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REPRESENTATION OF THE DOMINANT POLITICAL IDEOLOGY WITHIN A CARTOON SERIES: A TURKISH CASE

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Abstract

Media plays a significant role in the reproduction and dissemination of government ideology due to its ability to reach billions of people. The aim of this study is to evaluate the first Turkish cartoon series “Pepee” in relation to the Turkish ruling party AKP’s ideology. This is a descriptive study utilizing a qualitative research design. The sample of the study consists of eight seasons of “Pepee” that comprised 211 episodes. Research data was analysed using both content analysis and discourse analysis. Based on the analysis, it was observed that the cartoon series did contain several messages in line with the AKP ideology. AKP’s ideas about patriarchy, family values, Westernization, Islam and gender dimensions were strongly reflected within the cartoon series through the language used in the episodes, food and beverages, colours and style of clothing, the games played by the characters and the socio-cultural and socio-economic status of the characters throughout the episodes.

Keywords: Children cartoons, freedom of expression, media literacy, media politics, and socialization

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1. Introduction

The concept of “childhood” is understood as being a stage in life open to learning and shaping (Casey et al., 2008). Generally, it is seen as an important part of internalizing the dominant socio-cultural norms and values. Although Freud (1933) suggests that a sense of personal identity is learnt by observation of and interactions with others, the increasing role of the media on learning is undeniable. A growing body of literature demonstrates that with their colourful and captivating imagery, prime time television cartoons provide a unique opportunity for children to obtain new knowledge and even to modify their attitudes and behaviours. These programs are social constructions, which are prepared for children at the micro level by their parents and at the macro level by the dominant ideology (Buckingham, 2001). Thus, assuming prime time television cartoons to be one of the biggest sources of teaching does not mean that every single thing that it conveys to children has a positive content. As Former Federal Communication Commissioner of the United States of America Nicholas Johnson said, “...All television is educational: the only question is what it is teaching?” (Johnson, 1999 as cited in Thompson and Zebrinos 1995, p. 415). Therefore, analysing the content of the prime time television cartoon series and seeing how much children notice the given messages in those texts is significant in how it shapes the perceptions and future outlook of the children and, in the long term, of the country.

This study focuses particularly on Turkey, whose freedom of expression index is 65 out of 100, where zero is considered the best and 100 considered the worst (FHR, 2015). Accordingly, this study aims to analyse and evaluate the first Turkish prime time television children cartoon series *Pepee* in relation to the dissemination of the Turkish ruling party AKP’s ideology.

2. Research Method

This research has been conducted to illustrate the reflection and presentation of the AKP ideology in the first Turkish prime time television cartoon series entitled *Pepee*. For a complete and careful illustration of such an issue, a qualitative research methodology was utilized with a combination of exploratory and descriptive forms of research design.

The data was derived from the 211 episodes of the “*Pepee*” cartoon series broadcast from 2008 September until 2015 January on TRT Kids, Show TV and TV 8 channels. Each cartoon episode was approximately ten minutes long and the episodes were accessed via the Internet, downloaded, archived and analysed.

Discourse analysis, which is the study of the narrative of the content of a text, was employed in the illustration phase of the research. Narrative consists of visual signs that

include all the images and graphics that are seen on the screen and aural signs that consist of speech, sound and music which television produces (Bignell, 2013). Accordingly, the language, food and beverages, clothes and accessories, the songs and the music used throughout the episodes were analysed. Additionally, the frequency of appearance and emotional relations among characters, as well as their socio-economic and socio-cultural status were examined and compared with the AKP worldview in order to answer the main question of how the AKP ideology is reflected and disseminated within the cartoon series.

In order to anchor the discussion within the salient issues pertaining to the area of study, the findings will be presented in tandem with the background information related to these issues.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Background of Pepee

Pepee is Turkey's first cartoon project, which has been broadcast since 2008. It was designed especially for pre-school age groups (3-6 years) with the aim of entertaining and educating them. The name of the titular character, a four-year old boy, is derived from the term used in the Anatolian region of Turkey. "Pepee" refers to someone with speech difficulties. The cartoon series is produced by "Düşyeri Çizgi Film Stüdyosu" and distributed by the "Ciner Media Group", a Turkish media conglomerate established in 2007 (<http://www.dusyeri.com.tr>). The show was broadcast on TRT kids from 2008 to 2014, on Show TV from 2014 to 2015, and most recently, from 2015 onwards, it has been broadcast on TV8 owned by Acun Ilıcalı. All these channels are well-known to be aligned to and heavily slanted in favour of the government in power, that is the AKP, and their supporters and reflects the ideological status quo (Tunç, 2011).

Cartoon messages play, both directly and indirectly, an important role in a child's developmental process. Accordingly, Pepee like any other animated series, contains several educational elements. However, when analysed in detail, significant parallelism can be discerned between Pepee and the AKP worldview. The Islamic motifs, the patriarchal values, the anti-westernization aspects and the heavy emphasis on motherhood and the concept of "holy family", all of which underpin the AKP ideology are all largely embedded in Pepee. In addition to these categories, various gender inequalities can also be discerned within the narrative of Pepee and these are also in accordance with AKP's ideology about gender equality, "...One cannot equal the position of men and women, it is contrary to human nature..." (Cumhuriyet, 2014).

3.2. Religious and Conservative Features

Turkey has a complex and extraordinarily rich religious tradition and is of course an overwhelmingly Muslim society. However, from the foundation of the republic until the early 1970s, Mustafa Kemal and his friends placed religion in the realm of private practice for citizens instead of in the realm of politics. With the establishment of the Republic, Turkish politics de-emphasized Islam as a part of the Turkish identity (Duran & Çınar, 2001). However, the “National Outlook Movement (NOM) (*Milli Görüş Hareketi*)” led by Necmettin Erbakan during the 1970s foregrounded “religiosity” on the Turkish scene. Consequently, the secular character of the Turkish Republic was destroyed (Cizre, 2008). Due to the fact that the AKP emerged from the National Outlook Movement, the party aligns itself to NOM ideology, which has been the main representative of political Islam in Turkey. Since cartoons are social constructions, designed for them by the dominant ideology, it is not surprising to encounter various Islamic motifs and features within the cartoon series.

The findings of this study have indicated that, although there were no Islamic visuals such as mosques, prayer rugs and none of the characters were shown while they were performing *salaat* (prayers), there is a high level of Islamic expressions. “*Allah Allah*”¹, “*Allasen*”², “*Maaşallah*”³, “*inşallah*”⁴, “*Bismillah*”⁵ and “*Allah yardımcın olsun*”⁶ are all frequently used by Muslims all over the world (Arabic Acceleration Report, 2013).

Table 1. The distribution of Islamic expressions

Expression	Number	Rate	Character that used the expression
Gosh you!	47	22,27%	Pepee (47) Grandma (11)
Praise be	21	9,95%	Grandpa (9) Mother (1) Pepee (6)
Gosh!	9	4-26%	Grandpa (2) Bebec (1)
Godspeed!	4	1,89%	Grandma (3) Mother (1)

As can be seen from the table, in the content of “*Pepee*”, one can encounter many of these expressions. For example, the expression “*Allasen*” was repeated 47 times in various

¹ Gosh!

² Gosh you!

³ Praise be!

⁴ If God wills!

⁵ In the name of God!

⁶ Godspeed!

episodes by different characters. The expression “*maaşallah*” was used 21 times; “*allah allah*” 9 times and “*allah yardımcın olsun*” 4 times.

In addition to these Islamic expressions, the amulet that has a great importance in the Muslim world because Muslims believe in the protective and healing power of amulets- is seen in every single episode of the cartoon series. The main character *Pepee* carries one in his clothes at all times. Moreover, the balls that *Pepee* and sister play with both have amulet motives.

Another noteworthy point is the lack of sexual scenes. Obviously, nationally televised cartoon series designed for children age three to six would not contain sexual scenes. The problem arises when the cartoon series underspecifies the issues. In the episode titled “*Pepee is taking a shower*”, *Pepee*’s mother washes him and his sister one by one. In this scene, both were shown wearing swimming attire. The rationale behind this is not to show private parts of the bodies to the audience. However, this is problematic as showing kids taking a shower clothed may mislead children because cartoons generally portray norms and values to children. Children identify with the lessons about life from those cartoons and connect them with their own experiences. Hence, showing people taking a shower clothed would confuse the children because they know that when people shower, they do so without clothes. Moreover, in the episode titled “*Pepee is learning his body*” his grandfather was teaching him parts of the human body, the names of the organs and their functions. However, while teaching and showing the parts of our body, he overlooks the parts between the hips and the neck. Although these episodes establish the educational function of cartoons, they are also deliberately misleading in that they are not fully or adequately educating the children. Children are learning about human body but only partly, rather than the whole body.

3.3. Patriarchal Features

Patriarchy is a global issue, which also affects Turkey. The primary reason for the influence of patriarchy in Turkey is the country’s complex political history and its roots which go back to Ottoman Empire. However, the AKP’s period in government has increased the visibility of patriarchy and as Simten Coşar and Metin Yeğenoğlu (2011) stated has led to a new mode of patriarchy. This AKP mode of patriarchy can tentatively be named “neo-liberal conservative patriarchy” which limits the access of women to the public sphere through employment or education and defines the domestic sphere as the natural place of women (Smits & Hoşgör, 2008; Coşar & Yeğenoğlu, 2011).

According to the AKP mode of patriarchy, women are the main housekeepers, who spend most of their time working inside the house while men spend their time working outside

the house. AKP strengthens its patriarchal ideas via various policies such as supporting women to return home with the social policy program called “*Back to the Family*” to perform their family duties. All of these ideas of the AKP can be seen within the content of the cartoon series. For example, male characters portrayed in “*Pepee*” are employed but women are not. Although *Pepee*’s mother is a lawyer, she never goes to work. Furthermore, other women characters like *Pepee*’s aunt and grandmother or his friends’ mothers are not employed at all. In the majority of the episodes, the male characters were shown while they were working. However, the mother is always shown as a housewife fulfilling her domestic tasks.

Another important and suppressive feature of AKP mode of patriarchy is considering women as emotional and weak human beings, who are highly dependent on men (Aybars, 2010). This point is clearly reflected in the language and the songs used in the cartoon series. According to the semiotic approach, every single word that we hear from television is an interpretation of a particular group and carries an ideology. As Stephen Hill (1988) states:

“...The language that is used in the television is something “written” in the sense that is embodied autonomous not derived from immediate life world cultural participation but from sediment meanings...” (p. 65)

With the language used within television texts, the dominant ideology is reproduced again and again. A detailed analysis of the language used in the cartoon series “*Pepee*” supports these arguments. For example, female characters in the cartoon series were associated with more soft and feminine adjectives such as “*beautiful*”, “*dear*”, “*little*” or “*pretty*” and so on, while the male characters were associated with stronger, masculine adjectives such as “*powerful*”, “*hero*”, “*enormous*”, “*cool*”, “*lion*” and so on. The purpose of using these adjectives is to emphasise the notion that women are vulnerable, weak human beings, who need to be rescued and looked after by their heroic husbands. Men, on the other hand, are portrayed as adventurous, active and victorious while women are portrayed as constantly in need of being rescued, causing trouble, talking too much and not working enough (Smith, 1994). Furthermore, throughout the 211 episodes, the children sing songs for their family members. The lyrics of the song they have written for their mother are

*“You are my one and only dear mother
You are my beautiful mother
You, dear mother, you beautiful mother
You are my special
Dear mother, beautiful mother...”*

The song they have written for their father, in contrast, goes:

*“I have a powerful and an enormous father
I have a cool and a great father and a handsome father
Father father father...”*

These lyrics are very much in line with the existing literature on gender stereotyping in media. In fact, very little seems to have changed especially in looking at how men and women are portrayed in *Pepee*. More than 40 years ago, Streicher (1974) looked at how males and females were portrayed in cartoons and suggests that cartoons were predominated by active, noisy and successful male characters, while female characters were less numerous and always needed to be rescued.

3.4. Emphasis on “motherhood” and the notion of “holy family”

The AKP’s understanding of family is strongly based on a patriarchal normative model, where mothers play the role of homemaker and fathers are the main breadwinners (Acar & Altınok, 2012). This model of family puts a variety of domestic responsibilities, such as providing care for children and elderly dependents, cleaning and household maintenance, known as housekeeping, cooking, laundry, ironing, food shopping and so on to mothers and reduces the possibility of developing a professional career for them (İlkkaracan, 1998). Several examples of this picture of family and associated arguments can be seen within the content of *Pepee*. For example, in the 47th episode, broadcast on 2nd October 2009, *Pepee*’s mother was making breakfast while everyone else in the house was sleeping. After she had made the breakfast, she woke the others up. They all had breakfast together and afterwards the father went to work, *Pepee* and his sister went out to the garden to play with the dog and the mother cleaned the kitchen. Moreover, in the episode titled “*it’s so good to play together*”, children were shown roleplaying and *Pepee* was going to act as a cow, thus, he needed a cow costume. He immediately decided to go and ask his mother to sew a cow costume for him and she did it. Furthermore, in the episode called “*Forgive me*” *Pepee*’s mother was cleaning the house before her husband comes home from work and asked her children to remove their toys from the living room. Beside cooking and cleaning, according to AKP’s ideology taking care of children is another duty of mothers. This duty includes putting them to bed, helping them to take a shower and educating them. Accordingly, throughout the episodes *Pepee*’s mother is shown to be the one responsible for all these tasks.

Table 2. Distribution of works done by family members

	Cooking	Cleaning	Playing with children	Taking care of children	Teaching	Other domesticated works	Non domesticated works
Annee	64	27	7	36	51	2	5
Babaa	-	-	17	-	22	-	58
Nenee	29	6	44	-	44	-	3
Dedee	-	-	227	74	193	-	37
Teyzee	11	4	3	6	-	2	1
Enistee	-	-	-	-	-	-	2

As the table shows, the gender-based division of labour within the family is validated within the cartoon series “*Pepee*”. In majority of the episodes, female characters are associated with the domestic tasks and male characters are associated with non-domestic tasks.

In addition to conservative normative family model, the AKP and the former Prime Minister who is the current president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan favour the concept of extended family. They believe that grandparents are the ones, who will teach customs, norms and values to children. Numerous examples of this stand can also be seen in the content of the cartoon. The grandfather *Dedee* and the grandmother *Nenee* are the two characters, who teach children things about the world, customs and so on. They generally teach children the colours, how to count, differences in the size of things, the seasons or how to draw something, how to make a kite and so on. In addition to these, they teach children a lot about Turkish culture such as traditional songs, traditional folkloric games, costumes and importance of traditional days. For example in the episode called “*You can, if you believe*” the grandfather taught children how to make their own kite. Moreover on the episode, broadcast on 5th of May 2012, the grandmother taught kids how to play “*Kaşık Oyunu*”⁷.

3.5. Anti-Western Values

As mentioned above, AKP’s roots can be traced back to the National Outlook Movement (NOM), (*Milli Görüş Hareketi*)” led by Necmettin Erbakan and their ideology has always been pro-stance to political Islam and against westernization and entering into the European Union. Especially, during the 1970s when the Islamic, Conservative and Nationalist groups came into power, Westernization was considered the enslavement of Turkey by the Christian Western imperialistic states. Necmettin Erbakan was the main leader of this new view and refused the integration of Turkey into European organizations especially the European

⁷ Turkish folkloric dance from Silifke region and played with spoons.

Union. He referred the Union as “*Christian Unity against Muslims*” and rejected its benefits completely (Cizre, 2008). Not only Erbakan but also all other influential leaders of this new view were against Turkey’s integration to the EU. However, when the process of globalization and its components including the global resurgence of liberal democracy and the EU, substantially contributed to the reshaping of Turkish politics and the closing down of Erbakans’s three political parties the National Salvation Party (*Milli Selamet Partisi*), the Welfare party (*Refah Partisi*) and the Islamist Virtue Party (*Fazilet Partisi*), Turkish politicians started to believe that EU membership would be both economically and politically beneficial for Turkey (Kosebalaban, 2005; Bulaç, 2003; Ayata, 2004; Kutan, 2000 as cited in Cizre, 2008). Therefore, in 2002, the AKP came to power with a pro-stance to the EU claiming that they “*had removed the shirt of the National Outlook Movement*” (Cizre, 2008). In their first phase of government from 2002 to 2007, the AKP proceeded accordingly, focused on nurturing a recovery from the recession, pushed the liberalizing reforms required to enable Turkey to begin official accession negotiations for EU membership and to adopt the EU’s policies including freedom of expression. However, in 2007 when they were re-elected and increased their votes from 34.26% to 46.58% (Turkstat, 2012), their reforms about entering the Union weakened (Cizre, 2008). For instance, the latest Annual Report notes that progress has been made but the pace of change has slowed in Turkey (Cizre, 2008).

Table 3. Distribution of various cultural motives

	Exist	Number	Rate
Turkish cultural motives	✓	26	12,32%
Western cultural motives	✓	2	0,94%
Other cultural motives	✓	4	1,89%

As the table shows, within the cartoon series “*Pepee*”, there are high levels of Turkish cultural motives but very few other cultural motives. While these high levels of Turkish cultural motives are reflected in the food eaten in the cartoon series, the music played, the dances and the games played by children throughout the 211 episodes of “*Pepee*”; the western and far east cultural motives are only limited within the dances.

From the findings about food eaten during the episodes, it can be said that *Pepee* prefers to eat Turkish cuisine when he gets hungry. For example, *Pepee* eats bread with molasses tahini, eggs, honey and drinks milk for his breakfast, considered the main Turkish breakfast food. Moreover, *Pepee*’s favorite foods are haricot beans, *gözleme*⁸ with hash shepherd salad

⁸ Traditional pancake.

and pickles. He never eats fast food or pizza, defined as traditional western and American foods. Moreover, in various episodes of the cartoon series, his grandfather and the narrator Şuşu teach him various Turkish folk dances but not the dances of any other cultures. For example, in the episode called “*Pepee’s Teke Zortlaması*”,⁹ children wore traditional costumes and waited for the grandfather excitedly to come and teach them the dance. Then, the grandfather came and gave brief information about historical background of the dance and taught them how to do the dance. Additionally, in various episodes of “*Pepee*”, they play various songs. Despite the fact that with the Internet it is so easy to listen foreign songs these days, every single song played in the cartoon series “*Pepee*” is Turkish.

3.6. Gender Dimensions

Although the notions of gender inequality can be seen within almost every sphere of the AKP ideology and policies, the frequency of male and female characters’ appearances, their clothing, the preferences of the games played by them and their success levels in those games are the main features that are embedded into children's subconscious via cartoons. According to Ashmore and Del Boca (1979) sex-roles are considered as the structured sets of beliefs about the personal attributes of women and men.

Globally, media is considered as one of the most powerful agents in constructing and representing gender roles and television as an arena for construction, production and reproduction of stable notions of gender through stereotyping and generic convention (McQuail, 2010). Many cultural commentators have argued that television constructs and perpetuates gender roles and stereotypes (Gunter, 1995). Many investigations into representation of gender and sex roles on television have suggested that the world as as portrayed to us is a gender-skewed one (Gerbner & Signorielli, 1979). These findings are all consistent with the content of “*Pepee*” and reflected through the frequency of male and female characters, their clothing, their game preferences and their success level in those games.

The earliest studies about the frequency of female and male characters’ portrayals clarify that females have always been underrepresented across a wide variety of media and this unequal distribution is still valid in “*Pepee*”. The male characters appear 1814 times (63.87%) while female characters only appear 1026 (36.12%) in 211 episodes of “*Pepee*”, which makes male characters appear almost two times more than female characters.

⁹ The name of a Turkish folk dance

Table 4. Frequency rate of male and female characters

	Female characters	Male characters	Total
Number	1026	1814	2840
Rate	36,13%	63,87%	100,00%

Another important gender discrimination can be seen from the choice of the colour and style of the characters' clothes. Although there is no written rule, it is accepted that pink represents the female and blue, the male. This idea is imposed on children and their families as a cultural norm (Kalaycı, 2015). Analysis of the cartoon revealed that in every single episode male characters were wearing trousers or shorts and t-shirts in dark colours while the female characters were wearing skirts in light colours. Female characters were shown wearing skirts even though the attire was unsuitable for the occasion. For example, in the episode called "Shoot and goal that's football", the children were playing soccer. During the game, all female characters were shown wearing skirts although it defies the rules of soccer. As Nurdan Kalaycı (2015) states:

"In reality, a woman can wear whatever clothes are appropriate for her actions and activities she is carrying out. Moreover, the children viewing these cartoons may believe restricting female characters to this type of attire is normal. This perception may lead to a consolidation of their ideas regarding gender stereotypes..." (p. 261).

Table 5. Distribution of colors and types of clothing

Character	Colour	Type
Pepee	Blue	a t-shirt and a jean with bib
Bebee	Pink	a dress a bow tie buckle
Sila	Light purple	Dress
Eke	Yellow	a t-shirt and a jean with bib
	Blue	
Annee	Light purple	a long dress
	Dark purple	a jacket
Babaa	Blue	trousers, a tie, a shirt, a sweater
	Bordeaux	
Nenee	Light purple	a dress a head scarf
Dedee	Blue	trousers, a tie, a shirt, a cardigan
	Brown	

As “*Pepee*” is a television program, designed for children, it includes various games, hobbies and children's activities. However, the analysis reveals a gender-based difference within the game preferences. Activities performed outdoors which required more physical power such as hiking, paddling, playing with a gun or a sword, skating, cycling or running, playing with balls were performed mainly by male characters. On the other hand, female characters were mainly more closely associated with games played indoors such as drawing, playing doctors, playing blindfold and dancing. The male characters in “*Pepee*” were always presented as being more successful, more knowledgeable and able to learn more easily than female characters. In most of the episodes, male characters are shown already knowing things or learning them faster than female characters even though they are the same age. Such discrimination in game preferences and unequal success levels reflect AKP’s ideology, which consider women as emotional, weak and less intelligent human beings, who are highly dependent on men (Aybars, 2010).

4. Conclusion

Democracy has always been considered an ideal form of governance and one of the most important guiding principles is “*freedom of expression*”, which includes the freedom to hold opinions and to receive and impart information and ideas. Although Turkey claims to be a democratic society and applied EU-inspired reforms such as expanding freedom of expression, allowing education and broadcasting in Kurdish or abolishing cruel punishments for verbal propaganda (Governments reform package, 2002), the freedom of media is very low in Turkey. The US-originated think tank “Freedom House”, which investigates the freedom of press in 195 countries and 15 territories (Freedom House, 2015), has declared that the press status of Turkey is “not free” with 65 point out of 100 (FHR, 2015). To add to this, Turkey took the 149th place out of 180 in the Reporters Without Borders Organization World Press Freedom Index Report 2015 (RSF, 2015).

Especially, following AKP’s ascent to power after the 2002 general elections, the political discourse and practices in many spheres including the media, have faced a major transformation. During the period of its governance, slowly but surely, the AKP has built close relations with the owners of various mass media institutions, who were mostly businessmen instead of media professionals (Akkor Gül, 2011). Consequently, television broadcasting has lost its role of educating children, setting the agenda on public discourse, supplying resources for political participation and shaping the cultural identity of its viewers (Gripsrud, 2010). On the contrary, it has become a mirror and an actor in the social, political and cultural spheres, to disseminate the ruling elite’s own values and protect their own interests. Therefore, nothing

that happens on television “actually” happens; every single image that we see or every single word that we hear on television is a representation of a certain ideology. As Roland Barthes (1973) states, television texts are composed of signs, which generate a set of meanings or a message. This message or meaning is nothing but representation of a particular ideology with the purpose of conveying the dominant ideology and of making it appear natural. Since, television’s provisions of sound, image, narrative and repetition provide the frameworks for the public’s everyday lives, seeing a particular ideology repetitively makes them accept and normalize whatever they see.

In this study, the “*Pepee*” cartoon series was evaluated in relation to the Turkish ruling party AKP’s ideology and from the data collected via qualitative discourse analysis, some conclusions can be drawn. “*Pepee*” was considered as a television genre, which is suitable for children due to the fact that its content does not include any violent or sexual scenes and contains high levels of educative features. On the other hand, the cartoon series has been found to also reflect a major portion of the AKP worldview. Any aspect of these cartoons, which is used to reinforce and reproduce the dominant ideology, should be considered a serious threat to children's development. As the target audience of the cartoon series are pre-school children between the age of 2-5, who are not mature enough to watch them with a critical eye and are incapable of distinguishing dreams from reality nor good from bad, it is very important to analyse the messages conveyed because close dialogical and reflective relations with the rest of the society are manifested in its contents day by day following historical and socio-political developments (Gripsrud, 2010). Cartoon series with their colourful and engaging scenes insidiously inject this one-dimensional ideology into children’s mind like a syringe, which is totally inappropriate for the identity construction of children (Croteau & Hoynes 1997). What needs to be done to avoid this situation is to increase the media literacy level in Turkey to a more sophisticated level. At a macro level, this goes beyond personal initiatives and efforts and calls for a state involvement. As Gencel Bek (1995) argues, the restrictive legal structure should be changed, illegal power of the state over civil rights should be ended and the state broadcasting should be turned into a public service broadcasting (Gencel Bek, 1995 as cited in Gripsrud & Weibull, 2010). At a micro level, parents, teachers, students and any individuals, who are media literate should hold accountable the cartoon writers and producers to be more objective and careful about their product, and lastly, more research analysing the content of cartoons from various viewpoints including from its relationship with the government or gender equality should be given more prominence so that the outcomes of such research can be used to enlighten the public as to the "dangers" of mental manipulation by those in power.

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