are discourses that speak to the actual world and society; therefore, the analysis of these songs through CDA is “not only justified but also essential” (Filardo, 2015: 281).

Initially, CDA does not have a unitary methodology (Cervera et al. 2006: 9), but rather a textual analysis approach that changes based on different linguistic schools (Huckin, 1997: 78). The major ones are the Vienna School (Martin Reisigl, Rudolf de Cillia, Karin Liebhart, Ruth Wodak, Januschiek and Matouschek), the British School (Kress, Hodge, Fowler, and Fairclough), and the Dutch School (Van Dijk) (Günay, 2018: 86-87). Consequently, the existence of numerous and distinct procedures is based on the character of the objects of study and the scholars involved. All CDA approaches share a common interest in the expression of social inequalities and power abuse through language, despite this diversity (Wodak 2001: 2). In other words, CDA advocates for the notion that discourse is an appropriate medium for mental manipulation and persuasion due to the ideologies that are incorporated into it. Therefore, Huckin (1997: 79) states that the purpose of CDA is to identify the textual mechanisms that are employed for “non-democratic purposes”. According to Van Dijk (1993: 259), the critical objective of CDA is to determine the specific linguistic mechanisms that are involved in persuasive arguments. Cervera et al. (2006: 10) highlight that the foundation of this specific objective is the conviction that all the linguistic decisions are “ideologically based”, in other words they are never neutral. Therefore, it is crucial to employ a linguistic approach to uncover the devices that are typically implicit.

Fairclough (1992) uses CDA as a methodology to examine social interactions, emphasizing their linguistic components. From Fairclough's perspective, these linguistic factors shape the social dynamics within a given social framework. CDA, as a discourse analysis approach, merges various interdisciplinary techniques to facilitate a more comprehensive examination of discursive practices. Fairclough characterizes CDA as “critical” due to its exploration and critique of the interplay between textual properties and social processes, as manifested in power dynamics and ideologies. His three-dimensional framework operates on three levels of text, discourse and social context (Fairclough 1995: 74). Fairclough (1995) states that the critical discourse analysis involves describing the language used in the text, interpreting the connection between the processes of creating and understanding discourse, and finally, looking at the broader social and cultural context in which language use occurs.

Additionally, Teun Van Dijk has prioritized cognitive and

psychological components in his CDA methodology. In particular, he asserts that “modern and often more effective power is primarily cognitive” (Meyer & Wodak 2001: 21), and the analysis of what people talk represents the things in their minds. (Cervera et al. 2006: 19). In summary, Van Dijk developed socio-cognitive approach which focuses on how language shapes and reflects social cognition such as attitudes, opinions or beliefs (1993: 253). In order to examine the relationships between power and domination, Van Dijk implemented CDA on two levels: macro and micro (Durna & Kubilay, 2010: 68). Micro level is related to the linguistic features of discourse that enable speakers to convey certain meanings and carry out power in social interaction whereas macro level is related to factors that shape language use, such as power, dominance and inequality.

Ruth Wodak also is a significant figure in the field of CDA. His discourse-historical approach analyzes language use from historical and social perspectives. Wodak asserts that the complexity of CDA necessitates the consideration of multiple perspectives, which necessitates the integration of various theories and methodologies to conduct a comprehensive analysis (Cervera et al. 2006: 12). Additionally, Wodak's approach is distinguished from that of other scholars by her emphasis on linguistics, which is evident in her relentless pursuit of incorporating linguistic theories into her discourse model and her particular attention to pragmatics (Meyer & Wodak 2001: 21-22). In general, Wodak's approach prioritizes linguistics based on Systemic Functional Theory by Halliday while Van Dijk's method prioritizes cognition.

In its theoretical framework, this article also incorporates certain facets of feminism, which serve as the central theme of this study, aiming to highlight the submissiveness experienced by women. Feminism constitutes a movement that identifies the issue of gender inequality in women and proposes solutions for this inequality (Moi, 1989). The purpose was to establish equality between men and women across all parts of human society, encompassing the political, economic and social realms. Primarily, feminists have directed their attention towards matters like the power dynamics between genders, male dominance, and the subordination of women, a theme prevalent in nearly all societies. The exploration of feminist critical discourse analysis (FCDA) unites a global compilation of research that intersects feminism and critical discourse analysis, marking the first instance of such a collaboration. The objective is to foster a thorough and nuanced comprehension of the intricate interplay between power, ideology, and discourse, to reinforce a social structure that is sensitive to gender-

specific concerns. As noted by Lazar (2005), CDA should incorporate feminist theory into its analytical framework. Hence, feminist CDA aims to study gender issues more practically by deconstructing the discursive and linguistic formation of gender in different texts and settings.

When studies on feminist musical discourse analysis are examined, it is seen that many songs and folk songs contain expressions of violence against women (Genç, 2006; Bayburtlu et al., 2021; Köten & Akdemir, 2021; Kırlioğlu et al., 2016). In a study conducted by Vural & İstanbullu (2016: 92), 2030 folk songs from 7 different regions of Turkey were analyzed and it was determined that 293 folk songs contain explicit sexual connotations and 74 percent of these songs are performed by males. Yıldız (2013: 20) states that between 1992 and 2012, there were a total of 21 theses, including 7 doctoral and 14 master's degree studies in the field of music and gender, and that this number would not exceed 30 together with articles published in journals. As for arabesque, it is noticed that the studies in the literature are in the fields of musicology, sociology and fine arts, and that the studies examining the relationship between arabesque and gender from a constructivist perspective are in the minority. Music is not only an art form but also a powerful discourse that reflects social values, norms and ideologies. Born as a result of social changes, economic transformations and cultural interactions, arabesque has become one of the most influential music genres in Turkey, both musically and sociologically. The intersection of feminist critical discourse analysis and musical discourse enables the analysis of gender representations and power dynamics in music. This analysis helps to develop a more informed perspective for music listeners and critics, and provides artists with an awareness to produce content that questions gender representations. For this reason, this study, which tries to explain how arabesque music places gender inequality and patriarchal ideology in the subconscious of the society, is expected to make a significant contribution to the literature.

### **3. METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative methodology to investigate musical discourse, utilizing both content analysis and discourse analysis within an interpretive framework. As outlined by Creswell (2017), the method of qualitative research is used to explore and understand the interpretations that individuals provide for different social or human-related issues. Consequently, this article embraces the qualitative approach due to its alignment with the research's intention to tackle a societal problem concerning women.



To Stevens (2016), the content analysis is the process of examining significant ideas, subjects, and patterns within communication and relating them to the wider societal framework in order to reveal the power dynamics and the historical connections present in the analyzed text. The objective of this research is to unveil the specific ideology upheld in Tatlıses' songs and to discern the precise ideology conveyed through the linguistic mechanics intricately woven within the lyrics. Any form of text, including “a piece of music”, is enough to carry out critical discourse analysis, as stated by Fairclough (1995: 4). Consequently, this paper will employ critical discourse analysis to uncover the ideology within Tatlıses' selected songs and the values they strive to impart in consideration of the frameworks by Fairclough, Van Dijk and Wodak.

### **3.1. Data Collection and Analysis**

İbrahim Tatlıses is considered one of the most important and influential figures in Turkish arabesque music. Tatlıses, who started his music career in the 1970s, brought arabesque music to the masses, making it not only a music genre but also an important part of popular culture. He contributed greatly to the development of arabesque music with his voice, his power of interpretation and his influence in the music market. For this reason, the lyrics of 217 songs performed by Tatlıses were analyzed in terms of feminist critical discourse. Since 31 of these songs contain negative expressions against women, they were subjected to detailed analysis according to thematic priority. Following the selection process, the lyrics were translated into English to facilitate the analysis. During the translation process of the lyrics, 2 experts in translation and interpreting department were consulted and necessary corrections were made through reverse translation. In the first stage of analysis, as stated by Hesse-Biber (2010), this study employed content analysis, which involves evaluating non-interactive data that exists separately from the research. The analysis was conducted using a systematic approach that includes data selection, coding, categorization, and thematic identification. A corpus of 31 number of song lyrics was selected from Tatlıses to analyze recurring themes and discourse patterns. The selection criteria were based on relevance to the research topic. The selected song lyrics were transcribed and formatted into a textual dataset to facilitate coding and analysis. A preliminary coding framework was developed based on existing literature on lyrical analysis, feminist theory, and discourse theory. The initial coding process was conducted manually to identify key phrases, repetitions, and patterns in song lyrics. To enhance inter-coder reliability, the dataset was independently coded by the researcher

and a coder from translation and interpreting department at Kafkas University. Each coder analyzed the lyrics separately, and disagreements in coding were resolved through discussion and consensus. The identified codes were grouped into broader categories that represented recurring gender-related patterns in the lyrics. Categories were developed based on semantic similarity and conceptual overlap. The final themes were established by analyzing category relationships, frequency, and significance within the dataset. Thematic patterns were refined through iterative comparisons to ensure they accurately represented the lyrical discourse. The process led the researcher to uncover the four primary themes present in the songs.

This study employs Fairclough's, Van Dijk's and Wodak's Critical Discourse Analysis models in its second stage of analysis. The research objective addressed in this study is to provide a description of the text analysis, social cognition, social context, and historical background in Tatlıses' songs using the analysis models. A method of analysis has been developed for the selected musical discourse with specific characteristics using the ideas of different scholars. The existence of a unitary methodology for CDA becomes impossible due to the tremendous diversity among texts, as demonstrated by the theoretical framework of CDA. Consequently, it is necessary to establish distinct procedures for the analysis of different texts. Consequently, a concrete methodology has been developed by utilizing these three CDA models, while acknowledging that all the elements for analysis proposed by these models do not occur in all of the texts. In light of this, this section delineates the numerous variables that will be examined in order to identify the linguistic decisions made in these pieces of music, the rationale behind them, and the ideology they conceal and uphold.

At the micro level, the analysis depends on Fairclough's model. The analysis of the text is related to the linguistic features of discourse that enable speakers to convey certain meanings and carry out power in social interaction and the analysis of discursive practices focuses on the specific ways in which language is used in particular situations. The language characteristics present in the first stage include symbolism, presupposition, and implicature. It analyzes the roles used for men and women in the lyrics and focuses on gender roles at the time the song was written. At the macro level, the analysis is based on Van Dijk' ve Wodak' models. The analysis of sociocultural practice involves investigating occurrences within a specific socio-cultural framework. The second stage facilitates the understanding of the lyrics and the exploration of the underlying knowledge they encompass.

During the this stage of the study, the selected texts are evaluated in relation to the wider framework of social structures. Finally, it examines how the songs create cognition in listeners, whether they reinforce patriarchal norms, the historical background of the songs, and the connections with similar songs.

#### **4. FINDINGS**

##### **4.1. Results From Content Analysis**

After the data were collected, coded, and analyzed in the first stage, four important themes emerged:

- 1-Worthless woman
- 2-Woman as a sexual object
- 3-Threats and insults against woman
- 4-Evil woman

The syntax, semantic, and rhetoric components comprise the micro structures. The syntax element is responsible for the organization of the gathered words or phrases to produce well-formed sentences in the language. The semantic element is associated with the meaning of the language. The rhetoric element is related to the ways in which language both reflects and shapes social reality.

At micro level, the lyrics used in these songs are in the form of simple sentences that are easy to understand by the listeners and also use a few sentences that use figurative language. The most dominant mood is the declarative and imperative ones whereas the interrogative is the least frequent. Modality also could be seen in some lyrics such as the use of “will and should”. It also includes idiomatic expressions like “kanım aksın ki” which means “I swear blind that”. In the lyric, syntax elements appear in the simple and complex active sentences in present and past tense. The characteristics of all active sentences are consistent. The subject of the sentence is an actor, and its location is at the beginning of the sentence. To be, verb, object, and adverb are listed in order of appearance after the subject. The pronoun “I” implicates the agent “male” and the pronoun “you” implicates the patient “female” in the mentioned discourses. Consequently, the agency is consistently emphasized through the agent, who is often the man himself, while the woman, the patient of the action, is purposely excluded from the role of the agent. Secondly, these songs contain some imperative sentences. An imperative sentence is a form of sentence that is

employed to establish a request, command, or direction. Occasionally, a subject is not required in an imperative sentence, as it is assumed to be comprehended implicitly. The imperative sentences of the song lyrics imply male supremacy, a power relationship of the man over woman.

On the other hand, the macrostructures include the thematic elements that convey the overall message of the lyrics. The theme in the core concepts is how the general meaning is observed. The theme illustrates the critical information or significant objective of the text that is communicated to the audience, readers, or listeners. The various components of the lyrics will culminate in a single element, which will be complemented by the other components to illustrate a shared theme. The thematic elements in the songs are worthlessness towards women, to highlight their sexuality, and to contain violence.

The content analysis of the lyrics has also uncovered that there are vernaculars, dialects and slang words. They are also rich in vivid symbolism and semiotics, depicting women in stereotypical and manipulative roles. The presence of vernaculars, dialects, slang words, symbols, and idioms in song lyrics significantly influences social norms, gender roles, and patriarchal ideology by reinforcing traditional cultural narratives, shaping audience perceptions, and legitimizing power structures. These linguistic elements do not merely serve an aesthetic or artistic purpose; they act as carriers of ideological messages, making patriarchal values appear natural and acceptable.

Vernacular and dialectal language often reflects deeply ingrained regional beliefs about gender. These linguistic variations preserve traditional views on masculinity and femininity, influencing how different gender roles are perceived in various cultural settings. For example, In rural dialects, words referring to women often carry submissive connotations, portraying them as passive, dependent, and domestic. In contrast, men are described using strong, authoritative, and dominant language. If a dialect consistently portrays women as caregivers and men as providers, alternative gender roles become socially unacceptable or deviant. This linguistic conditioning affects how individuals in a given society internalize and reproduce patriarchal ideology. In addition, slang terms for women often carry demeaning, sexualized, or derogatory connotations, reinforcing their subordinate status in patriarchal societies. When negative slang expressions about women are repeatedly used in popular culture (especially in song lyrics), they become part of everyday language and accepted social norms. This subconscious repetition normalizes harmful gender stereotypes, making misogyny, sexism,

and male dominance appear acceptable. Furthermore, symbolism in lyrics often portrays women as delicate, fragile, submissive, possessed, desired, or evil beings while men are associated with strength, power, or dominance-related imagery. This binary opposition between genders maintains hegemonic masculinity and discourages deviation from traditional gender roles. Finally, many idioms related to gender implicitly reinforce male superiority and female dependence. Idioms are passed down through generations, embedding gender norms deeply into societal consciousness. Their repetitive use indoctrinates people into accepting patriarchal values without questioning them.

Driven by the impact of the arabesque genre, the extensive popularity of these songs in Türkiye establishes them as significant catalysts capable of exerting influence over the public. Although these songs may appear to be light-hearted forms of amusement, they actually function as powerful instruments of hegemony when examined more thoroughly and comprehensively. They create and maintain stereotypes about both males and females. These preconceptions not only arise but also obtain significant credibility when they are unquestioningly embraced by the majority. Building upon the overarching trends identified in the analysis, a more elaborative investigation of the chosen songs in this study reveals hidden ideologies.

#### 4.1.1. Worthless Woman

When the following songs are examined, it is seen that these songs try to turn women into silent servants or commodities that can be bought and sold in Turkey's patriarchal society.

Digel malım / Digel canım (Aşk kalbimde yer almış)

(Come here, my property. Come here, dear.)

Ben bir yiğidin malıyam / Dedi gardaş Urfalıyam. (Dedi ki nişanlıyam)

(I am the property of a brave man. I am from Urfa, she said.)

Anam nenesinden kız istemiş / Araba dolusu başlık istemiş (Perşembe gününde)

(Mom asked her granny for the girl in marriage, but the granny demanded the bride price for marriage.)

Biri der neredeydin / Biri der kiminleydin / Biri der gelmeyeydin / Yandım üç avrat elinden (Tosuno)

(The one says, where were you? The other says, with whom were you? The third one says, you needn't have come back after this time. I am ruined because of these wives)

Bak kızıyorum evinde otur çocuk doğur hey/ İşin gücün yok mu senin bir sıcak çay dök.(Erkekler)

(I am getting angry. Do not leave home. Get pregnant. If you don't have anything better, pour a cup of hot tea for me.)

Analar kız beslemiş / Vermedi sevdiğine (Aman kardaşım)

(The moms have raised their daughters but haven't let their daughters get married to the lover.)

Aziz misafir gelmiş / Şeker şerbet ez hanım. (Ayez hanım)

(The one, who is a saintly guest, has come. Prepare candy and sherbet for the guest.)

İpek mendil kirlenmiş / Gönder yar yıkasın o (Tosuno)

(The silk handkerchief is dirty. Send it to my lover to be washed)

Tut kolundan at gitsin / Eskimişse at hitsin / Yaramassa at gitsin (At gitsin)

(Throw her away holding her by arm. If she is wornout, throw her away. If she is useless, throw her away)

Biraz yüz verdim diye havalara girme sen (Allah yalanı sevmez)

(Do not get cocky just because I have indulged you a bit)

On iki gelin sevdim / Yine gönlüm sendedir (Kara çalı düzeledir)

(I have loved 12 brides, but I am still in love with you.)

At micro level, parallelism is the process of matching the forms of words, phrases, or clauses within a sentence. Parallel construction enhances the lucidity of your texts and underscores the importance of your arguments. In terms of stylistic features, there are parallelisms in lyrics such as “Come here, my property. Come here, dear”, “I am the property of a brave man. I am from Urfa, she said”, “Throw her away holding her by the arm. if she is worn-out, throw her away. If she is useless, throw her away”. In addition, the repetition of “throw away” reduces a woman's worth to her usefulness to a man. This linguistic pattern conditions the audience to accept female replaceability as natural. Furthermore, the slang phrases such as “Do not get

cocky just because I have indulged you a bit” suggest that women must remain humble and obedient, discouraging self-confidence or self-worth.

The word “bride price” implies an ideology that presupposes a man is a woman owner who pays the price of a woman, and highlights how women are treated as commodities exchanged between families. Additionally, the use of imperatives in the above discourses implies male supremacy, a power relationship of the man over woman.

The lyrics show the objectification of women when the woman says, “I am the property of a brave man” or when the man says, “Come here, my property”. Also, the phrase “three wives” emphasizes mandatory requirements for women, more than one of whom a man can have as if they were material for the man. These songs promote and sustain masculine dominance by highlighting their influential position in society. Therefore, musical discussion reinforces the dominant ideology of these male-dominated social systems. Woman is a small commodity that can be placed anywhere and bent in any way in this classical patriarchy.

In addition, the songs include the phrases “The one says, where were you? The other says, with whom were you? The third one says, you needn’t have come back after this time. I am ruined because of these wives”, “I am getting angry. Do not leave home. Get pregnant. If you don’t have anything better, pour a cup of hot tea for me” and “Throw her away holding her by the arm. if she is worn out, throw her away. If she is useless, throw her away”. These phrases highlight the worthlessness of women. The theme of controlling women’s actions reflects the traditional family structure, where men were the decision-makers, and women had limited autonomy. It is known that women were buried alive in the 6th century in Arab society because they were shamed by their fathers, which is an indication that women were not valued (Gülaçtı, 2012: 76).

It is seen that women are perceived as beings that should serve, with expressions such as “I am getting angry. Do not leave home. Get pregnant. If you don’t have anything better, pour a cup of hot tea for me”. In traditional patriarchal societies, women are expected to do the housework and raise children, while men work outside to meet the economic needs of their families (Gazioğlu, 2014). This suggests that the existing male-dominated hierarchies are upheld and perpetuated through these songs, as they depict a scenario where authority is transferred from females to males. Such a portrayal is presented as normal, inherent, effortless, and seemingly unchangeable as if it has existed since the dawn of time (Aleshinskaya,

2013). Considering such male-oriented organizations are quite abundant in male-dominated societies, these unequal and male-biased ideologies will consistently be reinforced through discourse, particularly in songs.

At macro level, these songs were written in a historical period (1970s-2000s) when patriarchal values were dominant, especially in rural Turkey. In addition, the multilingual and dialectal features of the lyrics (e.g., Şanlıurfa dialect) reinforce the idea that these gender norms are stronger in rural communities, making them appear culturally justified rather than socially constructed. The songs illustrate the limited role that women have in the patriarchal society of Turkey. The existence of a woman is so meaningless that she can be owned (more than once), sold for a price, commanded and, if desired, removed. In this context, the presentation style of women in some songs makes it a discount product that men can obtain (İmançer & İmançer, 2002: 18). In this social order, which allows men to dominate women, women have been made dependent on men by tradition, oppression, violence and fear, and they have been made to believe in the correctness of the behaviors expected from them. The patriarchy uses its power to make women quiet servants. Patriarchy aims to reinforce men's power and ignore women by minimizing the effectiveness of women in society. The woman that patriarchy wants is a servant who obeys but does not produce words, rather than a conscious and productive individual (Soyumert, 2008: 17-20). Living in a patriarchal society almost invariably results in a woman being placed in the second position in social life. Women are often depicted as fragile individuals who require the assistance of males to survive. Frequently, women are subjected to male dominance and may even suffer the loss of their identities as autonomous spirits.

Tatlises was born in 1952 in Şanlıurfa, in his own words, in a cave. She is the eldest of seven children. When Tatlises was born, his father was in prison. He never had any formal education. He kept living by selling water in different places and working in construction areas since early ages. Family is the first and the most important carrier of gender. The values and norms of society are internalized within the family. (Akın & Aydemir, 2007: 46). Especially in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, the role of women in the family keeps women in the background. Today, in Eastern and Southeastern Anatolia, women gain respect to the extent that they produce sons, not daughters, and work in their homes and croplands without expecting any financial or emotional return, but despite all these, they still cannot avoid being second-class citizens and being subjected to all kinds of physical violence. (Hatunoğlu et al. 2014: 243) As in many regions of



Anatolia, in the region where Tatlıses was born and raised, women do not have educational status and economic benefits, they have an extremely limited worldview, and the feudal reality and male hegemony are very strong. For these reasons, they are more oppressed and exposed to more violence. (Hatunoğlu et al. 2014: 244). Our proverb “Women do everything, men do the rest.” summarizes the women's situation in rural areas. Tatlıses was born and raised in a patriarchal society and a patriarchal family structure where women were seen as worthless. Considering that he had never any formal education, it is obvious that he has an image of a woman in his mind as she sees and experiences from her family and the other families, and this bad image is reflected in his songs. It is a widely held belief that language is influenced by society; however, it is equally crucial to comprehend the ways in which language influences and impacts society. Coming from a lower-class background and achieving immense success, Tatlıses' music often reflects the values, struggles, and male-dominant mentality of his upbringing. His songs serve as both a reflection and reinforcement of traditional gender dynamics, particularly regarding male authority over women, arranged marriages, and female subordination. The access of women and men to opportunities, rights and services, their social status, their visibility in society, and their participation in social life depend on centuries-old stereotypes of gender. The patriarchal structure is not only limited to the family, but also exists in every area where women try to exist, and as a result of all these, gender discrimination has become a universal reality.

Briefly, the repetition of specific linguistic structures sustains power relations. In these lyrics, the consistent reinforcement of male authority and female submission creates a subconscious cultural norm. These lyrics align with historical gender roles, making them appear timeless and culturally justified. Listeners who internalize these lyrics may subconsciously accept that women should remain passive, loyal, and obedient. They sustain gender inequality by making historical oppression seem like an unavoidable cultural norm.

#### **4.1.2. Woman As a Sexual Object**

In these extremely dangerous songs examined, women are mentioned as someone to kiss, sleep with, and play with whereas men are described as someone to desire women's bodies and to take advantage of it.

Koynunda bir çüt meme / Soyulmuş nara benzer (Bu gelin Abalıdır)

(There are a couple of boobs on her breasts. They look like a peeled pomegranate)

Elma gibi yanaklardan / Kiraz gibi dudaklardan / Ellere varda bize yok mu (Ellere varda bize yok mu)

(Cheeks like apple. Lips like cherry. Others have them but why not me?)

Bir kızar bir naz eder / Öptürmez doya doya (Esmerin adı Oya)

(She is either hot or cold and doesn't let me kiss her to my heart's desire)

Dudağı kiraz / Dişleri sedef / Gerdanı beyaz / Öpeyim biraz (Hayrettin ağabey)

(Her lips like cherry, her teeth like pearl, her neck is white, let me kiss you a bit)

Bir öpücük vermedin / Vallah huylandım siye (Kara üzüm habbesi)

(You didn't let me kiss you once, so I got chafed at you.)

Tuttum karının eteğinden / Tuttum karının memesinden (Kavur balıkları)

(I grabbed woman's skirt and boobs)

Sil gözünden sürmeleri / Çöz göğsünden düğmeleri / Göreyim yar sineleri (Sürme çekmiş gözlerine)

(Wipe the eyeliner from your eyes, unbutton your dress, and let me see your boobs.)

Kız demedim dul demedim eğlendim. ( Rakı içtim şarap içtim)

(I had fun of them irrespective of whether they were a virgin or a widow.)

Şimdiki kızlar ne hoş olur kucakta, vay vay / Öpüşürken yemek yandı ocakta (Bir taş attım bencereye)

(Today's girls will be nice on the lap, how lovely. The meal got burned on the stove while we were kissing each other.)

Tombul tombul memeler / Memeler baş kaldırmış / Kavuşmuyor düğmeler (Tombul tombul)

(Chubby boobs. They are so erect that her buttons don't come together.)

Bomboş kalmışsa sokaklar / Karanlık beni saklar / İşte o an o

dudaklar / Öpülmez mi yeşil gözlüm (Yeşil yeşil)

(If the streets are empty, the darkness hides me. At the very moment is it high time to kiss your lips, my green-eyed lover?)

Aman bir güzelki... / On birinde gonca diye koklarlar / On dördünde badem şekere benzer / On altında gören aklım dağılır / On yedide göğsü cennet bağıdır (Yaş 65)

(Oh my god, she is so pretty. She is smelled like rosebuds at 11. She's like an almond toffee at 14. I'm out of mind when she is at 16. At 17, her breasts are like a garden from heaven.)

İndim derelerine / Bilmem nerelerine / Kaytan bıyıklarımı sürsem nerelerine (Kırmızı kurdale)

(I have reached your gutters, which I don't know well. I don't know which parts of her body I should rub my thick mustache.)

At micro level, the Persian-original words used in the songs, “Çüt” (a couple of) and “Sineler” (boobs), are unfamiliar dictions, and the euphemisms in these lines aim to hide the anemic mentality underlying them, to a small extent. Moreover, many of these lyrics use dialectal expressions that objectify women, making patriarchal language more acceptable through folk-like storytelling. The use of Şanlıurfa and southeastern Turkish dialects adds an “authentic” and “traditional” feel to gendered power dynamics, making objectification seem natural and culturally justified. There are also hyponyms such as “apple, cherry, pomegranate and metaphors such as rosebud, almond toffee, gutters and a garden in heaven”. The lexical connotations of the words such as “apple, cherry, pomegranate, rosebud, almond toffee” are taste, flavor, sweetness and pleasure. In the lines above, these words are consistently used to describe women's body parts to be kissed. The male describes the cheeks, lips and breasts of the woman with these words and expresses that he wants to kiss her, which represents the objectification of women in a society that is predominantly controlled by men. Moreover, the word “gutter” is a metaphor used for the lower parts of the female body that are usually wet. In addition, the use of vocabulary such as virgin and widow to describe women serves to maintain male dominance and obliterate a woman's sense of self, resulting in her oppression, voiceless and sexual object in the context. The lyric “I had fun of them irrespective of whether they were a virgin or a widow” reflects male privilege in sexual relationships, suggesting that a man has the freedom to engage with both virgins and widows for pleasure,

reinforcing a double standard where male promiscuity is celebrated, but female sexuality is restricted. These lyrics shape audience perception, reinforcing sexual entitlement, male dominance, and female objectification. By romanticizing young girls, dehumanizing women, and portraying them as consumables, the songs contribute to a culture where women are seen primarily as objects of male desire. The repetition of sexualized language in musical discourse normalizes gender inequality, influencing how men treat women and how women perceive their own worth.

In addition, the songs include feminine characteristics of the beautiful woman portrait such as green eyes, light skin, apple cheeks, cherry lips, pearly teeth, and large breasts. According to Gumiandari and Nafia (2019), a signature of women is femininity which is their distinct commodity. Women are frequently assessed based on their appearance, speech, and behavior. They will be perceived as peculiar or other individuals if the beauty standard established by males, is violated. Furthermore, in society, the physical aspect of a woman is frequently the primary factor influencing the reactions of others and the emotions of the woman herself (Polivy & Herman, 2007). It is unsurprising that a woman will experience a sense of alienation or inferiority when she fails to meet these beauty standards, resulting in a sense of insecurity

In this study, the highest rate belongs to the sexual object. In a patriarchal society, attitudes, behaviors and practices such as seeing women as sexual objects and legitimizing harassment and rape due to the general belief that they have the potential to be prostitutes are frequently observed (Baydar, 2013: 152). In the songs examined, women are mentioned as someone to kiss, sleep with, and play with. Men want to have women's bodies. The songs state that women are hot and men want to take advantage of it. It draws attention to the fact that "girls will be nice on the lap". Especially the songs named "Tombul tombul", "Bu gelin abalıdır" and "Yaş 65" contain serious sexist messages and pedophilia. Tatlıses' music reaches a wide audience, especially in geographies where the traditional and patriarchal structure is strong, and produces a cultural discourse that legitimizes the portrayal of women as sexual objects from an early age. His presentation of the female body from a male perspective by depicting young girls in his songs with metaphors such as flowers, fruits and candy reinforces the idea that the real value of women is youth and sexual attractiveness in the subconscious of the listeners. Tatlıses' emergence as a national and international icon, especially from regions such as Şanlıurfa and Eastern Anatolia where traditional social norms prevail, has ensured that such

ideological discourses resonate not only locally but also nationally. Thanks to her popularity, these songs have shaped not only individual tastes but also the social perceptions of the masses. This contributed to the reproduction of social phenomena such as underage marriages, men's authority over women, and the view of the female body as an object of property, even perceived as a romantic or traditional value. Thus, through music, the idea that women are only valuable when they are young and virginal is transmitted from generation to generation, while the idea that men have the right to possess women's bodies is presented as a natural reality. Over time, these subliminal messages feed the idea that women's sexual identity should be shaped from an early age, leading to the implicit normalization and romanticization of pedophilia.

Throughout the ages, in accordance with the patriarchal system, women have been seen as belonging to the home and man. Men's dominance over nature, which comes from hunting, also includes women (Berktaş, 2000: 26). Unlike the woman, who is an organizing and unifying element within the home such as ensuring the integrity of the home, bringing family members together, and taking care of the children, the man takes care of his family by taking on the role of protecting his family and supporting his family financially. For this reason, women must be protected by society, above all else, as a good wife who knows how to please and make their husbands happy, and as an ideal mother who watches over their children. For this reason, the first purpose of sexual ethics in both Western civilization and Eastern civilization has been to protect women's honor and purity. Because it is impossible to talk about the concept of fatherhood without them. A family without a father means that the patriarchal family order is in danger (Russell, 2003: 10). The fact that sexuality is seen as a taboo in such conservative societies can also cause repressed emotions to be revealed for men in later ages. It is obvious that Tatlıses grew up in such a society and family culture, considering that he has 7 siblings. Additionally, the number of child brides is quite high in this region where Tatlıses grew up. It is also known that Tatlıses also worked in casinos and nightclubs before becoming famous. These types of entertainment venues are the most obvious places where women are seen as sexual objects. Women working in such places are invited to tables, made to dance and even have sex. The socio-cultural family structure and geography into which Tatlıses was born and grew up as well as his educational background and working life were reflected in his own life and songs in the later years of his life.

As a conclusion, these lyrics reflect deeply ingrained patriarchal

values in Turkish society, where women's worth is often reduced to their physical appearance and sexual desirability. The hypersexualization of young women (especially in Yaş 65) reflects historical norms where girls were expected to be sexually desirable at a young age, aligning with child bride traditions that persisted in rural Turkey. Such lyrics romanticizes the sexualization of young girls, reinforcing the cultural idea that a girl's body is a symbol of temptation and desire from an early age. The comparison to flowers, sweets, and paradise suggests that a woman's only value is in her youth and physical attractiveness. The objectification of underage girls normalizes gendered power imbalances in sexual relationships. It is seen that such lyrics cause sexual discrimination between men and women, and the adjective "sexual object" is attributed to women (Taşal and Vural, 2011: 6-7). With these expressions in the songs, the position of women is reduced to the lowest common denominator of male fantasies (Can, 2008).

#### 4.1.3. Threats and Insults Against Woman

These following lines epitomize the stark contrast in the roles assigned to men and women within societal structures and sustain the idea that women are vulnerable and easily exploitable on physical, mental, and social levels.

Vurun vurun öldürün / Yari terk edenleri (Ağamda şimdi gelir)

(Gun those who dump their lovers down)

Allah cezanı verecek / Alem sana gülecek (Allah cezanı verecek)

(The god will punish you and everybody will make fun of you)

Tüfeğim dolu saçma / Sevdiğim benden kaçma (Bitliste 5 minare)

(My rifle is loaded so don't try to run away, my lover.)

Göze aldım 20 sene yatarım / Benden başkasına yar etmem seni (Çoban)

(I run the risk of being jailed for 20 years but I do not let you belong to anyone but me.)

Kızını dövmeyenler / Billah dizini döver (Dünya böyle kurulmuş)

(Spare the rod and spoil the daughter)

Ben erkeğim hemen önümde eğil diz çok (Erkekler)

(Bow down and kneel because I am a man)

Kız ben seni vurmazmıyam / Saçlarından asmasmıyam ( Kız ben seni vurmaz mıyam )

(Girl, wouldn't I shoot you? Wouldn't I hang you by your hair?)

Kanım aksın ki / Terketmem seni (Odalarda ışıksızım)

(I swear blind that I will never leave you.)

Git ara bul getir / Saçlarını yol getir (Saçlarını yol getir)

(Go and find her. Bring her here tearing her hair out)

When it comes to the lyrics including threats and insults to women at micro level, the language is less formal and more offensive with only negative expressive values. The pronoun "I" implicates the agent "male" and the pronoun "you" implicates the patient "female" in the above discourses. Consequently, the agency is consistently emphasized through the agent, who is often the man himself, while the woman, the patient of the action, is purposely excluded from the role of agent. This exclusion serves to reinforce the notion of subservience, positioning women as obedient to their male counterparts. Additionally, the deliberate absence of the woman as the agent implies the denial of her equal rights—rights that her male counterpart exercises over her. To van Leeuwen (1997), such absence, which may have been represented in the discourse, is frequently disregarded, potentially as a result of ideological considerations. The intentional act of leaving out and disregarding women in the text marginalizes them from prominent social portrayals in society, assigning them to weaker and secondary positions.

Physical violence is more prominent in the lyrics of the songs about violence against women. Physical violence in songs shows itself in the phrases “My rifle is loaded so don't try to run away”, “run the risk of being jailed for 20 years but I do not let you belong to anyone but me”, “Girl, wouldn't I shoot you? Wouldn't I hang you by your hair?”, “spare the rod and spoil the daughter”. The use of direct physical threats normalizes extreme violence as a response to female disobedience. This type of language reinforces male entitlement over women's lives and bodies. The rhetorical question format "vurmazmıyam" literally translated “wouldn't I shoot you?” makes the threat sound inevitable, as if the woman's actions justify the violence. The willingness to kill or harm a woman to prevent her from being with another man romanticizes possessive control. It reinforces the idea that women do not have autonomy in choosing their partners. Moreover, the phrases "I do not let you belong to anyone but me" and “I swear blind that I will never leave you” emphasize the essential requirements

for a woman to be emotionally connected to a guy, as if he is indispensable to her. The metaphor “Kanım aksın ki”, which literally translated as “let my blood flow”, romanticizes suffering and violence, suggesting that true love requires bloodshed and self-destruction. It promotes the idea that women should tolerate possessive and abusive behavior as proof of devotion. The proverb “spare the rod and spoil the daughter”, which is literally translated as “Those who don’t beat their daughters will regret it” also legitimizes domestic violence, reinforcing the belief that physical punishment is necessary for controlling women. By using religious undertones “Billah”, which means “I swear”, the lyric makes violence seem not just acceptable but divinely justified. It perpetuates the idea that women must be controlled from a young age to prevent disobedience later in life.

The phrases “spare the rod and spoil the daughter” and “Bow down and kneel because I am a man” suggest the coexistence of men and women in Turkish society where males have the majority of power and influence. These lines explicitly establish male superiority and female submission. The command “kneel” suggests complete obedience, portraying women as subordinates. These lines also epitomize the stark contrast in the roles assigned to men and women within societal structures, perpetuating detrimental effects on the perception of female agency. The portrayal of women as fragile and weak is reinforced through this discourse, undermining their sense of empowerment. This form of media communication sustains the idea that women are vulnerable and easily exploitable on physical, mental, and social levels. It implies that the value of women's existence is diminished to the point where their compliance becomes imperative. Disobedience on their part is met with coercion. This narrative asserts that women are obligated to conform to societal norms while men enjoy greater freedom in their actions. The music industry is developing day by day as a sector where violence against women is getting intense both physically and psychologically. For example, the violence committed by Tatlises against his female friends has repeatedly made its place in the headlines of the newspapers (Kuyucu, 2014: 53-78). Tatlises’ own life story aligns closely with the themes in these lyrics. His public persona and personal history include allegations of domestic violence, threats against women, and a controlling attitude toward female partners. His rise to fame in the 1980s and 1990s coincided with a period in Turkish society where gender-based violence was often dismissed or justified under traditional male authority. Thus, the violent and threatening themes in his songs are not just artistic expressions but reflections of real societal norms that he both represents and reinforces. Violence against women is a global problem that affects the whole



world. These gender roles imposed by male hegemony and patriarchal social structure are the main reasons for violence against women, which are used to exploit and control women.

Individuals are always within a cultural system. This system has defined certain behavioral codes to coexist. Even when individuals reject the codes of the dominant culture in which they live, they create their lives under the guidance of a predefined cultural system, at least partially based on these systems (Leung and Cohen, 2011: 508). The gender-based perception of honor and purity in patriarchal societies is reconstructed by making women adopt gender roles and behaviors during the socialization process (Öztaş, 2018: 17). At this point, it is seen that the patriarchal social structure is decisive in the historical path regarding the emergence and shaping of honor and purity as a male-biased phenomenon. Honor and purity are a gender-based power relationship and a matter of men; Being pure belongs to women, and protecting this purity belongs to men. In this sense, it becomes important for the man to be dominant and powerful and for the woman to be passive and submissive, to strictly comply with gender rules and to be very careful in her behavior both in private and public areas. A woman who is considered to have harmed her own purity and her man's honor may be warned, scolded, insulted, or punished through physical violence, depending on the severity of the damage. This punishment based on physical violence can range from beating to wounding and killing. In this honor culture, violence against women by male members of the family due to their disapproved behavior regarding sexuality is called "honor crimes", and the killing of women due to the belief that tarnished honor can only be cleaned by eliminating the presence of the woman is called "honor killings". In this honor culture, women are perceived not as a subject with their existence, personality, body and sexuality, but as an object whose property belongs to men. For this reason, the control over women and the social construction of patriarchy pushes women into the position of open object of domination, exploitation and violence in almost every part of the world. Men, who are the perpetrators of violence against women, use the concept of honor, almost like an ideology, to justify violence or provide an excuse for it. The concept of honor crimes and honor killings is very common in the region where Tatlıses was born and raised. It is also known that his father was in prison when Tatlıses was born. This tendency towards violence, which comes from his family and the geography he lives in, has been reflected many times in Tatlıses' loves, marriages and social relationships. He has been the subject of national news many times with his violence against his wife, having his lovers shot with a gun and his degrading statements towards women. At the

Pantene Golden Butterfly Award ceremony, where awareness of women's rights came to the fore, the “Lifetime Honor Award” was given to İbrahim Tatlıses, which was criticized by many women on social media.

These lyrics shape listener perceptions of gender roles and violence, particularly among men in rural, conservative communities where Tatlıses has a strong following. The repeated exposure to violent threats against women in music normalizes the idea that violence is part of male-female relationships. Young men hearing these songs may internalize these messages, believing that dominance and aggression are necessary to control women. By portraying disobedient women as deserving of violence, the lyrics send a message that good women must be submissive to avoid harm. Female listeners may internalize fear and self-censorship, believing that they must obey men to avoid violence. This contributes to women accepting abusive relationships as normal or even romantic.

#### 4.1.4. Evil Woman

When we look at the following lyrics, the woman is seen as a means of satisfaction for men and as an object that seduces the man and provokes him sexually.

Yere bakan / Yürek yakan / Alemi peşine takan (Kim çeker seni)

(You are both a dark horse and a heartbreaker. You make everyone flock after you.)

Yanıyorum söndürelim mi? Tabi / Çıktı ateşim indirelim mi? Tabi / Bak bu sözlerin lafta kalırsa senin o tabini yerim. (Tabi Tabi)

(Female: I'm on fire / Male: Do you want me to put it out? / Female: Sure. / Female: I have a fever / Male: Do you want me to lower your fever? / Female: Sure. / Male: I will eat you (sexually) if your words are just all talk.)

Ben sana kandım Zühtü / Amanıda yandım Zühtü / Bir uçkuru çözemedim ipekten de Zühtü (Zühtü)

(I fall for you, Zühtü. I burn with you, Zühtü. I could not untie your silk belt, Zühtü.)

Güzel güzel bakarsın / Yürekleri yakarsın / Daldan dala konarsın / Şıpsevdisin vallahi (Şıp sevdi)

(You look beautiful. You make everybody fall in love with you. You bounce from someone to others. You are quick to fall in love.)

At micro level the idiom “You are both a dark horse and a

heartbreaker” plays into the common trope of the deceptive woman who appears innocent yet causes emotional turmoil. The use of this idiom for women signifies a stereotype of deceptive femininity, reinforcing the Madonna-Whore complex, where women are either pure and virtuous or seductive and destructive. Another idiom “You make everyone flock after you” shows that the woman is positioned as an irresistible force, controlling men’s emotions.

In the phrases “Female: I am on fire, I have a fever, I fall for you, Zühtü, I burn with you, Zühtü. I could not untie your silk belt, Zühtü”, the use of repetition and colloquial phrasing intensifies the sense of male suffering. The name “Zühtü” itself is significant, as it carries a humorous, almost mocking tone, portraying the speaker as helpless before a powerful, seductive woman. “Uçkur” (silk belt) is a metaphor for sexual desire, reinforcing the idea of a woman who manipulates intimacy. The female character is the initiator of desire, stating she is “on fire” and has “a fever”. This aligns with the Evil Woman trope, where women are depicted as: masters of deception, which means using words to entice men while withholding true fulfillment, controlling through passivity, which means making the man feel uncertain about her sincerity, and femme fatale figures, which means setting emotional and sexual traps for men.

In the phrases “You look beautiful. You make everybody fall in love with you” the woman is depicted as dangerous and manipulative, using her beauty as a weapon. Moreover, the phrases “You bounce from someone to others. You are quick to fall in love” highlights the untrustworthy and promiscuous woman stereotype, implying that she lacks emotional depth or loyalty.

Throughout human history, the positioning of women based on men has led to their lack of identity. When we look at the related literature, it is clear that women are depicted as demonic creatures in some religions and communities. For example, in Christianity, the woman who caused Adam to be expelled from heaven and the human race to become sinners by making him eat the forbidden fruit represents evil and dining with the devil (Akdemir, 1991: 251). In patriarchal societies, a woman is a commodity that is exploited by her father and brothers before marriage and then is passed like an inheritance from a man to another man. Patriarchy sees women not as a human being but as a sexual object to satisfy their desires. According to this idea, a woman is a witch who seduces men. Considering the expressions such as “there is no smoke without fire” or “if a woman does not wag her tail, men will not chase after her”, this patriarchal society has succeeded in

acquitting the man by placing all the blame on the woman. As a social cognition, it is inevitable for Tatlıses, who grew up in this kind of social structure, to adopt these ideologies and reflect them in his songs. His music is heavily influenced by traditional Middle Eastern and Turkish storytelling, where men are often portrayed as victims of love, and women are depicted as either idealized lovers or “femme fatales”. The lyrics above showcase these motifs, reinforcing cultural perceptions of gender roles.

In these lines, the male narrator often portrays himself as helpless before the woman’s charms, positioning himself as a passive sufferer rather than an agent of his own fate. The woman is never innocent—she is either seductive, controlling, or unfaithful, reinforcing misogynistic narratives. These songs sustain male-dominated cultural norms, where the ideal woman is either unattainable or dangerous. The narrator’s emotional turmoil is validated, suggesting that men have the right to feel wronged and victimized by women’s choices. In the Arabesque tradition, suffering is romanticized, and masculinity is often defined through emotional endurance, making it socially acceptable for men to express heartbreak but not vulnerability. These songs echo older Turkish folk traditions which includes unfaithful women, reinforcing the idea that men are destined to suffer due to women’s choices. These gendered representations perpetuate harmful stereotypes, positioning men as passive victims of female manipulation rather than equal participants in relationships. The lyrics may have influenced public perception of relationships, reinforcing male entitlement to women’s affection. In a contemporary feminist context, these lyrics could be criticized for their reductionist portrayal of women, yet they remain culturally significant due to their emotional depth and relatability for many listeners.

## 5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

This study aimed to uncover how İbrahim Tatlıses’ musical discourse perpetuates gender inequality by embedding patriarchal ideologies within song lyrics. The findings indicate that his lyrics consistently reinforce traditional male-dominated narratives, positioning women in limited and subordinate roles. Through Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), four major themes emerged: (1) worthless woman, (2) woman as a sexual object, (3) threats and insults against women, and (4) evil woman.

These themes reveal deeply ingrained gender stereotypes, where women are either idealized as pure and submissive or demonized as manipulative and dangerous. The analysis highlights how language, dialects, idioms, and metaphors reinforce patriarchal values, shaping public

perception of gender roles. The normalization of possessiveness, male entitlement, and even violence within lyrics suggests that musical discourse does not simply reflect social norms but actively constructs and maintains them.

Historically, arabesque music, as a genre, has served as an outlet for male suffering, often romanticizing men's emotional pain while framing women as the cause of distress. This victimization of men and vilification of women contribute to patriarchal structures that justify gender inequality. The persistent presence of vernacular expressions, symbolic language, and cultural references further legitimizes these gender roles within Turkish society, particularly in rural and conservative communities where Tatlıses has a strong following.

The findings of this study suggest that music serves as a powerful ideological tool that reinforces gender disparities. The repetition of gendered narratives over time influences audience cognition, normalizing the idea that men must dominate women and that women should remain submissive to avoid negative consequences.

To counteract the harmful effects of such musical discourse, several recommendations emerge:

1. **Educational Interventions:** Schools and universities should integrate media literacy programs to critically examine gender representations in music, helping students recognize and challenge patriarchal discourse.
2. **Artist and Industry Responsibility:** Musicians and producers should be encouraged to create content that promotes gender equality rather than reinforcing stereotypes. Industry-wide initiatives could incentivize gender-sensitive songwriting.
3. **Audience Awareness Campaigns:** Public discussions and media campaigns can raise awareness about how music shapes gender perceptions and the potential harm of normalizing misogynistic themes.
4. **Regulation and Ethical Standards:** While artistic freedom should be respected, media regulatory bodies should monitor and discourage content that explicitly promotes violence against women.

Despite the comprehensive nature of this study, several limitations should be acknowledged. The analysis focused exclusively on İbrahim Tatlıses' songs. Future studies could expand to other artists and genres,

providing a broader view of gender representation in Turkish music. Moreover, while this study focused on textual analysis, future research could examine listener reception, conducting surveys or interviews to understand how these messages are internalized by audiences. In addition, as societal attitudes toward gender evolve, future research should explore how modern Turkish music is adapting to these changes and whether gender representation is shifting toward equality. Finally, a cross-cultural study could compare gender narratives in Turkish arabesque music with other regional music genres, such as Arabic or Persian music, to understand how gender norms vary across cultures.

Music is not just a means of reflecting culture. it can also be a tool for challenging and transforming it. By adopting feminist perspectives in musical discourse, promoting gender equality in music production, and raising awareness among listeners, the industry can move toward a more inclusive and balanced representation of gender.

Ultimately, shifting the discourse in Turkish music, particularly in historically male-dominated genres like arabesque, will require collaboration between artists, academics, policymakers, and audiences. Only through conscious and collective efforts can music evolve from reinforcing gender disparities to challenging them and promoting equality.

## 6. SUMMARY

This study aims to reveal how İbrahim Tatlıses' arabesque lyrics reproduce gender inequality. The concept of gender no longer only refers to differences between men and women, but also to a structure that includes cultural norms and stereotypes of femininity and masculinity. Arabesque music, especially in Tatlıses' songs, reinforces a patriarchal narrative by portraying women in stereotypical roles such as victim, sacrifice or sinner. In this context, music is not only a means of entertainment, but also a powerful ideological discourse tool.

The study used the critical discourse analysis (CDA) method, and analyzed in detail 31 of Tatlıses' 217 songs. Four main themes emerged as a result of the analysis: Worthless women, Women as sexual objects, Threats and insults against women, and Evil women. These themes show that women are presented as submissive, silent or seductive figures. In the lyrics, women are portrayed as either objects to be possessed or "criminals" to be punished, while men are shown as strong, emotionally wounded but always dominant.

The language and idioms in Tatlıses' songs normalize patriarchal

values through regional dialects, metaphors and idioms. While roles such as women staying at home, giving birth to children and bringing tea to men are glorified, women's right to speak, sexual freedom or their existence as individuals are either belittled or perceived as a threat. In addition, sexuality is presented as a problem for women and a right for men. It is also seen that the descriptions of the female body in the songs are frequently reduced to young ages, thus implicitly legitimizing pedophilia.

The results of the study reveal that music does not only reflect culture, but also shapes it, and is a powerful tool that reinforces gender inequality. In this context, it is recommended that media literacy-based courses be given in educational institutions, gender-sensitive content be encouraged in the music industry, and audience awareness be increased. As a result, it is emphasized that artists, academics, and audiences should make a joint effort to ensure gender equality in male-dominated music genres such as arabesque.

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