THE REPRESENTATION OF THE WOMAN IN THE MEDIA DISCOURSE IN ALBANIA

Isida Hoxha
Universiteti Luigj Gurakuqi, Shkodër, Albania

ABSTRACT

In the Albanian society, gender differences remain even though several initiatives of national and international authorities aim to eliminate stereotyping related to gender differences. In this context, media can and must be, the most essential contributor towards improving women’s status. Media, through its power, can greatly influence public opinion by orienting the information the public receives and how the public should think. This approach in communication science is part of the “framing” theory, which is related to agenda setting. The research question raised in this paper is about how the woman is represented in the written media in Albania. Are the stereotypes created by society reinforced by the printed media? The methodology used in this study involves discourse analyses of the printed media, specifically the independent newspapers during October 2012. The findings of this study explain that, while the press brands the woman, representation enforces her stereotype.

UDC & KEYWORDS

UDC: 305 WOMEN REPRESENTATION MEDIA DISCOURSE GENDER DISCOURSE

INTRODUCTION

In Albania, the years 1990 are years which are related to important political changes because after a period of nearly 50 years, the government system changed from a communist system into a democratic system. This political change reflected consequences even in economical, social life of the country because such transformations touch all fields. People who hoped for a new democratic system and had aspired to be free were unprepared because these important paradigms were destroyed. Such transitive situation will affect all the factors of the society in different shapes and ways but in this thesis important for us is the role and the position of the woman. Important changes are evident when studying the dynamics involved with the transformation of women’s status. During the communist system, images of a woman showed she could do everything that a man could, because she was represented as an equal with the other gender, at least superficially. The change of political system reactivated the wide differences in relation to duties and rights according to gender. Gender stereotypes have been present in our society for centuries because of the historical context of Albania in terms of tradition and culture. In addition, economic factors played a role, because in the transition did not economically favor the growth of women’s incomes. In this context, when we study the role of the woman in Albania, we find discrimination and the existence of stereotyping of society’s members. In this thesis, we examine the role of the media as a reinforcing or opposing agent of stereotyping, in regard to its representation of the woman in her discourse.
Media discourse

The transmitted messages journalistic media differ from those of others forms of communication because of the specialties and tools specific to this profession. In analyzing the discourse we need to consider the language used, as journalism can greatly influence the society in which it operates.

“Journalism has social effects; through its power to create the issues of agendas and public discourse, it can enforce the beliefs; it can create people's opinion not only in the world but also in their country and the role in the world; or if it doesn’t shape your opinion in a particular issue it can slightly influence those you have thoughts on.” (Richardson 2007, p. 13)

When we study the discourse of media, we should consider its main features, which relate to the specifics of the text, its production, and the audience’s uptake. The form of the news often relates to the opinions and thoughts of the most prominent groups. When authors create the news, they write it knowing that they reach their desired audience through it and thus can attain their chosen objectives. In this thesis, we focus on media discourse and not only question the messages transmitted from newspapers to the public, but also how these are transmitted, by referring to the specifics of the text, in terms of production and reiteration of gender differences.

Gender and media discourse

Gender representation is a topic that has attracted interest in the study of media. Different studies on the language used in discourse show that gender stereotyping is formed through discourse or through the language in use. Discourses can influence the roles and gender stereotyping. Here we refer to the approach of Butler (1990), who emphasizes that “people do gender rather than have gender”. Gender stereotyping is related to the perception of members of a society, as a consequence of culture that exists in that society. The stereotyping that accompanies the woman implies she is a member of a ‘weaker’ group, or as emotional, less powerful, irrational, or similar. These existing labels are part of media discourse in the representation of events. Media coverage is not a true representation because many factors influence the final stage, when text is ready to be assimilated by the public.

News is a representation of the world in language; because language is a semiotic code, it imposes a structure of values, social and economic in origin, on whatever is represented; and so inevitably news, like every discourse, constructively patterns that of which it speaks. News is a representation in this sense of construction; it is not a value free reflection of ‘facts’ (Fowler 1991, p. 4).

The discourse in media serves to present and reproduce these stereotypes, using existing ideology. “Ideologies are representations of aspects of the world which can be shown to contribute to establishing, maintaining and changing social relations of power, domination and explanation” (Fairclough 2003, p. 9)

Analyze: The representation of woman in the written media referring to the articles

The newspapers chosen for analyses were from four media outlets that were important in terms of the written press in Albania. The articles used in this thesis are listed below with reference to the sections used in the study.

The following provides the media representation of the woman.

www.journals.cz
THE REPRESENTATION OF THE WOMAN IN THE MEDIA DISCOURSE IN ALBANIA

• “Emulation for a boy, the minor cuts the high school student” (Qoraj, 2012, p.11)
• “The old man denounces his wife; on the day against the violence toward women” (“The old man denounces his wife”, 2012, p.11)

Bad news or social news

The results of analyses reveal a domination of articles related to abuses of women by different ways including physical and psychological that end in murder of women. Despite attempts by the Ministry of Labor, Social Affairs and Equal Opportunities, to implement policies and programs regarding those described in the discourse reinforces the lexical and referential strategies (part of transitivity) victim, wife, woman, bride, and prostitute. The study of labeling mainly consists of these words: girl, girlfriend, involved are represented in the media discourse. Their purposes…” (Richardson 2007, p. 49). These strategies can serve many different psychological, social or political purposes; to describe an individual (or a group) as one thing or as another their work “have called these naming options a text’s categories. This relates to involvement in a certain category, to characterize what is displayed in terms of social differences. Women often do not report cases of abuse because of fear, shame, others’ the opinion, or referential strategies” and have illustrates that choosing to use idioms that reinforce the position of the victimized woman. The circumstances that comprise the narrative and those involved in the event are related by use of adverbs and idioms that reinforce the position of the victimized woman. In this case, unlike others, the circumstances are not used to create bias and support division, but forward messages that aim to produce sensation in the public.

Symbolic representation

The articles used in this study were separated into two main categories. The first category was discussed above and relates to the representation of women in the victim role. It is the most domimative category when considering the timing of the study. The second category relates to a different model of a woman’s representation. The results from analyses explain a symbolic representation of woman, referring to themes and discursive structures. Two articles published at Shekulli newspaper, describe two women who were wives of ex-politicians who had been persecuted. The two persecuted men had been participating in a hunger strike, in demand of their rights. In this case, the women were being interviewed from a wives’ position. Thus, they take place in media discourse only by their familiar bond, where they belong.

At another time, the newspaper, Koha Jonë, publishes only one article relating to the ceremony of the 9th anniversary of the beatification of Mother Theresa. Mother Theresa is a symbol of peace, but as far she represents the woman, there are no articles about women on this day, i.e. no opinion or related analyzes about women’s positions or contributes. The newspaper, Panorama, publishes an article about the left wing leader who made a call to women; he wants them to be the masters of their own fate and the masters of their own country, and make the “big change”. If we refer to Randall (2003), we can classify this article as a unimportant in terms of women’s representation, because that kind of news is positioned at the end of the pyramid for newsworthiness, because in such news nothing has really happened.

CONCLUSION

Media has the power to rule and orient public opinion, enforcing perceptions about reality and is an effective means of creating new opinions. Based on results of analyses in this study, the media’s influence is important in orienting the public (the reader in this case), about what to think in the case of women’s representation. There were two main media discourses identified during analyses. Firstly, the largest number of articles, published in newspapers, represented women with use of existing stereotypes in Albanian society. The cases that media chose...
as news were those related to accidents and deaths. The stereotypes created by society are strengthened by the way the media discourse is structured. Throughout the many cases of women’s violation, there was only one case that was presented with a social view and which was discussed by professionals, such as psychologist. Among many news articles, the women were victims of violation that concluded in death and only one case involved messages to produce awareness in society.

Secondly, there were numerous articles that related to a symbolic women’s representation. In those articles, the women are not represented as victims, but as somebody’s wives or somebody’s relatives. This symbolic role is seen in the discourses of political leaders as well.

REFERENCES

Ajsheja was abused under threatens and pressure by Shaban. (2012, October 17). Panorama, p.1

Bajrami, A. (2012, October 14). The policewoman was massacred, sentenced to prison uncle and nephew, Panorama, p.8


Çela, L. (2012, October 11). Edlira Bejko: The self-immolate was warned, they did not react, Shekulli, p. 4

Çela, L. (2012, October 09). Ndreca’s wife: Government forced Gjeraj to self-immolate, Shekulli, p.4


His girlfriend was molested; he wanted to retaliate with explosives. (2012, October 09). Shekulli, p.7

Ilnicaj, E., & Musaj, L. (2012, October 14). The father of Aisha, daughter dishonored me, I closed the mourn when I learned that she was pregnant, Panorama, p.1


Lisi, A. (2012, October 06). High school student being violated, the 26 years old is arrested, Gazeta Shqiptare, p.11

Lumezi, A. (2012, October 14). Men play with the fate of the country, Panorama, p. 6


Mitre, O. (2012, October 01). The girl whom I raised evicted me from the house, Gazeta Shqiptare, p.9


Qoraj, A. (2012, October 19). Deceived for marriage, turned her a prostitute for 5 years, Koha Jonë, p.10

Qoraj, A. (2012, October 19). Deceived for marriage, turned her a prostitute for 5 years, Koha Jonë, p.10

Qoraj, A. (2012, October 24). Emulation for a boy, the minor cuts the high school student, Koha Jonë, p.11

Qoraj, A. (2012, October 20). Imprisoned the youngster in a hotel, turned her into a prostitute, Koha Jonë, p.10


Qoraj, A. (2012, October 19). Tends to kill his wife and her parents, Koha Jonë, p.11

Qoraj, A. (2012, October 19). The bride threatens the mother in law for fortune, Koha Jonë, p.11

Randall, D(2003), Gazetari Universal, Tirané: Instituti Shqiptar i Medias.


Skënderasi, E. (2012, October 03). The declaration of feud, Ylli Cocka is accompanied by the police, Gazeta Shqiptare, p. 11.


Sh, E. (2012, October 07). Man kills wife on the verge of divorce, Shekulli, p. 3.


The old man denounces his wife, on the day against the violation toward women. (2012, October 24). Koha Jonë, p. 11.

Witness of the “murder” is threatened by the defendant. (2012, October 07). Shekulli, p.11.

