

The Representation of Objecting to Violence Against Women: A Semiotic Analysis

Kadına Yönelik Őiddete İtiraz'ın Temsili: Göstergebilimsel Çözümleme

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Abstract

Representing the objection to violence against women in public service announcements is a significant effort to raise concern and social awareness about this important social problem. Public spots aim to inspire women by emphasizing strong and resilient characteristics of women who have been subjected to violence. The persuasive effect of public service announcements in the fight against violence towards women can lead to behavioral changes by activating the emotional reactions of the audience. Thanks to the impressive stories of public service announcements, viewers may be more willing to stand by and support women subjected to violence. Furthermore, public spots emphasize the importance of a collective effort by conveying the message that all parts of society must take responsibility to prevent violence against women. This study examines the public spots titled "Don't Hide-Don't Ignore" prepared by Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, by means of semiotic analysis and discusses the representation of violence against women in public communication. Instead of imperious discourses referring to women's passivity, and contrary to the general view, the spots revealing that women can be subjected to violence regardless of their socioeconomic status include realistic persuasive arguments by encouraging social awareness, empathy, and solidarity.

Keywords: Semiotics, Violence, Against women, Violence, Gender

Öz

Kadına yönelik şiddete itirazın kamu spotlarında temsili, bu önemli sosyal soruna dikkat çekme ve toplumsal farkındalığı artırma amaçlı yapılan önemli bir çabadır. Bu tür kamu spotlarında, şiddete maruz kalmış kadınların güçlü ve dayanıklı özellikleri de vurgulanarak, kadınlara ilham kaynağı olması hedeflenmektedir. Kamu spotlarının kadına yönelik şiddetle mücadeledeki ikna edici etkisi, izleyicilerin duygusal tepkilerini harekete geçirerek davranış değişikliğine yol açabilmektedir. İzleyiciler, kamu spotlarının etkileyici hikayeleri sayesinde, şiddete maruz kalan kadınların yanında durmayı ve destek vermeyi daha fazla isteyebilmektedir. Aynı zamanda, kamu spotları, kadına yönelik şiddetin önlenmesi için toplumun tüm kesimlerinin sorumluluk alması gerektiği mesajını da ileterek, kolektif bir çabanın önemini vurgulamaktadır. Bu çalışma, T.C. İletişim Başkanlığı tarafından hazırlanan, "Görmezden Gelme" ve "Saklama" isimli kamu spotlarını gösterebilimsel analiz ile inceleyerek kamu iletişimde kadına yönelik şiddetin temsili ele almaktadır. Kadının edilgenliğine gönderme yapan buyurgan söylemlerin yerine ve genel kanının aksine kadınların hangi sosyoekonomik durumda olursa olsun şiddete maruz kalabileceğini ortaya koyan spotlar, toplumsal farkındalık, empati ve dayanışmayı teşvik eder şekilde iknaya yönelik gerçekçi argümanlar barındırmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Gösterebilim, Kadına yönelik şiddet, Şiddet, Toplumsal Cinsiyet

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Extended Abstract

Public service announcements play an important role via their power to reach large audiences and shape the social norms of the audience. Public service announcements are also important as a medium that shapes our world of thought. The messages intended to be conveyed to the target audience, the symbols used and the meanings attributed to them, the position and roles of the characters in society, language, discourse, decor, and camera use are conveyed. Social codes are sometimes used within a critical approach and sometimes quickly to orient the meaning of the target audience in a different way.

It steadily becomes more evident that violence against women, marginalization, and discrimination is a global problem. Despite the increase in the developmental and educational levels of the countries, violence is still present because of the existence of sexist perspectives. For this reason, women still endure being the biggest victims of violence which causes social destruction. Although children and the elderly are also exposed to violence in the family, it is indicated by all the data that women's bodies are the most exposed to mental, economic, and sexual violence.

Gender is a concept referring to the anatomical features of men and women and is used to express natural and biological features. The distinctions and discriminations between women and men apart from anatomical differences stem from social and cultural definitions and qualifications such as values, sexist division of labor, socioeconomic structure, and patriarchal point of view, which all are rooted in the dynamics of the society. These dynamics of the social structure, which are also the main causes of violence against women, appear to be the baseline for women's fading into the background, being pushed off, oppressed, and intimidated only because of being a woman. In this case, the solution should be a change in the cultural perspective.

The presence of objections to violence against women in public service announcements plays a significant role in shaping social norms via their power and efficiency to reach large masses. Public service announcements have a persuasive potential in the fight against violence against women since they can lead to behavioral change by evoking emotional reactions to their behavior. Public service spots aim to evoke empathy in the target audience by conveying women's encounters with violence, their inner emotional experiences, and their helplessness.

In our study, communication campaigns called "Don't Hide" and "Don't Ignore" made by Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications to prevent violence against women will be analyzed through

the semiotic method. As an effective institution of the state, it is of great importance that Directorate of Communications encourages women not to remain silent against violence and to take action so that they do not ignore all segments of society.

Instead of imperious discourses referring to women's passivity and contrary to the general view, the spots revealing that women can be subjected to violence regardless of their socioeconomic status include realistic persuasive arguments by encouraging social awareness, empathy, and solidarity. It is substantial in terms of efforts to underline this essential social problem and increase social awareness.

Semiotics reflects the common elements that exist in the social structure. Signs of which meaning is known by all segments of the society are presented within their cultural practices and learned by repetition, and common codes are formed. In the light of semiotics -the science explaining that we are surrounded by language elements, codes (clothing, color, body language), words, and symbols that direct our world of meaning, both verbal and nonverbal sign systems initiated between two people and resulted in social reconciliation- following questions were discussed: "What kind of approach did Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications conduct in order to prevent violence in its advertisements?"; "How was awareness raised?"; "Which elements of meaning were used in opposing violence against women?" As answers to those questions, the denotations and connotations embedded in the advertisements were revealed and analyzed.

The message intended to be conveyed through the communication campaigns of Directorate of Communications called "Don't Hide" and "Don't Ignore" is that the state will be the voice of the victims of violence and stand by them. Via its advertising campaign, it was aimed to bring a new perspective to women who have been subjected to violence. In the public service announcements, the objective to change the tendency of hiding violence was brought to the fore together with the perspective of directing and encouraging women's attitudes and behaviors in the face of violence. The slogans "Don't Hide" and "Don't Ignore" are clearly imperative directions. It is implicit that all women in society, women of different segments, economic backgrounds, and ages, who have been subjected to violence, should behave similarly: which is that they should not hide it. It was also observed that previous mistakes have not been made in public service announcements. While trying to prevent violence, the images prepared depict women as second-class, oppressed, hopeless, afraid of making decisions and silenced. The following are the messages that the public service announcements want to convey to the audience: the disapproval of society for the violence endured by women, the awareness against the way of thinking which internalizes

violence, the call made by saying “Don’t ignore” for a better life, the brave and determined stance of people in the advertisement and the cooperation of people against violence.

Through connotations and denotations which would set an example in terms of reducing the number of advertisements and contents normalizing violence or objectifying women, the campaign mentioned above also includes eye-opening directions for advertising agencies, advertisers, and media environments. Such communication and advertising campaigns will contribute to the advertising industry and society to act more consciously and responsibly on the representation of violence against women and to build a world where women’s rights are respected. Thus, it is possible to reduce the number of advertisements and contents that normalize violence or objectify women.

Keywords: Semiotics, Violence against women, Violence, Gender.

Introduction

Violence has manifested itself in various forms throughout human history, becoming a pervasive issue worldwide and leaving its traces in almost every society. Traces of violence can be observed in sports, healthcare sector, security breaches, acts of terrorism, media, and within families. Upon further examination, it becomes evident that the primary victim of violence leading to social destruction is women. Scholars unanimously concur that institutions that prioritize males are the primary perpetrators of gender-based violence. (Hunnicut, 2009, p. 567). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), violence against women is considered a substantial public health concern and a fundamental violation of women's human rights (WHO, 2013, p. 4)

The term "domestic violence" is used to express violence directed towards individuals within a family setting. Although children and the elderly may also experience violence within the family, women are known to be the most exposed group to physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence (Polat, 2017, p. 17). Violence against women, coupled with marginalization and discrimination, continues to escalate as a global issue. In our country, women are affected by this atmosphere of violence, and the plight of women is showing a disturbing and uncontrollable increase. Despite social progress and increased educational attainment, the internalization of violence continues to persist as a result of enduring gender-based perspectives. Within this particular context, Türkiye exhibits a notably inadequate history in terms of effectively preventing violence directed towards women (Afşar, 2015, p. 719).

There has been a disturbing increase in cases of violence against women in recent years, which has been intensified by the stress and uncertainty caused by the pandemic. (Pa, 2020, p. 38). The infectious disease that emerged in Wuhan, China, in December 2019, rapidly

spread and caused panic worldwide, disrupted normal life, and raised concerns about potential severe casualties. During the pandemic, calls were made for people to stay indoors and isolate themselves, with the adoption of the "Stay Home" slogan. While some violent incidents decreased due to these restrictive measures, there was a notable increase, especially in domestic violence incidents. Similar to the virus, increases in domestic violence have been being observed globally (Ergönen et al., 2020, p. 49). The WHO reported that women, especially the most vulnerable, including those with disabilities, the elderly, and refugees, could disproportionately experience violence during the COVID-19 pandemic (WHO, 2020). The pandemic has led to extended periods of time spent in confined areas, increased levels of anxiety, financial challenges, unemployment, and intensified stressors. Additionally, inequalities in division of household responsibilities, increased burdens on women, caring for children undergoing remote education, and the expectations of men working from home have heightened anxiety, restlessness, and stress, ultimately leading to the escalation of domestic communication problems. These reflections are becoming evident, especially directed towards women, in the form of psychological, sexual, and physical violence. (Mert, 2020). Data substantiating the rise in violence against women amid the pandemic can be attributed to scientific articles, anecdotes in scholarly journals, reports from law enforcement agencies, hospital admissions, and the upsurge in applications to women's shelters. (Sánchez et al., 2020, p. 181).

Recognizing the severity of the issue, all stakeholders in society are making efforts to eliminate violence against women, with civil society, private companies, and public institutions offering communication campaigns that create awareness and provide solutions. Communication campaigns affecting social life are essential not only for providing information but also for constructing human emotion,

thought, and behavior patterns. The message to be conveyed to the targeted audience, the symbols used, the meanings conveyed, the social status and roles of characters used in communication campaigns, and the language, discourse, decor, and camera techniques employed are communicated through social codes, sometimes critically addressed, and sometimes supported to shape the target audience's worldview (Özer & Yazar, 2019, p. 107).

Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, the highest-level institution in Türkiye's public communication, conducts various communication campaigns, including campaigns against violence. Communication campaigns titled "*Saklama-Görmezden Gelme*" (Don't Hide-Don't Ignore) aimed at encouraging society to take a stand against violence towards women have been broadcast on all national platforms. This study aims to semiotically examine the language and discourse of those campaigns by focusing on three promotional videos of the campaign.

Violence Against Women

The Turkish Language Association defines the term "violence" as "severity, the use of brute force against opposing views, excess in emotion and behavior" (DICTIONARY, 2021). According to the World Health Organization (WHO), violence is defined as the deliberate use of physical force or power, either as a threat or in actuality, against another individual, resulting in physical injury, death, psychological damage, or the potential for harm (WHO, 2002). According to these definitions, it can be concluded that there is a perpetrator who carries out acts of violence, as well as a victim who is subjected to violence, and an action involving the harmful nature of violence occurs. (Afşar, 2015, p. 722). The pursuit of social dominance can foster violence, leading those in positions of power to employ violence against weaker groups, subjecting them to second-class treatment. Women are the

most exposed among the disadvantaged groups. (Dursun, 2008, p. 21). Violence against women is recognized as a universal problem that transcends national boundaries, religious beliefs, geographical locations, and cultural contexts. Although recognized as a worldwide human rights violation, women in Türkiye persistently face marginalization and discrimination. (Çalışkan & Çevik, 2018, p. 219). International organizations view violence against women as a global public health issue and consider achieving gender equality worldwide as a primary priority (El-Serag & Thurston, 2020, p. 2).

Physical violence is the most visible manifestation of violence, inflicting harm and causing suffering to women. As per a 2015 report published by KAMER, women are subjected to various forms of physical violence, including kicking, slapping, hair pulling, injuring, killing, and inflicting psychological harm.

Nevertheless, a crucial inquiry emerges: Does the violence experienced by women originate from gender disparities, or does it derive from a patriarchal system rooted in gender inequity? It is crucial to distinguish between these two concepts. Gender refers to the anatomical features of men and women. In contrast, gender roles express the roles and expectations determined by society. Gender roles of individuals are influenced by factors such as social values, division of labor, economic structure, and a patriarchal perspective. Therefore, gender roles differentiate women and men. The gender perspective argues for the need to change these roles (Sarbay, 2015, p. 97).

Violence against women originates from these gender structures. These dynamics create a social structure that views women as second-class citizens solely because of their gender, establishing a framework of marginalization, oppression, and subjugation (Barkın & Özkartal, 2018, p. 168). The source of violence lies in the dynamics of social structure, and women are the primary victims of these dynamics.

Gender-based violence includes not only physical violence but also virtual violence. Virtual violence includes various forms of negative conduct such as trolling, verbal harassment, blackmail, non-consensual sharing of intimate images, photo manipulation, cyber-bullying, doxxing, hacking, and infringement of intellectual property. Women who experience this form of digital violence can face negative consequences in terms of their professional standing, personal security, self-confidence, and psychological resilience.

Women also face violence in politics. Women aspiring to engage in politics frequently encounter five different types of violence: harassment, threats, psychological violence, economic violence, and physical violence.

Although violence against women is widespread in every segment of society, the reporting rate to official authorities is very low. The reporting rate for gender-based violence is only %7. The low reporting rate can be attributed to factors such as shame, fear of being perceived as guilty, cultural norms, and the perception of perpetrators escaping punishment.

A change in attitude based on gender equity is necessary to reduce violence against women. This implies that society needs to adopt a more egalitarian perspective. Awareness-raising projects and efforts to change narratives that create gender inequity are essential steps in preventing violence (Akkuş & Yıldırım, 2018, p. 1368).

Semiotics

The field of semiotics originated with the guidance of American scholar Charles Sanders Peirce and Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. Saussure, in his book "Course in General Linguistics," provides a definition of semiotics as a scientific discipline that examines the presence and function of signs in everyday life, covering every aspect of it. It is also a field of study in science that examines the

functioning of signs in social life. Semiotics primarily concerns itself with the generation and interpretation of meaning.

Roland Barthes, in his significant work "Elements of Semiology," explains semiotics under four headings and in the context of contrasts: I- Language and Speech; II- Signified and Signifier; III- Syntagm and System; IV- Denotation and Connotation. Barthes argues that denotation is the accepted and unchanging meaning of the sign by all segments of society, and connotation represents the meaning added to the sign through cultural codes, which can vary across different cultures.

Semiotics reflect common elements within the social structure. Signs that are understood by every segment of society are presented within cultural practices, learned through repetition, and create shared codes. Signs are examined both within the structure of language and visually. Assuming that what is observed is not real, the intended meaning is investigated, and all representations are reviewed.

A sign is a physical object that can be emotionally perceived, points to something other than itself and is accepted by users as a sign. For example, a conductor turns towards the orchestra and makes a gesture with his hand, and all orchestra members start playing. This hand gesture has been accepted as a recognized sign by all members. Meaning is conveyed originating from the conductor.

To decipher the meaning of signs, the codes of social memory are consulted. Accepted signs in society are used as an effective communication method to explain incomprehensible concepts. Public authorities utilize the power of signs to increase the memorability of messages and create depth in minds in the construction process of social perception. Semiotics plays a significant role in communication tools such as public service announcements.

Methodology

Public service announcements are crucial tools for organizations to communicate their efforts and goals to the public. They construct the meaning of messages aiming to influence cognitive, emotional, and behavioral responses through signs. In this study, the semiotic method will be employed to examine the semiotic universe in the communication campaigns titled "*Saklama-Görmezden Gelme*" (Don't Hide-Don't Ignore) prepared by Directorate of Communications. This analysis will focus on cultural codes, the use of linguistic and visual signs, and connotations of meaning.

Semiotic Analysis of the Advertisement "*Saklama-Görmezden Gelme-2*" (Don't Hide-Don't Ignore-2) by Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communication

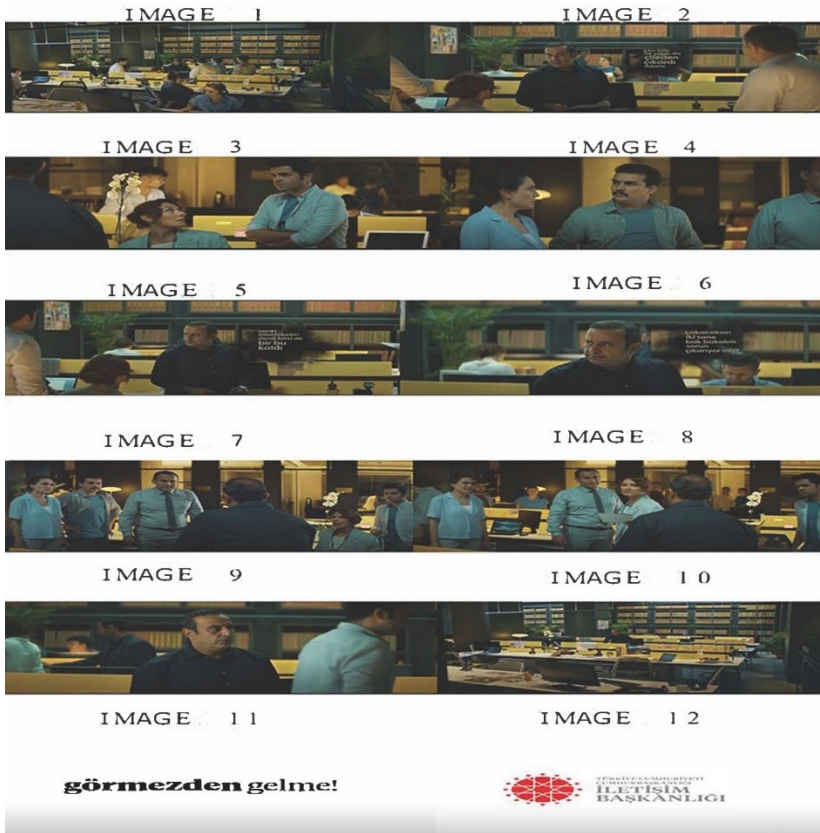
Findings and Interpretations

The public service announcement begins with the statement, "Pity, such a pity. We are tired of making news, and men are not tired of assaulting women." The speaker using these expressions is identified as a male, strategically placed in the center of the screen. This placement suggests a direct reference to the fact that men are at the heart of violence against women. The individual, portrayed as the director of a news production center on television or in a newspaper, appears to have his thoughts deciphered by those around him. It becomes evident that his spoken words contradict his actual thoughts, visible through the reflections of his innermost sentiments on the screen.

In Image 2, the expression "Who knows what she did to infuriate him?" is projected onto the screen within a created dark cloud. This positioning implies an emphasis on darkness and ignorance. It is

presumed that this representation aims to depict the idea as a product of a negative mindset. Simultaneously, the portrayal reinforces the view that professionals at the helm of the media, holding decision-making positions, are predominantly male (Gencel Bek & Binark, 2007, p. 149). Employees, seemingly able to read the mind of the news director, appear astonished. Female and male employees exchange bewildered glances. Subsequently, the news director instructs, "This is a very important issue, my friends. We have a great responsibility as the press. Let's make it headline news."

The expression "As if the country's problems are solved, and only this one remains!" is projected onto the screen. The facial expression clearly reflects the mindset. Mind readings continue on the screen. The phrase "You'll hit her twice, see if she causes any trouble!" appears on the screen. Simultaneously, the words of the news director are heard, saying, "How can a person do this to their life partner, it's incomprehensible!" It is worth recalling the concept of hegemonic masculinity: a social understanding that shapes behavior in line with the roles assigned to women and men. Hegemonic masculinity advocates for men to be aggressive, powerful, dominant, and brave (Akça & Tönel, 2011, pp. 27-28).



Visual 1: *Semiotic Analysis of the Advertisement "Don't Hide-Don't Ignore-2"*

In Image 7, a counter-stance to this is demonstrated, and notably, the first reaction comes from a man. The intended message is that men should primarily oppose violence against women. The man expresses a counter-stance by saying, "At this rate, one day you will be in the news too." This is interpreted as a call to rebellion against violence against women. Subsequently, everyone in the room stands up, indicating a call for a revolt against violence. A voiceover intervenes: "No one can read your mind, but the truth will come out sooner or later" (in Image 8, images of the woman confronting the male

executive and demanding answers appear on the screen). The message conveyed is that violence against women derives strength from the surrounding environment that either supports it or turns a blind eye to it. As seen in Image 9, everyone leaves the room, and the voiceover states, "Ignoring, regardless of the perpetrator's status, income level, education, or social circle." The logo of Directorate of Communications appears on the screen, concluding the public service announcement.

The advertisement emphasizes the disparity between spoken words and the realities existing in mind. It underscores the necessity for the ideal man to react to these dark ideas. Despite the continuous coverage of violence against women in the media, the advertisement suggests that violence will persist without a change in the mindset of men. While the public service announcement begins with a strong gender narrative, it concludes with an emphasis on the isolation of this idea.

The visual lacks any representation of woman subjected to violence. However, the viewer associates the image with the man perpetrating violence. The thought process of the male executive is coded through the visuals. The public service announcement suggests that without a change in the mindset, violence will persist, despite continuous media coverage. The advertisement starts with a strong gender narrative but ends with an emphasis on the isolation of this idea.

The dark blue attire worn by the news director signifies formality, authority, and institutional representation. One of the contradictions here is that Directorate of Communications does not adhere to this institutional line, as indicated by the news director's approach. Employees opposing authority wear blue outfits, symbolizing broad horizons, peace, and calmness. There is an allusion to the tranquility

and peace that resisting violence against women would bring. The blue color's connotation of freedom and liberation is also understood as a secondary meaning.

In this public service announcement, there is a reference to the discourse suggesting that news and visuals in the print media related to gender inequality reproduce and legitimize gender-based violence, one of the sources of violence (Arslan, 2017). Similarly, the public service announcement highlights the inadequacy of media outlets in creating social awareness and consciousness regarding gender-based violence in news about violence against women. The campaign aims to draw attention to society's perception of violence against women, recognizing the internalization of violence and making a call for "ignoring it" for a better life. The brave and determined attitudes of the individuals in the ad and their collaboration against violence convey the meanings the advertisement seeks to impart to its audience (The Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, 2020a).

Table 1: *Semiotic Analysis of the Advertisement "Don't Hide-Don't Ignore-2" by Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications*

Signifier	Signified	Denotation	Connotation
Man	Executive, Manager	Decision-Maker	Source of Violence
Attire	Shirt	Dark Blue Color	Authority, Institutionalism
Attires	Shirt, T-shirt	Blue Color	Freedom, Liberation, Peace
Dark Cloud	Letters	Black Color, Sign	Ignorance, Darkness, Malevolent Mindset

Semiotic Analysis of the Advertisement "Don't Hide-Don't Ignore-6" by Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications

Findings and Interpretations

The public service announcement begins with an image of a woman in a backstage setting, her back turned, wearing glasses. Simultaneously, a large star image appears on the right side of the screen, symbolizing the star concept commonly associated with renowned artists. The woman portrayed seems troubled, with trembling hands, expressing distress and inner turmoil. Subsequently, the woman's glasses become visible on the screen, suggesting her reluctance to face herself in the mirror.

The woman then puts on new glasses and looks into the mirror. The white shirt she wears symbolizes purity, cleanliness, and innocence. The woman's inner voice reflects, "I won't let them use her for gossip, and I won't ruin my image." Here again, there is an absence, and the missing figure is a man. The person referred to as "him" is a man. Later, the woman confidently stands up and heads towards the door. When she reaches the door, it is revealed that paparazzi and fans are waiting for her outside. The woman's inner voice comes into play once again: "But what about the thousands of women watching me? How many of them are experiencing violence? If I hide, can they speak?" In this scenario, a woman who has freed herself from the suppressive structure of a sexist gaze is visible in the public domain and is economically independent. It is evident that she aims to set an example for other women through her words. There is a clear objection to the patriarchal social norms that render women powerless and helpless. The announcement challenges the passive and submissive perception of women. The determined fight against

violence, showcasing a woman who asserts herself under all circumstances, is emphasized, breaking down patriarchal, male-dominated social patterns.



Visual 2: *Semiotic Analysis of the Advertisement "Don't Hide-Don't Ignore-6"*

In the thoughtful process of self-reflection, the woman in the visual contemplates and eventually decides to remove her glasses. It is understood that she makes this decision through introspective questions. Here, the glasses symbolize the concealment of traces of violence. The hidden signs of violence, although seemingly absent, come to mind. While the spotlight is on the woman in the public service announcement, there is a subtle emphasis on violence in the background. In Image 7, the absent man is portrayed as a silhouette on the screen. The silhouette serves as a reflection of the violence in the

background. The woman remains true to her femininity throughout. The red lipstick on her lips, in terms of connotation, serves as a signifier of femininity.

The reason why she didn't want to look at herself in the mirror without glasses becomes apparent. The woman is seen placing her glasses aside, holding them in her right hand. However, it is understood that the purpose of the renowned woman putting on sunglasses is to hide the traces of violence, or in the context of the ad's slogan, to "hide" them. The glasses, as a sign, connote violence. Within its own integrity, it implies and signifies the traces of violence. By confidently walking down the corridor after taking off her glasses, the woman wants to expose the traces of violence to the waiting paparazzi and fans. Meanwhile, the male voiceover says, "The reasons for silence are different because their ages, statuses, and economic situations are different, but the steps they need to take in the face of violence are the same." Here, the message is that all women in society experience violence, and women of different segments, economic structures, and ages exhibit the same behavior, meaning they hide the traces. At the end of the public service announcement, male and female reporters waiting for the woman are seen wearing red and white clothes. These colors represent the colors of the flag of the Republic of Türkiye, symbolizing the state. The intended message is that the state will be the voice of women subjected to violence and stand by them. The public service announcement, aiming to provide a new perspective on women experiencing violence, aims to change the attitudes and behaviors of women in the face of violence, encouraging them (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, 2020b).

Table 2: Semiotic Analysis of the Advertisement "Don't Hide-Don't Ignore-6"

Semiotic Analysis of the Advertisement "Don't Hide – Don't Ignore-5" by Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications: Findings and Interpretation

Findings and Interpretations

The public service announcement begins with an image of a woman in what appears to be an office, facing a mirror. The portrayal of the woman in the mirror signifies a moment of self-confrontation, particularly in the context of violence. The presence of a pen and paper next to her emphasizes her education. The inner voice of the woman is then heard: "A renowned professor getting beaten; I won't let that happen." In Figure 3, a drawer is opened, revealing a box of scarves. The purpose of the drawer is to conceal items, and the woman takes one of the scarves, tying it around her neck. The inner voice continues, stating, "A renowned professor is being beaten, staying silent, and hiding." Meanwhile, the camera angle shifts to the outside of the door, showing young university female students. The inner voice persists, with the woman questioning, "If I stay silent, can others speak?" The woman, preparing to leave for class, appears thoughtful, concerned, and sad, while the three female students in the corridor seem cheerful. As the professor is about to leave the room, she unties the scarf from her neck, indicating that the scarf is worn to hide the signs of violence. The semiotic representation of the scarf implies the concealment of violence traces. Violence is the absent element in the advertisement. The moment the woman is preparing to leave the room is also the moment of decision.

It's a moment of deciding whether to remain silent or not, to be compliant and submissive, to resist or not, to obey or not obey violence. At that moment, a male voice is heard saying, "Reasons for silence are different because their ages, statuses, and economic situations are different. The steps they need to take in the face of violence are the same." The female professor is seen walking, openly revealing signs of violence among her students.

The screen displays the slogan "Don't Hide" followed by the logo of Directorate of Communications, concluding the advertisement. The slogan "Don't Hide" is a clear directive. It signifies both the state's stance and the attitude that women facing violence should adopt. The advertisement emphasizes that even professors, who are considered sophisticated individuals in society, can be victims of violence. It seeks to debunk the notion of intellectual authority being exclusively male-dominated, portraying a female professor who has risen to the rank of professorship in a male-dominated academic community but has still experienced male violence (Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, 2020c).



Visual 3 Semiotic Analysis of the Advertisement "Don't Hide-Don't Ignore-5" by Directorate of Communications

Table 3: Semiotic Analysis of the Advertisement "Don't Hide-Don't Ignore-5" by Directorate of Communications

Signifier	Signified	Denotation	Connotation
Woman	Professor	University Educator	Leader, Director
Scarf	Accessory, Jewelry	Clothing Completing Elegance	Concealing Signs of Violence
Pen	Writing Tool	Engaged in Writing	Pursuit of Education, Liberation from Ignorance
Mirror	Reflection of Woman	Self-Reflection	Confrontation with Violence

Conclusion

Violence against women remains a prevalent and escalating issue both globally and in Türkiye. Women can be subjected to violence regardless of their social or cultural status. The underlying factors contributing to this issue encompass the dominant male-oriented mindset, patriarchal systems, and cultural viewpoints. Even men with high levels of education can engage in acts of violence, and women who have achieved economic independence are still susceptible to becoming victims of violence. The media and communication sector has the ability to propagate violence by means of language, discourse, status symbols, and character roles, thereby establishing violent behavior as the norm..

Legislative bodies ought to implement stricter regulations for cinema, TV series, and advertisements that depict violence against women. The presence of violent content gives rise to issues such as the objectification of women, their social isolation, the normalization of

violence, and a lack of genuine concern for the suffering of victims. It is crucial for advertising agencies, advertisers, and media organizations to arrange training sessions on gender inequality and promote awareness regarding the impact of violence against women. This can aid in diminishing the quantity of content that advocates violence or objectifies women.

According to social learning theory, television, and visual media are significant tools influencing learning. Viewers develop attitudes, emotional responses, and new behavior patterns through symbolic models presented in the media. Symbolization can contribute to the repetition of behaviors. Viewers unconsciously learn content containing violence, and social acceptance of violence against women can be acquired through exposure to messages and representations containing violence.

Research suggests that young males, specifically, are more drawn to advertisements that feature sexual violence. Implementing restrictions on content that depicts violence against women and promoting alternative public awareness campaigns can be a promising initiative by state institutions. Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye Directorate of Communications, as an efficient state institution, should actively promote women's empowerment by urging them to speak out against violence and mobilizing all sectors of society. Hence, making use of public service announcements as a means to generate and mobilize social awareness in order to prevent violence against women proves to be effective.

Moreover, in such campaigns, it is essential to prevent repeating previous mistakes. When attempting to prevent violence, it is crucial to portray women as resilient and determined. This promotes the perception of women not as targets of violence, but as individuals with

immense power. Providing such guidance and messages that encourage empathy can contribute to the development of a more sensitive society. In conclusion, the advertising industry and society can play a significant role in fostering a world that upholds women's rights by adopting a more mindful and accountable approach towards the representation of violence against women.

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