

Gender-Sensitive Communication

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Introduction

Gender equality is necessary for the development of individuals and the development of societies. The idea of gender equality emphasizes the equal representation of women and men and their visible participation in social processes. Gender equality should find a place for itself in the understanding, establishment and use of its perspective, in communication instruments and communication processes. For gender equality to become mainstream, it must penetrate the discourses and visual uses of the media. Gender stereotypes which take part in the media mostly show parallelism with traditionally learned and established gender stereotypes in society. According to the gender culture, while men are represented with superior and positive characteristics, women are represented in more passive and male-dependent roles.

What is Gender Equality?

While biological sex refers to the physical difference between men and women, gender refers to the whole of the roles and norms that the individual acquires with socialisation in society. The gender of people consists of norms and prejudices that are not biologically determined, shaped by social and cultural acceptances and imposed as if they were natural. Roles and behaviours that are thought to be ideal for men and women get involved in the life of the individual through the social construction process. Gender changes according to time and socio-culture.

 **Woman****Characteristic & Physical Properties**

Emotional
Kind
Gossipier

Weak
Well-groomed
Fragile
Shy

Roles

At home
The mother and spouse
Responsible for the care of a family and house

Professions

Teacher
Secretary
Nurse, etc.

 **Man****Characteristic & Physical Properties**

Brave
Combative
Rude

Strong
Muscular
Uncared

Roles

Outside
The head of the household
The breadwinner of the family and home

Professions

Doctor
Engineer
Pilot
Administrator, etc.

A DIFFERENT COMMUNICATION IS POSSIBLE



GENDER-SENSITIVE LANGUAGE SAVES LIVES!



Why Gender-Sensitive Language?

Reality is built first in language. Consequently, the current language must change to ensure equality. Media tools play a major role in reproducing traditional roles and values. The language and visual materials used in the media are also effective in shaping the individual's world. When the information presented by the mass media, which is an important cultural transmitter, acts with a perspective sensitive to gender equality, this sensitivity finds the opportunity to reach large masses.

Change your words and your world will change too



Don't say

"The woman was raped in the house of the man she went to at midnight"

Instead, say

"The man raped the woman in his apartment"

The Importance of Representation in the Media

In the media, genders are often positioned in parallel with traditional, stereotypical roles in society. While women are at home and doing housework, men are outside. While women are depicted with cleaning materials etc. men are depicted in cars with technological products in advertisements. To change these traditional stereotypes, women should not be portrayed as figures who are constantly at home, undertaking household chores and childcare and also men should not be associated with public spheres, workforce and being breadwinners of the family. A language and appearance purged from prejudices will make a significant difference in breaking these stereotypes.



Prejudiced Gender Stereotypes

Sexist News Discourse

Businessman
Female doctor
Acting like a man
Mankind
Male power
Male nurse
Steward/stewardess

Gender-Sensitive Use

Businessperson
Doctor
Acting like a human
Humanity
Human generation
Workforce
Nurse
Flight attendant

Sexist News Discourse

Gender and news discourse are highly effective in reproducing prejudiced traditions and values. Accordingly, the use of gender-sensitive language will also be effective in changing traditional and prejudiced norms. In news reports, women are mostly given the position of victims and their names are revealed. However, the full name of the person who committed the crime is not revealed and the photo of the criminal is either revealed or blurred. When the subject of the news is a woman, sexist language is used while especially emphasizing the subject's gender.



The female driver had an accident (Sexist language)

The driver had an accident



Advertisements

The advertisements presented by the mass media mostly have content that is presented from a masculine point of view and presents women as sexual objects. (Cihangiroğlu, 2018: 34). Exhibited as physically beautiful, attractive and well-groomed, the woman is in the position of an object of sexual desire of a man. Advertisements have a sexist history from past to present, in terms of both visibility and the language, it uses. Women reimpose the patriarchal perception that guides the masses through traditional patriarchal values by presenting them through advertisements. In the image on the right, while the woman is happily working in traditional roles and is stuck in the private space, the man who is associated with the car is positioned outside.



(Demir, 2018)



The use of familiar, mediatic faces in advertisements is also a strategic act used to instil confidence in society. It can be said that successful and beautiful women also create the perception that they enter the kitchen, make food and do the cleaning.

Television Series

Television series in the mainstream media channels in Turkey are watched by a quite large audience. Viewers admire the fictional series characters and see them as role models. Series with a wide audience reproduce traditional patriarchal roles and norms. Series, which are a medium where men are glorified and presented as the authority, cause negative effects on the individual.

In these series, while female characters are represented mostly in weak, incapable, victim roles, male characters are represented in strong, rich and successful roles. This successful and strong man saves the woman at the end of the day and becomes her protector. Although women with successful careers are relatively represented in TV series, they are in the role of seductive and bad characters. A gender-sensitive representation is also effective in changing and transforming the perception of individuals.



It is necessary to change the representation of women limited to domestic roles and men in hegemonic roles. Women should be represented in roles related to success and career rather than their emotional and physical characteristics. The presence of women as independent individuals who can stand alone and do what she wants will help to transform society's perspective on women.

Use of Gender-Sensitive Visual Material

The visual materials used in media have a very strong effect on directing the masses and shaping their opinions. Accordingly, the use of gender-sensitive images is very important so that the images used do not reproduce gender inequality:

- Visual materials that are equally representative of men and women should be used.
- Images that trap women and men in traditional roles should be avoided.
- Images that reproduce gender stereotypes should be avoided.
- Images that exhibit women as victims should be avoided.
- Images representing women as sexual objects and spectacles should be avoided.

Gender Equality in 5 Steps

The End of Biological Reductionism

The character traits and roles of the sexes are not formed by biological sex. It is taught later.

Stay Away from Stereotypes

Roles and stereotypes that are not based on any reality and have to be followed according to one's biological sex should not be used.

Equal Representation

Men and women should not always be represented in the same traditional roles, and women should not be represented in supporting roles compared to men.

Positioning

In the media, women are constantly positioned as helpless, passive victims in the face of injustice. Men are positioned as strong and combative.

Equality for Everyone

Representing and portraying everyone in an equal and prejudice-free context raises awareness of gender equality.

References

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