THE IMAGE OF SYRIAN WOMEN IN TURKISH NEWSPAPERS: DOUBLE BURDEN HIDDEN IN THE FRAME

Abstract

From the beginning of the Syrian civil war, Syrian citizens have started to flee to Turkey with the hope and expectation of protection because of Turkey’s open door policy. In time, with the increase in the number of the Syrian population in the country, interest of Turkish media towards the situation of Syrian refugees has also increased. This study aims to underline the news coverage specifically focusing on the image of Syrian women to answer the question in mind: “what does the image of Syrian women tell us about the gender-differentiated approaches of media?” This study uses citizen theories on refugees to emphasis the suspension of their rights due to their status as “not being citizen” or “not having a state of their own” while pointing out the gender-based discrimination as well as the refugee-based discrimination together. Therefore, this paper argues that Syrian women have been holding double burden as being both woman and refugee in Turkey and this burden to be traced in the newspapers’ coverage of Syrian women’s image.

Keywords: woman refugee, media, newspapers, Syrian women
TÜRK GAZETELERİNDE SURİYELİ KADINLARININ GÖRÜNTÜLERİ:
ÇERÇEVEDE SAKLANAN ÇİFTE YÜK

Öz


Anahtar kelimeler: Kadın mültecisi, medya, gazeteler, Suriyeli kadınlar

I. Introduction

Mass conflicts in Syria which started in March 2011 couldn’t come to the end, is still proceeding with its all violence. Syrian people escaping to survive to other countries have resulted to the refugee crisis all over Europe, including Turkey. In this context, Turkey became one of the host countries which opened its borders to a large number of Syrian people in this period. To the official declaration of Ministry of Internal Directorate General of Migration Management, by the December of 2015, there is 2.415.494 Syrian in Turkey (Management web site). Thus, Syrian refugees have become significant issue of the country just like in other neighbor countries while their existence has become a part of the social fact.

In that manner, this study aims to emphasize how women refugees are portrayed by newspapers in Turkey. By this way, how these social changes and situation of women refugees are interpreted and depicted in Turkish media might become visible. With regards to these questions six newspapers which differ to their political stance are investigated: Zaman, Ortadoğu, Sözcü, Hürriyet, Sabah and Yeni Şafak. Pictures of woman refugees in first pages of these newspapers are researched and categorized with regards to types of representation. In this sense, the study aims to emphasize women refugees’ positions as re-subordinated by social roles attributed to them just being woman while also under tough circumstances of being homeless, countryless and under real threats of war conditions. So that, their portrayals in printed media might be significant resource for considering what kind of characteristics are came to the forefront in relation with dominant discourse about woman and woman refugee.

This study underlines that information and knowledge which gets into social circulation by means of media tools has significant effect on hegemonic discourse and popular culture. Also, needless to say, media is not independent from social knowledge and popular opinions in society. Indeed, knowledge reproduced by media both is derived from this knowledge and reproduce this knowledge. Therefore, images of women refugees in these newspapers are consid-
Gendered Nature of Displacement: Women as Refugees

Women and their dependant children constitute more than 80% of the refugees in the world. Under the harsh situation of being refugee, women also face with the torture, executions, forced deportation, and racist state policies denying or limiting public representation, health care, education, employment, and access to legal redress along with the rape and sexual torture while being used as an object of humiliation to demoralize the whole population. However, only legal document for the status of refugees namely the 1950 Refugee Convention and international law have been continuing to be the gender-blind (Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2001, p.21).

When a family is forced to leave their country of origin, they mostly settled in the camps in the host countries. In these camps, men become the representative or spokesperson of the family, the face of that family in the public arena, and the problems of the men as a refugee become the problems of refugees due to the invisibility of the women in public sphere. Despite the fact that both men and women refugees are defined and resettled by the system of the host country; women also suffer from the disabilities of being a refugee.

Refugee women are mainly treated as second-class citizens in the hosting country if not third. They face discriminations on many field of the everyday life such as in terms of “wages, job security, working conditions, job-related training, and the right to unionize”. In addition to
that, they encounter with the physical and sexual abuse, and discrimination on the basis of religion and ethnicity (Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2001, p.27).

So, end result is the discrimination of the women refugees twice; as women and as refugees leading the way the women to be seen as passive and unproductive sides of the relocation, depending on the men (Hillmann, 1996: 43). This encourages the patriarchal structure underestimating the women as agents to become a norm, and women continue to be seen as vulnerable human beings (Hillmann, 1996). In the refugee situation, women also suffer from being unheardable because they are not expected to protest anything due to two reasons; their traditional gender roles tell them not to; and they thought the status of their men if women started to talk in the host country. So, they are discriminated again twice; by their host country context and that of their source culture (Indra, 1987, p.4).

In the armed conflict, women, apart from the known types of violence, face with the gender specific forms of violence. Women’s roles as the representative and bearer of the culture and values make women the political targets (Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2001, p.23) when they become refugees, they are given less value due to their refugee status, and being other; but also given lesser value on their gender; so they are alienated twice; both on ethnicity and gender grounds. This situation is used to shame the men of women’s community in the form of rape, and sexual torture (Pittaway & Bartolomei, 2001, pp.23-24). Moreover, both women and men face with the threat of death and fear of being harmed because of extraordinary circumstances. Yet, discriminative institutions of the host country and of social community accuse women for stepping out of her appropriate role or for deviating from sexual necessities of the society (Indra, 1987).

Thus the concept of refugee fundamentally differs for men and women. Also, from a different perspective, women are also treated as the ones who are willing to marry men from the hosting country to gain an upper status or certain rights which cannot obtain by themselves (Kryvenko et.al., 2016, p.89).

In addition to that, women became one of the targets of the battlefield as the image of the domestic sphere, as the bearer of the characteristics of the civil population for the ones who have been attacking their countries (Nordstrom, 1991, p.7). So, they become primary target of the discourses developed or evolved throughout the both battle and displacement process. Indeed, women might become the main focus of goals of wars that violence for women actually appears as the main tool of the fight (Enloe, 2011, s. 216). In other terms, since women’s bodies are defined as the symbol of the national unity or the homeland a foreign attack to women is regarded as a part of victory. On the other hand, this opinion entails men to protect their women who symbolize the existence of national body (Najmabadi, 1997, s. 445).

In the study regarding the women in Kosova war, there are six labels that women are categorized:

2. Waiting wife: Many refugee stories highlighted, not the woman herself, but her missing husband and discursively privileged male life over female life (del Zotto, 2002, p.145).
3. The female body torn apart: how women’s ‘honour’ was defiled to blame the other side (del Zotto, 2002, p.146).
4. Rape survivor

5. The touchy-feely peace activist; the impact of women’s peace work was largely not taken seriously by mainstream media (del Zotto, 2002, p.147).


Therefore, it can be stated that women in the refugee status have not only experiencing the difficulties and challenges of being apart from their homeland; they also have to bear the burdens of being the representative of the domestic life of the origin country, of the honour of their family and of the culture and traditions.

III. The Role of the Media

Media presents the artificially constructed imagery as truth, this is called by Hall as a “circuit of culture” (Hall, 1997, pp. 24–27). Media gives meaning and interpretation to the words and images regarding the events covered, and in time these meanings become the only meaning that can be drawn from such events, and a belief system based on that data is constructed. For instance in Kosova, women were framed as mere bystanders to the actions (del Zotto, 2002, p.142) and this became the common knowledge regarding the events.

The theory of Social Representations coined by Serge Moskovici argues that social representation is;

“system of values, ideas and practices with a twofold function; first, to establish an order which will enable individuals to orient themselves in their material and social world and to master it; and secondly to enable communication to take place among the members of a community by providing them with a code for social exchange and a code for naming and classifying unambiguously the various aspects of their world and their individual and group history” (1973, p. xiii).

Therefore, social representations are the mechanisms turning the unfamiliar things to familiar things and objectifying the abstract things. So, they basically transfer something in the mind to the existing objects in the physical world. They can change, evolve, and be reconstructed (Sevim, 2013, p.88).

In this context, media constitutes the social mind, social reason while setting the agenda. It decided the subjects that the society would discuss, and while doing so, it also forms a fictional reality that would emphasize some issues much more than others (Sevim, 2013, p.42). This is what happens when the media covers the news about the refugee women; limited, selective and reductive definitions becomes the the representation points of the women.

There is an interconnection between the media, gender and war logics. The media coverage of the news related to the war and gender establishes certain rules and stereotypes of that issues in the specific period of time (Klaus & Kassel, 2005, p.336). By 1979, Altheide and Snow had already introduced the term media logic. Gender logic is about the construction of femininity and masculinity by social symbols (Klaus & Kassel, 2005, p.338). And most commonly, presence of the women in the media coverage does not guarantee to report their problems, needs and opinions, and the issues of women; but they seem to be merely a symbol in the war covered by the media for different purposes such as justifying the military intervention as an only way to protect the women and the children (Klaus & Kassel, 2005, pp.344-346). Regarding the refugee women in the news reported, it was clear that women were portrayed as highly
traditional and passive victims of the resettlement who have been depending on the men for their future to be shaped (Kurbjuweit, 2001; Klußmann et al., 2001).

Regarding the reasons behind the selection of the events by the media, three explanations are mostly accepted by the scholars and media workers. These are time and tradition, money and patriotism. Within this context, media lies on the manageable meaning traditional imaginary when publishing an event. Because if one event serves as the stereotypes as “otherness”, this event becomes much more easier to explain than the ones that falls in the untraditional framework such as the non-traditional roles of women. So, it is simply easy to prepare news if it is traditional and common to everyone.

In that manner, gender logic and war logic are interconnected closely to underline the characteristics of women as weak, passive and in need to protection by men. Also, women are mainly portrayed as mothers. This assumptions point out portraying women as mothers contributes to see women as in need to their husbands’ protection who are stereotyped as brave fighters (Klaus & Kassel, 2005, p.346).

When this situation is combined with the allegiance to patriarchy, the things that women had to get through in the war are visually and discoursively controlled, and blocked from the public view (del Zotto, 2002, pp.143-144).

Depending on the study that covers the media representation of women in Kosovo shows that

The public opinion regarding the war have been continuing to be shaped by a masculinist paradigm of a war. Women are mostly seen as passive victims because media is shaped through the traditionalism, commercialism and nationalism leading them to cover the news in accordance with the needs of these norms in a masculinist way resulting to the gendered coverage of the war (del Zotto, 2002, p.149). So, this situation leads women to be underrepresented in the time of war and resettlement, and makes difficult to reach the official sources to get an information about what is really going on in the lives of women.

The media presents the immigrants and refugees with a negative image. According to Van Dijk (2000) also immigration is portrayed as a threat and immigrants are portrayed as passive people responsible for reprehensible acts (p.188) by the media. As a result, media claiming to present the truth to the public has been creating its own truth and norms, resulting to the hostile point of views towards the audiences. In this sense, the language of the media using the dichotomy ‘us vs. them’ leads to discriminative approach which engages with a moral panic (Santoro, 2011, s. 14). The moral panic dominant in the society derives from this discriminative tone which rejected to live with refugees. Moreover, this kind of attitude keeps the fear engaging with the criminalization of refugees alive.

One of the biggest failures of the media when reporting about the ethnic wars is the lack of investigation on the matter of relationship between the victim and perpetrator who now each other (Appadurai, 1999). Under this intimate war conditions, women serve as a voice of resistance, however because media wants the simplified versions of the events, women and their complex relationship to the war are underrepresented. Mainly, media is tend to focus on the masculinist and state based interpretations of the conflicts for instrumental reasons, (Lemert, 1998) leading way to gendered framing of war (Tickner, 1996, p.142).
Also, it is the many media organizations’ tendency to present women in the frame of stereotypes of being women such as being mothers and wives while ignoring the various lives and challenges of the women (Erdoğan, 2011, p.4).

Women are portrayed mostly in magazine section of the printed media reports (%51 of the news article), and even the news covering the ideas and problems of women are presented by the male commentators (Tanrıöver, U., 2008) women are marginalized, misrepresented or underrepresented in the texts, images and also in the decision making of them. As Tickner maintains, when women are acknowledged by political realists, they are seen as victims, rarely as agents (Tickner, 1996, pp.141-142).

Under the light of these information, three main assumptions regarding the representation of women in the media can be drawn. Firstly, it can be suggested that women are underrepresented by the media. Secondly, women are tended to be portrayed in a negative manner and their subordinated roles are emphasized. Thirdly, women are presented in a way to serve as a part of traditions and stereotypes of womanhood such as being wives, parents, and sexual gatekeepers (Collins, 2011, p.290).

However, for the positive side, the media can serve for the better integration of the refugees by underlying the problems and needs of these people, and providing the solutions or at least providing a platform for the refugees to explain themselves, rather than simply covering the situation from a specific point of view. The media is expected to approach the conditions of refugee women in an objective way as much as it can be possible by avoiding to provide gender-specific discriminated news, and to be an asset for the integration of refugees rather than an obstacle (Sevim, 2013, p21).

If media uses its power to portray the foreigners as threats, peace in the country confronts a danger. So, as long as the journalist and the news agencies follow traditional and gendered way of looking and interpreting the events, mostly the ones in the war zone and after, women will remain the victims, not agents, of the events (del Zotto, 2002, p.149).

a. Analyzing Pictures-Images in the News

Media by showing the images, symbols and narratives besides the words construct its own reality, and result individuals to construct their identities on the basis of this reality. So, the meaning of being White, black, women, men, refugee etc. is constructed through the images and the texts produced by the media. So, media serves as one of the sources of our social realities. By giving publicity to the human sufferings in the wars, battles and resettlement, media also affects the way populations’ view on that subjects by explaining the sufferings of strangers. In that context, women are usually the part of helpless people in a violent situation, and victims of the war (Brooks & Hébert, 2006, pp.513-517). As Moeller argues, ‘Mothers and children make ideal victims’ (1999, p.107).

According to Behrens and Hinrichs (1986), pictures and the information hidden in the picture are easier to absorb than in the texts, and it is easy to shape a public opinion by images. Pictures are important because they do not only provide an information but also move the emotions and feelings and bring reality in a high level in comparison to the texts (Klaus & Kassel, 2005, p.346). By influenced by the cultural and historical experiences, picture and images provide a comparison area between new and old events and gain a symbolic value. As Naumann suggests (2001, p.37) that "the picture gains another quality of ‘truth’: it is no longer perceived
as an effigy of reality but as a symbol of it” (Klaus & Kassel, 2005, p.347). In her content analysis of the news magazines Focus and Der Spiegel, Winter (2001: 167), it was argued that gender logic has an effect on the choice of pictures in the news. She states that “most pictures of women are used as symbols and for the purpose of illustration and demonstration respectively, whereas pictures of men are more often used for documentation and visualization” (Klaus & Kassel, 2005, pp.346-347).

Therefore, pictures are important to analyze to see the certain agenda that media wants to put as a norm or to create a stereotype from the shoulders of the women images in the refugee situation.

IV. Method of the Study

a. Research Question and Hypothesis

Theoretical concern of this study is to analyze the pictures of the Syrian women to establish an understanding whether the representation of women is affected by the gender stereotypes, so our research question is that

RQ: What does the image of Syrian women tell us about the gender-differentiated approaches of media?

Depending on that research question, the main hypothesis of the study is that Syrian women have been holding double burden as being both woman and refugee in Turkey and this burden is to be traced in the newspapers’ coverage of Syrian women’s image.

b. Sample and Method

This study aims to examine the pictures of the refugee women in the selected Turkish newspapers, in our sample, namely Hürriyet, Sabah, Sözcü, Yeni Şafak, Orta Doğu and Zaman. It focuses on the representation of women through images. The reason to select these newspapers is to focus on the newspapers from the different publication policies with the highest circulation rates, and different political tendencies so that the broader picture regarding the issue can be drawn.

The study covers the time period from the September 1, 2015 to February 29, 2016; the period of six months. This timeframe is selected because in the September of 2015, the border gates of the Europe has opened to the Syrian refugees, and they massively wanted to flee to Europe, and the attention of the media channels towards the Syrian refugees have been increased in that period.

We analyzed the first pages of the previously mentioned newspapers by focusing on the refugee related news to interpret the content of the pictures. We looked for the images of women only, so the pictures of refugees without any women representation was dismissed from the study. So, our selection criteria is based on the visibility of the women in the pictures. In that context, the title of the picture is also considered as a part of the image that the newspaper aims to construct.

It is a qualitative content analysis with the help of visual analysis of media materials based on the representation criteria and coding scale that we established for this study. Qualitative content analysis fits for our research because it allows us to focus on the content or contextual
texts\textsuperscript{1} of the pictures printed in the newspapers. Whether it becomes verbal, printed or verbal data; as Weber pointed out, “content analysis goes beyond merely counting words to examining language intensely for the purpose of classifying large amounts of text into an efficient number of categories that represent similar meanings” (1990). For the purposes of this study, content analysis provides an area of interpretation based on the specific classifications and coding patterns (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278).

Coding scale is determined with two features; number of the pictures for each newspaper, and subject/agent of the pictures. Women’s representation is categorized under six subtitles that del Zotto had introduced in the study related to Kosova war namely the passive refugee, wife, the female body torn apart, rape survivor, peace activist and the Non-Stereotypic Woman in War; and eight other subtitles that we see crucial to understand the situation in Syrian case namely mother, victimized person, tired, desperate, helpless, worried, homeless, care taker. Numbers of these representations in the first pages of the selected newspapers are also counted to answer the research question properly. The eight subtitles are coded as follows;

- **Mother**: if she holds a baby, or a child
- **Victimized person**: if she is portrayed that she is in a life or death situation, as putting her life at stake
- **Care taker**: if she feeds her child, or carries her/his belongings and food
- **Tired**: if she seems exhausted, and sweaty
- **Homeless**: if she seems to live in the streets, not in a camp (holding all the belongings with her, and lying in the streets)
- **Desperate**: if she seems as begging or crying
- **Helpless**: if she is portrayed as weak because of migration situations
- **Worried**: If she is in the middle of struggle for rescuing or seems for waiting to be rescued

To specify more, this study is the directed content analysis because our study starts with the theory, codes are determined before and during the study, and sources of the codes are the findings of the previous studies and theory (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, p.1286). Therefore, three main guidance for our study have been established as it follows;

1. The image of the women must be printed in the first page of the newspapers.
2. Number of the pictures are listed to examine.
3. Adjective terms to define women are categorized (such as desperate).
4. Terms used to define women are categorized (victim, activist etc.).

Although there is no single definition of news frame or framing, the many that have been employed point up similar characteristics. News frames are “conceptual tools which media and individuals rely on to convey, interpret and evaluate information” (Neuman et al., 1992, p. 60). They set the parameters “in which citizens discuss public events” (Tuchman, 1978, p. IV). They are “persistent selection, emphasis, and exclusion” (Gitlin, 1980, p. 7). Framing is selecting “some aspects of a perceived reality” to enhance their salience “in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993, p. 53). Frames are to help audiences “locate, perceive, identify, and label” the flow of information around them (Goffman, 1974, p. 21) and to “narrow the available political alternatives” (Tuchman, 1978, p. 156).

**Table 1: Analysis of the newspapers**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#of news in a specific newspaper</th>
<th>Subject and agents of the pictures</th>
<th>Adjective and terms defining refugee women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Zaman -1- (21.10.2015)          | Woman carrying her child along with the carrier bags in both arms while walking  
Men just walking without carrying anything at all | Mother, wife, care taker, tired |
| Zaman -2- (17.11.2015)          | Woman carrying her child in their arms, sitting and looking towards the  
Another woman behind the first one, looking to the same place | Mother, care taker, homeless |
| Zaman -3- (24.11.2015)          | A family-Woman, a child and father  
Man taking woman under his wings  
Woman crying and taking shelter to man | Wife, mother, victimized person |
| Zaman -4- (25.01.2016)          | Mass of people walking/migrating/escaping from the war  
Women on the front carrying the bags and sacs  
One woman holding her child’s hand along with the loads she has to carry | Non-Stereotypic Woman (Physically strong), mother, tired |
| Zaman -5- (02.02.2016)          | A woman holding her child on their arms  
She is crying and seems to be in need to take shelter to her child | Mother, victimized person |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Label</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Zaman -6- (09.02.2016) | Six women and their children  
Women associated with their households  
Worried women, waiting and fighting against weather conditions  
[Six women and their children]  
Women associated with their households  
Worried women, waiting and fighting against weather conditions | Mother, Non-Stereotypic Woman (fighter) |
| Orta Doğu -1- (06.09.2015) | Mass of people walking/migrating  
Woman carrying sacs  
[Mass of people walking/migrating]  
Woman carrying sacs | Tired |
| Orta Doğu -2- (17.09.2015) | A family of man, woman and a child sitting  
A woman holding her child in her arms / taking shelter to her child, seems to be cold  
A woman sitting in front of them  
[Orta Doğu -2- (17.09.2015)]  
A family of man, woman and a child sitting  
A woman holding her child in her arms / taking shelter to her child, seems to be cold  
A woman sitting in front of them | Mother, wife, waiting refugee |
| Orta Doğu -3- (19.09.2015) | 4 men and 3 women and a child in the refugee camp  
Men walking and their faces are visible on the road  
Women facing back, so no faces and they sidling up to each other on the road  
Women seems like standing aside for men to walk on the road  
Child’s face is visible, standing behind the women  
[Orta Doğu -3- (19.09.2015)]  
4 men and 3 women and a child in the refugee camp  
Men walking and their faces are visible on the road  
Women facing back, so no faces and they sidling up to each other on the road  
Women seems like standing aside for men to walk on the road  
Child’s face is visible, standing behind the women | Mother, passive refugee |
| Orta Doğu -4- (22.11.2015) | Women and children in the refugee camp  
Women as the responsible for the children  
[Orta Doğu -4- (22.11.2015)]  
Women and children in the refugee camp  
Women as the responsible for the children | Mother, care taker |
| Orta Doğu -5- (24.11.2015) | Woman and three children  
Woman hugging the two of the children, one boy and one girl  
Woman raising her hands as if she begs for of as if she is des-  
[Orta Doğu -5- (24.11.2015)]  
Woman and three children  
Woman hugging the two of the children, one boy and one girl  
Woman raising her hands as if she begs for of as if she is des- | Mother, care taker, victimized person |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dergi</th>
<th>Tarih</th>
<th>Açıklama</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Orta Doğu</em> -6- (28.01.2016)</td>
<td>Mass of people walking/migrating</td>
<td>Passive refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Sözcü</em> -1- (11.01.2016)</td>
<td>Mass of people saved from drowning at the sea</td>
<td>Passive refugee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hürriyet</em> -1- (06.09.2015)</td>
<td>Middle-aged woman waving to camera inside the bus with a crowd of people</td>
<td>Victimized person. Tired (seems grateful because German let them in)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hürriyet</em> -4- (31.10.2015)</td>
<td>Woman and her child rescued from being drowned. Almost crying</td>
<td>Mother, Victimized person. Tired, desperate, helpless.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Hürriyet</em> -7- (05.02.2016)</td>
<td>Two women. One is almost unseen because of the face of her child on her lap. The other one is older and walking through the borders.</td>
<td>Mother, care taker. Invisible, tired. Passive refugee. Tired and desperate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Yeni Şafak</em> -1- (05.09.2015)</td>
<td>Two women crying and trying too reach the seaside. With their children.</td>
<td>Mother, Victimized Person. Worried, desperate, helpless and tired.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Yeni Şafak</em> -2- (06.09.2015)</td>
<td>Two women smiling and praying.</td>
<td>Passive refugee. Non-Stereotypic Woman (Grateful and smiling)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Yeni Şafak</em> -3- (15.09.2015)</td>
<td>Woman with her family.</td>
<td>Mother, Care taker.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Yeni Şafak</em> -4- (31.10.2015)</td>
<td>Woman holding his child and rescued from the sinking boat. Almost crying</td>
<td>Mother, Care taker, Victimized Person. Worried, desperate and tired.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
V. In Lieu of Conclusion

As can be examined from the analysis of the images in the selected newspapers that out of the total thirty three (33) images, twenty four (24) portrays women as mothers, three (3) as wives, eight (8) as passive refugees, eleven (11) as victimized person, two (2) as homeless, twelve (12) as care taker, nineteen (19) as tired, four (4) as non-stereotypical women, fourteen (14) as desperate, six (6) as helpless, and four (4) as worried. None of these images associated women with the female body torn apart, rape survivor, peace activist.

Existance of some information as well as the absence of some tells us something about the gendered nature of these news. Emphasizing the role and status of women as mother and wife and the adjectives that will comply with these two seem to be the main presentation of women in the Syrian refugee case.

Syrian women in the news are not sexualized in a materialized way by giving attention to their bodies or the sexual harrassments they may be faced with. Moreover, they are not portrayed as the activist in none of the newspapers we examined. Therefore, the absence of these two feautures can interpreted as the removal of the women from the public domain, and portraying them as the ones stuck in the private domain doing their household and traditional duties even in a situation as much as publicly as being refugee. In this context women are frequently depicted with their children that as if there is not any single women refugees without child. Therefore as being refugees women are considered inseperable from their children. Experiences specific to women and children become invisible in this way. Women are also portrayed as if they do not have any belongings or needs or worries other than the ones resulted from their being a woman. They are presented with the attachements, not as an individual. They are mostly portrayed as mothers, wifes, as someone who can be matter if places with someone else, mostly
with men or children. So, they are mostly not a leading lady of their own stories, but an understudy.

Women are also portrayed to carry the burdens of their houses even if they have been leaving their homeland. They had to carry the things left from their household with their hands and shoulders, along with the all symbols they are attached to represent their houses properly. On the other hand women refugees are frequently portrayed as on the way between borders. Although it could express the part of their experiences not the entire of them.

Also, although there is an official declaration stating that a great majority of Syrian refugees live out of refugee camps because facilities of camps are not enough, there is nothing about daily life conditions of refugees living in city-centres.

Women in the pictures are commonly presented without showing their faces; they are presented as the ones in misery and crying; making women the victimized side of the refugee case.

Most of the pictures show the refugees as the mass of people eliminating the image of these people as individuals but just a group, wiping away the individualization.

The words used on the headlines are associated with stereotyped gender roles of womanhood, mostly linked with the household which leads the way to the traditional roles of women. As a consequence, any difference about portrayals of women refugees among newspapers couldn’t be observed. But, conspicuously newspapers used photos of refugees with different expressions as a respond to political developments. In this context, refugees are depicted as a part of political strategies not as their individuality or experiences. Therefore, in addition to their limited positions ascribed to womanhood, women refugees are frequently not seen with their conditions, necessities and demands.

As Nira Yuval-Davis stated women are destined to carry the burdens of representing the nations, leading them to be the symbolic and material boundaries national and ethnic collectivities (Yuval-Davis, 1997, pp.45-46). In addition to these burdens, historical and cultural discourses regarding womanhood encourages woman to be the gender dependant woman whose subordinated or secondary status in the society has been legitimized through cultural symbols, mostly as mothers and wives. Syrian refugee case is just another case showing the fact that the status and representation of women has been continuing to be the symbolic battlefield affecting the daily routines and social relationships of the refugee women. At the end, what is left for us as an audience are the stories of the nameless, hopeless, stateless, and forgotten people.

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