

**A Curse and/or Blessing? Turkish Soap Operas and their  
Impact on Contemporary Algerian Women: Audience Reception  
and Audio-visual Analysis of the Historical TV Drama *Harim al-  
Sultan (The Magnificent Century)***

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## Abstract

Turkey is now the second biggest TV market exporter after the US finding huge audiences among Arab women. This study examines how Algerian women perceive the Dizi genres, what makes them captivating and influential, and determines the dominant positive and negative themes tackled in these TV dramas. Based on literature review on globalized media, media effect theories, and gender studies, an online focus group discussion, online questionnaires, and interpretative phenomenological analysis techniques this study aims to understand the reception and perception of Turkish TV series by Algerian female viewers. The thesis implements the audio-visual content analysis method on the most-watched Dizi TV drama titled *Harim al-Sultan* as a case study to identify the prominent features of those soap operas. The findings show that the lack of Algerian local cinematic production, cultural proximity between Turkey and Algeria, Syrian dialect, creative scenarios, and modern lifestyles broadcasted in the Dizi TV dramas has rapidly increased its popularity among Algerian female viewers.

The results also indicate that Turkish TV dramas depict women who appear to be modern and independent and who challenge imposed traditional patriarchal values. At the same time, they also promote gender stereotypes, romanticizing rape stories, and spreading Western ideologies under the umbrella of modernity that could threaten or weaken Algerian females' traditional values. Audio-visual content analysis shows that *Harim al-Sultan* contains controversial topics, that generated many critiques in terms of history, power, religion, identity, and representation of women. Nonetheless, this study examines how participants incorporate some Dizi TV series' features in a relevant way to Algerian female traditional values and lifestyles, thus, arguing for the creation of an ambiguous identity which sits at the cusp of traditional principles and modern hybrid identities.

## **Dedication**

My research study is dedicated to my family, especially to my warm-hearted mother and my father, a man of the highest integrity in my life who always encourages and gives me unconditional love in every chapter of my life.

I am indebted to my sister Somia, my brothers Yacine, Mohamed el Amin, and Ayoub el Saber.

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## **List of Abbreviations and Acronyms**

**MC:** *The Magnificent Century*

**AKP:** Justice and Development Party

**US:** United States

**UNESCO:** The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

**MBC:** Middle East Broadcasting Channels

**IPA:** Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis

**ASATDER:** The Arab Travel Agencies and Tourism Development Association

**TRT:** Turkish Radio and Television

**FLN:** The National Liberation Front

**UK:** United Kingdom

**2M:** Moroccan generalist television channel

**LGTBQ:** Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning, and/or Queer

**MSA:** Modern Standard Arabic

## **Chapter 1: General Introduction**

### **1.1.Motivation of the Study**

This thesis explores the extent to which Turkish TV series influences Algerian female audiences by soft power instruments such as fashion, attractive actors, affluent interiors, and provocative scenarios. My interest in pursuing this study comes from my own experience of being a Turkish TV drama viewer for more than ten years. While watching these TV series, I developed a curiosity about the influence of Turkish soap operas on Algerian female identity. These TV shows attracted me on different levels: language, culture, and tourism. I became fascinated with how women are depicted, and the way screenwriters transform the character of the female protagonist from weak and dependent to powerful and independent woman. I observed that many Algerian females are impressed with Turkish products like accessories, furniture, clothes, songs, and wish to visit Turkey and to learn the Turkish language. I also noticed that many of them watch these TV programs frequently with excitement and pleasure compared to other TV shows like Latin American telenovelas or Syrian and Egyptian musalsalat<sup>1</sup>. In conversations about the Turkish series content, they often gossiped about physical appearances and the beauty of actresses and posted pictures of Turkish TV stars on their Facebook profiles.

The Dizi phenomenon in Algeria seems like a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it reinforces and supports women to be strong and independent; at the same time, it promotes some Western ideologies and taboos that contradict Algerian traditions and potentially weaken Algerian females' values. Therefore, the topic of this research is a response to this initial curiosity aiming to explore the reality of the Turkish TV series consumed content by Algerian females, how they evaluate this content, the reasons that stimulate them to watch these TV dramas and whether it influences them. It is worth mentioning that the Algerian

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<sup>1</sup> Musalsalat: Arab television drama, commonly known as musalsal (plural: musalsalat).

government heavily controls TV channels as they are supposed to broadcast only appropriate content for the Algerian Muslim family, preserve the common Arab cultural heritage, and secure national unity. This means that Algerian TV producers cannot bring taboo or controversial topics to the surface but are restricted to traditional ones such as family issues and social classes, which causes crises in contemporary Algerian TV drama production. Therefore, Algerian TV viewers found that Turkish soap operas are ideal alternatives for this gap in the Algerian TV industry, representing a mixed modern lifestyle world with quotidian roles of religion and tradition. Therefore, throughout this research I aspire to examine the phenomenon of Dizi TV series popularity and find out what makes them appealing to Algerian females. This interdisciplinary study combines different research areas, mainly media, politics, psychology, and gender studies. It is based on a mixed method approach for in-depth exploration of transnational media reception and consumption through addressing two main research questions:

1. What are the most salient features of Turkish TV series' content that Algerian females pay attention to?
2. To what extent do Turkish TV series contribute to the cultural hybridization of Algerian females' identity?

I hypothesized that Algerian female viewers are conscious that Turkish TV dramas tackle positive topics that make them up to date with modern brands, encourage them to challenge the traditional patriarchal society and to be independent and autonomous at the same time they are transmitting Western ideologies that contradict their cultural norms. Thus, the content of these TV series can be a curse and/or blessing on their cultural identity. Nonetheless, contemporary Algerian women are expected to be aware, integrating modern lifestyles in a way that is consistent with their traditional beliefs and religion.

## **1.2.Situating the Research**

The relationship between Algeria and Turkey has a long history. Algeria has been influenced by foreign civilizations like the Roman and Byzantine Empires, while the Ottoman Empire was the longest, lasting nearly three centuries, from 1515 to 1830. Aroj brothers in 1515 moved to Algiers and detached it from the Spanish army and declared that the best solution to make Algeria secure is to link it to the Ottoman Empire until it gains international protection. Therefore, Sultan Selim I appointed Khairuddin I as the first Turkish ruler in Algeria. Canan Halaçoğlu (2013, p.14) notes: “In 1827, the area which is now called Algeria [...] was a province of the Ottoman Empire named Cezayir-i Garb”. Mahmoud El -Meshhadani and Rashid Ramadan (2013, p.3) mention that Algeria’s political and economic state at that time was generally satisfactory. It was characterized by architectural buildings, strong political leadership, and a powerful marine navy. During the era, Algerians experienced a variety of social, economic, political, and military changes. William Spencer (1980, p.111) clarifies that the Algerian population has been influenced by the long existence of Turks in Algeria in almost social, cultural, administrative, and military sectors. For instance, the official language in Algeria became the Turkish Osmanli, a mixture of Arabic, Turkish, and Persian languages written with Arabic letters.

On the other hand, the Quranic schools are considered one of the most important features of the Ottoman Empire’s existence in Algeria. The primary role of those Quranic schools was based on teaching the Quran, beliefs, and Hadith for the sustainability of Islamic culture. These schools had an effective contribution and a leading role in building the Algerian national identity and highlighting its sanctities. Ottomans left Algeria hundreds of years ago, the cultural and historical remains prove its existence and influence. Ottoman-style citadels, old mosques, and palaces were inscribed on the World Heritage List by UNESCO 1992, such as ‘El-Kasbah’ (Ottoman palace in Algiers). Most of these monuments have been renovated

for tourism and filming locations. Spencer argues that the Ottomans brought different cultural elements to Algeria. For instance, Spencer explains that Algerians were imitating the Ottoman society of Constantinople. Rulers' outfits in Algeria reflected the Ottoman civilization. He justifies: "the modern fashion in Algeria has been developed during the reign of Sultan Selim I [...] they designed caftan and the fez and added a special place to put a sword or pistol" (1980, pp.104-105. My translation).

According to Spencer, Algerian women were extensively impressed by the Turkish dresses of Algerian envoys from the Ottoman Empire. They were also influenced by how Ottoman women were dressing up and their cosmetics such as perfumes, henna<sup>2</sup>, and headscarves styles. Moreover, during the Ottoman Empire Algerian women were going to Hammam<sup>3</sup> every week as a Turkish ritual to show off their fashion, jewellery, and exchange or gossip about family news (pp.108-109). Algerian cultural and social sectors were also inspired and influenced by the Ottoman culture, including clothes, ceremonies, music, cuisine, furniture, the architecture of baths, tombs, and mosques. For instance, Algerian houses were inspired by the Turkish style using the same materials and decorated with Anatolian carpets, copper trays, and mirrors. On the other hand, Algerian cuisine was influenced by Ottoman ones. The Turkish Doulehm, Kefta, and kebab became popular in Algeria (see Spencer,1980, pp.109-111).

Linguistically, the Algerian dialect is rich with many Turkish words and expressions dating back to the Ottoman era. Spencer confirms that the Algerian linguistic repertoire consists of 634 Turkish words that are still used in Algeria (p.103). These vocabularies are integrated into everyday life conversations, including names of jobs such as Banka Müdürü (bank director),

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<sup>2</sup> Henna: is a dye prepared from the dried, powdered leaf of the henna plant applied to the skin and dries to dark brown-black colour. It is temporary body art resulting from the staining of the skin from the dyes.

<sup>3</sup> Hammam: originating from the Arabic hamma means "heating up". It is a Turkish bath. A type of steam bath or a place of public bathing associated with the Islamic world.

Ressam (painter), and Mühendis (architect). Name of things like Kalelm (a pen) and Kitap (a book), names of food, drinks, and names of people like Salim and Sherine. This relationship may be explained by the desire of Algerians to preserve the Turkish language as it offers them a new and different linguistic repertoire and because Ottomanism is the most enduring empire in the history of Algeria.

The Algerian ministry of education stressed the importance of the Turkish language. Therefore, it was included in the educational system in the 1970s. According to Khalifah Ibrahim Hamach (2016, pp.13-15), the Turkish language in Algerian universities is passed through three main stages: foundation, generalization, and specialization. In the first stage, the Turkish language was introduced into the Algerian teaching programs in the early 1970s at the University of Algiers (capital) to help students to understand Islamic history and the Arabic civilization. Secondly, the generalization stage started in 1978 during the second reform procedure on the Algerian universities. Finally, the specialization stage opened different specialties to teach Turkish language basics such as grammar, translation, and poetry. The Turkish language nowadays is taught in Algerian universities and private schools as it attracts many Algerian students. Rachida Boubaker (2015) argues that the number of Turkish language students at the University of Algiers doubles by about three times in one year. Boubaker justifies this considerable demand by the good political, commercial, cultural, and social relationship between Algeria and Turkey.

With the increasing pace of globalization, the integration of cultural, social, political, technological, and economic production and consumption between nations is unavoidable. Globalization is the opening of one's local culture toward world cultures through the connection of different activities. Nowadays, Turkey is reviving and increasing the production of television dramas that depict and glorify the history of the Ottoman Empire. Historical TV series, for instance, are projecting and promoting neo-Ottomanism. Omar Al-Ghazzi and

Marwan Kraidy (2013) coined the term ‘neo-ottoman cool’ to describe Turkey’s foreign policy to create a new ‘cool’ reputation about everything related to the Ottoman Empire. Al-Ghazzi and Kraidy mention that the popularity of Turkish television drama captures the notion of “neo-Ottoman cool”. Likewise, the cultural proximity between Turkey and Algeria has paved the way to Ottomanism to be an influential ideology through soap operas. These soap operas use Turkish popular culture as a soft power instrument that successfully attracts Algerian female viewers.

Algerian females started watching Turkish TV series in 2007 when The Middle East Broadcasting Centre Channels (MBC) aired *Gümüş* dubbed into the Syrian dialect. MBC is a large and private media company in the Middle East and North Africa region launched first in London in 1991. Its first arrival in the Arab world was in 2002 as the first private free-to-air Arab satellite TV channel aiming to enhance people’s lives through information, interaction, and entertainment. Today, the MBC Group includes 20 TV channels airing a variety of programs for family entertainment, Western movies, children’s edutainment with a mix of both local productions and Western acquisitions and online platforms, like MBC 1, and MBC4. It seems that the most famous channel among Arab females is MBC4: “MBC4 launched in 2005 and it is the Arab world’s first channel exclusively geared towards young Arab families with women’s interest at its core” (MBC Group, 2019). MBC4 gained wide popularity when it started focusing on dubbed and broadcasting Turkish TV dramas into Syrian dialects.

Fatima Bhutto (2019) interviewed the general manager of the Middle East Broadcasting Centre’s Fadi Ismail in 2017 who declared being: “the one who opened Turkish culture through TV to the whole world”. Turkish soap operas were first discovered in August 2007, when Ismail went to a cinema festival in Turkey. He observed a small kiosk showing a local television series. The series discovered by Fadi in Turkey in the Kiosk is a Turkish romantic

TV drama called *Gümüş* was aired in the Turkish national channel Kanal D. *Gümüş* narrates a love story between a pretty woman named *Gümüş* (*Noor* in the Arab world) played by Songül Öden and the attractive blue-eyed and fair-haired husband Muhannad performed by Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ. Fadi Ismail re-counts: “But immediately I could visualize it as Arabic content. I replaced it in my mind with Arabic audio and everything else looked culturally, socially, even the food, the clothes, everything for me looked like us, and I thought: ‘Eureka!’”. In this context, ‘eureka’ gestures towards Ismail’s opportunity to increase the popularity of his channel and income. Accordingly, MBC dubbed all the Turkish TV dramas they bought into the Syrian dialect and gave them a new formula to the Arab-speaking world using names and titles that match Arab culture.

The success of Dizi in the Middle East inspired Algerian TV channel managers to search for an alternative to satisfy audiences’ needs and substitute the absence of Egyptian TV dramas. Egyptian TV dramas were the most prominent entertaining TV shows for Algerians. However, they have been prohibited from being aired because of the unstable relationship between the Algerian and Egyptian football teams for the 2010 finalist World Cup. Therefore, Algerian TV channels began dubbing Turkish TV series into the Algerian dialect to compensate for the lack of Algerian local TV drama productions. There is a growing field of research that this thesis is in dialogue with many studies investigating the influence of Turkish and other foreign TV dramas consumption on the social and cultural values of viewers. These studies have been conducted in different contexts, periods, and with different samples. For instance, in 2011, Hussain Hamasaeed conducted a study titled *The Impact of Commercial Global television on Cultural Change and Identity Formation (A Study of Kurdish Women and The Turkish Soap Opera Noor)* investigating the consumerism of Turkish soap operas by Kurdish women and the role of this TV series in identity formation and cultural changes.

He aimed to find out the reasons that push Kurdish women in the Kurdistan Region to be influenced by the Turkish soap opera *Gümüş (Noor)*, explore how storylines of soap operas correspond to the changing social and cultural norms of morality, and analyse the dependency of Kurdish viewers and local Kurdish television channels on international commercial television programmes. His research relies on qualitative methods: interviews and observation to study women's lives and cultural norms in the Kurdistan region and their reaction towards the Turkish soap operas *Noor*. He used interviews to investigate and provide descriptions of the personal experience of his participants, while observation was used to interpret their opinions. 21 face-to-face interviews were arranged with Kurdistan Turkish soap operas females' viewers aged between 18 and 40 years old from different social statuses, including students, mothers, and employed women.

Research findings show that Turkish soap operas increase cultural changes in Kurdish female viewers. These TV shows push them to compare their lives with soap operas characters'. Consequently, most participants show their desire for the Western or a modern lifestyle. The interviews demonstrate that most participants watched more than three TV dramas each week, especially Turkish TV series. Accordingly, this generates a mixed identity between their traditional Kurdish identity and the modern identity shown in Dizi soap operas. The descriptive analysis validates that interviewees do not watch TV dramas just for entertainment but also to apply them in their lives. Hamasaeed mentions that wives persuaded their husbands to follow Muhannad (Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ, the male protagonist in *Noor*) and asked them to behave with them as Muhannad does with his wife. They show their desire to imitate the characters' behaviours. They use these dramas as a cultural tool to reformulate and develop their identities to be identical to the modern world. One of the participants proclaims: "I always ask my husband to treat me like Muhannad treats his wife Noor, but he does not agree.

In addition, he cannot because he grew up in a society where the man has to treat his wife harshly, because in this society this is the symbol of the strong man” (Hamasaheed, 2011).

He concludes that the repetitive themes and local entertainment programs led Kurdish women to find foreign soap operas and the Turkish ones are closer to their religion and culture. Concerning the Western ideologies and their effects on identity, Hamasaheed finds that foreign TV shows strongly influenced Kurdish women’s identities. Most of them prefer Western women’s behaviour, such as independence, self-reliance, modernity, and leadership. However, at the same time, they said that the content of these TV shows is not acceptable in their society. He summarises that the identity of Kurdish women is now becoming more ambiguous as they wish to live a modern life, but they are tied to their traditional local culture. As a result, they are integrating modern and western lifestyles in a way that is relevant to their traditional values and religion.

Mariam Amari (2015) conducted her research entitled *Turkish TV Series: Another Platform to Construct Algerian Youth Identity* where she seeks to identify the social, ethical, and cultural impact of Turkish TV dramas on the identity of young Algerian people. Amari examines Dizi consumerism among Algerian youth and the role of these TV series in reshaping the identity and acquiring new thinking and clothing style. Her research is primarily based on a quantitative approach using questionnaires for data collection. Her sample consists of 51 Masters’ students, 11 males, and 40 females aged between 20 to 26 and above. The questionnaires’ data shows that the highest viewership rate is attributed to Turkish TV series representing 62.7% of participants, followed by Arab musalsalat, Western soap operas, and Mexican telenovelas, respectively. She proclaims that 51% of respondents consider that dubbed Turkish TV dramas are valuable and worthy. The researcher explains their tendency towards Turkish soap operas by the repeated scenarios of the Arab musalsalat. 56.9% of them believe that Turkish TV dramas provided them solutions to some complicated issues they

face. 72.5% of the sample argue that Turkish soap operas effectively deliver social and critical messages. Finally, 80.4% of respondents confess that actors' personalities and beauty are the main factors that stimulate them to watch these TV genres.

Similarly, Rahaf Al-Shuli and Asma Belhak (2018) pursued a study entitled *The Impact of Dubbed Turkish Series on The Social Behavior of Adolescents and Emotional Study (Case Study of Nablus and Sabastia Villages)*. Their investigation has been conducted in two Palestinian towns named Nablus and Sebastia. Their research investigates the influence of dubbed Turkish TV series on female teenagers' social and emotional values and determine the motives that stimulate them to watch this type of TV programme. The results show that many Nablus and Sebastia teenagers are watching Turkish TV dramas and that the latter is influencing their social and emotional standards. The findings indicate that Dizi TV series lead their viewers to introversion. Al-Shuli and Belhak deduce that actors' physical appearances and emotional scenes are the main reasons for the widespread of Turkish TV series. They conclude that romantic and comedy genres are the most-watched genres among Palestinian youth females.

Moreover, one of the most recent academic studies on the power of soap operas on female viewers from South-East Asia is: *Women Watching Television: The Influence of Thai Soap Operas on Lao Women Viewers* conducted by Mesirin Kwanjai (2018). She investigates how women viewers in Laos are influenced by the storylines and lifestyles presented in Thai soap operas regarding their agency and identity. Kwanjai examines how Thai TV series change the public and personal perception of feminine beauty, including white skin, body dissatisfaction, and the use of cosmetic surgeries. He applied four research methods: questionnaire, TV diary-keeping, focus-group, and in depth-interviews. Questionnaires were employed to explore how and why Lao women watch Thai television, especially soap operas. TV diary-keeping discussions were used to analyse women's interpretations of the soaps and their effects on

their cultural identity and agency. It provided insights into the perspectives and feelings of the Lao audience. The focus groups allow the researcher to listen to and observe conversations among knowledgeable participants. They were also designed as a form of triangulation to cross-check the validity of the questionnaires and TV diaries to determine whether Lao women can interpret soap opera texts in the same way as they respond to the questionnaire and diary questions.

Finally, in-depth interviews were undertaken with eight (8) Lao politicians to examine how the Lao government seeks to deal with the effect of Thai and/or Western ideals pervading viewers' lifestyles through their regular viewing of Thai television. The data show that 37.5% of the questionnaire respondents believe that Thai soap operas help provide knowledge and advice about modern life. Respondents argue that the main reasons that motivate them to watch Thai TV dramas are the storylines, popularity of the actors and actresses, soundtracks, modern production values, and filming locations. She concludes that Young Lao female viewers have a hybrid identity. On the one hand, they embrace modernity and consumer culture to achieve self-satisfaction by pursuing trendy clothing, beauty patterns, and particular lifestyles besides the experiences of “modern” intimate relationships that led the Lao government to show concerns about the destruction of the traditional culture.

Women's behaviour, particularly in their personal and familial relationships, is shaped and changed enormously by TV dramas (Kwanjai 2018). In this context, Ruoxi Chen (2015) investigated gender differences and receptivity of Western cultural products by Chinese people aged 18 years old and older in three metropolitan cities in China: Shanghai, Wuhan, and Xi'an using interviews and surveys.

The data show that young Chinese women who watch foreign TV programs are more inclined to advocate for Western values such as cohabitation and individualistic relationships rather than traditional Confucian family norms. Likewise, M. Anuradha (2017) conducted research

titled *A Study on The Preference for Tamil Dubbed Hindi Serials Among Home Makers in Salem*. She examines the power of TV series on the daily life routine of middle and the lower classes segments in India. M. Anuradha uses questionnaires to collect data with females of the Salem district because they made up the most significant percentage of the regular audience for Hindi serials. According to the study, about 50% of females are between 31-50 years old, 62.5% are educated only up to secondary level, and only 8.5% are illiterates. M. Anuradha notices that these segments rearranged their daily activities in accordance with their favoured TV programs. For example, homework like cooking is prepared before their favourite show begins. Also, these shows cause cultural changes in terms of their lifestyles, including hairstyles, dresses, and makeup. According to Anuradha, Hindi soaps have a significant effect on indigenous people and cultures. Thus, there was a decrease in the overall quantity of original serials in South India because of dubbed movies, which reduced the influence of the local Tamil series industry.

Shakuntala Banaji (2011) studied the power of Bollywood on audiences of North-East India. Interviews' findings show that female viewers in urban areas have a greater desire to value the rich and liberated lifestyle depicted in soap operas. Young women are increasingly abandoning conventional beliefs and family traditions and constructing liberal views about gender roles. Similarly, Chao Yang (2017) found that the Chinese TV reality dating programs *If You Are The one*, hosts guests from different educational and ethnic backgrounds to represent younger generations and discuss controversial social and moral topics in post-Mao China. This TV show has become a vital means for Chinese youth to construct their identities in terms of love and intimacy. Results indicate that this TV show also encourages young Chinese women to reject traditional gender roles by portraying premarital sex, cohabitation, and extramarital affairs. Yang states: "people tend to have more individualized values

concerning various forms of relationships, and the free expression of issues surrounding love and sexuality” (p.11).

Most of the previous studies focused on the consumption of foreign soap operas by local female viewers. They identified a general overview of the reasons and the pleasure of consuming these TV shows. They used different methodologies with different samples from different socio-cultural and ethnic backgrounds to examine the power of TV dramas in hybridizing identities, attitudes, and everyday practices. These studies focused more on the consumer than the quality and the characteristics of the products themselves and have not paid so much attention to the social, political, and cultural factors that led to the popularity of these TV shows, such as cultural proximity. This lack of examination of soap operas’ content in connection to other quantitative methods mentioned above, allowed me to introduce a more nuanced method which to explore and address the relationship between the consumer and the content of the product in a more comprehensive way. This examination is based on positive and negative themes tackled on Turkish TV series that Algeria females pay attention to. I argue that identifying the real power of foreign TV content on audiences requires content analysis of that product to quantify and analyse the presence, meanings, and relationships of particular themes and concepts.

Therefore, the current study: *A Curse and/or Blessing? Turkish Soap Operas and their Impact on Contemporary Algerian Women: Audience Reception and Audio-visual Analysis of the Historical TV Drama Harim al-Sultan* aims to explore how Algerian female audiences consume Turkish TV series and the potential influence on their identities, including their way of thinking, dressing, and behaving. The validity of Turkish TV series influence in this thesis will be determined by analysing one of the top watch TV dramas of their choice to determine what kind of content and morals Dizi deliver. Unlike previous studies that explore the power of Western TV shows and cultures on Arab-Muslim audiences, this research focuses on the

influence and the power that originates from a Muslim country and is consumed by another Muslim country. However, Western ideologies seem to be delivered under the umbrella of modernity. Turkish TV series proposes alternative modernity that includes romantic love stories, intimate modern relationships, and individualism merged with traditional family structure and gender roles narratives.

This interdisciplinary study makes an original contribution to knowledge in different ways. The purpose of this investigation extends beyond a superficial understanding of Turkish TV drama viewership in Algeria. First of all, it expands our knowledge about gender soap operas' relationship and consumption between a Muslim country producer and a Muslim country consumer within the potentiality of disseminating Western ideologies through soft power transmission. It identifies how these TV shows empower women through familiar stories of female lifestyle, feminist resistance, and the possibilities for change and emancipation. At the same time, it identifies gender stereotypes and representation with traditional and patriarchal societies. This study uses audio-visual content analysis to examine a historical drama that has been watched by millions of viewers all over the world. In this research, the most promoting positive and negative themes of *Harim al-Sultan* across four (4) seasons with 376 episodes are quantified and interpreted, aiming to find out whether the overall content of these soap operas is a curse of blessing for Algerian females' identity, how it influences their viewing habits, beliefs, and daily life performances.

### **1.3.Thesis Structure**

In order to answer research questions this research will introduce a theoretical and a practical framework based on gender, media, and audience studies used to explore females' TV reception and consumption.

Chapter 1 is an opening section where I introduced the research topic and its background. I situated my research topic and compare it with other academic studies that share common interests mainly in gender studies and transnational media influence. I also addressed research questions, research aims and methodology, motivation, contribution, and thesis structure. Chapter 2 examines globalization and globalized media flows and outcomes. It explains how Dizi soap operas grew and have become a soft power tool to promote Turkey's popular culture, tourism, language, and material products. It seeks to clarify the relationship between TV drama reception, gratification, and cultural hybridity.

Drawing on Stuart Hall's coding-decoding model (1973), it examines whether Algerian females are active or passive audiences and how they interpret, understand, and react towards the diverted Turkish TV series content. The gratification approach developed by Katz et al. (1974) is employed to explore what mechanisms Dizi integrates to gratify and satisfy its viewers. The soft power theory developed by Joseph Nye (1990) is utilized to see how Turkish TV series are shaping the Algerian females' preferences through appeal and attraction. Chapter 3 explains the reasons behind the shortage of Algerian local TV dramas production and how cultural proximities and interculturality between Turkey and the Arab world contributed to the spread of Dizi. It also offers a general idea about feminism in Algeria as well as the influence of modernity and stereotypes. In this chapter, I explained cultivation theory and the role of audio-visual translation methods, mostly the dubbing process of Turkish TV series into the Syrian dialect. I clarify how Syrian dialect minimizes and bridges Turkish and Arabic cultures, which automatically led to the popularity of Turkish TV series among Arab viewers and the creation of an imagined community.

Chapter 4 presents an outline of the research methodology and method used in this study. This research employs three techniques: online focus group discussion, online questionnaire, and audio-visual content analysis. As a complementary technique, linear snowball sampling is a

technique used to reach different samples and regions of Algeria. In addition, the interpretative phenomenological analysis method (IPA) is applied to interpret codes that emerge from participants' answers and transfer them to meaningful themes. Chapter 5 is the first empirical chapter, and it discusses Algerian women's perspectives, attitudes, and viewing habits with Turkish TV series TV dramas. This section introduces the age, educational level, social status, and occupation of the population sample. It also identifies the average number of episodes they watch, their preferred watching platforms and TV channels, reasons behind watching Turkish TV series, and the most prominent features that attracted them to these soap operas. This chapter focuses on soft power tools integrated into these TV series and how they promote Turkish popular culture and tourism. Finally, it clarifies the role of Turkish TV series in empowering women, normalizing violence, and rape, and how Algeria female viewers value Turkish TV series content and internalize celebrities' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours in their daily life performances.

Chapter 6 provides a detailed description of one of the most popular Turkish TV series in the world: *Harim al-Sultan*. This section contains a general overview of the main event and characters in this historical TV drama, followed by a content analysis of the most dominant positive and negative themes shown in *The Century*. This chapter also clarifies how women, history, religion, and power are depicted. It demonstrates how Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Islamic party attempt to glorify Ottoman past and reflect Justice and Development Party's (AKP) propaganda using epic TV series. This chapter also discusses the foremost critics and describes the most controversial scenes and events of *The Century* that angered President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and viewers. I conclude this thesis by a comprehensive discussion about online questionnaires and content analysis findings and a general conclusion that reviews this study's main findings and contributions, research limitations, and ideas for future research.

## **Chapter 2: Globalization, Media, and Cultural Consumption**

### **2.1. Introduction**

Globalized media grant individuals the chance to exchange cultural beliefs and experiences. Turkish TV dramas, for instance, are promoting the Turkish popular culture through persuasive and attractive scenarios, filming locations, and modern lifestyles, especially for Arab female viewers who seem to be very attracted to these TV shows. Therefore, this chapter will introduce a theoretical framework on which the study is based on a feminist approach that focuses on modernity, empowerment, and cultural/identity hybridization. This section will first review the history of Dizi Empire and how the Middle East Broadcasting Channel (MBC) engineered this phenomenon when it first started airing them dubbed into the Syrian dialect in 2007. The audience reception method based on Stuart Hall's model (encoding-decoding approach 1973) offers an in-depth examination of Dizi soap operas consumption and their power on Algerian female audiences' identity. This power is transmitted through soft power instruments, especially creative scenarios that present a diversity of topics such as taboos, patriarchy, modernity, and conservatism that are compensating the lack of local cinematic productions and meeting Arab audience needs.

### **2.2. Dizi Industry**

Turkish TV shows were broadcasted in 156 countries, and Turkey ranks second after the US in global TV series exports. The heart-gripping plots and the dramatic storylines, besides the diversity of tackled topics such as the impossible love between different social classes, the glory of the Ottoman Empire, and many other prominent themes, made Turkey the second-largest exporter of TV series in the world after the United States reaching millions of viewers

from different cultural regions (*Daily Sabah*, 2019). This section aims to answer the first research question: what are the salient features of the broadcasted content of Turkish TV drama according to Algerian females? However, before investigating its characteristics, it is worth knowing whether it is conceivable to use other terminologies with regards to TV genres such as soap operas or telenovelas to tag or name Turkish TV series or not.

According to Aaliya Ahmed, the name “soap operas” was coined by the American press in the 1930s as a signification to popular broadcasted domestic radio dramas. Ahmed mentions that the term “soap” in soap operas refers to their sponsorship by the manufacturers of household cleaning products. “Opera” proposed an ironic conflict between the domestic narratives’ apprehension of the daytime serial and other famous dramatic forms (2012, p.12). It seems that soap operas emerged first on the US radio when the advertising agencies of the soap, toiletry, and foodstuff industries started developing programmes that could attract audiences. Ahmed emphasized that the primary goal of soap operas producers in that era was to attract a large number of female audiences via using household products. Allen (1995) and Derry (1992) assert that many people agreed that the word “soap” is about the dirty secrets, dirty scandals, and dirty sins of soap operas and that those dirty plots of soap operas are interrupted by a commercial advertisement of cleaning products. According to Buchman (1984), operas are created either from the melodramatic nature of the serial or from the short musical jingle that was heard during the radio serial episode (cited in Catherine M. Drain, 1996, pp.4 -6). Buchnam (1984) and Hagedorn (1995) state that successful radio broadcasting depended on bringing large and regular audiences to the sponsors who purchased radio publicity time. Hence, networks began designing their daytime programs for women. Radio sponsors knew women were the primary buyer of household products, and they were trying to produce attractive programs to instil loyalty to their products (ibid, p.2). Allen (1995) and Hagedorn (1995, p.3) argue that by the 1940s, serials on network radio became the most dominating for

over 90% of all sponsored broadcasted programs during the daytime and that women made up a large percentage of the audience.

Allen (1995) and Frenzt (1987) estimate that over half of the U.S. women living at home with television are at least attached to one soap opera (cited in Catherine M. Drain, 1996, p.9). The focus of producers and sponsors were deliberated and directed to women for two main reasons: time and the topics tackled. First, soap operas producers and sponsors recognized that housewives were spending much of their time at home more than men. Listening to the radio was a primary form of entertainment for women while performing their domestic tasks. Those serialized narratives were broadcasted during daytime hours; hence women were more committed listeners. Regarding topics, Brown (1994), Buckman (1984), and Frenzt (1987) mention that serials and their sponsors were focusing on three common themes about women: single women, marriage problem, and family relationships. It means that soap opera content usually gravitates towards topics women prefer, such as love stories, intimate relationships, and family concerns. The tremendous popularity of serialized narratives via radio sparked many studies after the 1940s to discover why women are attached, and eager to listen to soap operas (Yoon-Kyung Chung et al.2016, Hazel Collie 2014, Kwanjai 2018, and Hamasaeed 2011). The current study continues this research into what makes Dizi TV production enjoyable to consume and how these narratives have sparked a soft revolution in the viewers' self-identities.

Scholars seem unable to agree on the exact definition of the soap operas and how they differ from other TV genres. Nevertheless, Brown (1994) conducted several interviews with women who are soap operas viewers and asked them to define the soap operas genre from their perspective. They proposed different characteristics that exemplify soap operas mainly the centrality of female characters and the description of women as powerful. They also

suggested that soap operas contain many plots and characters that detail family and romantic relationships (cited in Catherine M. Drain, 1996, p.2).

This type of drama is named differently across different cultural contexts. Lee Artz declares that love stories, beauty, family, and wealth are called telenovelas throughout Latin America, mainly in Brazil and Mexico. He adds that the same meaning but with different notions is used in East Asia as “trendy drama, idol drama, or J-doramas”, “musalsalat,<sup>4</sup>” in Egypt and other Arab countries, and finally “mini-series” in other regions (2015, p.193). Tania Cantrell Rosas-Moreno notes that there is one clear distinction between soap operas and telenovelas. She explains that soap operas run for a year uninterruptedly at daytime as “open” daytime, tackling a variety of stories and complex problems. Unlike soap operas, telenovelas are usually aired in the evening for only several months. Each episode of the telenovelas contains a well-defined section that has a definitive “closed” ending (2010, p.261). Ahmed clarifies the difference between “open” and “closed” soap operas. She indicates that there is no ending point in the narrative process in open soap operas, while the narratives eventually closed in closed soap operas (2012, p.1). It seems that TV dramas are not an innovative form of TV production, but they are just a subdivision format of soap operas. Nelson Zagalo and Anthony Barker point out: “in terms of narrative structure, new series borrow most of their techniques from soap operas. In terms of visual style, they mostly borrow from contemporaneous Hollywood film” (2006, p.1). Similarities between TV dramas and soap operas are also embedded in the length of the storylines, which can be extended over years or decades. According to Zagalo and Barker (2006, p.4), in soap operas, characters can die and come back a few months or years later, like as a part of the plot.

I argue that Dizi TV series have both narrative types: open and closed soap operas. Most social, romance TV dramas have no endpoint in which the action of the narrative moves. In

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<sup>4</sup> Musalsalat: (Arabic word) is the Arabic version of soap opera.

parallel, in most action, and historical TV series the narrative eventually closed. Considering the international success of Dizi, Dizi began its worldwide epic in the Arab world in 2007 when MBC4 aired the show *Gümüüş* a love story of couple Noor and Muhannad dubbed in the Syrian dialect. Fatima Bhutto (2019) mentions that the oral history teacher Arzu Öztürkmen suggests using a different term for the Turkish series. He declares: “what Turkey produces for television are not soap operas, or telenovelas, or period dramas: they are dizi. They are a “genre in progress”. Öztürkmen explains that the terminology “Dizi” stands apart from the soap operas and telenovelas in different ways. First, in terms of storytelling, he argues that Dizi genre has its unique style in filming the scenario because it relies on performing dialogues in real-time, each episode tends to be filmed and aired during the same week. After watching a substantial number of Dizi series, I noticed that the recent Turkish television market is broadcasting a maximum of one episode a week lengthened between 1 hour and 30 minutes to 2 hours a week. For instance, although the wide popularity of *Sefirin Kizi* 2019 (*Ambassador’s Daughter*), *Sen Çal Kapimi* 2020 (*You Knock on My Door*), and *Hercai* (2019) that reached a huge number of viewers, they are only aired once a week.

Nonetheless, Dizi TV production companies share some common features and use strategies as soap operas and other TV series genres. According to Trade Ministry data and sector representatives, about 50 to 70 TV series are aired on TV channels and other websites. However, Dizi companies release, suspend, or cancel the production of new episodes depending on two reasons: viewership and local competition, which helps create a high quality of Dizi dramas (*Daily Sabah*, 2019). Many TV series does not run for longer than 10 episodes because of the low viewership and the high competition among different local channels. Some recently released series in 2020, such as *Seref Sözü* and *Yeni Hayat*, and despite the increased budget paid in filming them, they have been suspended because of their low viewership numbers. Öztürkmen identifies some other features of Dizi dramas. He states

that Dizi is richer than soap operas and telenovelas. Because it offers its audiences comprehensible narratives and unique musical, textual and visual forms, interestingly, Öztürkmen talks about audiences' perspectives and what they can learn or acquire from watching Dizi TV series or how can Dizi influences them. He suggests:

From the perspective of audience perception, local attachments may have different reasons from those appealing to foreign audiences. Dizis rely heavily on Turkish lieux de mémoire and display a familiar ethnographic imagery, pouring scenes from Turkish ordinary life, which include family meals, true to life costumes and dialogues with traditional sayings. (2018, p. 7)

Öztürkmen finds that simplicity makes Turkish TV series more attractive and competitive. In this context, it has been argued that movies and documentaries might be used to promote tourism. Ahmet Kirk, the chairman of the Arab Travel Agencies and Tourism Development Association (ASATDER), declares that the Gulf and other Arab countries are progressively spending their holidays in Turkey as they wish to replicate the life seen in Turkish TV series. Kirk notes that those people prefer more historical places, particularly in Istanbul, where historical TV series have been filmed and emphasizes that: “the positive effect of the Turkish series is seen mostly in the tourism sector” (*Anadolu Agency*, 2017). Accordingly, during the last decades, Dizi series has been aired in different Arab countries, in which Turkish culture and history are implicitly promoted. Hence, its popularity raised a higher level of attraction, including tourism, fashion, music, and many other products shown in Dizi series.

The positive impact on Turkey's global image as a tourist attraction is examined in Amer Aljammazi and Hilal Asil's (2017) study *The Influence of Turkish TV Dramas on Saudi Consumers' Perceptions, Attitudes and Purchase Intentions toward Turkish Products* where they explore how Dizi TV series influence perceptions and attitudes of Saudi Turkish product consumers. The study concludes that Dizi TV series portray Turkey in a positive light and that

they play a significant role in the Saudi Arabi viewers' perception of Turkey. Most participants of this study confess that their insight into Turkish history, culture, technology, industry, economy, and quality of life had improved. They also admit that they have been positively influenced by the quality of outfits made in Turkey after watching Turkish TV dramas, which made them more interested in Turkey and its culture (pp.6-7).

Complements to the previous sections about history, similarities, and differences between TV genres, the rise and the enhancement of soap operas, telenovelas, and primetime TV drama is related to a certain historical-political period that made these genres appear. For instance, soap operas and telenovelas genres had initially begun on the radio and that those soap operas occurred within the developing economies in 1950s post-depression America. While soap operas were sponsored by the soap industry since advertisements' managers shaped the 1930s and their narratives, telenovelas appeared between the 1970s and 1980s during the authoritarian military coup era, and it was usually linked to the traditional spectacle of the Brazilian theatre (see Öztürkmen, 2019, p. 1-2). Compared to soap operas and telenovelas, it seems that Dizi has its own unique emergence story: "dizis have come to offer a hybridity of different narrative forms including musical, spatial, cinematographic, and visual as well as textual" (p.1). Öztürkmen argues that the growth of Turkish Dizi is historically related to the international repertoire of TV dramas that started many years ago before even the invention of television and radio broadcasting.

According to Öztürkmen, the traditional entertainment performance was called "shadow theatre" during the Ottoman era based on different subjects, such as humour and class conflicts. These plays were performed in open-air and coffeehouses. Later, these shadow plays were shifted to "indoor theatre" by buying tickets; however, people get back to the storytelling of some romantic, religious, and heroic content based on Middle Eastern stories. After that, radio became the central broadcasting media for homemakers and students in the

1950s. Then, in the 1970s, black and white television broadcasting spread in Turkey, besides some German and French programs. Watching foreign content made TRT (Turkish Radio and Television is the national public broadcaster of Turkey) inspired in producing local programmes such as films and mini-series. Therefore, it started gathering movie directors to write and film a series of short stories from modern Turkish literature to television.

By the 1980s, TRT developed its interest in historical adaptation looking at the Ottoman era and its social norms, political figures, and events. It also started broadcasting soap operas and telenovelas. Still, the national monopoly of TRT was superseded in the 1990s by the arrival of private channels that started importing and airing foreign programmes. TRT was still powerful because it produced its documentaries, whereas private channels were airing the imported ones. Nevertheless, private production companies began creating their cast with a high quality of production, which broke TRT's domination. The twenty-first century for Turkish TV producers has been an era of searching for creative content via the depiction of uncommon issues to captivate more audiences, which was a new direction for the Turkish TV industry. Hence, a melodrama that treats love stories between the rich and the poor became the most salient genre of the 2000s, such as *Gümüş: Nour* (2005-2007) (cited in Öztürkmen, 2018, pp.2- 7).

Dizi has a different historical background of its emergence and developments, and it gained enormous popularity across the world. Nonetheless, serialized narratives of soap operas and telenovelas before and after the invention of television have reached a special status among females in the U.S. and other countries. Though soap operas, telenovelas, and Dizi dramas appeared in different eras, one can argue that all these genres emerged for commercial and industrial reasons. And that all of them focus on emotional and familial topics to attract more female audiences because they find women are more likely to view television for interpersonal or emotional reasons, particularly housewives. However, it seems that there is a

significant phenomenon that boosts Turkish Dizi to become salient and popular worldwide, which is globalization. Globalization today makes Turkey the second biggest TV content exporter in the world competing even the first worldwide TV industry of the U.S. Dizi industry encourages its local companies for competition and the produce of high-quality TV series.

From the above, it seems that Dizi TV producers are advertising and familiarising Turkish history, culture, and language to different countries. The historical drama *Harim al-Sultan*, for instance, has been the first Dizi bought by Japan. Fatima Bhutto (2019) clarifies that: “since 2002, about 150 Turkish Dizi have been sold to more than 100 countries including Algeria, Morocco, and Bulgaria. It was Magnificent Century that blazed the way for others to follow”. In 2017 Spanish channels also started broadcasting Turkish TV dramas. They became a part of Spain’s social life so that Spanish viewers now can discuss the Turkish TV series they watched. *Sıla* (2006) and *Sen Anlat Karadeniz* (2018) are among the most popular Turkish TV dramas that have appeared on Spanish channels. It is also proved that the number of Turkish TV series broadcasted in Spain grew in a short period and that they are even taking the place of Spanish TV production (*Daily Sabah*, 2019).



**Figure 2.1:** A Turkish series played on Spanish TV channel with Spanish-language captions  
(*Daily Sabah*,2020)

Equally, Dizi dramas have softly penetrated the Arab-speaking world via dubbing several series into the Syrian dialect. MBC had engineered this phenomenon when it first started airing them in 2008. Once Algerian TV producers noted that Algerian audiences prefer Dizi genres, they stopped importing telenovelas, as well as Egyptian series that was very popular at that period for political reasons as explained earlier. In 2016, because of the high demand for Turkish TV series, some Algerian private channels such as Echorouk began dubbing them into the Algerian dialect to attract more audiences and to fill in the gap due to the absence of local TV dramas. Alexandra Buccianti illustrates: “on August 30, 2008, 85 million Arab viewers were glued to their TV sets for the finale of the Syrian -dubbed Turkish soap operas *Gümüş* (*Noor* in Arabic)” (2010, p.1). Consequently, *Gümüş*’ success led to an outbreak of Turkish dramas in the Arab world and a growing interest in Dizi TV series amongst Arab and Algerian female viewers.

Arzu Öztürkmen (2018) states that Dizi genre have a distinct history of emergence and development, and the Turkish TV industry has established its global status and impact, reaching different audiences and territories. Nevertheless, it appears that Dizi genre meets soap operas, primetime drama, and telenovelas conventions by its structure and narrative. To clarify, Dizi, soap operas, and the other genres share one central thematic interest: family and life within and between families. While Dizi tells stories about Turkish life, soap operas narrate stories about American life, and similarly with telenovelas present Latin American life stories. In addition, all these genres address the same issues, though they are developing and performing them differently. Dizi genre also has specific characteristics that can be found in all TV series genres. Romance, for example, is the cornerstone of all almost TV series genres, even in crime and action TV dramas. In their majority they share similar interest in love

stories, family values, culture, and the tackled social issues such as drugs, social classes, wealth, and crimes. In this sense, it is also appropriate to use other terms such as soap operas to refer to Dizi genre, which is what I will be using throughout this study. Finally, the following section will offer a literature review on globalized transnational media and cultural hybridity to better understand how TV series play a pivotal role in spreading globalization and vice versa.

### **2.3. Globalization and Cultural Hybridity**

It seems that the concept of globalization has no exact definition that has been agreed upon by experts. For instance, Martin Albrow and Elizabeth King (1990, p.9) state: “globalization refers to all those processes by which the people of the world are incorporated into a single world society, global society”. Nevertheless, Simon Reich (1998, p.4) come up with four potential definitions of globalization:

1. A historical epoch marked by different events, mainly the Cold War. There were tensions between spheres of influence, distribution of power, and theories of nuclear war.
2. A confluence of economic phenomena that refers to the worldwide spread of sales, production facilities, and manufacturing processes.
3. The hegemony of American values, stressing that globalization is universalizing the American values based on a normative and ethical foundation in public and private sectors.
4. A technological and social revolution in which different domains will be revolutionized by the growing effect of technology across social, economic, and political spheres.

Reich illustrates: “this view depicts a striking revolution among techno-industrial elites, driven mainly by technological advances, that ultimately renders the globe a single market” (1998, p.19). Similarly, Manfred Steger, in his book *Globalization: A Very Short Introduction* (2003), defines globalization as a multidimensional collection of social processes that create, increase, and reinforce worldwide social interdependencies and exchanges. It also raises people's awareness of the growing interconnectedness of local and international networks. He points out an ongoing academic disagreement over which dimension contains the essence of the postmodern version of globalization. He states: “Some scholars argue that economic processes lie at the core of globalization. Others privilege political, cultural, or ideological aspects. Still others point to environmental processes as the essence of globalization” (pp.34-35). Steger asks whether globalization is primarily a phenomenon of the modern age and posits that the chronological growth of globalization is based on five periods: The prehistoric period (10,000 BCE-3,500 BCE), the premodern period (3,500 BCE-1,500 CE), the early modern period (1500-1750), the modern period (1750-1970), and the contemporary period (from 1970).

According to Steger (2003), the prehistoric period of globalization began about 12,000 years ago when a group of hunters and gatherers arrived in South America. This event marked the end of a long process of settling all five continents started by Africans. Later, during the premodern period, some technological and social boosts moved globalization to a new level, mainly writing, wheels, and food productions in the American Empire, the Ottoman Empire, the Chinese Empire, and the Roman Empire. On the other hand, the early modern globalization has witnessed prosperity in science, liberating rational modes of thoughts, and achieving a worldwide form of morality and law. Finally, during the modern period, Europe dominated a network of political, economic, and cultural exchanges such as international banks.

In terms of contemporary globalization, Steger introduces four dimensions: economic, political, cultural, and ideological globalization. According to him, economic globalization relies on the emergence of new international and modern commercial enterprises and the enhancement of the financial industry. Contemporary political globalization began when individuals structured their political differences along territorial lines, giving them a sense of belonging to a specific nation-state. The modern nation-state system has reinforced international law based on the principle that all states have an equal right to self-determination, whether ruled by kings or republican leaders (see Steger, 2003, pp.58-89). Regarding the cultural dimensions of globalization, Steger proclaims:

Cultural globalization refers to the intensification and expansion of cultural flows across the globe. [...] Cultural globalization has contributed to a remarkable shift in people's consciousness. In fact, it appears that the old structures of modernity are slowly giving way to a new 'postmodern' framework characterized by a less stable sense of identity and knowledge. (pp.90-96)

Researchers propose that the world is witnessing the growth of an increasingly homogenized popular culture underwritten by Western industrial culture. They support the idea of Americanizing the world through the spread of Anglo-American culture and lifestyles. However, it appears that homogenization is hard because today's societies do not possess an 'authentic' self-contained culture. The role of divergence and particularity in forming extraordinary constellations is uncommon (see Steger, 2003, pp.96-97). Therefore, the appropriate method to measure the cultural changes brought by globalization is to examine the patterns of language use: "the globalization of languages can be viewed as a process by which some languages are increasingly used in international communication while others lose their prominence and even disappear for lack of speakers" (p.103). This process focuses on the growing global importance of some languages such as English, Spanish, and Chinese. Then

the emphasis of the Anglo-American culture industry to make English the global lingua franca of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Finally, the ideological dimension of globalization is filled with a range of claims, beliefs, and narratives about the phenomenon itself: “an ideology can be defined as a system of widely shared ideas, patterned beliefs, guiding norms and values, and ideals accepted as truth by a particular group of people” (p.114). Steger concludes that globalism comprises influential narratives that can construct meanings and shape individuals’ identities. These proposed claims suggest that the neoliberal language about globalization is ideological in the sense that it is politically driven, aiming to preserve the existing asymmetrical power relations.

Further evidence that supports Steger’s clarification is Edward Said’s (1993, xxv) definition of globalization. He argues that globalization is a tool to combine different cultures and establish new types of cultural hybridity. He maintains: “all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic”. Therefore, people share their experiences and meanings from their lives to make sense of the world and themselves. As a result, globalization increases the movement of these meanings and cultures, resulting mixture of cultures (see Kathleen Franz and Susan Smulyan, 2012, p.435). According to Marwan M. Kraidy (2002), the relationship between culture and globalization has been shaped in the image of Western, mainly American culture. This image has been conceptualized and transformed by international mass media. He notes that the globalization of culture is often chiefly channelled by global mass media. For instance, television, cinema, and music seem to have a significant role in allowing cultural exchange and facilitating information and image flows across nations. Cansu Arisoy (2016) explains that nations cannot prevent the influence of globalization because it transfers popular cultures of other nations, such as arts, food, etiquettes, and ethics. In this context, globalization benefits powerful countries and their cultures to affect “financially weak”

societies who cannot resist this power and enter this international competition. Arisoy elucidates:

This transmission is done by globalization. As a result of this process, long time customs and traditions are brought into disrepute instead these new habits are encouraged and implemented. In this sense weaker indigenous cultures are mixed up in this affair and sometimes get assimilated. (pp.3-5)

Globalization requires a combination of local and global forces. It is often associated with modern and industrialized societies. Carolina Matos (2012, p.3) states that the idea of modernization that appeared during the Cold War has used media to convert traditional societies and include them into capitalism. She elaborates: “The idea was that international communication media could be used as a tool to transfer the political-economic model of the West to the growing independent societies of the South”. Globalization nowadays has become more connected to modern trends that accelerate social, cultural, and economic exchanges. It seems to have consequences for the distribution of power between countries, leading to cultural and media imperialism. According to Kraidy (2002), this imperialism leads to a disorder in both quality and quantity since most media flows are exported by Western countries, and imported by developing countries, while developing countries get a limited and biased coverage in Western media. The countless changes that globalization brings to people can be positive or negative, or both. Nevertheless, there is nowhere to escape these cultural transitions and mixtures of cultures that might produce hybrid identities. Kraidy (2005, p.1) defines hybridity:

Hybridity is one of the emblematic notions of our era. It captures the spirit of the times with its obligatory celebration of cultural difference and fusion, and it resonates with the globalization mantra of unfettered economic exchanges and the supposedly inevitable transformation of all cultures.

Hybridity is one of the most often used ideas in postcolonial theory. The term ‘hybridity’ has been most recently associated with the work of Homi K. Bhabha in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Bhabha is one of the pioneers of the notion of hybridity in post-colonial cultural discourse. His analysis of colonizer/colonized relations emphasizes their interdependence and the mutual construction of their subjectivities. Hybridization takes many forms while in this study I am focusing on the linguistic and cultural forms. In translation studies, language plays a significant role in cultural hybridity. The linguistic hybridization is the merging of two languages to create a new one that shares similar characteristics to its origin (Kooshna Gupta, 2017, p.3). The relationship between the linguistic hybridization and translation approaches used by MBC dubbing studios will be elaborated in the following sections.

Connects back to pioneers in cultural hybridity theory, the Argentinean-Mexican cultural critic Nestor Gracia-Candini is one of the most influential figures in discussing cultural hybridity. In his book *Hybrid Cultures* (1995), translated by Christopher L. Chiappari and Silvia L. Lopez, Gracia-Candini. He discovers the tensions and contradictions between modernization and democratization in Latin American nation-states. He first describes hybridization as a socio-cultural process in which distinct structures or practices that existed previously in separate forms are merged to create new designs, objects, and activities (1995, p. xxv). Thus, he advocates a theoretical understanding of Latin American nations as hybrid cultures. His analysis includes a variety of cultural processes and institutions, such as the museum, television, films, and visual arts. Gracia-Candini (1995, p. xxxix) asserts that because of the technological advances’ hybridization became easier and more productive. She clarifies:

Hybridization in a certain way has become easier and more prolific at a time when it does not rely on long periods of artisanal or erudite patience, but

rather turns on the ability to generate hypertexts and quickly produced audio visual or electronic publications.

In this study, I argue that foreign TV drama content can lead to a hybridization of identities because of the Western ideologies that Dizi transmit. The power of globalization is investigated in this thesis throughout exploring the influence and the role of Turkish TV series in spreading Turkish popular culture. Globalized media also led to modern Turkey's cultural hybridization during the transitional cultural era from Kemalist (Kemalist Atatürk) to the AKP modern era founded by the current Turkish president Tayeb Recep Erdoğan. According to Marwan Kraidy and Omar Al-Ghazzi (2013, pp.10-11), many scholars such as (Bozdağlıoğlu, 2008, Fisher Onar 2011, Keyman 2007, Özyürek 2006, White 2012) have observed that modern Turkey is politically and culturally hybrid. They mention that its history is shaped by two forces: secularism and Islamism. M. Hakan Yavuz and Ahmet Erdi Öztürk (2019, p.2) state: "Today there is no easy way in Turkey to strip Islam from secularism or vice versa". Cultural hybridity in Turkey reflects the hybrid identities and customs through the lens of Islamism, secularism, and modernity. According to Yavuz and Öztürk (2018, p.3), secularism is: "an ideology for catching up with the West was inherited from the Tanzimat mentality. The purpose was to empower the state by imitating Western institutions, cultural practices, and mentality". These Western practices and mentality are integrated into the Turkish TV dramas and that Islam is used to bridge between Turkish productions and Arab audiences. Nonetheless, Arab journalists argue that these TV dramas do not reflect the values of the more conservative section of the Muslim population and that these soap operas represent an inappropriate image of Muslims' lives both in Turkey and the Arab world (see Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi, 2013, p.7). Even so, it appears that Turkey's modernization, which provides hybrid Islamic and secular values in one TV product, has attracted millions of Muslim and non-Muslim viewers in different countries. Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi (2013, pp.10-11) justify:

Neo-Ottoman Cool, then, is grounded in a Turkish modernity that has been attractive to Arabs because it manages to combine a variety of hitherto separate and seemingly contradictory political, economic and socio-cultural elements in one seductive “package,” what one Arab columnist captured as “[A] European, Islamic, Secular, Capitalist Turkey” [...] The pan-Arab success of Turkish drama enables a deeper understanding of Arab public opinion of Turkey. Arabs face Turkey with a combination of desire and anxiety.

It is not only Arabs who might watch Turkish TV drama with some reluctance; Turkish audiences might also feel that their sense of national pride is undermined by the depiction of the Ottoman Empire in some Turkish historical TV series such as *Harim al-Sultan*. Contemporary Turkish identity is influenced by secularism, modernism, and/or Islamism (the relationship between secularism, Islamism, and modernity will be discussed in detail in the following sections). However, unlike the ancient Ottomans, contemporary Turks are more influenced by movements of modernization and Westernization: “Young Turks were deeply influenced by their learning of European science and materialism. In contrast to the Young Ottomans, they gave no credit to efforts to reconcile Western civilization and science with Islam and traditional values” (Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu, 2008, p.58).

Bozdağlıoğlu clarifies that Westernization and political relations with the West are complementary to those of the Middle East not as an alternative. In this regard, it seems that Arabs’ desire and impression of Turkish TV series is combined with an anxiety from the influence of Western ideologies transmitted through different soft power instruments, which may lead to the hybridization of their societies and identities. Kathleen Franz and Susan Smulyan describe the power of globalization in hybridizing cultures: “globalization offers the possibility of cultural mixing on a scale never before known. This can of course produce resistance to difference, but it can also produce the fusing of different cultures and the making of new exciting form of cultural hybridity” (2012, p.435). Similarly, Edward Said considers

that no culture is independent and pure, but all cultures are hybridized with each other. He argues: “all cultures are involved in one another; none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic” (1993, p. xxix). Therefore, the examination of hybrid cultures and identities in this study is based on the power of globalized Turkish TV series. The following section will deliberate how the soft power of globalized media helps in the popularity of Dizi TV series.

#### **2.4. Popular Culture and Neo-Ottomanism**

Popular culture is particularly relevant to this study as it helps to understand the extent to which media and globalization contributed to the spread of Turkish lifestyle, language, fashion, food, and many other rituals via the dubbed Turkish TV series. According to Ashley Crossman (2019), popular culture may refer to the traditions of a particular society or to cultural products such as music, fashion, dance, film, arts, television, and other sources of culture consumed by the plurality of society individuals. John Storey, in his book *Cultural Theory and Popular Culture: An Introduction*, 2009 suggests that before defining the term popular culture, we need to explain two key terms that are: culture and ideology. First, according to Storey, Raymond Williams (1983) considers culture as one of the most complicated words in the English language. Nonetheless, he proposes three comprehensive definitions:

First, culture can be used to refer to ‘a general process of intellectual, spiritual and aesthetic development’[...]. A second use of the word ‘culture’ might be to suggest ‘a particular way of life, whether of a people, a period or a group’ (ibid.). [...] Finally, Williams suggests that culture can be used to refer to ‘the works and practices of intellectual and especially artistic activity’ (ibid.). In other words, culture here means the texts and practices whose principal function is to signify, to produce or to be the occasion for the production of meaning. (cited in Storey, 2009, pp.1-2)

Storey specifically identifies ideology as the second most significant concept in the study of popular culture. He highlights five definitions of the concept 'ideology'. First, he proclaims: "ideology can refer to a systematic body of ideas articulated by a particular group of people" (2009, p.2). Storey demonstrates these ideas may be collecting political, economic, and social ideas that inform objectives and activities. Storey's second definition of ideology signposts how some script practices present inaccurate images of reality because of certain masking, distortion, or concealment. He acknowledges that ideology also has distinct meanings. Understanding this term is complicated because in much cultural analysis the concept is used interchangeably with culture itself, especially popular culture" (2009, p.2). His third definition of ideology is related to and dependent on the second definition. While the second definition is associated with the inaccurate image of reality, the third definition is about how texts such as television, films, novels, and so on draw intended attention to shape a particular image of the world. He clarifies: "This definition depends on a notion of society as conflictual rather than consensual, structured around inequality, exploitation, and oppression" (2009, p.4). According to Storey, the fourth and fifth definition of ideology refers to the unconscious meanings and materials of everyday life that texts and practices carry. He explains: "the attempt to make universal and legitimate what is in fact, partial and particular; an attempt to pass off that which is cultural (i.e., humanly made) as something which is natural" (see Storey, 2009, pp.4-5). He concludes his study about culture and ideology by stating the difference between these two complicated concepts. He suggests:

What should be clear by now is that culture and ideology do cover much the same conceptual landscape. The main difference between them is that ideology brings a political dimension to the shared terrain. In addition, the introduction of the concept of ideology suggests that relations of power and politics inescapably mark the culture/ideology landscape; it suggests that the study of popular culture amounts to something more than a simple discussion of entertainment and leisure. (2009, p.5)

After defining the concepts of culture and ideology, John Storey offers six different definitions of popular culture. First, he proposes that popular culture is a culture that is widely preferable or approved by many people. He describes it: “popular culture is simply culture that is widely favoured or well-liked by many people. And, undoubtedly, such a quantitative index would meet the approval of many people” (2009, p.5). According to Storey, the popularity of culture can also be observed by the quantitative index (approval of many people). It can be also examined by the sales rate of printed and audio-visual texts such as books and DVDs. Also, by the number of audience attendances in different events such as festivals and concerts. Storey’s second definition of popular culture is whatever is left after defining the “high culture”. He clarifies: “Popular culture, in this definition, is a residual category, there to accommodate texts and practices that fail to meet the required standards to qualify as high culture. In other words, it is a definition of popular culture as inferior culture” (2009, p.6). Thus, popular culture is inferior. To be an authentic culture and ensure its status and class as a high culture, it should be difficult since the complexity of culture guarantees its position.

The third way of defining popular culture for Storey is “mass culture”. He says that popular culture is mass-produced for mass consumption. He classifies it as a commercial object that is produced for mass consumption by a non-discriminating audience. Storey proclaims: “The first point that those who refer to popular culture as a mass culture want to establish is that popular culture is a hopelessly commercial culture. It is mass-produced for mass consumption. Its audience is a mass of non-discriminating consumers” (2009, p.8). The fourth definition represents popular culture as folk culture, so it is something authentic that originates from the people rather than imposed on them. Storey asserts:

Popular culture is the culture that originates from ‘the people’. It takes issue with any approach that suggests that it is something imposed on ‘the people’

from above. According to this definition, the term should only be used to indicate an 'authentic' culture of 'the people'. This is popular culture as folk culture: a culture of the people for the people. (2009, p.8)

In his fifth definition, Storey says that, popular culture is negotiated at this stage and not imposed mass by culture by the dominant class of the society (intellectual and moral leadership) nor an emerging from below. The negotiated popular culture is partially imposed by the leading classes and partly resisted by the subordinate classes. Tony Bennett (2009) explains:

It consists not simply of an imposed mass culture that is coincident with dominant ideology, nor simply of spontaneously oppositional cultures, but is rather an area of negotiation between the two within which in different particular types of popular culture dominant, subordinate and oppositional cultural and ideological values and elements are 'mixed' in different permutations. (cited in Storey, 2009, p.10)

In the last definition, Storey studies the relationship between popular culture and postmodernism and how the distinction between authentic and commercial is blurred. Storey concludes that all these definitions have one shared thought: popular culture emerged following industrialization and urbanization. In a similar vein, Winwin Wiana (2013, p.2) defines popular culture as a style, ideas, perspectives, and attitudes that differ from the mainstream culture. However, by the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the mass media heavily influenced popular culture and lifestyles. According to Winwin the existence of popular culture due to mass media became unavoidable. Therefore, the passing of popular culture to other communities through media became easier using different mediums like fashion, movies, music, etc. Winwin studies the power of fashion in changing the traditional culture and how new styles appear and are adopted, then spread and followed by many people. She proclaims:

Clothes/fashion as a cultural artifact in humans have been affected also by popular culture. Through a variety of books, magazines, children, adolescents, and adults, product catalogs, television shows, movies, and internet [...] today's superbly changed dramatically, with the emergence of various styles of dress, which not only presents the aspect of function, but rather represents a lifestyle, the pleasure, pride and dreams of the things that are glamorous, or be part of a certain class of people. (2013, p.6)

Turkish TV dramas became a global phenomenon, and that offers Turkey wide international relations. Herbert Schiller (1976) and Armand Mattelart (1982) mention that the world television channels were dominated by American TV series such as *Dallas* and *Knight Rider* that reigned the international TV channels for many years. Today, the Americanization of media is no longer the focus of academic studies, but local TV shows have become the target of popular culture studies (cited in Cansu Arisoy, 2016, p.8). According to Cansu Arisoy, these broadcasted national TV shows make the spread of local culture, including ideologies, lifestyles, norms, and values, possible. Arisoy illustrates his theory of the popularity of Turkish popular culture via its TV series. He proclaims:

The success of Turkish series is a good example of these transnational cultural flows which proves currently not only Western cultures have the advantage of promoting their values to other countries. As a matter of fact, the competitiveness of global markets is enlivened with the participation of non-Western cultures. (2016, p.8)

Stuart Hall (1998, p. 443) demonstrates that popular culture includes fake attractions and distortions and some factors of acceptance, identification, and familiar experiences (cited in Serpil Aydos, 2017, p.9). Serpil Aydos considers how these features gave Turkish TV dramas certain popularity and attracted interest in the Balkans as: “several Turkish TV series began airing on Balkan television nearly a decade after the end of the war, and they achieved record-high ratings. Among these series, the most popular is *Harim al-Sultan* (Muhteşem Yüzyıl)”

(2017, p.2). He interviewed (43) Bosnian, Serb, and Croat university students to determine their thoughts and perspectives towards the historical Turkish TV series *Harim al-Sultan*. According to Aydos (2017, pp.2-3), the spread of mass media and popular culture has transmitted and reshaped national identity through commercial networks. It seems that *Harim al-Sultan* is one of those commercial networks that invited its viewers to rethink their national identities since it has narrated the Ottomans' five-century rule over the Balkans. He justifies: "for this reason, viewers' conceptions of and reactions to the series are important in terms of settling the place of Ottoman Empire in their perceptions of national identity" (2017, p.2). It appears that the transmitted Turkish popular culture of the Ottoman past and its historical and political relationship with the Balkans via this TV drama has succeeded in provoking some audiences and appealing to others. Aydos clarifies:

In Bosnia and Herzegovina, where about 50% of the population is Bosniak, 30% are Serbs and 15% are Croats, the Bosniak population's sympathy towards the Ottomans and Turks has been strengthened with the great interest in the Turkish series. Despite that, Croat and especially Serb audiences have experienced various emotional tensions due to the negative "Ottoman" image that plays an important part in their respective national identities. For instance, while these audiences expressed their admiration for the scenario, they also had to refer the "oppressive policies" of the Ottoman Empire. (2017, p.11)

Aydos concludes that the study about similarities of lifestyle between Bosnian and Turkish cultures has provoked some Balkan Turkish TV drama viewers. He also indicates that the case of *Harim al-Sultan* illustrates globalized media are mediums of stereotypical and confusing representation of national identity. Therefore, he found that Bosniak audiences didn't change their opinion on Turks after watching the TV series. Nevertheless, they admit many similarities between the two cultures in terms of cuisine, music, architecture, social behaviours, clothes, and family values. Unlike Bosnian viewers, Serbian and Croatian

audiences did not show their admiration while talking about the intercultural similarities but used implicit concepts such as lifestyle, culture, and family relationships when comparing their own culture and the Turkish culture. In the context of the Arab world, Ofra Bengio and Gencer Ozcan (2011, pp.52-53) mention that Turks are not positively viewed. The negative image is analysed by Turkish scholar Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu who studied 12 Egyptian history textbooks that analyse the era between 1912 and 1980. Ihsanoglu mentions that these books focused only on the military aspects neglecting cultural heritage. These books also described Ottoman rule as oppressive in which Ottomans used terrorist methods to control the Arabs and blamed the Ottomans for obstructing Arabs to be civilized, like Westerners. Ihsanoglu states:

It was accused of having deliberately neglected education, the economy and public services in the Arab lands, and of cutting off the Arabs from 'western civilization', 'because they feared the infiltration of foreign influence into those lands'. Thus, the Arab homeland remained under oppressive Ottoman rule for about four centuries in which the Ottomans isolated the Arab homeland and prevented it from contacting the rising West, thereby causing the Arabs backwardness while also weakening their national [qawmiyya] spirit. (cited in Bengio and Ozcan, 2011, p.52)

One of the influences of these books is *Turkey and Arab Politics* written by Egyptian president Gamal Abd al-Nasir 1954. It draws a negative picture of Ottoman rule, and it has influenced the writing of the textbooks. For example, he quotes: “the Ottoman occupation of our lands was the worst tragedy that has befallen the Arabs and Muslims throughout their history ... [Moreover] to this date, the Arabs, wherever they are, still suffer severely the effects of that occupation”. This book defends the ‘Arab revolution’ in which the Hashemites supported Britain against the Ottomans during the First World War, linking it to the Ottoman domination and oppression of the Arabs. Both Gamal Abd al-Nasir and Ihsanoglu hold Kemal Atatürk, the founder of modern Turkey, responsible for adopting

triple policies: secularism, changing the Arabic alphabet into Latin, and the removal of Arab words from the Turkish language as an attempt to make Turkey ‘a pure European country’ (cited in Bengio and Ozcan, 2011, 53). According to Yücel Bozdağlıoğlu (2003, p.47), Atatürk justified the reason behind establishing his reforms by arguing that Turkey belongs to the civilized West rather than the backward East associated with Arabs (cited in Omar Al-Ghazzi and Marwan Kraidy, 2013, p.5).

This negative stereotypical image of the Ottoman Empire continues expanding in the Arab world textbooks, journalism, and television drama. According to Martin Stokes (1992), in Turkey, anti-Arab stereotypes are reflected in popular culture: “For example, Turks refer to popular music associated with lower-class urban communities as Arabesk<sup>5</sup>, a term originally meant to signal unrefined taste and a rejection of modernizing reform” (cited in Omar Al-Ghazzi and Marwan Kraidy, 2013, p.5). However, ten years after the Justice and Development Party (AKP) in 2002, Turkish-Arab relations have improved. Al-Ghazzi and Kraidy (2013, pp.3-4) explain that: “this rapprochement was largely based on Turkey’s engagement with Arab publics as part of a soft power-based policy conceived as neo-Ottomanism”. They also demonstrate that the founder of the AKP Turkish president Recep Tayyip Erdoğan in 2010, proclaimed that Turks and Arabs are close comparing them to fingers of the hand as they also share the same history, culture, and civilization.

Unlike Kemalism, neo-Ottomanism drives the foreign policy of Turkey’s ruling party, the AKP to create diplomatic relationships with both the East and the West. Omer Taspinar (2008) notes that the primary purpose of neo-Ottomanism is encouraging engagement and projection of influence recalling Turkey’s multicultural, Muslim, and imperial past. Al-Ghazzi and Kraidy propose that the key notion in neo-Ottomanism discourse is the “strategic depth”

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<sup>5</sup> Arabesk: is a style of Turkish urban popular music that originated in the 1970s in the recording studios (Martin Stokes, 1992)

through the adoption of diplomatic style, which gave rise to the spread of soft power in the region in addition to the combination of historical and resonance and geographical scale. They argue that media and popular culture helped in reflecting this status and reinforced Turkey's soft power and emphasize the role of Turkish TV series in supporting the Turkish economic investments in East European countries such as Greece and Bulgaria. In this context, Nektaria Palaiologou and Vasilis Gialamas (2015, p.1) demonstrate:

A new trend in Greek TV is the screening of Turkish TV Serial, which seem to be very popular in many European countries. The effect of such Turkish Serial is so huge on the TV's audience that many times people prefer attending such soap-operas rather than other TV's very popular events, such as football games or Eurovision's competition.

Al-Ghazzi and Kraidy (2013, p.2) conclude that the success of neo-Ottomanism is due to the use of multiple strategies by the Turkish government, mainly through popular culture. They agree that media and popular culture have played a significant role in reconstructing Turkey as a friend of the Arabs. They clarify: "the success of neo-Ottomanism has been based on the Turkish government's use of multiple strategies of outreach through popular culture, rhetoric, and broadcasting to create a new Turkish nation brand of neo-Ottoman cool, articulated as at once more benign and more powerful". These attraction and persuasion tools are used by modern Turkey to increase the political and economic power in the region and satisfy and gratify audiences' needs.

## **2.5. Soft Power Theory and Turkey's Public Diplomacy**

I have so far shown how globalization and globalized media can spread popular culture, lifestyles, as reshape audience preferences. These globalized media tools are often reinforced by soft power instruments aiming to seduce other nations and societies to consume the product. In this section, I will explore the practice of soft power to ground my examination of

the reception of Turkish TV drama by Algerian women. Different countries have been ruled under the Ottoman Empire for a long period. Some of these countries considered the Ottoman era the worst era that prevented Arabs, for instance, from developing like other Western nations. Turkish scholar Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu refers to Egyptian president Gamal Abd Al-Nasser's speech who accused the Ottomans of preventing them from contacting with the progressive West. Gamal Abd Al-Nasser justifies: "the Ottoman occupation of our lands was the worst tragedy that has befallen the Arabs and Muslims throughout their history ... [Moreover] to this date, the Arabs, wherever they are, still suffer severely the effects of that occupation" (cited in Ofra Bengio and Gencer Ozcan 2011, p.53).

In order to understand the mechanisms of soft power, I will here explore it in more detail. Nye discusses soft power in relation to the US's influence via mass media. First of all, the notion of soft power was first coined by Joseph Nye (1990), referring to the power of persuasion and promotion of ideologies, literature, and language. But it seems that soft power is not something new. In the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries France promoted its culture to Europe, in which French became the language of diplomacy and even used in Prussian and Russian courts: "After its defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the French government sought to repair the nation's shattered prestige by promoting its language and literature through the Alliance Francaise, which was created in 1883". (cited in Nye, 2004, p.2).

U.S president Franklin Roosevelt 1930s was convinced that America's security was related to its ability to speak and gain other countries' support. He was concerned about the German propaganda in Latin America as it was airing 7 hours a week of its programs to Latin America. Consequently, the American State Department established a division of Cultural Relations. It started broadcasting 12 hours instead, and by 1941, the United States was broadcasting around the clock (see Joseph Nye and J.R. Winkler, 2004, pp.4-6). The Office of

War Information (OWI) was the source of American propaganda considered radio and Hollywood as the essential tools to spread its soft power. Nye and Winkler (2004, p.3) clarify:

Even the OWI worked to shape Hollywood into an effective propaganda tool, suggesting additions and deletions to films and denying licenses to others. [...]Radio played a significant role. What became known as the Voice of America grew rapidly during World War II. Modeled on the BBC's approach, by 1943 it had 23 transmitters delivering news in 27 languages.

Hollywood, according to Nye and Winkler, is one of the constituting American soft power: "American corporate and advertising executives, as well as the heads of Hollywood studios, were selling not only their products but also America's culture and values, the secrets of its success, to the rest of the world" (2004, pp.3-4). Similarly, Turkish TV series are effective elements in changing perspectives and perceptions towards Turkey in a positive way. The soft power and the popularity of Dizi in the Arab world and Algeria seem to be reached through two effective elements: MBC and the Syrian dialect. Content has also been suggested as one of the influential factors that helped Dizi gain an international position. Bhutto (2019) reports the explanation of Imane Mezher, the Format Distribution and Licensing Coordinator of iMagic, a Beirut-based TV production company. She asserts that the widespread of Turkish TV dramas among Arab audiences is because of the "wonderful" content of Dizi series. Mezher argues that Arab countries used to watch Mexican and Brazilian TV series that was unprincipled; however, Turkish TV soap operas have a high standard of morality. She explains: "you have a daughter and you don't know who her father is, you don't know who the mother is. The stories were moral-free. At the end of the day, like it or not, we like things to be a little more conservative. The Turks are amazing at that".

Equally, Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ, the protagonist of *Gümüş* states that the romantic series *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* (*What is Fatmagul's Fault?*) is the best example of a Turkish TV

drama story based on rape and abuse but preservation. He mentions: “the couple in *Fatmagul’s* don’t kiss until about episode 58”. In this respect, Imane Mezher considers that Turkish TV Dramas combines social and cultural conservatism with contemporary lifestyle: “the European freedom that everyone longs for and, at the same time, the problems are conservative”. Fatima Bhutto also interviewed Halit Ergenç or Sultan Suleiman, the protagonist of the historical Turkish TV drama, *Harim al-Sultan*. Ergenç explains the difference between American TV and Dizi arguing that “American TV is entertaining, but not moving they don’t touch the feelings that make us human”. It seems that Dizi TV series have the power of influence that attracted audiences all around the world. In this context, Nye suggests that one can affect others’ behaviours in 3 different ways: threats of coercion, inducements and payments, and attraction that makes other want what you want.

For example, a country can get the results it wants in world politics because other countries want to follow it, appreciate its principles, emulating its model, and/or aspiring to its level of prosperity. He demonstrates: “power is the ability to affect others to get the outcomes you want” (2008, p.2). Therefore, instead of forcing other countries the change using economic or/and military weapons, it is more effective to set the agenda and appeal to them by other soft features of the country. He explains: “soft power is a staple of daily democratic politics. The ability to establish preferences tends to be associated with intangible assets such as an attractive personality, culture, political values and institutions, and policies that are seen as legitimate or having moral authority” (2008, p.2). The soft power for Nye is the ability to affect others and shape their preferences using the power of attraction and seduction. Nye (1990, pp.15-16) argues that political leaders understand that the effective way to attract other countries and set a political agenda can be reached through intangible power. Dizi attractiveness, for instance, rests on non-material resources, mainly political, social, and cultural ideologies that merge liberalism and conservatism that can frame the international

agenda. Consequently, a country's soft power is associated with its cultural resources, values, and politics. He asserts:

Soft power is more than just persuasion or the ability to move people by argument, though that is an important part of it. It is also the ability to entice and attract. In behavioral terms, soft power is attractive power. In terms of resources, soft power resources are the assets that produce such attraction. (2008, p.3)

Shaping public opinion becomes vital to control and employ soft power. Therefore, the diplomacy and the reputation of the country have always mattered in world politics. Nye (2008, p.2) defines public diplomacy:

Public diplomacy is an instrument that governments use to mobilize these resources to communicate with and attract the publics of other countries, rather than merely their governments. Public diplomacy tries to attract by drawing attention to these potential resources through broadcasting, subsidizing cultural exports, arranging exchanges, and so forth.

However, if the broadcasted content of a country's culture, values, and policies are not interesting, public diplomacy that disseminates them cannot generate a soft power but produce results through film distribution: "exporting Hollywood films full of nudity and violence to conservative Muslim countries may produce repulsion rather than soft power". (Nye, 2008, p.2). Likewise, the spread of Turkish TV series and their popularity all over the world places Turkey's TV market second after Hollywood. Arzu Ozturkmen declares: "thanks to international sales and global viewership, Turkey is second only to the US in worldwide TV distribution finding huge audiences in Russia, China, Korea, and Latin America" (cited in Fatima Bhutto, 2019). For that reason, the current study examines to what extent Turkish TV series play the role of a soft power instrument for Algerian female audiences by evaluating the most dominant features of these TV series that reinforced the Turkish soft power and diplomacy in the Middle East and Algeria.

According to Abdennour Toumi (2020), since the Justice and Development Party (AKP)'s coming in 2002, Turkey changed its foreign policy stance in North African countries. Algeria and Turkey, for instance, share common historical, cultural, as well as linguistic ties that date back to the Ottoman Empire in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Toumi argues that the Algerian-Turkish rapprochement first emerged under the AK Party administration. In 2006, Algeria became one of the most important commerce partners for Turkey in the region because of Turkish President Recep Tayyab Erdoğan, who signed a Friendship and Cooperation Agreement. Toumi (2020) notes:

The trade volume between the two countries in the first 10 months of 2019 reached \$2.2 billion: \$1.6 billion in terms of exports and \$0.6 billion in imports, with Turkey's investment in Algeria hitting \$3.5 billion. In 2018, Algeria became Turkey's second-largest trading partner in the African continent.

Nye, on the other hand, demonstrates how the U.S. used the American popular culture as a low-cost and valuable soft power resource to attract other people. He illustrates:

American popular culture, embodied in products and communications, has widespread appeal. Young Japanese who have never been to the United States wear sports jackets with the names of American colleges. Nicaraguan television broadcast American shows even while the government fought American-backed guerrillas. Similarly, Soviet teenagers wear blue jeans and seek American recordings, and Chinese students used a symbol modeled on the Statue of Liberty during the 1989 uprisings. (Nye, 1990, p.18)

Similarly, Eyal Ben-Ari and Nissim Otmazgin (2014, pp.31-35) found that popular culture as a soft power can be transformed into an object or a product of policy and utilised to reach economic and political goals. They state: "Popular culture can potentially serve as a tool to convey a state's core values and ideology, and as its front window, selling its attractive culture abroad". Regarding Turkey's TV market worldwide, the Trade Ministry data and

sector representatives report that about 50 to 70 new TV series are broadcasted on TV channels or online platforms each season. These series are screened in many countries of Central Asia, Africa, Latin America, the Middle East, and Balkans, reaching 700 million viewers: “Turkish TV shows, which have become one of the most-watched productions in the countries where they are aired, are effective in increasing the export of goods and services by contributing to Turkey's image and the promotion of its products in those countries” (*Daily Sabah*, 2019). According to Nye (2004, p.6), information is power, and the most significant part of the world has access to that power. For Dizi TV production, producers have integrated cultural and political information about the Turkish lifestyle, rituals, landscapes, fashion, music, and other instruments through these TV dramas. Cansu Arisoy (2016, p.9) explicates:

These exported television series are based on a striking mix of flamboyant production, the scenarios include full of love [sic], rage, frame-up, and deaths that go on between beautiful Turkish actresses and handsome actors. These stories can be filmed in rich neighbourhoods or poor but beautiful areas of Istanbul or Eastern parts of Turkey. These are increasing Turkey’s prestige by publicizing Turkish way of life.

The Turkish scholar Nurçin Yıldız argues that the popularity and the success of Turkish TV series in the Balkans and the Middle East come from the combination of modernity and traditional Muslim themes in Western lifestyles and common Islamic cultural values. She clarifies: “The broadcasting of these series shows that Arabs are open to the sort of Westernization that is found in Turkey, which in turn is a synthesis of East and West. This synthesis seems to be the root of Turkey’s soft power at its strongest” (cited in Carola Cerami, 2013, p.12). Nemanja Carbic et al. (2013) describe the popularity of Turkish TV drama in Balkan regions:

Turkish shows are most watched in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Macedonia followed by Kosovo and Serbia. [...] The most watched show in Bosnia and

Herzegovina was “Magnificent Century”, which is set in the golden age of the Ottoman Empire at the court of Suleiman the Magnificent. [...] In Macedonia, of nine Turkish shows on air, five were ranked in January 2013 among the top 15 in terms of viewers. Three Turkish shows are currently on air in Kosovo. The most popular in December 2012 were “What is Fatmagül’s fault,” which ranked top of all programmes and “Love and punishment,” which came third. [...] In Serbia, four Turkish soaps are currently on air on three television stations.

Nehir Ağırseven and Armağan Örki (2017) notes that the success of these TV series in these regions has decreased. They agree that: “although the export of Turkish TV series continues, either the number of series whose influence is at issue has decreased or they are the subject of studies less and less as this situation becomes usual” (p.15). Nonetheless, these TV soap operas are still effective instruments that have the power of popularizing and promoting the Turkish culture, mainly in countries that the Ottomans dominated. The following section will explain the reception process of TV dramas and how they cultivate and gratify the needs of their viewers.

## **2.6. TV Drama Reception, Cultivation, and Gratification Theory**

Cultivation and gratification theory are mass communication theories that explore how people use and interact with media content and how it influences them. Cultivation theory, on the one hand, was composed by Gerbner in the 1960s and later expanded by George Gerbner and Larry Gross in 1976. Gerbner and Gross developed a research project called ‘cultural indicators’ (1972) in order to analyse the rise of violence in American society. According to them, viewers' perceptions of reality may be cultivated over time by frequent exposure to television. They found that “considerable support for the proposition that heavy exposure to the world of television cultivates exaggerated perceptions of the number of people involved in violence in any given week” (Gerbner and Gross, 1976, p.22). Cultivation theory tackles the

long-term effect of television on viewers and how it shapes their moral values and perceptions about the world. According to Eman Mosharafa (2015), television shapes ideologies, assumptions, beliefs, and perspectives because it is universal, accessible, and people spend long time watching it. According to the cultivation theory, television does not represent what is happening in the outside world; however, it creates an artificial world that concentrates on specific subjects based on people's desires and interests who control the media (Mosharafa, 2015, p.25).

As discussed, soap operas are the most prominent TV shows that have the power to shape people's perceptions about the world. They can cultivate and spread popular cultures since the establishment of the serialized narratives on the radio in the 1930s. There are no exact statistics regarding which Algerian gender watches more soap operas since individuals watch TV irregularly. However, many previous studies focus on females as the primary consumer of soap operas and found that contemporary women find TV dramas enjoyable to consume for many reasons. For instance, in order to differentiate soap operas from other television forms, Mary Ellen Brown (1990) interviewed female soap operas' female viewers and asked them to define the soap opera genre relying on their experiences. Female interviewees observed that the centrality of these TV shows is on the female character and that they represent females as powerful and independent. Brown (1994) notes that these features are strongly associated with feminine values and culture; this justifies the popularity among women (cited in Catherine M. Drain, 1994, pp.8-12). Hence, TV series are a source of entertainment and gratification for audiences to satisfy their needs. According to Shraddha Bajracharya (2018) uses and gratification theory explains how people use media to fulfil their needs like interaction, awareness, relaxation, knowledge, escape, and entertainment.

Uses and gratification theory was developed by Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler, and Michael Gurevitch in their journal article *Uses and Gratifications Research* (1973-1974): "the

approach simply represents an attempt to explain something of the way in which individuals use communications, among other resources in their environment, to satisfy their needs and to achieve their goals” (p.3). According to Katz et al, the interest media’s gratifications is associated with earlier empirical communication studies. They mention that different media gratifications research is well detailed in Lazarsfeld-Stanton collections’ (1942, 1944, and 1949). For instance, the collection includes the work of Herta Herzog (1942) discussion of the gratification derived from listening to soap operas. Edward Suchman (1942) identifies the gratification of listening to music on the radio. Kathrine M. Wolfe and Marjorie Fiske (1949) tackle the development of children's interest in cartoons, and finally, Bernard Berelson (1949) on the functions of newspaper reading. The purpose of using these old theories is to argue that media, mainly TV dramas are still a source of gratification for people. These old theories are helpful in my analysis as they allow me to think about soft power tools, political propagandas, and transnational popular cultures transmitted via globalized media. Katz et al argue that these studies come up with different functions, they state: “to match one's wits against others, to get information or advice for daily living, to provide a framework for one's day, to prepare oneself culturally for the demands of upward mobility, or to be reassured about the dignity and usefulness of one's role” (1973, p.2). They also consider that gratification is media-related because people refer to media for the topics they discuss, the satisfaction of curiosity, and seeking reinforcement. It may also refer to the need for self-esteem, affiliation, release tension, and reduce anxiety (p.6). Katz et al. clarify audiences use media differently. Each medium is unique in its purposes, so they can be satisfied by watching television, act of reading, or/and having the radio ‘on’. In the same context, Alan M. Rubin (1994, pp.525-527) considers that some kinds of TV shows are related to specific human needs like companionship, information acquisition, escape from unpleasant life experiences, or reducing anxiety. Mihalis (2014, p.6) states that the uses and gratification approach showed that:

“people prefer entertainment shows rather than informational TV shows. Entertaining oneself became much easier than acquiring information as a result of the developments in communication technologies, especially beginning with the developments in the 1970s”. Thus, gratification theory is still pertinent nowadays in the field of media consumption and reception.

Many media theories consider media users as passive, while uses and gratification theory see them as active agents and “variably active communicators, rather than passive recipients of messages” (Rubin,1994, p.525) thus able to control their media consumption. Hence, the uses and gratification approach include many principal elements such as our psychological and social environment, wants and motives to communicate, our expectations about the media, outcomes, and consequences of our behaviour (see Rubin, 1994, p. 525). Regarding the typologies of audience gratifications, Katz et al. argue that they differ in terms of levels of study (medium, content), materials (e.g., television), and cultures. Harold D. Laswell (1948) proposed the four-functional interpretation of media on a macro-sociological level. He assumes media served surveillance, correlation, entertainment, and cultural transmission for individuals and society. He clarifies that media can control the environment and provide information and news to people. It also covers issues and provides instructions during the time of crisis. Accordingly, it is responsible for selecting and interpreting news and how people receive it and respond to it. Concerning cultural transmission and entertainment, he considers media as a tool for broadcasting and promoting cultural heritage. It is also a source of entertainment, that can help people to relax and escape from everyday’s life routine (cited in Elihu Katz et al. 1974, p.512). According to Paul F. Lazarsfeld and Herta Herzog (1940), investigations about audiences and media gratifications in the past focused on how radio offered competitive, educational, and self-rating programmes. They also examine how radio

daytime serials gratify women listeners in terms of the emotional release, wishful-thinking, and advice-seeking (see Katz et al. 1974).

Later, within printed media means of communication, Bernard Berelson (1949, pp.111-116) explored why people were reading newspapers. He found they read them to interpret public affairs, social prestige, and as a tool to escape. To examine TV effects on females, Sari T. Thomas (1977) interviewed 40 participants to examine the relationship between females and soap opera in the 1970s. She states it has been estimated that at least fifty million people view soap operas on television and that 70% of these viewers are women. Thomas founds that the educated participants watch fewer soap operas than the non-college informants who watch serials more frequently. According to the research, college-educated interviewees reported less dedication to the serial of dealing with outside interruptions. They reported their willingness to dispense any parts of the serial instead, they prefer a phone call or a visit from a friend. Regarding the reasons that stimulate them to watch soap operas, college-educated viewers watch them for entertainment and relaxation. In contrast, the non-college viewers say they watch them because of their interest in story outcomes. Finally, considering the effects of soap operas, viewers confess that they have conversations about these serials in three cases: gossiping, catching up on missed segments, or engaging in analytic critiques of soap operas (pp.168-169).

A more recent study titled *A Study on the Preference for Tamil Dubbed Hindi Serials among Home Makers in Salem* by M. Anuradha (2017) shows that television influenced the daily life routine of middle and the lower classes segments in India. M. Anuradha investigated the reasons for switching over the dubbed serials, respondents state they accepted it because of the existing cultural components and strong values as the primary reason. She justifies: “they said that those serials reinforced the faith in joint family system and respect for elders which made them engrossed in the serials”. Second, filming locations also attracted those females,

like the palatial houses, North Indian style of architecture, and decorations. Third, women were fascinated by sarees and jewellery of actresses: “It was interesting to note that many respondents even bought those kinds of sarees and jewellery. In fact, of late, their way of wearing sarees itself has changed due to the influence of these serial” (2017, p.4). Fourth, participants believe that storyline, structure, and presentation of dubbed TV series are different and more interesting than Tamil’s series. Besides the practiced festival and rituals, which seems new to Tamil viewers. Consequently, it appeals to them: “instead of watching the same functions and festivals of Tamil Nadu, they found it intriguing to watch their way of celebrations” (p.5). Finally, this research examined the gratifications sought from the content of the dubbed serials that are perceived to be missing in the Tamil’s serials.

Qiaolei Jiang and Louis Leung (2012) note that 455 internet users in Urban China prefer Korean and American TV dramas. Therefore, they investigate the power of lifestyles, gratifications sought, and narrative appeal that makes those people prefer these foreign TV series. For the gratifications sought in foreign TV drama viewing, the data shows that Urban Chinese watch American and Korean TV dramas for many reasons, first, for entertainment, relaxation, and passing the time. Second, for sociability they believe that these TV series offer them new topics to discuss with their relatives and friends. Second, to learn foreign languages, explore other cultures, and stayed up to date about fashion. Finally, they consider TV drama a shelter they escape from life, reality, and responsibilities. About the narrative appeal, the findings show participants are divided into two categories: those who prefer Korean TV dramas because they are lengthy in the story, simple in plot development, and homogeneous in drama genre. Moreover, those who favour American TV dramas because they are varied, powerful, complicated, and fast-paced. Jiang and Leung mention that despite these diverse preferences, there are no significant differences within gratification sought, so foreign TV dramas appeal to different lifestyle types for different motivations (p.13).

They end their study by stating: “well-educated and well-informed thinkers were more likely to watch for entertainment and learning. Strivers and innovators tended to watch for sociability. [...] Those who have limited resources and are suspicious of new ideas watched for escape”. Also, they assert that watching TV dramas can be a tool of gaining social gratitude and influence since they offer and support the viewer to be an opinion leader in discussing and exchanging ideas from viewed foreign TV series. In the Arab world, Muna Abdelaziz Alradimi and Fawzia Abd Allah Al-Ali (2019) conducted research aiming to identify and classify the motives and factors that influence the preference for dubbed TV shows in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). They used an online questionnaire to reach students of four universities. Alradimi and Al-Ali remark that re-voiced TV programs that contain romance, new plots, and different stories have captured the attention of the UAE’s youth. According to the research, storylines and plot are the central motives that push them to watch dubbed TV shows. Then, they seem interested in learning about new cultures, tourism, fashion, quality of videos, and furnishing. They conclude that UAE university students showed a great interest in languages of dubbing and accents used in translation (Syrian and Lebanese). Alradimi and Al-Ali clarify: “In case of the UAE, the preference for dubbing foreign television shows might positively affect the proficiency of the citizens in the Arabic language” (p.8). Dubbing allows UAE viewers to follow the flow of the TV show without interruption, as many of them complain that reading subtitles distract them. They also focus on the shortage of local UAE cinematic content. For that reason, UAE university students seem attached to foreign TV programs. Those participants apparently intend to gratify their personal needs (learning languages, cultures, etc) by watching the imported dubbed TV shows.

Turkey is now considered the second TV market in the world. Its TV dramas producers seek to include different components such as entertainment and information to satisfy and gratify

different age groups, cultural backgrounds, and genders. Eleni Pothou (2020) examines what makes Turkish TV series so successful in Greece. Pothou considers Greece as the most effective and successful European example of the popularity of Turkish TV content. To explore the reasons behind Greek viewers' preference for these TV shows, she focuses on two indicators of cultural proximity that positively influence their preference: family values and interpersonal romantic relationships. After conducting a semi-structured questionnaire with 708 Greek audience members, she found that most of the sample was 93.5% female aged between 45 and 54 years old compared to 3.8% male. Respondents consider that the family structure, respecting elders, and authority practiced by the family members (in the marriages and the life of their children) shown in Turkish soap operas are culturally familiar for Greek viewers.

However, respondents seem to disagree with regard to the representation of gender issues and violence against women. They also disagree with the representation of patriarchal families, where women are obedient. Pothou reports their perspectives on gender issues: "The majority of the comments following the question expressed the belief that this representation was found "discriminative", "sexist" and "outdated" (p.13). For interpersonal romantic relationships, the data shows how men express their love in Turkish TV dramas attracted respondents more than any other research variable. But the unidentified cultural proximity in this case and the dominant behavior against women increases the percentage of disagreement. Pothou compares the findings of interpersonal romantic relationships to the findings of family values and finds that when respondents find gender issues arise and discrimination against women is at stake, the respondents' preference was negative in both variables.

In this case, she proposes that the condition of dependency may explain this engagement. Thus, if countries cannot produce their content, audiences search for another option from nearby or similar cultures. For instance, Greek audiences are culturally close to the cultural

representations in Turkish TV series because Dizi TV series seem to be the closest products. Apparently, audiences' gratifications depend on two variables: cultural proximity between the producing and the consuming country and the shortage of cinematic productions that motivate audiences to watch imported TV shows. This is also the case for Algeria, where local TV series barely exist. As a result, this shortage opens the door to other foreign TV dramas to inundate the Algerian TV screens like Mexican telenovelas, Egyptian and Syrian musalsalat, and recently Turkish TV series. This thesis contends then that the shortage of Algerian cinematic local production, cultural proximity, and intercultural exchange between the Arab and the Turkish culture are some of the key reasons for the popularity of cultural proximity between Turkey and Algeria (these factors will be discussed profoundly in the following chapter).

## **2.7. Conclusion**

This chapter summarises the history of the contemporary universal phenomenon, Dizi TV series, and how the globalized media facilitate their global popularity. I argued that it is conceivable to use soap operas and telenovelas terminologies to name Dizi TV series as they share common aims. The gratification approach is helpful in exploring audiences, pleasure, and satisfaction. Gratification instruments of Turkish TV series include relaxation, knowledge, escape, and entertainment that are embedded in creative scenarios, high qualities of filming, attractive actors, music, and well-performed roles. The power of attraction of these TV dramas also includes many missing features in the Arab cinematic production, mainly modernity. I claim that soft power tools used in appealing and satisfying audiences have also succeeded in spreading Turkish popular culture and empowering Turkish public diplomacy and neo-Ottomanism in the Arab world. Finally, this study is a gender-related phenomenon that examines transnational TV drama reception and consumption by Algerian females. I

reviewed some previous studies and background literature related to my topic that share the same gender dimensions.

### **Chapter 3: Algerian Female Audiences: Identity and Imagined Communities**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

This chapter explains the audio-visual translation process related to reception theory developed by Stuart Hall based on the coding and decoding model. It describes how Turkish TV series are dubbed and the role of Syrian dialect and the Syrian TV drama *The Neighbourhood Gate* in bridging Turkish and Arab culture and familiarizing Arab female audiences with foreign TV content. This chapter will also elaborate on the role of cultural proximity and interculturalism in watching Turkish soap operas by Algerian females. It determines how females and feminists use these TV dramas as a source of inspiration to protest against marginalization and inequalities, create an imagined community and a unified national identity. This section demonstrates how Arab women use Dizi to express their desire for the modern lifestyle, romance, and gender equality. It will also explore the extent to which Algerian female viewers internalize modernity in their daily live performances.

#### **3.2. Audio-Visual Translation of Dizi Series and Reception Theory**

Audio-visual translation interprets different products and programmes, such as movies, into other languages either through subtitling or dubbing, to increase popularity and consumerism among viewers. Rocío Baños and Jorge Díaz-Cintas explain that audio-visual translation (AVT) is an umbrella term referring to various practices related to the translation of audio-visual content. This strategy aims to make foreign programmes accessible to audiences who do not speak the language of the original text. Hence, interlingual translation can be achieved via dubbing or subtitling (2018, pp.2-3). AVT<sup>6</sup> comprises a different classification of language transfer modes. The popular modes for Turkish TV series translation to the Arab world are re-voiced in MBC and other Arabic channels such as Dubai One and Nessma or subtitled in social media platforms such as YouTube and Netflix. Dubbing and subtitling are the most frequent ways of presenting foreign TV content to audiences in different countries of the world. Both of them have distinct features, making them more or less adequate to target international viewers. Subtitling is the presentation of the written translation of the storyline under the screen.

Jorge Díaz-Cintas and Pilar Orero, on the one hand, distinguish between the two approaches, defining the subtitling process as “a shift of medium from an oral discourse in the second language into a written text in the target language that normally appears at the bottom of the screen” (2006, p.447). In the subtitling process, there is a change from spoken to written mode, in which original dialogues and oral texts are exchanged into written texts on screen. Dubbing is also known as voice-over, is transferring the oral output of the original language into the target language by inserting new soundtracks. Zoé De Linde and Neil Kay (1996, p.46) argue that “dubbing entirely substitutes an original dialogue with a phonetically-tuned synchronous oral translation” (cited in Azadeh Nemati and Marzieh Bagheri, 2014, p.86). MBC’s choice of dubbing rather than subtitling Dizi soap operas may refer to the fact that

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<sup>6</sup> AVT: Audio-Visual Translation

MBC4 in which these TV series were aired, has been purposefully launched to appeal to wider Arab female audiences which includes women of different educational backgrounds and ages who may not be able to read subtitles. Also, the dubbed version seems to offer all female viewers the opportunity to carry out their household tasks while watching their favourite TV dramas.

The general manager of MBC pointed that the success of Turkish dramas is owed to the choice of using the Syrian dialect for dubbing: “we dubbed the Turkish dramas with the most prevalent and established drama accent: Syrian” (Bhutto,2019). Although classical Arabic has been used previously to dubbed Latin America telenovelas for Arab viewers, MBC translators preferred translating Turkish soap operas into the Syrian dialect rather than the modern standard Arabic (MSA<sup>7</sup>) or any other colloquial Arabic for several reasons. First, MSA is distinct and more formal than its spoken dialect, and they are used in different social and cultural contexts. Its challenging writing and pronunciation systems pushed MBC translation studios to search for a more popular and simple dialect. In contrast, Syrian dialect is readily understood by most Middle Eastern viewers due to its conversational nature; in fact, the popularity of the romantic series *Noor* is largely owed to this particular dubbing choice (Oxford Business Group,2015). Alexandra Bucciante explains the distinction between classical Arabic and the Syrian dialect in dubbing Dizi TV series. She argues that:

This choice challenged the traditional literary Arabic dubbing of Mexican telenovelas that has created a disconnect between the audience, which found the language too complex and inadequate for the scenario, and the series over the years. (2010, p.3)

According to the linguistic and cultural contexts, audio-visual translation caters for 300 million Arabic speakers. According to the Middle East Monitor (2014), Arab League

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<sup>7</sup> MSA: Modern Standard Arabic

Educational, Cultural, and Scientific Organization (ALECSO, 2014), the Arab population is youthful, with almost 60% under the age of 25 (World population review) of whom 29%, or 97 million persons, are illiterate (cited in Muhammad Y Gamal, 2014). In this vein, illiteracy can be one of the central factors that pushed MBC translators to dub Dizi series into the Syrian dialect instead of classical Arabic. Syrian dialect indeed did not only translate, but it transferred and mediated between Arabic and Turkish culture as it minimized and bridged the huge cultural and social differences between the two cultures. The translation is recognized as an act of culture transmission and communication. However, cultural gaps between the source and the target language during this process have always been an issue for translators since the same words have various connotations in different cultural settings. For that reason, Nida (1964, p.244) stresses that understanding the significance of any message requires understanding its cultural context. She points out that “the larger cultural context is of utmost importance in understanding the meaning of any message; for words have meanings only in terms of the total cultural setting” (cited in Mojde Yaqubi, 2013, p.95).

Cultural settings in translating foreign content are important and, although Arab countries and Turkey speak different languages, most of them share historical, geographical, cultural, or religious links. For Algerian audiences, for instance, Dizi portrayals shared marriage rituals, food names, and many vocabularies like those that have existed in Algeria since the Ottoman Empire. This likeness allowed Algerian audiences to form a sense of affiliation and empathy with this genre, so they became more attached to it. Moreover, the Syrian soap opera *Bab al Hara (The Neighbourhood Gate)*, released in 2006, comprises of ten seasons is one of the most popular TV dramas in the Arab World that paved the way for Dizi series to reach wide popularity among Arab viewers because of the use of Syrian dialect in dubbing. One could argue that Syrian actors of *The Neighbourhood Gate*, for instance, match the re-voiced dubbed characters of the historical Turkish TV drama *Harim al-Sultan*. The famous Syrian

actors Khaled el Kaish, Asim Hawat, and Samer el Jondi who played Adham, Sobhi, and Khaled in *The Neighbourhood Gate* played the re-voiced dubbed role of Sultan Suleiman, Ibrahim Pasha, and Sümbül Aga in *Harim al-Sultan*, respectively.

Similarly, the Syrian actresses Lama Ibrahim, Filda el Samour, and Wafaa el Musli who played the role of Iftikar, Fouzia, and Ferial in *The Neighbourhood Gate*, performed the re-voiced roles of Sultana Huyam, the queen-mother, and Dura Khanum (a servant in the palace) in *The Century* correspondingly. Thus, the Syrian dialect and *The Neighbourhood Gate*, in particular, contributed to the success of Dizi in the Arab countries. Then, listening to Syrian actors' voices of *The Neighbourhood Gate* or other Syrian TV drama in the dubbed Turkish soap operas makes Arab audiences familiar and close. The dubbing process of the Turkish TV series includes translating and substituting the Turkish language dialogue of the storyline into the Syrian dialect, focusing on the need to synchronize the translated dialogue with the lip movements of the actor on the screen. Cristina Nicolae (2018, p.51) clarifies:

Dubbing is, therefore, understood as a creative process of adapting the source language text/script/verbalized message to the target language script/soundtrack, where 'adapting' implies the substitution of the SL<sup>8</sup> soundtrack with a TL<sup>9</sup> equivalent.

Nicolae emphasizes the substitution of the second language soundtrack with the target equivalent in the dubbing process. However, the Syrian dialect and the Turkish language have two different linguistic and morphological systems. Sometimes, it is challenging to identify the Syrian corresponding word or expression that matches the Turkish actor's lip movement in the original discourse. For instance, some Turkish expressions such as "Günayden" (good morning in English) usually are substituted with the expression: "؟شو أخبارك" (how are you?), as it has a different pronunciation speed and a different lip movement to the Syrian dialect

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<sup>8</sup> SL: Second Language

<sup>9</sup> TL: Target Language

expression. In addition, sometimes the entire dialogue is changed, especially when original dialogues cannot be compatible with the Arabic culture or have not its equivalent in the Syrian dialect such as proverbs and jokes or removed such as intimate scenes. Actors' names and series titles are often changed into Arabic to facilitate the task to audiences to remember and internalize them. The strategy applied by the MBC group that aims to narrow the distance between the foreign culture and language to Arab viewers.

Translation theorists have developed several strategies to help the translator to overcome linguistic and cultural obstacles that arise in any intercultural exchange between different languages and cultures. Accordingly, they come out with two approaches that can either take the reader abroad to a foreign culture or bring a foreign culture home to the reader. Both approaches were introduced by Lawrence Venuti between 1995, 1998, 2008, and 2010. The former approach is known as foreignization and the latter as domestication. In his book *The Translator's Invisibility*, Venuti (1995) explained that domestication and foreignization refer to ethical attitudes toward a foreign text and culture, as well as ethical consequences of the text chosen for translation. According to Eugene Nida (1964, p.244), a successful translation is achieved when the target text meets the cultural expectations of the receivers by minimizing the foreignness and strangeness of the origin text.

According to Safa Elnaili (2014, p.VI), the translation process is culturally and linguistically accomplished when translators use both strategies: foreignization and domestication. She states that: "cultural equivalence is better accomplished when a translator domesticates the form and foreignize the content in order to have a balanced outcome". Venuti (1995, p. 20) defines domestication as: "an ethnocentric reduction of the foreign text to target-language cultural values, bringing the author back home," whereas foreignization is "an ethnodeviant pressure on those (cultural) values to register the linguistic and cultural difference of the foreign text, sending the reader abroad." In the context of Turkish TV series, MBC follows

the principles of “domestication” in order to make Turkish texts closer to the Arabic culture and language.

Wenfen Yang (2010) argues that in order to reduce the strangeness of the foreign content for readers of the target tongue, a transparent, flowing style is used in domestication translation. Thus, MBC dubbing studios used the domestication strategy to minimize and bridge foreign source scripts to its Arab viewers. For instance, the original title of the Turkish series is *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, but the countries who have bought it have renamed it in their native languages and broadcasted it, either dubbed or subtitled. Rachel Flynn (2014) considers that the decision of dubbing or subtitling refers to different reasons, such as economic, political, and cultural. The aim behind translating titles of Turkish soap operas to Arab audiences is usually for cultural and commercial reasons.

From a cultural standpoint, MBC dubbing, and subtitling studios have used this strategy since the emergence of Dizi genre in the Arab world. For example, the extended Turkish version of the romantic series *Adini Feriha Koydum* and *Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?* were translated into *Feriha* and *Fatima*, respectively, as both names exist in the Arabic and Muslim culture. Maintaining the original title in the original language for overseas audiences is difficult because of cultural, commercial, and linguistic reasons. Some titles, for example, cannot be translated, and if so, they may become meaningless and unappealing. For instance, the famous Turkish TV drama *Gümüş*, in the original language, means “silver” and has a different meaning in Arab culture. The translated version refers to the white chemical and metal element valued for its decorative beauty and other electrical uses. Hence, MBC translators renamed the TV series using an Arabic feminine name referring to the female protagonist *Noor* instead of *Gümüş*.

In a similar way, they came up with a different name for the historical TV drama *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, which became Hureem el Sultan. The original version of the historical drama

*Muhteşem Yüzyıl* means the glorious century, which refers to the age of victories of Suleiman the Magnificent in ruling and building the Ottoman Empire. The Arabic renamed version refers to the females of the palace who were considered as ownership of the Sultan Suleiman, including his wives, mother, sisters, concubines, and female servants. MBC studios attempt to increase viewership using an understood and simple dialect for the Arab-speaking world, so they chose the closest Arabic dialect that suits most Arab viewers. The Syrian drama *The Neighbourhood Gate* shortened the way for almost all Turkish TV dramas in terms of the used dialect, especially to *The Magnificent*. Because the term “harem” in *The Neighbourhood Gate* was frequently repeated in *The Century’s* storylines, referring to all females under the guardianship of men.

Ekrem Buğra Ekinici (2016) declares: the word "harem" is derived from the Arabic words "hurmet" and "haram" (forbidden by religion), and it means the place that is forbidden to outsiders. Ekinici argues that every Turkish home included two parts: a “harem” and a “selamlık” in each city and village. She illustrates: “The harem was the portion of a house reserved for women, and only male relatives were allowed in. Selamlık was the place where male guests were hosted”. Similarly, the term “harem” in the Syrian dialect signified females that men can protect and prevent foreigners from approaching them except through a lawful marriage. Regarding the status of harem during the ottoman empire, *Turkpress* (2016) mentions that information about women in that era was scarce, and just a few historians and writers have dealt with this issue as women had a valuable status and were rarely mixed with men in the Ottoman society. However, Ottomans lived in Algeria for around three centuries and Algerian people were influenced by the long existence of Turks in it in almost all sectors. Abdelkader Rebaidia (1980, p.81) notes: “The Turkish bringing an important cultural mixture besides the one that existed before” (cited in Chami, 2009, p.39). Thus, there is a high

probability that Ottoman and Algerian women shared the same legal rights and status preserved by men, Islamic legislation, and Algerian/Ottoman traditions.

It is valid to deduce that the term “harem” used in domesticating the foreign title *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* makes the TV drama more attractive for Arab audiences and Algerian females. Petar Gabrić et al. state: “film titles have been understood as having a prominent role in one’s perception, thus also in one’s understanding, of a film” (2017, p.1). The advertising function and the importance of titles determine the success of the film in the market. Šidiškytė and Tamulaitienė (2013, p.71) for example, assert that film titles are a salient element that deserves extensive and systematic linguistic research (cited in Petar Gabrić et al., 2017, p.1). According to Stuart Hall’s (1973) reception theory, media texts are encoded by the producer and then decoded by the reader or audience. Different readers may decode the same code and texts differently, depending on individuals’ class, age, gender, and ethnicity. However, text writers use recognized codes and conventions to draw audience expectations and agree on what the code means. For this reason, I am drawing on reception theory as a key lens to analyse the reception of Dizi dramas by Algerian female viewers.

I will now return to Stuart Hall’s division of the reader of the text position. He examines the relationship between media texts and their audiences. Contrary to understandings of audiences as passive who accept and interpret the messages exactly how content producers want, Hall notes that audiences play an active role in interpreting messages and are capable of changing them using their social contexts, identity, cultural knowledge, and opinions. According to Greg Philo (2008, p.536), Hall proposed three positions for the reader of a text: the dominant, the negotiated, and the oppositional. First, in the dominant position, viewers decode the message in the same terms within which it was encoded, suggesting how producers want the audience to view the media text. Second, according to Greg, the negotiated position is “a mixture of adaptive and oppositional elements” (2008, p.536). The negotiated reading

occupies a space between the dominant and the oppositional reading. In this position, viewers admit some sections of the producers' views but hold their oppositional views. Finally, oppositional reading occurs because of the complexity of viewers' identities, such as different behaviours, beliefs, age, cultures, complex narrative structure, and controversial themes.

Regarding Hall's active reader theory and Arab audiences, it seems that the policy of domesticating Turkish TV series titles using the Syrian dialect enables them to adapt and memorize names. They feel closer and familiar with the material, which increases the viewership rate. Nevertheless, this does not mean that they accept and interpret the message exactly the producer wants; rather, they interpret them differently according to their gender, life experience, culture, and other factors. Hence, Hall's 'negotiated position' seems to be the most appropriate term to describe Algerian female viewers. The title *Harem Sultan*, for example, is the combination of two terms that have distinct semiotics "harem" and "sultan". The term harem (women), on the one hand, refers to various connotations. It is written in the plural form to signify for audiences that many protagonists or antagonist females will probably oppose or support each other. It may also signify that there will be more than one heroine who will struggle to reach the top or win the heart of the Sultan. On the other hand, the term "Sultan" indicates that there is a rich, powerful, and perhaps a handsome man for whom females may confront each other to win his heart. Combining these semiotics signposts that the storyline contains confrontations, love stories, romantic scenes, gossip, secrets, intrigues, and many other events make the title more appealing.

### **3.3. Algerian TV dramas, Cultural Proximity, and Interculturalism**

According to Algerian film experts, Algerian cinema and television production and distribution faces many obstacles that prevent this domain's development, such as the lack of sponsorship of TV producers, taxes, lack of cinematographic equipment, filming licenses, and

bureaucracy (*Algerian News Agency, 2020*). Even though there are many Algerian TV channels like ENTV (*Établissement National de Télévision*), El Echorouk TV, and Ennahar TV that broadcast a variety of entertainment TV shows, only a few local TV dramas are produced except in Ramadhan wherein the number of soap operas increases dramatically. Ramadhan has proven to be the month with the highest TV viewership in the Arab world: “over 30 Egyptian series alone are being aired on various TV channels available in Egypt and the region, coinciding with the start of Ramadan” (*Jumana Khamis, 2016*). It seems that the small number of the aired Algerian TV series besides the quality of filming and the repetitive scenarios cannot gratify the needs and expectations of Algerian audiences who are looking for creative, bold, and realistic stories (*Rabia Khurais, 2020*).

Algerian viewers discovered Dizi TV series in 2008 while several Turkish TV series was aired in MBC such as *Ihlamlar Altında (The Lost Years, 2007)*, *Gümiş (Noor,2007)*, *Acı Hayat (Tears of Roses,2007)*, and *Kurtlar Vadisi (Valley of the Wolves, 2010)*. These dubbed TV dramas have achieved high viewership rates across the Arab world to the extent that they have been described as a ‘fever’ that hit Arab and Algerian TV channels (*Eylem Yanardağoğlu and Imad N. Karam, 2013, p.2*). Because of the increasing demands of Algerian TV audiences for more dubbed Turkish TV dramas, Algerian TV producers begin dubbing Turkish series in the Algerian dialect to satisfy their audiences’ needs and compensate for the shortage of local TV dramas (*Turk Press -Anatolia, 2018*). The growth of Dizi TV dramas in Algeria coincided with the prohibition of Egyptian TV series from the Algerian national television because of the conflict between the Algerian and Egyptian teams on 2009 finalists for the 2010 World Cup. As a result, Algerian TV directors prohibited Algerian channels airing the Egyptian musalsalat, which paved the way for more Syrian and Turkish soap operas to be aired. Therefore, in 2016, Echorouk TV aired the first Turkish TV drama dubbed in the Algerian dialect entitled *Ötesiz insanlar (Elif,2013)*. In 2017, the same

TV channel increased the number of the broadcasted Turkish TV series dubbed into the Syrian dialect such as *Kösem Sultan* (2015), and *Kara Sevda* (2015), and some others in modern standard Arabic like *Diriliş Ertuğrul* (2015). In 2017 other private TV channels, including El Ennahar Laki (blocked now), El Fadjer TV, and Al Djazairia One, aired some soap operas such as *Kara Para Aşk* (*Black love*, 2017) in the Algerian dialect (Turk Press - Anatolia, 2018).

Building upon these reasons and previous studies about intercultural reception and popularity of TV dramas, the present thesis argues that cultural proximity and interculturality between the Arab and the Turkish culture contributed to the spread of Dizi genres, constructing an imagined community and unified national identity for Arab viewers. Sabine Trepte (2003, p.2) states: “In a globalized world, media are able to overcome international and intercultural barriers. For instance, U.S. television fiction is shown all over the world”. On the one hand, intercultural communication focuses on how individuals from different countries, cultural backgrounds, and ethnic groups use media to narrow down geographical distances and communicate with each other. According to Fred Dervin and Andreas Jacobsson (2021, p.13), interculturality is: “a phenomena that is occurring between (inter) ‘things’ (culture and/or may be people) in a processual manner(-ality)”. They argue that interculturality is about the interaction between at least two people, ideas, and cultural productions. According to Gunther Dietz (2018, p.2), interculturality is a set of interrelations that make up a society's culture, ethnicity, language, religious denomination, and/or nationality. Therefore, similarities or cultural proximities between traditions, histories, religious beliefs, and linguistic repertoires make people perceive other cultures as similar to theirs.

Cultural proximity in relation to media is described by Joseph Straubhaar (1991, 2003, 2007) as a term that refers to the commercial cultural industries that can influence international relations and the adaptation of the imported media contents. Thus, media can overcome

international and intercultural boundaries in today's globalized society. Straubhaar explains cultural proximity as “the tendency to prefer media products from one’s own culture or the most similar possible culture” (2003, p. 85).

Straubhaar (1991, p.51) suggests that audiences seek more for national and local cultural proximities in TV programs: “They seem to prefer nationally or locally produced materials that is closer to and more reinforcing of traditional identities, based in regional, ethnic, dialect/ language, religious, and other elements”. He illustrates his point of view by focusing on two major American TV industries: American soap operas and Brazilian telenovelas. He argues that despite the asymmetrical interdependence and the entrepreneurial competition, the industrial cultural exchange between Latin American TV production and America is common: “Audiences exist for U.S. genres as well, and some of them are also divided by class”. For Latin America people themselves, like Dominican audiences, they prefer the more regional and culturally proximate telenovelas produced in Brazil or Mexico than those made in the United States. Researchers argue that cultural proximity can influence the processes of evaluating the movie and that both personal resonance and cultural proximity are seen to be positively related. Juan-José Igartua and Carlos Muñiz (2008) note that enjoying a movie is often associated with low or high cultural proximity. Because personal memories are awakened while receiving culturally close or proximate narratives (cited in María T. Soto-Sanfiel and Juan-José Igartua, 2016, p. 92). Soto-Sanfiel and Igartua conducted a quasi-experimental study aiming to understand the reception and the consumption of a film produced in Germany in two different European socio-cultural contexts: Spain and the Netherlands. The result shows that participants from Holland (high proximity) found that the movie is more comprehensible, clearer, and positively perceived than Spain (low proximity). Kōichi Iwabuchi (2004, p. 102) points out that a survey on the reception of Japanese dramas in Hong Kong shows people prefer these dramas because they are believed to be more

realistic as characters “have similar hair color, fashion, and way of life”. In a similar way, Meriam Berg (2017, pp.1-6) discusses the importance of cultural proximity in the success of Turkish TV drama in Qatar. She conducted an online survey with 202 university students aged 18 to 25 years old from different nationalities and ethnic groups, aiming to identify the social and cultural factors that lead to the popularity of these TV shows. Berg finds that historic, cultural-linguistic, and ethnic similarities between Arabs and Turks have contributed to the attraction among Arab viewers towards the dubbed Turkish TV. For instance, one participant said: “As a male, I can say they are better looking than Arab actors, but they still look very Arab, maybe more refined, but still similar” (p.10). Historically, Ottoman-Arab history has intertwined and overlapped in many aspects of culture, including ethnicity and race, resulting in similar physical appearances, customs, traditions, food consumed, and music. Iwabuchi’s research also indicates that Turkish TV series balance Western and Eastern values, modernity, and lifestyle makes them more culturally familiar for Arab audiences (p.10).

As shown in the previous chapters, Turkish soap operas expanded in neighbouring regions and attracted audiences from the Arab world and Balkan countries because they boosted historical relationships, cultural or/and religious connections between Turkey and those countries. These TV dramas play an important role in the distribution of Turkey’s soft power: “Indeed, Turkish soaps have been held responsible by many for the rise of the country’s “soft power” and for surging tourism to Turkey, as fans come to visit the haunts of their TV heroes” (*Oxford Business Group*, 2012). Bilge Yesil (2015, p.55) agrees that Turkish soap operas’ popularity is linked to cultural proximity and the shared cultural values that are perceived positively in any given culture. However, she considers that attraction towards a particular product is not necessarily attached only to cultural proximity because Turkish TV series has reached other markets such as Romania, Poland, Brazil, Japan, and Vietnam. None

of these countries share with Turkey any linguistic, cultural, or historical commonalities. Accordingly, she suggests the notion of “multiple proximities”, referring to cross-cultural genre structure and narrative themes such as romance and power as the central factors that contributed to the wide popularity of Turkish TV series in these regions.

Cultural proximities, multiple proximities, and interculturality between Arabs and Turks are embedded in many shared performances, like wedding rituals. For instance, it is common in both cultures to start the wedding with asking a girl’s hand, an engagement ceremony, and the Henna evening (entertaining gathering) wherein women of both families (groom and the bride) meet the night before the wedding and celebrate it through singing, dancing, and colouring hands of the bride as a step of bridal preparation. Again, Arab female audiences consider Dizi series as a source of inspiration for powerful and independent women. For example, participant (C) in Berg’s study proclaims: “I think Arab women love to see women that are strong and leaders, which is something we do not see a lot” (2017, p.12). On the other hand, the more conservative approach of modernity of these soap operas that combines Islamic principles with Western lifestyles allows the series to be exercising their soft power. The following section will elaborate on how two contradicting aspects (modernity and conservatism) are broadcasted in Dizi that contribute to Turkish dramas’ appeal and create a sense of cultural proximity.

### **3.4. Modernity, Secularism, and Islam**

In media and culture theories, audiences are anticipated be either passive or active in relation to how they make sense of media texts. Active audiences are usually engaged, interpret, and respond to media texts through decoding them. Passive audiences, in contrast, are more likely to accept the messages as they are delivered. Sonia Livingstone (2017) argues that audiences cannot be entirely passive because they are compelled to

`do` something with media text otherwise these texts will be meaningless. In the face of powerful and unavoidable mass media, many media experts have agreed that audiences are regarded as homogenous and easily manipulated. Nonetheless, some traditions of mass communication according to James Curran (1990) push and make audiences engaged, resourceful, and motivated (Livingstone, 2000, p.4).

Therefore, the transmitted media content is perceived by viewers as a resource that meets their needs related to identity and social relationships. Livingstone (2000) focuses on three arguments for the active engagement of audiences with the mass media. First, she states that viewers should interpret what they perceive in order to construct a meaningful and ordered message. Second, she mentions that audiences have different interpretations so different results for the same text. Third, according to Livingstone, the viewing experience stands at the interface between the media and audiences' concerns, experiences, and knowledge.

Mass media and audience discourse lead uses and gratification researchers to think about what makes audiences watch certain programs. They found that they watch Television either for entertainment, relaxation, or/and escapism. According to Livingstone (2000, p.5), people are active audiences because they are emotionally engaged by TV. Likewise, Tamar Liebes and Elihu Katz (1990) argue that TV viewers discuss how television helps them meet personal identity needs. They believe television keeps them connected to the rest of the world through a shared imagined community which allows them to know what is going on in other places as it offers them the chance to discuss common topics with others. Therefore, they are active as this pushes them to criticize television, decode TV posters and promotion designed to appeal them. In the same way as media texts, tradition and modernity as well are not static. They are negotiated,

performed, and conceptualized, through cultural debates and encounters like when watching and discussing TV series.

Ahu Yigit (2013, p.2) considers modernity as one of the appealing aspects of Turkish TV dramas from an Arab perspective. He stresses that the modern lifestyles they present, mainly gender relations and gender equality, makes them attractive to Arab audiences. These TV series also represent women as free and more independent members of society compared to many of their Middle Eastern and Maghreb counterparts. Similarly, Meriam Berg (2017, p.42) emphasizes that Turkish television drama has shaped a positive image of modernity to Arab viewers. For instance, a recent study about Turkish TV series' socio-cultural, socio-psychological, and economic impact on Egyptian and Pakistani audiences by Ulrike Rohn and Musa Khan (2020) indicates that most audiences in both countries were seeking a new fashion and modernism. Hence, Turkish TV series are inspiring women for the modern lifestyle. Berg mentions that Turkish TV series infiltrated different Arab and Muslim cultural contexts and merged cultural and social relations and similarities besides ethnic and family ties with a modern way of life. Compared to a modern Western lifestyle, Yigit finds Arabs more attracted by modern Turkish lifestyle because of two key reasons: first, they grow anti-Western sentiments, especially after the colonization of Iraq that makes Western popular culture less appealing; second, contemporary Turkish and Arab societies have mutual cultural codes that make TV dramas more familiar to Arab-speaking viewers, such as family ties, patriarchal society, and Islam.

Referring to the history of modernity, Hèla Yousfi (2007, p.6) discusses that modernization began with the enlightenment philosophers understanding culture as a social process for development across societies. Those modern and traditional societies differ in terms of embedded cultural traits: “thus, the traditional traits of third-world societies were thought to dissolve through contact with modernity”. Nikoleta Ratsika (2012, pp.18-37) notes that

modernity dates back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century in Europe. The rise of industrialisation changed ways of production, the creation of institutions, and the different use of money. However, the portrayals of modernization are no more political and industrial only because even culture matters in the process of development as much as the economic and political domains (see Hèla Yousfi, 2007, p.6). Ole Jacob Madsen (2014, p.2) explains that the notion of modernity refers to social, cultural, and intellectual aspects that differentiate Western societies from other societies. Thus, capitalism, industrialization, secularization, media, and other factors of modernity are features of the West.

Anthony Giddens (1990, p.4) writes that the modern ways of social life undermine the fixity of traditions: “the modes of life brought into being by modernity have swept us away from all traditional types of social order, in quite unprecedented fashion”. According to Giddens, tradition refers to a particular community’s social practices, modes, activities, or experiences within the continuity of past, present, and future. He suggests that in traditional cultures, the past and symbols are honoured and valued as they represent the experience of generations. Nonetheless, they cannot resist changes: “tradition is not wholly static, because it has to be reinvented by each new generation as it takes over its cultural inheritance from those preceding it”. Yigit demonstrates that Turkish TV dramas combine a modern lifestyle with Islamic conservative society standards in this context. But they are claimed to be threatening and weakening Arabs’ values, increasing divorce rates, and decreasing work efficiency: “a number of fatwas have been issued in Saudi Arabia warning the faithful against the habit of watching them”. Also, there has been a nationalist reaction against the influence of Turkish TV series for spreading Turkish culture at the expense of authentic Arab culture (see Yigit,2013, p.3). However, Berg (2017) assumes that Turkish TV drama has shaped a positive image and relevant modernity to Arab viewers. Zafer Yörük and Pantelis Vatikiotis (2012, p.2) clarify that these TV series’ appeal for both Western and Middle Eastern audiences rely

on their ability to create nostalgia towards traditions and old-fashioned religious morals of Western audiences. Meanwhile, these TV productions also appeal to the Arabic middle classes through their representation of Westernization, secularism, and modernity.

Typically, modernization processes are attributed to Western societies, with the assumption that non-Western societies could embrace modernization only if they abandon their traditional values. However, Joseph R. Gusfield (1967, p.2) suggests that the relationship between traditions and modernity does not necessarily involve conflict because modernity does not always threaten traditions. Nevertheless, the identity of the Algerian females who are the basis of my study is shaped by Islamic traditions that often formulate their moral positions, behaviours, and social relations based on “halal” (allowed) and “haram” (forbidden) that are inspired from the Qur’an and Sunnah. Therefore, in comparison to the Western world, Muslim societies are supposed to rely more on tradition because of religious beliefs and social norms. In this regard, B. Senem Çevik (2014, p.18) states: “When it comes to the Arab Middle East, it would be fair to suggest that the broader population uphold religious values and is very traditional”. However, it is complicated to clearly define the religious and the cultural tradition boundaries of social organization in the Middle East and Northern African countries as “the two are intertwined and have been implicit in the production of social norms for centuries. Each has influenced the other” (Desiree Bryan, 2012, p.2).

According to Meili Criezis (2018, p.13), Algerian Muslim women during the French colonization in the early 1950s argued that Algerian women need to be freed from certain conservative customs. Some dominant figures of the “l’Union Democratique du Manifeste Algérien (JUDEMA)” talked about gender restrictions and the desired liberation from traditionally patriarchal and religious Algerian customs. In this regard, Fadila Ahmed, an Algerian feminist, writes:

We Algerian women have two jailors: colonialism...and those listless beings who cling to the customs and traditions inherited, not from Islam, but from their ignorant fathers. The second jailor is worse than the first. (cited in Criezis, 2018, p.15)

According to E. Fuat Keyman (2007, pp.218-223), the process of secularisation in Turkey entails an institutional split of the political and religious spheres, in which religion is decoupled from the state's power and legitimacy. As I have discussed earlier, Turkish identity during the rule of the AKP combines a moderate Islamic identity combined and a liberal free-market economy. Keyman states: "Today, it is not possible to think of Turkish modernity without reference to Islam. Nor is it possible to think of Turkish secularism as uncontested". The reliance of modern Turkish national identity on secularism allows it to present itself as a modernized nation that deserves to be a member of the European society and Islam: Keyman concludes that secularism needs to be secured because it is the constitutive ground for Turkish modernity. However, the relationship between modernised representation of identity in TV dramas and Islam is quite complex. Abdulrazzaq and Badr (2008) and Salha (2010) as cited in Marwan Kraidy and Omar Al-Ghazzi (2013, p.7), note that the relationship between Turkish TV production and Islam was always controversial. They note that the secular imagery and the depiction of Western values in those TV productions does not reflect the real lives of Muslims both in Turkey and the Arab world. Salha (2010) makes the case that these TV dramas present "a distorted image of Western values, which secular Turkey is trying to imitate". Despite including Islamic customs and traditions such as fasting Ramadhan and following some Muslim religious rituals at funerals and weddings. Besides the Islamic religious expressions such as Maşallah (wow! that's great), İnşallah (God willing), and Salamu Aliakmon (Hello) by Turkish characters in both dubbed and subtitled versions that sound natural, Arab Muslim conservative clerics see them as harmful for Muslim society.

The complex relationship between secularism and religious attitudes or modernization and tradition through the consumption of foreign soap operas can be seen in many studies. Benjamin M. Han (2019, p.39) finds that Korean TV dramas since 2000 became popular in Latin American countries such as Mexico and Brazil. According to him, this international success extended beyond the cultural novelty of Korean texts, and it is mainly about how these TV dramas offer a lived experience of social class struggles as a significant aspect of modernity. M. Han points out that social class struggles are created between TV drama protagonists in which a high social class male falls in love with a woman from a lower class. The relationship of the poor female protagonist with the rich man allows her to escape emotionally and financially, thus transforming her into a modern woman: “K-dramas use the conventional modes of melodrama to offer a lived experience of social class as an important part of the modernization process. In doing so, K-dramas also address the tension between the modern and tradition embodied in the characters”.

According to M. Han, the Korean drama entitled *The Secret Garden* represents the hero as a modern and cosmopolitan person who is financially independent. At the same time, the female protagonist is portrayed as weak and pure with traditional values that are not tainted by the forces of modernity while she climbs the social ladder. He illustrates: “modernity in the form of consumerism and capitalism is embodied in the male protagonist while Confucian virtues such as filial piety and purity are enshrined in the female protagonist” (see M. Han, 2019, p.44). Similarly, Mesirin Kwanjai’s study on the reception of Thai soap operas in Laos, for example, showed how Thai soap operas contributed to the hybridization of Lao women viewers’ identity and detraditionalized them to some extent from their traditional family structure. Lao females internalized the modern values shown in the Thai TV series by buying fashionable clothes and changing their perception of feminine beauty. Hence, they expressed their desire for white skin colour, use of cosmetic surgeries, and intimate relationships, which

led the Lao government to express concerns about the issue of identity hybridization and the erosion of traditional culture (see Mesirin Kwanjai, 2018).

In Muslim countries, despite the traditional characters of the audiences, the Western and modern style of Turkish soap operas is likely to be welcomed by audiences. For instance, new values, behaviours, and habits are replacing the old cultural ones of Kurdish women after watching the Turkish soap operas *Noor* which lead to an ambiguous identity. Hamasaheed Hussain (2011, p.258) explains: “Kurdish women have largely been affected by this impact, which has generated an ambiguous identity for them in formatting their identities based on the behaviour of the soaps’ characters and qualities”. Statistically, during the summer of 2008, the romantic drama known *Noor* dominated social life in much of the Arab world. Media reports estimated that 3 to 5 million viewers watched the program each evening, and 85 million turned to the final episode (see Christina Salamandra, 2012, pp.6-9). Regarding the aspect of modernity depicted in *Noor*, Salamandra elaborates:

Reports in both the Arabic language and Western news media argued that *Noor* went where Arab television drama never dared in depicting independent career women, equitable marital relationships, extramarital sex, drinking, and abortion—phenomena often associated with modernization, westernization, and more recently, globalization.

Eylem Yanardağoğlu and Imad N. Karam (2013, p.10) define modernization in the Arab discourse as something associated with the Western and authority of colonial power, therefore, as something to be rejected and aspired to at the same time. Similarly, Arab women used *Noor* to express their desire and aspiration for modernity, masculinity, elite family, gender equality, and romance. Media experts and journalists suggest the missing romance in Arab marriages could be the primary reason behind the popularity of this TV drama. The Egyptian blogger Shirien demonstrates:

Most women who watch the show watch it because of this strikingly handsome guy, “Mohannad.” Most will also tell you they never liked the blond hair look because they all wanted the tall dark and handsome guy. Well, to them the only exception to that rule is “Mr. Mohannad”. (ibid, p.12)

Regarding gender equality in the Arab world, Arab female audiences perhaps witness that Turkish women participate more in professional life. *Noor* has become a locus of tension for conservatives Muslims because of shifting gender roles and relationships. Christina Salamandra argues: “the *Noor* phenomenon created a forum where conflicting notions of Middle Eastern identity, sexual agency and gender relations vie [sic] for dominance” (2012, p.45). Modernity in gender relations, for instance, in *Noor*, was highly related to sexual liberation and extramarital sexual freedom. In this TV drama, the two main female characters, Muhannad’s sister Dana and his cousin (Bana), can be seen as controversial figures for Arab conservatives. Dana represents the independent woman who returns from New York with a female child by an unknown father and Bana falling pregnant outside of marriage and getting an abortion.

In Dizi TV series, romance plays an essential part of modernity for both genders that seem to attract Arab female viewers. The leading male character, for instance, often shows romantic gestures such as proposing for marriage, bringing flowers, openly expressing their love, and fighting to defend it against other men. However, romance among the series’ protagonists Noor and Muhannad has been criticized for increasing divorce rates in the Middle East countries as women compare their real-life husbands to the Turkish TV star and, as Muhannad. Çevik (2014, p.20) attributes this to the fact that “romance is a traditionally disregarded aspect of the traditional Middle Eastern family makeup”. Therefore, Arab conservatives voiced alarm over the affection of Arab women to the series’ and how they compared their husbands to the physical appearances of the male protagonist. According to

Salamandra “a husband divorced his wife after they had a heated argument about the actor while watching the series, [...]the wife reportedly told her husband: ‘I want to sleep with Muhannad for only one night and die afterwards’” (p.7).

Modernity in Turkish TV dramas also includes fashion trends, hairstyles and colouring, headscarf styles, and tattoos. Amer Aljammazi and Hilal Asil (2017, p.218) find that Saudi viewers’ perceptions about Turkish fashion and clothes had a positive influence on their attitudes towards Turkey: “the Saudi people are interested in the Turkish drama [...]. They also have a positive attitude in purchasing these clothes”. To sum up, Dizi TV series assimilate modernity and traditionalism in one product. They represent Islamic norms, patriarchal society, conservatism whilst, at the same time being a source of inspiration of some extraneous and confounding Western ideologies that can influence Arab Muslim females’ principles. The following section will offer a brief historical backdrop for the sample of this study (Algerian females) to gain an understanding of how they protested against gender inequalities and marginalization through the demands of the abrogation of Algeria’s Family Code that gives the privilege to males over females. Unlike females of the post-colonial era, feminism for contemporary Algerian females, including my sample, focuses on how gender shapes the whole social world more than the roles or positions of males and females.

### **3.5. Algerian Feminist Movements**

The primary idea of feminism is that women have been oppressed in society because of their gender. Thus, feminist movements arose because of the dissatisfaction with postcolonial governments' gendered politics. In the Arab world many female writers authored influential books about Arab and North African feminism focusing on controversial topics such as honor, sexuality, and religion. Fatema Mernissi, for instance, the founder of Islamic feminism wrote

a detailed feminist literature that has had an impact in the Maghreb regions and beyond. In her books *The Veil and The Male Elite* (1975) and *Beyond the Veil* (1987), Mernissi sparked a new generation of Islamic exegete study that debunks the contradiction between a so-called Western human rights discourse and an Islamic discourse portrayed as patriarchal and misogynistic at its core. Her Islamic exegesis presented a critical interpretation of religious texts, highlighting women's previous positions and significance within Islam. She argued that Western imperialist conceptions such as gender equality and democratic principles were imposed on the Muslim world. While Islam was founded on the principle of the equality of all believers regardless of their sex, ethnic background, or social origin (Mernissi 1987, p. 42). Therefore, she reinterpreted and contextualised Islam as an egalitarian revolution for women, rejecting the antiquated male-elite consensus that emphasises earlier interpretations of Islamic sacred texts. Her interpretations influenced and inspired a generation of exegete scholars across the globe, as well as Muslim feminist scholars like Leila Ahmed who address the same phenomenon, under the term Islamic feminism.

Arab and Muslim family conservativeness, male dominance, and gender roles tackled by Mernissi have been also tackled in several Turkish TV series that focuses on women's topics such as marginalization, violence, rape, and traditional gender roles. For instance, the Turkish TV drama *Fatmagül'ün Suçu ne?* (*What's Fatmagül's Fault?*) broadcasted in 2010 narrates the social and psychological sufferings of a young girl who had been raped by four drunk men, forced to remain silent, and marry one of her rapists (Karim) to preserve her family's honor. From a feminist perspective, the rape victim turned into a powerful woman challenging familial and social pressure. Fatmagul stood up on her feet again with the help of Maryam (Karim's adoptive mother) who found her while she was picking herbs and helped her to make her voice heard and fight to confront her abusers. Filmmaker Nina Maria Paschalidou (2013) directed a documentary film entitled *Kismet: How Soap Operas Changed the World*,

exposing the influence of Turkish soap operas on women across the Arab world and beyond. She interviewed a group of Arab females from different countries such as Egypt and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), wherein they shared that the Turkish TV drama *What Is Fatmagul's Fault* inspired them to speak out and break their silence realizing that they are not alone.

According to June Hannam (2007), feminism suggests a range of social, political, and ideological movements that have been attached to women's rights such as the gender pay gap and equal employment rights. Enlightenment and the French revolution, besides the influence of Mary Wollstonecraft's book titled *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792), paved the way for the emergence of the feminist movement of the twentieth century (2007, p.4). Feminist movements took place from the late 19 century to the present day. There are three main types of feminism: liberal, radical, and Marxist feminism. Liberal feminists aimed to liberate the society from patriarchal throwbacks in law and culture, "investing in legal, educational and media strategies as a form of feminist civilising process as well as lobbying the state for formal equality within the public sphere". In contrast, radical feminist seeks to deconstruct patriarchy instead of seeking legal reforms to the system. Marxist feminists, on the other hand, advocate that "gender oppression will be overcome with the end of capitalism and class society" (Sara Motta et al., 2011, pp.5-6).

For the Third World and post colonized northern African countries such as Algeria, postcolonial feminism is concerned with representing females and bringing to light issues they faced. Unlike Western feminism, postcolonial feminism or 'Third World feminism' "emerged in response to Western mainstream feminism" (Raj Kumar Mishra, 2013, p.1). Feminists of postcolonial eras had different lives, experiences, and circumstances from those of Western women. Even though women in the Middle East and Northern African countries live in dissimilar conditions such as geography, economic conditions, social classes, religious

affiliations, nationalities, and linguistic communities, they share almost the same feminist concerns. The Arab feminist movement (since 1945) focused on political and social issues that affect the development of Arab societies, such as nationalism and liberation against colonial ideologies through addressing the social and humanistic consequences of colonialism.

For Arab women, raising feminist awareness goes back to the 19th century, when female authors, activists, politicians, and lawyers sought to support women's struggles during the political and economic instability in those regions. Ghida Ladkani (2015) lists 11 inspirational Arab women who made a difference in the Arab world. For example, the Egyptian journalist Mona Eltahawy, considers herself a radical, secular, and Muslim feminist interested in women's rights and feminism working with Islam. Similarly, Nawal El Saadawi, a psychiatrist, physician, writer, and activist, her book titled *Woman and Sex* (1972) has been approved as a foundational text for second-wave feminism in the Arab world. She is also the founder of "The Arab Women's Solidarity Association" and the co-founder of "The Arab Association for Human Rights". It is worth mentioning that even Arab men defended women's rights like the Egyptian writer Qasim Amin who has been historically viewed as one of the Arab world's first feminists known for his women's emancipation through several publications such as *The Liberation of Woman* (1899).

In Northern African countries like Algeria, feminist movements and women's activism faced several challenges in the postcolonial era. According to Zahia Smail Salhi (2009, p.114), the birth and development of the Algerian feminist movements were in the 1940s during the French colonization. Salhi cites Mahfoud Bennoune's (1990, pp.40-46) description of Algerian women's suffering during French colonization, confirming that they were kept as hostages or treated like animals. Valentine M. Moghadam (2016, p.464) mentions that the history of the feminist movement in the Maghreb dates back between the 1960s and 1980s

when Algerian women started creating women's rights organizations, and soon afterward in Tunisia and Morocco aiming to struggle for egalitarian family laws and clientship for women wherein some of these rights have been achieved in the early 1990s. Lynn Maalouf (2003, p.20) explains the reasons for the revolution of Maghreb females. She states: "women in the Maghreb and the Arab world at large are usually represented as inferior, submissive and dependent, living in a male-dominated, patriarchal society".

These reasons pushed Algerian, Moroccan, and Tunisian feminists to form the 'Collective 95 Maghreb Égalité' which was established in 1992 by a group of feminist intellectuals and activists. This organization sought to realize equality between man and woman and strengthen the culture of equality between genders. Maalouf proclaims: "in its current program, the CMÉ 95 proposes to fight against inheritance inequality seen as a system of male domination and the impoverishment of women. It aims to raise a social debate around this issue and to initiate a reform of the legislation" (My translation, see Dorra Mahfoudh, 2014, p.132). Zahra Zarif, Djamila Bouhaid, Fatima al-Nesumar, and many other Algerian women took part in the liberation of Algeria against the French colonization between 1830 and 1962. They revolutionized and spoke up against anti-colonial oppression, domination, and violence. Algerian women played a heroic role alongside men in rural and urban areas during the independence period (1954-1962) and the construction of new Algeria from 1962 until the present day. Amrane-Minne and Abu-Haidar (1999, pp.1-2) argue that during the Algerian liberation period, around 10,949 fighting women joined the National Liberation Army or Civil Organizations as fighters, 3.1% of them were active combats, this percentage represents approximately the same percentage of European women who took part in the Second World War. They were members of civil resistance who planted bombs among French army gatherings and in confidential military operations such as shipping letters, food parcels, and smuggling weapons from one region to another. Despite their influential role in the social

sectors in that era, they were excluded from public life and forced to work as farmers, domestic servants, and traders. Amrane-Minne and Abu-Haidar (1999, p.02) state that:

In 1954, Algerian women were totally excluded from public life. Nearly all illiterate, with only 4.5% among them able to read and write, they did not have access to the world of work except in the sectors that did not demand professional qualifications.

They worked as nurses and paramedic assistants to save the lives of wounded combatants inside and outside cities. Algerian women were also supposed to take care of their families and children, cook, and sewing for Algerian army centres. Aicha Kemmas clarifies that women sometimes were cooking and keep watching over Algerian soldiers all night. Through time their strong desire to get freedom and equality pushed them to immerse themselves in political resolutions and activities to organize and participate in fateful decisions like manifestations and elections (see Amrane-Minne and Abu-Haidar,1999, p.03). Despite the French colonial abuses, Algerian females resisted and fought to protect their identity by holding their religious principles and cultural values. The use of the veil, for instance, was established as a religious and cultural symbol of the struggle against colonialism. According to Frantz Fanon (1959, pp.1-6), French administration officials tried to destroy the identity of Algerians, so they focused on women's headscarves, as it was considered a symbol of resistance and battle. He explains that the colonial administration invested enormous sums in this war supposing that woman constituted the pivot of the Algerian society, so to strike against Algerian society in its context and its power of resistance, they should have first control over the Algerian women. Fanon elaborates: "we must first conquer women; we must look for them behind the veil where they hide and, in the houses, where man hides them" stressing that Algerian women's rape in the dream of a European is always preceded by taking the veil away by force (Fanon, 1959, p.3, my translation).

After Algeria's independence, women were expected to return to the Algerian traditional roles of wife and mother. Danièle Djamila Amrane-Minne and Farida Abu-Haidar (1999, p.2) affirm Algerian women were excluded from public life. They had no access to the world of labour since they were nearly all illiterate, with just 4.5% able to read and write. They could only work in sectors that did not demand professional skills: "there were no more than six women doctors, 25 women teachers at secondary schools and none in Higher education. The University of Algiers had no more than 500 Algerian students, among whom were about 50 girls". Acknowledging the role of the Algerian women in the war of independence has been hardly accepted by soldiers and leaders. For example, all those who took part in the battle for liberation were called upon to create the new state. Only 10 women out of 194 members attended the first National Assembly meeting. Zahia Ismail Salhi (2003, p.2) points out that Algerian women rebelled on two fronts during the national liberation struggle: one was against France's colonial domination of Algeria, and the other was against the restricted traditions of the Algerian society.

The Algerian political nationalist party National Liberation Front (FLN) argued for women's equality and independence and criticized 'the retrograde mentality about women's role'. The equality between males and females was affirmed in Article 12 of Algeria's first Constitution (1963) emphasizing that all citizens, regardless of gender, have the same rights and responsibilities. However, this idea has been welcomed by a small percentage of the population while conservative forces attempted to limit women's rights insisting that this reformulation makes Algerian women distanced from Islam and that the application of the Islamic rules should construct Islamic society. Hence, the Algerian government legislated another family and women's code based on Sharia (Islamic traditions) which would frame women's position in Algeria. The first Algerian President Ahmed Ben Bella after Algeria's independence reinforced the idea of an Arabo-Islamic country that constrained women again

to the domestic sphere, preventing them from participating in any sports, in addition to the adoption of polygamy as suggested by the committee of ulémas (Islam scholars) (see Margaret A. Majumdar and Mohammad Saad, 2005, pp.63-66). In 1965, the former president Houari Boumediene (the second Algerian president after independence) declared: “women have got to where they are by their own efforts...and have earned their rights in this society”, however, this freedom had to be kept pure from the Western influence. According to Gordon David (1969, pp.77-78), President Boumediene insists that women’s freedom does not signify that they should imitate Western women in any way:

We say “no” to this type of evolution, for our society is an Islamic and a socialist society [...] We are in favour of the evolution and the progress of women . . . But this evolution must not be the cause of the corruption of our society[...]The evolution of the Algerian woman and the enjoyment of her rights must be in the framework of the morality of our society. (cited in Leila Ahmed, 1982, p.165)

Therefore, he introduced a new draft of the family code aiming to change the imposed traditional and inferior roles attributed to women. According to Caroline Rohloff (2012, pp.2-3), women's conditions continued to improve steadily, particularly through the creation of educational opportunities. But then again, the post-Presidential Boumediene’s term was marked by a conservative movement at women’s expense. For instance, the government of the new President Chadli Bendjedid announced the recreation of the Family Code draft that prevents Algerian women from going abroad without the permission of a guardian (father, husband, and brother). Moreover, the Algerian civil war between 1991 to 2002 brought oppression, violence, and marginalization urging women to apply pressure to the Algerian government and society to recognize and enforce their legal rights. Bendjedid’s wish to prevent women from going abroad unaccompanied might be connected to the fear against feminist independence that Algerian women can encounter in the West. Majumdar and Saad

state that the Algerian women's movement has been influenced by Western feminism through their experience in studying abroad or migration.

In the same context, Salhi (2009, pp.4-8) finds that the Algerian feminist movement in the early years of post-colonial Algeria can be categorized into three categories depending on periods of emergence, conditions, and circumstances: nationalism, patriarchy, and Islamism. These movements according to her, are in between two ideological fractions: the liberal and the conservative fraction. The liberal faction, on the one hand, advocate for the growth of women's rights and their incorporation into the government's development plan, while the conservative side promotes cultural authenticity and the revival of Islamic cultural values. The resurrection of the national Algerian feminist movement according to Salhi refers to the recognition of Algerian women that the Algerian revolution has used them but did not support them to become independent citizens and be equal with men. They recognized they were misled by nationalism as “at the eve of independence Algerian women found themselves in the position of losing ground to their male compatriots, whose camaraderie and trust built up during the years of struggle against colonialism they still relied on” (Salhi, 2009, p.8). The feminist movement against patriarchy, on the other hand, relates to women's engagement in the struggle for independence, which was the primary force for change, not just in terms of women's roles but also in terms of how these women challenged patriarchal power. Finally, the Islamist feminist movement protests against the fundamentalists who were harassing and threatening women they believed were dressed improperly. Salhi elaborates:

Islamists imposed veiling on women, forced segregation between boys and girls in some schools and deprived schoolgirls of physical education. They attacked women on the street for dressing ‘indecently’ and threw acid on their bodies. They intimidated people on beaches and swimming pools and interfered with cultural life in general. (p.10)

The restricted traditions, backward mentalities, patriarchal society, and the government's broken promises in granting Algerian women's social and political rights forced them to protest and fight to get equality with men and full citizenship. According to Valentine M. Moghadam (2016, p.1), the development of women's organizations and the growth of Arab and Algerian feminist movements are linked to the enhancement of demographic factors such as the age of females' marriage which rose in all countries, the decrease of family size, and their participation in the paid workforces. These factors offer them opportunities to be modern women, autonomous, and empowered to join other public activities and social services. Regarding the political and the economic factors, he points out that the growth of a movement for democratization, the inefficiency, and/or the failure of governments in some areas such as female illiteracy, reproductive health, and social wellbeing pushed the non-governmental organizations to act and focus women's status and welfare.

Algerian feminism also reflects Algerian women's awareness of what's happened around them, so they were characterized by two types of social activists: the superstructure activist who focuses the ideological change of society and the infrastructure social activists, including women who act more on the basis of society. Their primary goal is to release a stronger force of female labour considering that the advancement of women is attached to her employment, such as The National Association for the Protection and Promotion of Woman and Girl (1990) and The Association of Algerian Women for Development (1999) (see Djamila Belhouari-Musette, 2000, pp.2-3).

In 1999, when Abdelaziz Bouteflika was elected president, he promised to address problems faced by women. During his presidential term, the radical Islamism that caused political violence and threatened Algerians and their national security, especially women was defeated. In 2005, President Bouteflika revised the Family Code and made some amendments to it. In this regard, Rachid Tlemçani (2016, pp.244-245) explains: "the amended clauses granted

women more rights in terms of divorce and housing, reduced the role of a woman's male guardian to largely symbolic status, and ensured Algerian women's right to transmit citizenship to their children". However, in 2015, on the occasion of International Women's Day, he suggested to abolishing the Family Code entirely as it does not support equality between men and women. In the same context, he acknowledges the active and positive role of women in public spheres. Tlemçani illustrates: "women's participation is more significant than men's in the crucial sectors of health and education. Other sectors, such as the judicial apparatus are also becoming increasingly feminized (38 % of attorneys are women)".

Women's rights enacted during the Presidential term of President Bouteflika removed the burden from the shoulders of contemporary female activists as it reduces violence against women, discrimination, and preserves them from abusive patriarchal traditions. It also offered them the freedom and the potentiality to take part in the Algerian parliament, ministries, administrations, and other social and economic workspaces and to find expressions in literature and the arts<sup>10</sup>. For instance, thousands of contemporary Algerian females joined the Hirak marches between 2019-2020, wherein Algerians protest against the fifth presidential term of the former president Bouteflika. Women of all generations were in the forefront of the demonstrations. They also established groups to demand to be part of the political conversations. Melyssa Haffaf (2019) explains:

The participation of women in the street protests today is particularly inspiring. Women joined the marches, and a feminist group even established a "feminist square" by the gates of the downtown campus of the University

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<sup>10</sup> Assia Djebar, for instance, is an Algerian writer and director. She is the founder of the Algerian feminist movement; she was known for her feminine writing style. Most of her works discussed the sufferance of Muslim women and the role of women in decolonizing Algeria. Djebar seeks to correct the omission of female viewpoints throughout Arabian history. She, therefore, tackled a variety of subjects like parents' authority and restrictions imposed on Algerian Muslim females (Alison Flood, 2015). Similarly, Zehor Wanasi an Algerian author and politician, is known for her short stories such as *The Sleeping Sidewalk*, *Extended Shadows*, and *Old Men of the Moon* highlighting the ambiguous relationships between men and women.

of Algiers. The group, composed of Algerian women of all generations, published a declaration arguing that building a new Algerian republic is inconceivable without guaranteeing equal rights to all citizens.

For Algerian women, things have certainly improved in different spheres such as industry and government. They are more independent and autonomous in social life. They have many opportunities like men in Entrepreneurship, parliament, ministry, and journalism. In this study, I suggest that my sample is composed of women who might carry feminist ideas. Feminist ideologies of contemporary Algerian females are associated with modernity and individuality inspired by Turkish TV series. Nina Maria Paschalidou (2013) notices that Arab females find a voice in Turkish soap operas and that these TV series are a new tool for empowerment. For example, one of Paschalidou's interviewees, 54-year-old Samar, a Lebanese woman living in the United Arab Emirates, was inspired by the Turkish TV drama *Noor* which revealed to her that marriage is an equal partnership between the couple rather than the domination of man, her experience with the unbalanced marriage roles forced her to search for a divorce lawyer. Nonetheless, gender portrayals in Dizi TV series sometimes promote gendered stereotypes and how masculinity and femininity should be performed.

Elif Kiran (2016, p.247) analyses gender stereotypes focusing on female representation in two Turkish soap operas entitled *Eşkiya Dünyaya Hükümdar Olmaz (The Brigand Don't Rule the World)* and *Hayat Şarkısı (The Song of Life)*. Kiran finds that the overall depictions of females require obedience of the wife to her husband and an obedient daughter-in-law to her husband's family. He argues: "they expect her to manage with the experience of betrayal and to continue her marriage with her husband as if nothing abnormal have happened". These TV dramas also depict mothers as someone who sacrifice everything for their children "they go through fire and water for their child/children". The final section will discuss gender roles, performances, and how mass media can empower or undermine women's roles in society.

### 3.6. Gender Performances, Gender Stereotypes, and Imagined Communities

This thesis also draws on ideas from the fields of gender and performance studies. Gender studies emerged towards the end of the second feminist wave and focused on sociological and cultural analysis of sexuality and gender identity. One of the key references in this field is Judith Butler (1990) who proposed that masculinity and femininity can be distinguished by studying their everyday performances that conform to specific gender expectations and behaviours across time. In other words, performance offers the opportunity to express the ideal role of gender and that without performativity there will be no gender, so gender can be read as socially constructed and performed. Butler comes up with a unique sense which differentiates performativity from performance according to their nature. She (1999, p. xv) notes: “performativity is not a singular act, but a repetition and a ritual, which achieves its effects through its naturalization in the context of a body, understood, in part, as a culturally sustained temporal duration”. In her essay *Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory* (1988) she differentiates between sex and gender, arguing that sex is a biological facticity and identifies gender as a cultural interpretation of signification based on biological sex. Her idea of gender performance is that neither sex nor gender are entirely natural, and both are performed and naturalized through time. Hence, human beings behave, walk, and talk in a way that reinforces the concept of being a man or a woman. She illustrates:

Gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed. [...]Gender reality is created through sustained social performances means that the very notions of an essential sex, a true or abiding masculinity or femininity, are also constituted as part of the strategy by which the performative aspect of gender is concealed. (pp.10-11)

For performance studies scholar Richard Schechner (2002, p. 31), performance is the conscious act in distinct areas such as ritual, sex, everyday life, sports, technology, and popular entertainment where the performer is aware of the performed actions. Schechner (2002, p.28) distinguishes different genres of performance. The most relevant ones to this thesis are art performance, business performance, and everyday life performance. According to Schechner, to perform is to put on a show, a play, a dance, or a concert, for those who are watching. Dizi TV series, for instance, used a variety of soft power tools for the attraction and gratification of audiences. They integrate attractive actors, music, and fashion to show their culture, history, and traditions to the entire world. As a result, Turkish TV series' audiences, internalise and perform aspects they watched in those series by buying Turkish clothes, accessories, furniture, and imitating actors' lifestyles. They also visit their favourite TV drama filming locations, learning the Turkish language, and downloading Turkish songs. Eylem Yanardağoğlu and İmad N. Karam (2013, p.14) note that the appeal of Turkish soap operas in the Arab world is an economic and cultural phenomenon and those Arab audiences are attracted to Turkey by watching these TV shows, and this attraction is regarded as one of the components of soft power.

For Dizi TV series performance, mainly the advertisement of the Turkish culture and audience's performance, including the consumption of Turkish products. It can be argued that gender performativity suggested by Butler and art, business, and everyday life performance proposed by Schechner can be all assembled on one sociocultural notion coined by Victor Turner (1987), which is 'cultural performance'. Turner (1987, p.28) argues that performance can refer to social drama, literature, theatre, and rituals. He says: "one phase of the social drama, in particular, deserves attention as a generative source of cultural performances". Therefore, the current study focuses on Dizi TV dramas as a cultural performance that transfers Turkish popular culture to viewers from different nationalities, cultural backgrounds,

and ethnic groups. In addition, it also seeks to identify how and to what extent they influence Algerian females' everyday performance.

According to Schechner, performing in business is to do something up to a standard to succeed and excel. In this regard, Sobia Ghous et al. (2020) investigate the power of electronic media such as TV dramas, news, and advertisements in affecting buying behaviours of Pakistani females aged 15 years and above, including housemakers, students, and employees. The data shows that most participants were influenced by products' advertisements shown on media platforms and bought a lot of them. Moreover, the exposed thin ideal bodies of female actresses and stars in TV shows can influence female consumers' performances with their body shape wherein they change their consumption behaviours in order to achieve the ideal bodies they saw in those TV programs. Eric Stice et al. (1994, p. 836) find a direct relationship between media and eating disorder symptoms as media have a negative impact on how women view their bodies and create unrealistic standards of body image and weight that they internalise. The results demonstrate that even if female audiences are satisfied with their bodies, they suffer from eating disorders to maintain a low weight and that their body's shape perception changed, so they internalize that thinness is necessary (see Gregory Fouts and Kimberley Burggraf, 1999, pp. 473-476).

In the same context, Dizi TV series are promoting Turkish tourism and culture for its audiences. For instance, the Pakistani youth get fashion inspiration from Turkish TV dramas characters' appearance, hairstyles, and clothing (see Raza Waqas Ahmad et al. 2020, p.15). Leila Bukhari (2020) states that the Pakistani President Imran Khan aims to promote the Turkish historical TV drama *Diriliş Ertuğrul* in order to boost Islamic values and culture: "Throughout the country, jewellers and designers alike have adhered to current trends and have adopted symbols and influences of Turkish fashion in their work". According to The Turkish Statistical Institute, Turkey welcomed 51.9 million visitors in 2019. Another study

carried by Istanbul Economic Research in the U.S., India, Australia, Brazil, France, Sweden, Argentina, and Saudi Arabia on audiences and non-audiences of Turkish soap operas shows that 54% of participants are willing to visit Turkey for tourism (*Daily Sabah*, 2020). Simon Hudson and J. R. B Rent Ritchie (2006, p.389) deliberate the performative role of films in increasing tourism in the UK, such as *Braveheart* filmed in Wallace Monument, Scotland (UK), *Harry Potter* filmed in different locations in the UK, *Pride and Prejudice* filmed in Lyme Park in Cheshire (UK). Hudson and Ritchie conclude that films and TV shows are attractive and modern marketing tools that improve destination image and increase the number of tourists.

Gender performances on TV shows are often studied with gender stereotypes. According to United Nations Human Rights (2014, p.1), a gender stereotype is a generalized positive and/or negative belief or preconception about the qualities, characteristics, and roles that women and men should or should not have or perform. Traci Gillig et al. (2015, p .1-14) examine portrayals of gender, race, LGTBQ status from 2007 to 2014 in over 700 popular Western films. They find that the male gender is depicted in a more positive way than women. According to their study, women appear less frequently than men in media, usually sexualized with limited roles on the screen and behind the camera. They state that male sexualization is significantly lower than female sexualization, with no change in trends between 2007 and 2014. While the depiction of male characters in sexy attire or exposed bodies does not exceed 11.7% in 2014, 27.7% of females were shown in sexualized attire in the same year. They argue: “females were more likely than males to be young adults, sexualized, and shown in domesticated roles such as parents and relational partner”.

Similarly, in Turkish TV series gender stereotypes focus on women’s negative portrayals, and rarely on the positive. For E. Sinem Kasimoğlu and Mustafa Ufuk Çelik (2019, p.7), the stereotypical image of TV series female characters can be described as follows: “The female

characters are portrayed as powerless, weak, whinny, under male dominance, or class- and power-focused, wealthy, ambitious, dominant, intriguing and with beautiful physicalities". The authors explore women's roles portrayed in domestic TV dramas and compare them to the real-life women's figure, from women's perspective, throughout interviewing 10 women professionals. Results show that there are few similarities between the TV drama female character and the real-life figures. Respondents agree that female characters' roles reflect exaggerated and unpleasant emotions. At the same time, they prefer autonomous and financially independent women characters.

In a similar vein, Sevda Melek Sancar (2017, pp.50-51) uses the content analysis method to explore how women are portrayed in Turkish TV series. She, therefore, analyses three Turkish TV dramas, which are *Kalbimdeki Deniz (Second Chance)*, *Aşk ve Mavi (Love and Blue)*, and *Anne (The Mother)*. The findings show that 55% of female characters have a significant role compared to 45% of the major roles for males, while, for minor roles, female characters accounted for 49% and males 51%. Nevertheless, these soap operas do not challenge the traditional status of women in Turkish society. Most women are described as housemakers who do not enter higher education, with a restricted social circle limited to their family members and other women in the neighborhood where they live. Data also demonstrate that while those females also endorse modernity, they are not allowed to break free from patriarchal gender stereotypes. Sancar explains:

Women representations in Turkish TV serials show that in every three television serials women are being represented in the traditional context with dominant patriarchal values that already exist in Turkish society. [...] the mission of women is bounded with to manage the housework/house holding and to be a good wife/mother. (p.59)

Arab female viewers watch Turkish TV dramas looking for modernity, equal opportunities with males, independence, and autonomy. These social and psychological motives give rise to

a particular type of political community and nationalism as they begin to imagine their relationship with one another in new ways. Benedict Anderson suggested the umbrella term “imagined communities” to refer to imagined political nations and communities. He explains: “[the nation] is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (1983, p.6). He contends that through everyday practices we feel a sense of inclusion and attachment across time and space with those individuals whom we have not met yet but aspire to meet one day. Anderson focuses print culture such as novels and newspapers in establishing a modern nation. As a matter of fact, there are a few empirical studies on national audiences conceived as imagined communities (Benedict Anderson; 1988 and Alexander Dhoest; 2012).

However, this research attempts to explore the role of modern mass media focusing on the function of audio-visual media culture in shaping of the imagined nation and identity and in particular, how Turkish TV series create an imagined community for its Arab female viewers despite their distinct nationalities, dialects, and cultural backgrounds, and how they encourage them to perceive themselves as part of that group. In this study, the imagined Arab nation and identity are linked to shared culture and language, historical experiences, religion, and geographical continuity of Arab countries. Imagined national Arab females’ identity also refers to the discourse between liberalism and traditionalism. According to Alexander Dhoest (2012, p.2), television audiences are called imagined or interpretative communities using television to develop or reinforce their group identities. Dhoest discusses the reception of television fiction by the ethnic majority and minority viewers in Flanders. These ethnic groups include Dutch people, black people of African descent, Jews, Turks, and Moroccans. He uses semi-structured interviews and in-depth interviews to analyse whether domestic fiction was part of sharing Flemish culture and whether they use it to construct a sense of

identity. Their data showed that all ethnic groups agreed on the preferred channels and programs; they all watched American entertainment TV shows on the same Flemish channel except Turks who watched their 'own' Turkish programs. He argues that this majority and minority groups created an imagined community and national identity through television programs even though they were heterogeneous.

In the same way, Arab female audiences were watching the same program simultaneously, on the same TV channel and the same dubbed dialect, thus sharing a similar experience, which creates a sense of community. I have argued in chapter 2 that Dizi TV series entered the Arab media market due to cultural proximity to the Arab culture. At the same time, Arab audiences were looking for something that combined modern and traditional ideas which correspond to their religion and culture, not like American soap operas, Brazilian, and Mexican telenovelas in order to compensate for the cinematic shortage of local dramas. As mentioned earlier, the final episode of the romantic TV drama *Noor* has been watched by 55 million Arab females. It could be argued that this drama created an imagined community and a new national identity and made Arab women connect with each other through imagining belonging to the same Arab nation.

For Etienne Wenger (1998, p.176), imagination is a method of self-expansion that involves transcending time and space to create new visions of the world and oneself. Correspondingly, Algerian females Turkish soap operas viewers may imagine and recognize themselves as members of the international Dizi TV series audiences' community, and those TV dramas are seen as the primary means of facilitating this belonging. Many factors in Dizi TV dramas contribute to the construction of imagined Arab females' identity, such as modernity, patriarchal and traditional Arab family laws, women empowerment, Muslim identity, and the Syrian dialect used in the dubbing process.

It could be argued that Arab females feel close towards *Noor*, wherein family ties and patriarchy are a part of the series. As Arab societies, this TV drama shows the domination of the wise head of the family; in *Noor*, the grandfather Fekry Bey. Furthermore, the radical shift of the heroine *Noor* from the poor and unschooled female to a successful fashion designer and her efforts to be autonomous and powerful seems to embed aspirations of many Arab females, and that take part in the construction of a collective identity. Moreover, the Syrian dialect and MBC have challenged the traditional use of Standard Arabic (MSA) in dubbing Mexican telenovelas. They unified North African and Middle Eastern Arab females despite their different ages, educational backgrounds, and dialects. To sum up, the media seem to promote stereotypical representations of gender roles and performances, reinforcing traditional patriarchal notions of gender, where females are often underrepresented. At the same time, they can play a significant role in social change using their power to shift public opinion about gender rights, duties, and stereotypes by constructing an imagined community with a unified national identity.

### **3.7. Conclusion**

This chapter provided an overview of postcolonial and contemporary Algerian feminism. It clarifies how the shortage of Algerian local TV dramas, cultural proximity, and interculturality between Turkey and Algeria contributed to the popularity of Dizi TV dramas. In this section, I demonstrated the complex relationship between Islam, secularism, modernism, and traditionalism and how the combination of these elements in one storyline attracted Arab audiences. From a feminist perspective, this chapter explained how Dizi TV series are used as a source of inspiration for Arab females to protest against patriarchal oppression and for modern lifestyle to Arab women despite the disapprovals of Muslim religious scholars who consider it a threat to Muslim values. I also explained the role of

Syrian dialect in domesticating foreign texts, minimizing the strangeness of texts for Arab audiences. In this chapter, I argued that despite geographical distances, distinct nationalities, dialects, and cultural backgrounds, cultural proximity and interculturalism between Turkey and the Arab world shown in Turkish TV series created an imagined community and unified identity for its Arab female viewers. The following chapter will describe in detail the methods and approaches used in the data collection process. It also identifies the philosophical position of the research and ethical guidelines and frameworks used with the sample of the population

## **Chapter 4: Research Methodology**

### **4.1. Introduction**

This research project focuses on the soft revolution of Algerian females' sociocultural and psychological aspects due to the widespread of Turkish soap operas. In order to understand how the global commercial Turkish TV products and their content can affect perspectives and beliefs of Algerian females and how the consumption of Dizi series challenges or maintains their developing cultural identity through the lens of different genres. This exploratory research draws on different theories, including: the feminist theory, cultivation theory, receptive theory, soft power theory, and uses and gratification theory under one umbrella called post-positivism that aims to understand the phenomenon of Dizi popularity and its impact on Algerian females.

In this chapter, I will explain my positionality throughout this study. I will also discuss the ethical consideration, the philosophical position of this research, and research tools for data collection: online questionnaire, online focus group discussion, and audio-visual content analysis methods. This chapter clarifies how online snowball sampling help me in reaching a representative number of audiences and the use of the interpretative phenomenological analysis method in interpreting participants' codes and transforming them into meaningful themes. In this section, I will also demonstrate the objective behind the choice of each technique and how they would address the research questions.

#### 4.2. Researcher's Positionality and Reflexivity

The research represents a shared space shaped by both researcher and participants (Kim V. L. England, 1994, p.10). In this case, it seems that both researcher and participants' identities, personalities, and perspectives can influence the research process and outcomes. Andrew Gary Darwin Holmes (2020, p.2) states that positionality is identified by positioning the researcher's subject under investigation, the research participants, and the research context and process. Equally, Kirsti Malterud (2001, p.2) confirms that reflexivity begins by identifying preconceptions included in the study starting from the representation of prior personal and professional experiences, introduce what and how will be investigated, and finally, the motivation and the interests for conducting a research project. The current research project is titled: *A Curse and/or Blessing? Turkish Soap Operas and their Impact on Contemporary Algerian Women: Audience Reception and Audio-visual Analysis of the Historical TV Drama Harim al-Sultan*. In this thesis, I reflect on my position as a gendered subject focusing on the Algerian females as I observed that they tend to watch, discuss, and gossip about Turkish TV series scenes and events more than males.

Although there are no statistical data to prove this, there is also a possibility that they are watched by many male viewers as well (I would not go as far as to suggest the opposite, more men than women). Nonetheless, females seem to be active audiences as they negotiate, interact, and even imitate what they view. The motivation of conducting this research goes back to my journey during my master's degree, where I investigated the impact of globalization and social media platforms on the language innovation of Algerian youth. However, I found that the influence of globalization is beyond language innovation; it even influences self-identity (self-confidence, self-esteem, personality...). Turkish TV dramas are one of globalization's outcomes that became popular and successful in Algerian society,

especially among females. For example, I watched one Turkish soap opera episode a day, where each episode was lengthened around one hour. Later on, I switch to YouTube channels reaching the highest peak of viewership in my life by around three hours every day. This attraction made me wondered about soft power components used in these TV shows to attract and gratify their audiences.

Therefore, I decided to analyse the content of these TV series using the content analysis method and then conduct an online questionnaire with Algerian females from different age groups and regions to explore their experiences with Turkish TV dramas. Regarding my positionality in this study, Susan Gair (2012, p.137) defines the notion of insider and outsider as a degree to which the researcher is located within or outside the group being researched because of the shared lived experiences or a member of that group. Similarly, Heather D’Cruz and Martyn Jones (2004, p.119) suggest that researchers can be insiders, outsiders, and sometimes both. I can identify myself as a “researcher in the middle”, being both insider and outsider in this respect. I am insider research because I belong to the same socio-cultural context of my participants and, therefore, I share various characteristics with them that allowed me to have an insider role and helped me to understand some behaviours that could have different meanings for a person from different background including gender, nationality, cultural background, language, and ethnicity. On the other hand, my positionality as an outsider researcher comes from the desire to explore Dizi’s power on Algerian females without being subjective or biased by any of my personal experiences with these TV dramas, even if it seems impossible to be entirely objective. The upcoming section will explain ethics process in this research.

### **4.3. Ethical Consideration: Informed consent and Access**

In research that involves human subjects, there are ethical guidelines and frameworks the researcher must uphold. For instance, the research should be valuable, safe from risks and harms, and respect the privacy and confidentiality of participants (Jane Ritchie et al. 2013, p.78). According to Louis Cohen et al. (2011, p. 77), conducting research with human participants requires their approval for taking part in the research; “much social research necessitates obtaining the consent and corporation of subjects who are to assist in investigations and of significant others in the institutions or organizations providing the research facilities”.

Throughout this study, I took into consideration that these ethical protocols are applied within my research process and participants. Therefore, I started obtaining informed consent from the research ethics committee for conducting an online questionnaire with Algerian females using social media platforms. In December 2019, I received the confirmation of ethics compliance from the chair of the faculty ethics panel on behalf of Christ Church University (United Kingdom). The consent includes ethical and health issues related to the research, such as individuals’ right to privacy, safety, security, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data. It also includes a summary of research goals, identification of participants, methodology, and the intended outcomes. The online questionnaire format first provided my population sample with an introductory section about the title and explained the study’s aims. At the beginning of the online questionnaire, participants were asked if they had volunteered to participate in the research. I also informed them that their information would be anonymized and stored carefully within CCCU premises by the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), and the University’s data protection policies. It also informs them that they have the right to withdraw at any stage in their participation without giving any reasons. I, therefore, avoided causing any deception or harm while accessing or obtaining the data sources and ensured to use a simple and readable Arabic language style that suits the specific

targeted age group of the participants and their educational levels. Finally, my study did not involve any risks related to the researcher herself, participants, and/or data confidentiality (the consent and the online questionnaire form are in the appendix A, E &, F).

#### **4.4.The Philosophical Position of The Research: Post-Positivism**

This section represents the practical part of the current research that seeks to identify the outcomes of globalization and media consumption in general and the influence of Dizi TV dramas on Algerian female audiences. This study's ontological and epistemological intentions are to understand and describe the worldwide phenomenon of Dizi TV series that Algerian females are experiencing through different Arab TV channels and YouTube. The study aims to identify the key characteristics of Turkish TV series content watched by the Algerian females and explores to what extent these contribute to the cultural hybridization of their identity. A variety of studies discuss the effect of TV series on females' identities. For instance, Mesirin Kwanjai (2018) researched the influence of Thai soap operas on Lao women viewers, aiming to investigate the extent to which women viewers in Laos are affected by storylines and lifestyles presented in Thai soap operas in terms of their agency and identity. Kwanjai based her research on an epistemological position that relies on the constructive-interpretative approach. According to her, the constructivist approach is founded on social constructivism and believe that reality is socially constructed. According to Honebein (1996), the philosophical paradigm of constructivism asserts that people construct their understanding of the world via experiencing things, reacting, and reflecting on those experiences (cited in Dickson Adom et al., 2016, p.16). Kwanjai deduced that Lao women' consumption of Thai TV soap operas impacted their attitudes and practices when she noticed that they were highly attached to Thai products, Thai television, Thai songs, etc. She assumed that the consumption of Thai TV series by Lao women potentially weakened their traditional principles and

threatening their identities. Therefore, the purpose of using the constructivist paradigm is to study a visible and specific power of social behaviour on the attitudes of individuals. Kwanjai's research and the current research share many areas of studies, aims, and beliefs. Nevertheless, they apply different philosophical approaches that refer to the distinct standpoints and case studies. Kwanjai started her research already knowing that the Thai series poses a risk to Loa females' identity. However, in my study, the effect of Turkish TV dramas on Algerian women is not yet identified and needs to be explored.

Thus, it seems that the post-positivist approach is the most appropriate philosophical position for this research. Nick J Fox (2008, p. 03) proclaims: "Post-positivism describes an approach to knowledge but is also implicitly an assessment of the nature of reality.". This means that positivism is a position in the philosophy of science that emphasizes the significance of observation for the progress of knowledge. This suggests that the post-positivist approach can be applied to gain knowledge about a particular social phenomenon through observation and measurement to reach a central understanding. According to Max Weber, post-positivism contains social realities that need to be understood (ibid, p.03). In the post-positivist research, theory and practice cannot be separated. For this reason, argumentations, observations, and interpretations of Dizi phenomenon in this research are derived from existing media, audience, and gender theories.

Hypothetically, the understanding of human behaviours according to Weber and the post-positivist approach do not demand the observers' position or role only, but also imagine oneself in the situation or circumstances of another person to understand their perspectives and opinions. Practically, both position of observer and participant in this research are required for a clear conception and realization of Dizi TV series phenomena, its high viewership rates, and its power on Algerian females' identity. In this exploratory study, it

appears that accomplishment of these conditions is possible as I am an insider and outsider researcher. Karla A Henderson state that post-positivism legitimizes the probability of using mixed methods. She declares: “Post-positivism offers a practical approach to collecting data using more than one method” (2011, p.343). Martyn Denscombe argues that the mixed method approach represents a third paradigm and the qualitative and quantitative methodological paradigms. He suggests that using the mixed method approach can produce a more comprehensive picture of phenomena. It can be considered as a means of avoiding biases of a single method approach.

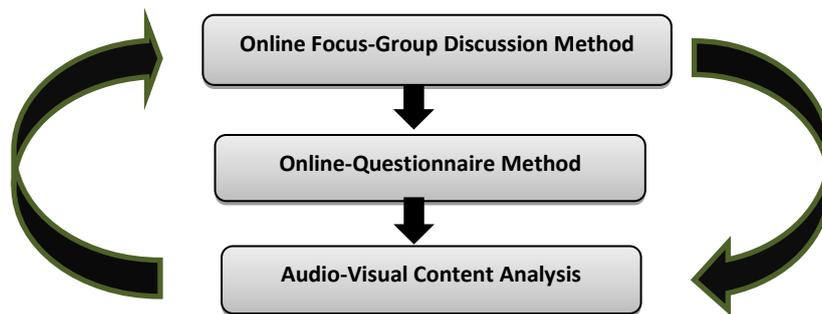
Cohen et al. (2011, pp.21) argue that the mixed method approach is implicitly in all stages of research; methodology, sampling, data collection, data analysis, and interpretation. They note that: “the mixed methods research recognizes, and works with, the fact that the world is not exclusively quantitative or qualitative; it is not either/or world, but a mixed world”. Similarly, Jose F. Molina-Azorin (2016, p.37), defines mixed method research as: “the combination and integration of qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study”. Therefore, mixed approach in this study combines numerical and qualitative data from research participants and the analysis of the TV product (a historical Turkish TV drama). Subsequently, the post-positivist paradigm and the mixed approach identifies the relationship and the power of Dizi soap operas on Algerian females’ audience’s identity.

#### **4.5. Research Methods and Strategies**

This research applies the mixed research approach and multiple research strategies, including an online questionnaire, online focus group discussion, and audio-visual content analysis methods to enhance the validity of data and reach the final answers to the main research questions:

1. What are the most salient features of Turkish TV series' content that Algerian females pay attention to?
2. To what extent do Turkish TV series contribute to the cultural hybridization of Algerian females' identity?

The following diagram demonstrates the methods used in the study:



**Figure 4.1:** The Applied Research Methodology

This study is conducted on social media platforms using online focus-group discussion and online questionnaire methods with a representative number of Algerian females to explore media reception and consumption by Algerian female viewers. The online questionnaire and online focus group discussion sample was randomly selected using the most popular females Algerian Facebook pages and groups. Sanjoy Datta (2018, p.3) defines simple random sampling as a sampling in which everybody or every element has an equal chance to be nominated. Datta insists on several important conditions to reach the random sampling method such as homogeneous elements in which they should share the same features that meets the target population's general criteria. Equally, Rachel Harter defines random sampling as "a variety of selection techniques in which sample members are selected by chance, but with a known probability of selection" (2008, p.2). Accordingly, random sampling in this study will help minimize sampling biases with Algerian female groups such as age and level of education as they had an equal chance to participate.

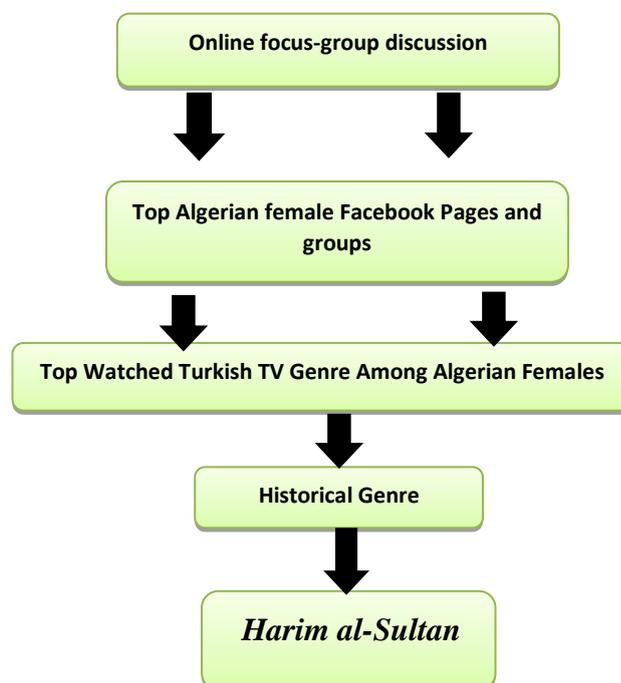
This technique also validated my research findings as the selected sample shared some identical traits such as gender, community, dialect, and traditions. These characteristics realize the significant rule of simple random sampling, which is homogeneity. In addition to the simple random sampling, the chosen linear snowball sampling method in this research effectively allows me to reach different geographical areas in Algeria, occupations, social classes, and so on. The linear snowball sampling method occurred when I asked for support from my peers and family members to reach a representative number of participants. The efficiency of this tool will be discussed in the following sections.

In this study, these methods, approaches, and techniques are under one umbrella called virtual ethnography, in parallel with Facebook as the primary tool for data collection in the online focus-group discussion and the online questionnaire. Ethnography is one of the data-gathering methodologies used in everyday life to make sense of our surroundings. According to Martyn Hammersley (2016, pp.1-2), ethnography does not have a precise definition, although it overlaps with words like qualitative research, interpretive research, case study, and participant observation. He says that ethnographic research is defined by observing people's behaviours in a real-life setting and that discussions and observation are the most common data sources.

Due to globalization, many social media platforms have become accessible to people all over the world, where they communicate, interact, and share knowledge and experiences. For example, Annette N. Markham (2007, p.1) considers that internet-based technologies as tools for research changed the research scenario. Today, many researchers prefer using virtual ethnography for the validity and value of data gathered. This technique also allows them to be updated, contact overseas or distanced participants, and stay connected. Facebook, for instance, has become one of the most popular tools for researchers because much of social life

now exists online. Steffen Dalsgaard (2016, p.3) conducted online interviews, observations and used Facebook to explore how communication through Facebook became a crucial supplement to a classic long-term ethnographic engagement with a field site in Papua New Guinea (PNG). He clarifies that he uses Facebook because of its popularity among his participants (interlocutors in PNG). He justifies that Facebook is a widespread platform for both registered profiles globally and monthly use. Dalsgaard finds that conducting ethnography through Facebook allows the researcher to merge home and distanced participants in unprecedented ways. Because it does not require any physical proximity or face-to-face contacts as Facebook has simplified updates of current research interest. The following sections will explain the use of Facebook platforms in reaching participants and for the data collection process.

#### 4.6. Online Focus-Group Discussion Method



**Figure 4.2:** Online Focus-Group Discussion Method

Over the past few years, Turkish TV series gained wide popularity among Algerian females. It seems that the diversity of themes besides the high quality of production brings a breath of fresh air to many Algerian female viewers who are unfamiliar with these kinds of topics. It is worth mentioning that Dizi TV market produces many TV dramas each year broadcasted on television and YouTube. These TV dramas have recently gained even more visibility generated by the production of Netflix's original series in Turkey: these include the famous soap operas *The Protector* (*Hakan Muhafiz*, 2018) and *The Gift* (*Atiye*, 2019). According to a report by *Deloitte* (2014), Turkish TV drama episodes last for around 150-180 minutes on average including advertising time, which is considerably higher than Western standards. Dizi is known for its variety of TV genres such as historical, romance, action, and social dramas. However, up to now, it is not clear yet what TV series genre Algerian female viewers prefer. Therefore, I initiated this study by using the online focus-group discussion as a qualitative approach to figure out the most popular Turkish TV drama genres among Algerian females after that, identify the most watched TV series titles.

Nyumba et al. explain the role and the use of the focus group discussion method, they state:

Focus group discussion is frequently used as a qualitative approach to gain an in- depth understanding of social issues. The method aims to obtain data from a purposely selected group of individuals rather than from a statistically representative sample of a broader population. (2017, p.20)

This online focus group discussion has been conducted in popular Algerian female Facebook groups and pages where I posted my questions. I used Facebook as a unique social platform for data collection to reach women from different Algerian regions, namely North, South, East, and West. According to *Radioalgerie.DZ* (2018), the Algerian population number on the 1st of January 2018 was 42.2 million, 20.59 of whom are females. Despite the lack of references and studies about social media platforms, Behdja Boumarafi (2018) examined the

top popular social media networks among students in one of the Algerian universities called Constantine. She found that Facebook is the most used social media network among respondents.

Type of Social Network	Number of Users	Percentage	Rank
Facebook	140	100	1
YouTube	70	50	2
Twitter	40	28.57	3
Skype	15	10.70	4
LinkedIn	10	7.15	5
Myspace	5	3.58	6

**Table 4.1:**

Popular social network sites for Constantine University Student (n=140) (cited in Behdja Boumarafi (2018, p.36)

According to *Internet World State* (March 2020), Algeria is one of the leading countries in annual Facebook subscribers in 2020. The total population is around 44 million; 25 million of them have Facebook accounts with an estimated growth of 50.75 % between 2000-2020. Thus, compared to other online research platforms such as Twitter, Instagram, and E-mail, Facebook in Algeria seems to be the best representative social media platform for female gatherings, particularly for Turkish TV drama audiences. Also, it helps reach a maximum number of respondents in a short period and understand their perspectives and preferences. Hence, I started first selecting the most-followed groups and pages by Algerian females. They are several but relying on the number of followers and members, I nominated the top five (5) female groups and the top five (5) female pages to post my questions about the most preferred

genres, and the top watched TV series. Those Facebook groups and pages include between 3000 to 2 million Facebookers. Thus, I assumed that this feature would help me in collecting an enormous number of responses. However, only a few of them responded and interacted with my posts.

Remarkably, the primary aim of creating those Facebook groups and pages is fun and entertainment. Most discussed topics are about beauty, fashion, celebrities, modern lifestyles, love experiences, and other feminine subjects. Therefore, in order to reach a representative number of participants, I decided to repost questions using a simple vocabulary and informal, indirect style to avoid any emotional risks. For instance, instead of asking them: are you influenced by any Turkish actor or actress? which might make them feel accused or guilty. I repeated the process using embedded questions and replacing modern standard Arabic with Algerian dialect, supporting my posts with pictures of Turkish actors to get their attention. Effectively this technique gave a fair number of interactions and responses.

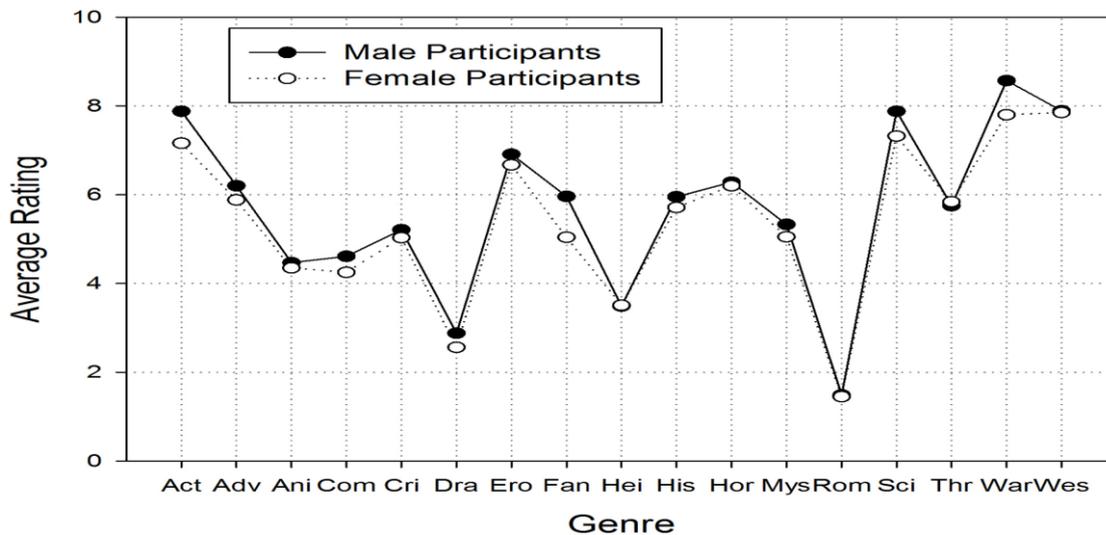
Accordingly, in the first question, I asked them about their point of view regarding the top popular Turkish TV genres among Algerian females. In the second question they were asked to list the most-watched Turkish TV series' titles. Selecting the top watched Turkish TV drama in Algeria was a challenging task because of two main reasons. First, there is a long list of Turkish TV series that have been broadcasted and are still aired on some national channels like (El-Echorouk and Al Fadjer) and some other international Arab channels like (MBC 1, MBC4, Nessma, and 2M). The Confederation of Turkish Tradesman and Craftsman (TESK) chairman Bendevis Palandöken clarifies: "more than 100 Turkish TV series are produced per year, and they are exported to 156 countries and watched by 500 million people. The current volume of TV series exports is estimated to be around \$350 million" (*Daily Sabah*, 2019). Second, the lack of statistics and sociological studies that elaborate details, rates, and numbers about the top watched Turkish TV dramas genres in Algeria. Therefore, this thesis in general

and the online focus-group, in particular, are breaking new ground in classifying and understanding what genres of Turkish TV series are popular among female audiences in Algeria.

Algerian women Facebook comments show that about 90% of them agreed that historical and romance genres are the most popular genres compared to 10% who suggested comedy and action TV dramas. Although romantic genres were highly predicted to be chosen, the historical genres were somewhat unexpected to have the same ranking and reputation as the romance genres. After identifying the top watched Turkish TV series genres among Algerian females, my subsequent goal was to discover the most viewed series titles from the romantic and the historical genres. Accordingly, viewers were asked: according to your perspective, what are the top watch romantic and historical Turkish soap operas watched by Algerian women? Hundreds of participants suggested many romantic TV series titles like *Gümüş* (2008), *The Endless Love* (2015), *Aşk Laftan Anlamaz* (2016), and *The Forbidden Love* (2008). However, most of respondents agreed that *Harim al-Sultan* (2011), known as *Hareem el Sultan* in Algeria and the Arab world is the top watched historical Turkish TV drama viewed by Algerian females.

Peter Wühr et al. (2017) researched the gender-specific stereotypes about movie genre preferences for 17 genres such as adventure movies, action movies, comedy movies, and romance movies. They aim to identify what genres women and men prefer and test the accuracy of gender stereotypes of movie preferences. According to them, women are supposed to like romantic, melodramatic, and comedy films, but dislike action and horror movies and that men are supposed to like action and horror movies and to dislike romantic and melodramatic movies (p.1). They disseminated a questionnaire to 150 participants, 75 men and 75 women, and asked them to list which genres are generally associated with men

and which genres are typically associated with women. The following diagram demonstrates their findings.



**Figure 4.3:** Genre movies preferences for male and females

Peter Wühr et al. found that five out of the 17 genres were stereotyped as female genres: animation, comedy, drama, Heimat, and romance. In contrast, 10 genres were stereotyped as male genres that are: action, adventure, erotic, fantasy, history, horror, science fiction, thriller, war, and Western. Regarding the stereotypical genres for male and female, they clarify: “participants considered dramatic and romantic movies as female’ genres, and they considered action-packed and violent movies (e.g., action, adventure, horror, thriller, war, and Western) as ‘male’ genres” (p.5). Finally, the results also showed that crime and mystery genres are considered equally popular among both genders. From this standpoint, it seems that Algerian female participants have broken this stereotypical image about movie genres’ gender preferences by selecting a typically male genres, the historical soap opera *Harim al-Sultan*. For this reason, I selected this historical TV drama as a case study in this research to closely examine its appeal.

<i>Harim al-Sultan (Muhteşem Yüzyıl)</i>	Genre: Historical
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Number of viewership	500 Million (Fatima Bhutto, <i>The Guardian</i> , 2019)
Year of Diffusion	2013
Channel were almost all Algerian females viewed it	Tunisian Channel 'Nessma TV'
Number of seasons and Episodes	(4) Four Seasons/ 376 Episodes
Leading Protagonists	Halit Ergenç, Meryem Uzerli, Nur Fettahoğlu, Selma Ergeç, and Okan Yalabık.
Language of dubbing	Syrian Dialect
Runtime	45 to 50 minutes

**Table 4.2:** An overview description of *Harim al-Sultan*

In this context, I selected the most popular Algerian Facebook groups and pages which contain the most significant number of females. These females' Facebook pages and groups have been purposefully chosen as they include females from different regions of Algeria and different age groups and educational backgrounds. Nonetheless, they may include some male members. The following tables present Algerian female Facebook communities where I posted the online questionnaires links and chatted with my population sample. It is worth mentioning that the names of those Facebook groups are mixed between modern standard Arabic, French, English, and Algerian dialect.

Name	Femme Algérienne	Chedda Tlemcen Hema we Chane	Femme Algérienne Actuelle	Algerian Elegance	Algerian Women
Number of Followers	2 182 544	1 209 570	1 351 723	587 436	365 183

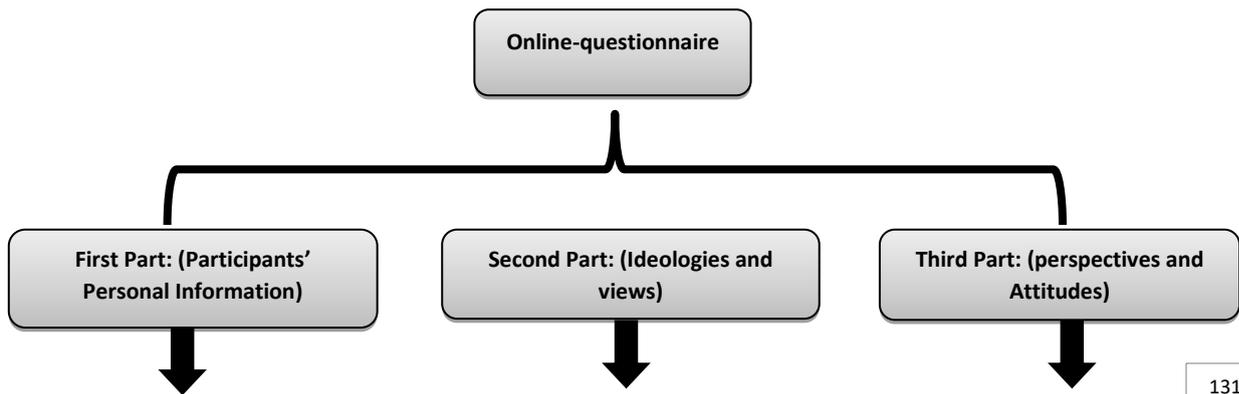
**Table 4.3:** Top 5 Feminine Facebook Pages in Algeria Between (2019-2020)

Name	Bayrattes Algérienne (Single Algerian women)	لالة العروسة الجزائرية (The Algerian Bride)	عجوزتي وسلفاتي وما دارو فيا (Me and my mother-in-law)	عالم الوندغفولات (World of beautiful Ladies)	Algerian women in the UK and the Republic of Ireland
Number of Members	552,914	450,619	63,681	19,003	10,376

**Table 4.4:** Top 5 Feminine Facebook Groups in Algeria Between (2019-2020)

As different geographical, cultural, and linguistic contexts change people’s perspectives and beliefs, it was imperative to research the diasporic communities’ views of Algerian females abroad. Therefore, I asked the same questions in one of the most popular Facebook groups of Algerian females in the United Kingdom, known as ‘Algerian women in the UK and the Republic of Ireland’. My purpose was to study and compare whether the geographical circumstances and western cultural and social backgrounds affect the TV genres chosen or not. Likewise, I posted the same questions as I did within the female sample in Algeria, and it seems that they share the same perspectives as those who live in Algeria. Finally, both samples’ questions were posted in the Arabic language because of many reasons, such as different educational levels.

#### 4.7. Online-Questionnaire Method





**Figure 4.4:** Online-questionnaire structure

This online questionnaire diagram shows the designed in order to answer research questions:

1. What are the most salient features of Turkish TV series' content that Algerian females pay attention to?
2. To what extent do Turkish TV series contribute to the cultural hybridization of Algerian females' identity?

I applied the qualitative and quantitative approaches to collect statistics, beliefs, and perspectives. Accordingly, various optional questions have been included to reach different data like multiple-choice, rating scale, and close-ended and open-ended questions. The questions' contents and goals sought to explore the representation of women in Turkish TV dramas, practically focusing on gender representations, ideologies, performances, and stereotypes and how Algerian women receive them as Arab and Muslim audiences. The online questionnaire also looks at how Algerian women evaluate Turkish TV series' content in relation to their socio-cultural background.

The online questionnaire questions are divided into three sections, and each section has its own goals. The first section consists of close-ended questions related to personal information, geographical region, age, occupation, educational background, and social status of the respondents. The purpose of the first and the second questions is to confirm the inclusion of different demographic and geographic classes to identify the dominant age groups and regions that watch more Turkish TV dramas. The third question sought to highlight their occupations (whether they are housewives, students, or workers) in order to explore what social category consumes more Turkish TV series. Subsequently, the fourth, fifth, and sixth questions determine each other in terms of their chronological frequency and goals. The fourth question

is a close-ended question in which I aimed to discover whether Algerian women are Turkish TV series fans or not, if yes, how often they watch these TV shows. The fifth and the sixth questions attempt to state an exact average number of the watched series and episodes for each audience which would help me to know the extent to which they are attached to Dizi TV series and then how it influences them.

Moreover, the sixth question aims to identify the most popular online platforms and TV channels in which Algerian females watch their favourite Turkish TV series. Respondents were provided different options, including Middle East Channel (MBC), Moroccan channel (2M), Tunisian channel (Nessma), and other Algerian TV channels. The seventh question is about the reasons behind the popularity of this TV genre and the secrets that make them successful and appealing. Participants were given many choices, and they were allowed to tick more than one answer or suggest other possibilities. I tried to cover various suggestions that are assumed to be attractive in these TV shows like scenario, Turkish language, Turkish culture, music and songs, the beauty of actors and actresses, Turkish landscapes, and the Syrian dialect. The eighth question sought to identify the social and psychological factors that motivate Algerian females to view Dizi TV series. I proposed Five propositions: boredom and routine, pleasure and enjoyment, emotional void, escape from reality, educational or/and informative purposes. The ninth question is a ranking scale question consisting of five (5) statements to evaluate females' agreement or disagreement concerning Turkish TV drama impact, content, and ideologies in order to know to what extent it challenges or maintains their traditions. The statements are:

1. Turkish TV dramas have a positive effect on Algerian women.
2. Turkish TV dramas have a negative effect on Algerian women.
3. Turkish TV series content proportionate with your customs and traditions.
4. Turkish TV series promote Western ideologies.

5. *Harim al-Sultan* is among the most-watch Turkish TV series among Algerian females.

The fifth statement is designed to confirm their previous choice in the online focus-group discussion where many of them agreed that *Harim al-Sultan* is one of the famous and top watch historical TV dramas among them. Regarding their position as fans and viewers of Dizi TV dramas, they were asked to state if they are eager to search for personal information about Turkish actors and indicate if they have been impressed by any of them. Accordingly, they were requested to name their favourite actors and actresses and explain how they influenced them. Lastly, they were asked to mention their level of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the representation of women in these soap operas.

The qualitative section of the online questionnaire includes five (5) open-ended questions to identify Algerian women's perspectives on Turkish soap operas. In the first question, I asked them to list the salient features distinguishing Turkish TV drama from other TV series. The purpose behind this question is to explore the secret behind their popularity among Algerian females. The second question explores whether Turkish TV series contribute to their attraction to the Turkish language. In case they say yes, they were asked to demonstrate by Turkish words and expressions they learned.

The third question in this section was about Algerian females' consumption of Turkish products, including outfits, accessories, makeup, furniture, etc. Participants at this stage were asked to mention Turkish products they consume. It was another implicit question to discover how Turkish culture broadcasted via TV series is influencing Algerian females' preferences and lifestyles. Moreover, Turkish celebrities are known for their beautiful fashion styles, makeup, and well-performed roles. Hence, in the fourth question, I asked my participants if they have ever imitated Turkish celebrities in their way of speaking, hairstyle, dressing, or/and behaving. Finally, in the sixth and the seventh question, the sample of the population was asked to list the most challenging and the most appreciated topics that Turkish TV drama

tackled. From their answers, a coding sheet has been designed to count frequencies and identify the dominant portrayals that characterize Dizi TV series (see appendix C, table 1-4).

The data collection process using the online questionnaire method continued for about 3 months until the data analysis process began. The questionnaire format was accessible in google form for all Algerian females who had the willingness to participate. The snowball sampling method is integrated to spread the questionnaire format and get a representative number of participants using my social network, including family, friends, and participants to share the questionnaire's link with other female volunteers. In parallel, the interpretative phenomenological analysis is used to interpret codes that emerged from participants' answers in the qualitative section of the online questionnaire. The following section will describe how these two strategies are used.

#### **4.8.Snowball Sampling and Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis**

Snowball sampling method aims to study a sample through the transfer made by people who know each other or share some characteristics of the research interest. One of the most applicable chains referral sampling methods is snowball sampling often involves hidden or hard-to-reach samples. According to Christine Brickman Bhutta (2012, p.3), snowball sampling was developed by LA. Coleman (1958) as a tool to study individuals that are hidden or impossible to sample by phone, mail, or door-to-door because they are dispersed or small samples. Brickman Bhutta provides examples of this sample, such as the homeless, members of the LGTB community, people with AIDS, and drug users. However, chain referral sampling is applied in this research to get in touch with the hard-to-reach Algerian female Turkish TV series viewers who live in different Algerian locations.

Charlie Parker et al. (2020, p.3) state that snowball sampling is one of the common methods in qualitative research that starts with a sample that shares some features and ends once the

target sample number or data saturation is reached. They explain that the researcher often begins with a small number of participants who fit the research criteria (they likened them to seeds). Accordingly, this involved sample will invite other contacts who fit the same research standard and are willing to participate. Charlie Parker et al. elaborate: “researchers, therefore, use their social networks to establish initial links, [...]. Sampling usually finishes once either a target sample size or saturation point has been reached”.

Bhutta (2012, p.1) asserts that online social networks such as Facebook are considered the most appropriate tools for data collection that help the researcher conduct investigations quickly, cheaply, and single-handedly. She justifies: “social networking sites and online questionnaires make it possible to do survey research faster, cheaper, and with less assistance than ever before. The methods are especially well-suited for snowball sampling of elusive sub-populations”. Regarding the power of social networks in accessing samples, she (2012, p.2) argues that Facebook snowball sampling offers the researcher the opportunity to use his/her personal relationships or/and having access to Facebook groups and pages that connect and gather other users who have some shared interest and attributes. She elaborates: “Facebook and other SNSs<sup>11</sup> allow us to carry chain-referral methods into the age of the Internet, while also exploiting the strengths of web-based questionnaires” (2012, p.4).

For instance, throughout this research, my objective is to reach the maximum number of Algerian females watching Turkish TV series. However, geographical constraints such as accessibility and mobility to reach all Algerian regions are time and money consuming. Some hidden social groups are often difficult for the researcher to access because of their social or physical location. Algeria is the tenth-largest country in the world and the first in Africa with 2.382 million Km<sup>2</sup>. Also, according to Statista (2019), Algeria’s female population is approximately 21.3 million. For that reason, the researcher used the online snowballing

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<sup>11</sup> SNS: Snowball Sampling

method as a solution for quantitative and qualitative data attempting to study a variety of Algerian females and their experience with Dizi soap operas. In this context, Parker et al. (2020, p.3) proclaim:

Due to its networking characteristics and flexibility, snowball sampling has become a popular means of recruiting research participants when seeking access to hard-to-reach populations. Such potentially unobtainable populations can have low numbers, be geographically dispersed, be unrecorded or inconspicuous, feel stigmatized and/or desire anonymity, be particularly sensitive and vulnerable, and require a degree of trust in order to become a willing participant.

The use of snowballing methods on social media platforms has been increased. For example, Fabiola Baltar and Ignasi Brunet used snowball sampling via social media to identify and detect a small number of Argentinian immigrant entrepreneurs who are geographically dispersed (hidden population). They clarify that Facebook has been used to identify Argentinean immigrants' entrepreneurs in Spain. Because of some individuals have double nationality (non-EU and EU) they are administratively invisible in national statistics. Therefore, the virtual sampling using the online questionnaire helped them reach those entrepreneurs (2012, p.1).

Baltar and Brunet found that Facebook was more effective in expanding the size than traditional snowball sampling. The number of Argentinian immigrants detected by Facebook and the virtual responses rate was higher than the traditional snowball technique. They proclaim: "statistical differences can be observed in terms of response rate between traditional (42 percent) and virtual (77 percent) search of units of observation". According to them, the different rates between the traditional sampling and the virtual is explained by the fact that contacting participants by Facebook makes them feel trusted because the researcher has no reference to who recommends him on the one hand. On the other hand, respondents can

access the researcher's profile information to see others participating and their contacts which increases confidence about the research goals (p.11).

Similarly, in this study, I am using Facebook to make a referral chain to get in touch with different Algerian females from all Algerian regions (North, South, East, and West). I first created a google form survey for the questionnaire then started sharing the link with my friend and relatives. The linear snowball sampling method occurred when I asked for support from my peers and family members to reach a representative number of participants. The involved participants have also shared the link of the online questionnaire form with other females creating a referral chain between different age groups, regions, social classes, and educational backgrounds. Google form survey was posted in the most popular Algerian female groups and pages. Ilker Etikan et al. declared: "this sampling method generates biased samples because respondents who have a great number of social connections can provide investigators with a higher proportion of other respondents" (2016, p.06). Subsequently, linear snowball sampling refers to a linear chain started from a single participant to the second and the third up to the end of the sampling.

Brickman-Bhutta (2009, p. 4-8) concludes that Facebook and other social networks allow researchers to carry chain-referral methods and complete projects in a short period at minimum costs of printing, postages, etc. Linear snowball sampling offered opportunities to recruit and comprise the hidden populations that are difficult to sample when using other sampling methods in a short period with no biases. It also provided data reliability, especially for those who refuse to cooperate or feel threatened for their privacy.

Qualitative data gathered from the online questionnaire and snowball sampling are interpreted using the interpretative phenomenological analysis. The interpretative phenomenological analysis is a methodological framework in qualitative psychology focus on how people make sense to their life experiences. It became later used in different disciplines mainly, human,

social, and health sciences. Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flower, and Michael Larkin are the most recognized theorist in the IPA approach. According to them the interpretative phenomenological analysis is: “a qualitative research approach committed to the examination of how people make sense of their major life experiences” (2009, p.1). According to Abayomi Alase (2017, p.2), Husserl (1931) was the first who theorized phenomenology to comprehend the context and the meaning of the ‘lived experience’ of the research participants. Alase mentions that Van Manen (1990, p.4) wrote about the hermeneutical phenomenology, which combines the ‘lived experience’ of the research participants and the interpretation of texts of their lived and experienced life (hermeneutics).

According to Clark Moustakas (1994, p.1) hermeneutics involves: “the art of reading text or experiences in such a way that the intention and meaning behind the appearances are understood. The point of view is known as well as the cultural and social forces that may influence it”. Moustakas also writes about psychological phenomenology in which he focuses on obtaining a comprehensive description based on the reflection and interpretation of the ‘live experience’ of research participants. In a similar vein, Amedeo Giorgi (1994, p.19) discusses the importance and the usefulness of phenomenological studies in making a solid determination of the meaning unit. He considers that: “the researcher’s phenomenological task is to describe the nature of reality as taken up and posited by the research participants” (1994, p.14). He also notes that the researcher may face some difficulties in the qualitative research, mainly the expression of findings. Giorgi justifies:

Because the research participants employed generally use the same language as the researcher, and also express meanings, many researchers seem to get pulled between the two extremes of surrendering the disciplinary meaning to the everyday meaning of the participants, or else using the jargon of the discipline in such an abstract and external way that a certain richness of meaning is lost. Phenomenologically, there is no doubt

that it is the meaning for the participant that must be captured, but it is equally certain that the meaning must be taken up and be reexpressed in the language of the researcher's discipline (sociology, psychology, etc.). (1994, p.19)

In 2009, Jonathan A. Smith, Paul Flower, and Michael Larkin developed a new phenomenological research approach called the interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA). Jonathan A. Smith and Mike Osborn (2007, p. 1) found that this approach concerned people's perception and interpretation of an object or event. They declare: "the aim of interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) is to explore in detail how participants are making sense of their personal and social world". According to Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012, p.9), IPA stresses studying people idiographically by generating a comprehensive description of how participants experience the phenomena under examination. Likewise, Larkin et al. identify the role of the IPA, they state:

The IPA is committed to the detailed examination of the particular case it wants to know in detail what the experience of this person is like, what sense this particular person is making of what is happening to them. This is what we mean when we say IPA is idiographic. (2009, p.3)

Abayomi Alase (2017, p.1) asserts that the interpretative phenomenological analysis approach permits research participants to express themselves and their lived experiences stories freely without any distortion and /or prosecution. Smith and Osborn (2007, p. 1) write that the IPA approach is based on two guidelines: explaining how participants make meanings to their world and how researchers decode and interpret these meanings. They note: "The participants are trying to make sense of their world; the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants trying to make sense of their world.". On the other hand, Pietkiewicz and Smith (2012, p.9) suggest three analytic stages to make meaning of participants' codes.

First, multiple reading and making notes, according to Smith and Pietkiewicz, this stage will help the researcher immerse himself in data. They believe that the more the researcher read more he discovers new insights. Second, transforming notes into emergent themes, the researcher starts using his notes instead of participants' transcripts. They proclaim: "the researcher aims to formulate a concise phrase at a slightly higher level of abstraction which may refer to a more psychological conceptualization" (2012, p.9). The final stage is called seeking relationships and clustering themes. At this stage, the researcher accumulates all text themes with the probability of cancelling some of them if they are meaningless or not accurate with the emerging structure. Smith and Pietkiewicz clarify: "the next stage involves looking for connections between emerging themes, grouping them together according to conceptual similarities, and providing each cluster with a descriptive label" (2012, p.9). Relying on Pietkiewicz and Smith's (2012) analytic stages, in this phenomenological study, I will identify the most salient notes from participants' answers, transforms them into meaningful themes, and then classify them according to their semantic group.

First of all, it is worth mentioning that this section consists of five (5) questions, and each question has a different aim. In the first question, participants were asked to describe the critical features of Turkish TV dramas that make them special compared to other international TV series. This question aims to identify participants' perspectives behind the popularity and the widespread of this genre among Algerian females.

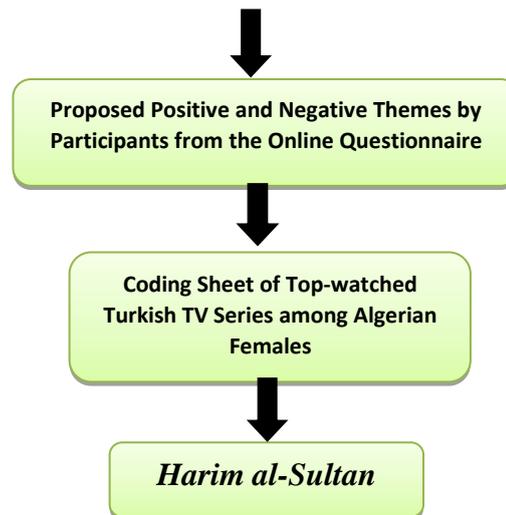
Furthermore, it appears that the Turkish language is one of the soft power instruments that help Dizi TV series flourish. Thus, the third question is whether these soap operas attract them to the Turkish language and what Turkish vocabulary they learned. Likewise, it is presumed that these kinds of universal TV production work to promote different Turkish products to its local and international viewers. Participants of this research were asked to list Turkish products they consume, such as outfits, accessories, makeup, and furniture. Moreover, the

fourth question sought to know if Algerian female participants have ever imitated Turkish actors and actresses in their way of speaking, dressing, or/and behaving. These three questions will define how these TV dramas influence Algerian females' style and preferences.

Researchers seem unsure yet about the effect of Turkish TV dramas as it can be positive or/and negative, and it is less likely to be affectless. Therefore, participants of this study were asked to list the most dominant challenging and the most maintaining topics shown in Dizi genres. Their preliminary ideas will be transformed into themes in a coding sheet designed to identify the most prevalent positive and negative portrayals and their frequencies in these TV series. These themes are considered to be the basis of the second research method (content analysis). At the first stage, they will be classified into two categories depending on their function (positive/negative). After that, the frequencies of each theme will be counted, relying on the chosen Turkish TV series titled *Harim al-Sultan* used as a model and a case study to see what kind of content Turkey and Dizi deliver to its viewers.

According to Smith and Osborn (2007, p. 1), the interpretative phenomenological analysis is concerned with the attempts to understand what it is like from the participants' point of view. The IPA approach in this study is applied to investigate how Algerian female audiences make sense of their experience with Turkish TV series. It is assumed that they are actively engaged in interpreting the content and interact with it. Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009, p.3) argue: "When people are engaged with 'an experience' of something major of their lives, they begin to reflect on the significance of what is happening, and IPA research aims to engage with these reflections.". To sum up, the IPA method seems the most suitable approach for investigating the phenomenon of Dizi TV series and its consumption and how it is perceived and interpreted by the Algerian female viewers.

#### **4.9.Content Analysis Approach**



**Figure 4.5:** Strategies of applying content analysis method for qualitative and quantitative data

Content analysis is a method of coding and decoding qualitative and quantitative data used to identify frequencies of key themes in different contexts. Therefore, content analysis in this research is used for categorizing, comparing, and contrasting different audio-visual elements in Turkish TV series. This method aims to answer the first research question: What are the most salient features of Turkish TV series' content that Algerian females pay attention to? Klaus Krippendorff defines content analysis as a research technique in the social sciences, which describes phenomena not as a physical event but as texts, images, and expressions to a meaning that can be seen, read, and interpreted (2004, p.107). Krippendorff argues that this method is powerful and discreet. It makes sense of what is mediated between individuals and mass media, messages, signs, texts, and technology used in social interaction (2004, p. XIII). He also explains that contemporary content analysis is different from the earliest one in terms of methods and aims. He points out three distinguishing characteristics of contemporary content analysis (2004, p. XVII).

First, he contends that content analysis is a grounded method, investigative, predictive of what messages, texts, sounds, and images mean or convey to people. Second, he argues that

the development of media technologies makes us aware of the way we communicate and the role of culture in appointing meaning to what is being analysed, like the awareness or prediction in getting the idea of messages, and channels in delivering these messages to audiences. The third contemporary content analysis feature is that it enables researchers to evaluate their analysis critically, whatever the results. Krippendorff concludes his idea by stating that this research technique provides the researcher new insights and increases his understanding of certain phenomena and people's actions (2004, p. XVII and XIX).

Equally, Carole Busch et al. describe content analysis as “a research tool used to determine the presence of certain words or concepts within texts or sets of texts” (1994 – 2012, p.02). According to them, the idea of “text” or “texts” is a broad concept that could refer to an essay, interview, historical document, speech, or any other occurrence of communicative language. They explain that the content analysis method includes two general categories: conceptual and relational analysis. In the former, the concept chosen for examination involves quantifying and counting its presence. The conceptual analysis aims to evaluate both the explicit and the implicit occurrence of the term either in word sense, phrase, sentence, or themes. However, the coding process in the implicit process may face some issues like subjectivity and biased judgments. The interpretation of codes in the relational analysis involves exploring the relationship between concepts (1994 – 2012, p.02). Naorem Binita Devi elucidates that content analysis can be quantitative, qualitative, or both. Devi clarifies the relation between the qualitative and the quantitative analysis by stating:

Researchers quantify and analyze the presence, meanings and relationships of such words and concepts, then make inferences about the messages within the texts, the writer(s), the audience, and even the culture and time of which these are a part. (2009, p.01)

According to Devi, qualitative content analysis involves any analysis where communication content such as images is categorised. Compared to qualitative content analysis, quantitative analysis is based on frequencies of words, space measurements, and so forth (2009, p.05). In addition to this, Devi focuses on a dynamic argument which is a part of this study wherein she declares that all qualitative data can be coded quantitatively, and that all quantitative data is based on a qualitative judgment (2009, p.06). For instance, this research's post-positivist approach and content analysis method are based on a qualitative judgment of participants' perspectives from the online questionnaires when they were requested to highlight the dominant positive and negative topics tackled in Dizi. In brief, Algerian females' qualitative judgments are coded quantitatively in which frequencies are counted and interpreted. The content analysis method in this research is used as a model of interpretation of delivered and consumed verbal and non-verbal messages of Turkish TV dramas by Algerian female viewers. In theory, the significance of this technique is that it is based on a coding and decoding model where codes, signs, and meanings are revealed, classified, and categorized. In practice, this study's content analysis strategy is determined by the way Algerian female audiences receive the broadcasted content of Dizi.

In order to understand the way Algerian females, evaluate and respond to the broadcasted content of Turkish TV series, this study also uses reception analysis as a complementary method. The audience reception method, also known as reception analysis, is a qualitative technique used in communication and cultural studies during the 1980s and 1990s. David Mathieu notes that reception analysis is a methodology of research that has been established to understand the symbolic implications and meaning of broadcast media (2015, p.16). Gail Denes and Jean Humez declare:

All texts are subject to multiple readings depending on the perspectives and subject positions of the reader. Members of distinct genders, classes, races,

nations, regions, sexual preferences, and political ideologies are going to read texts differently, and cultural studies can illuminate why diverse audiences interpret texts in various, sometimes conflicting, ways. (2003, p.15)

This method is grounded in the work of the cultural theorist Stuart Hall who developed the first model of communication in (1973) known as “the encoding/decoding model”. Therefore, Hall’s model advances cross-cultural TV conception of Algerian females’ Turkish soap operas audiences. Turkish TV dramas transmit a list of encoded verbal messages such as words and non-verbal messages like body language and facial expressions. These symbols help Algerian female audiences to understand the delivered message better, and subsequently, they start constructing an overview about Dizi and its content, whether it is maintaining, challenging, or none of the above. According to Pamela J. Shoemaker and Stephen D. Reese (1996, pp.21-24), Lasswell (1948) has developed a model of communication, which is considered as one of the earliest and most influential communication models called a “linear model of communication”. This model organizes the systematic study of communication processes through reacting five (5) questions: who says what? through which channel? to whom? and with what effect? Therefore, “says what” and with what effect” seems to be the key interrogations in this model as they refer to Turkish TV dramas and their influence on Algerian female identity. These questions could reflect visual and audible concepts, codes, and symbols performed and deliberated in the series’ storylines.

The audio-visual content analysis method in this research is used to explore the salient features of the transmitted content of Turkish TV dramas consumed by Algerian women. Before analysing the series’ content, I first designed my coding sheet from online questionnaire participants’ opinions and suggestions. In other words, the method of content analysis in this study is attached to and derives from the online questionnaire method as I applied two qualitative questions from the third section of the online questionnaire (question

numbers 4 and 5). The first question is: what are the most common positive topics that Turkish soap operas tackle? The second question is: what are the most common negative topics that Turkish soap operas tackle? The aim behind selecting these two questions is to identify the agreed appreciated, and non-appreciated themes proposed by the sample of the population to test their existence, frequency, and power in the series and finally see if they have a positive impact, a negative impact, double-edged sword (both positive and negative impact), or none of the above.

Accordingly, participants proposed different topics such as love, self-confidence, marital infidelity, sex, and discrimination. These topics have been classified in separate tables to explore their presence and occurrences across the chosen genre (see appendix C). This technique allows me to examine moral, cultural, and social dimensions transmitted via TV series and watched by Algerian females. The purpose behind applying the binary thinking portrayals of Dizi TV series is that the target of this method is to investigate the extent to which the imported Dizi content influences Algerian females positively and/or negatively. Although Turkish TV series may be affectless, this exploratory research aims to identify reasons and the soft elements that make these kinds of TV shows so successful and widely consumed by Algerian females. I, therefore, highlight the shared arguments between the soft power theory founded by Joseph Nye and the reception theory founded by Stuart Hall. It seems that both theorists believe in the power of attraction and persuasion in which the delivered coded media texts became decoded and may be influential. From this standpoint, the idea of studying the positive and the negative power of Dizi transmitted codes emerged. And since television is likely to reshape our cultures as it communicates and spreads various ideologies, stereotypes, and beliefs, Turkish soap operas also have the power to reform or affect the social, cognitive, educational, and gender attitudes of Algerian women.

It seems that Turkish soap operas contain different codes depending on the genre and the scenario. Sex, for instance, was one of my participants' highly selected negative topics. For that reason, I tried to develop a supplementary description of this code by focusing on that phenomenon that comes across almost all Turkish TV drama genres. Accordingly, I consider sexuality in the series as a 'pie' made up of different pieces. This formulation consists of verbal and non-verbal attitudes and behaviours of femininity and masculinity such as hugging, intimate kissing, intimate dancing, and so on. Regarding the positive topics, participants suggested the importance of family as one of the most significant themes in Turkish dramas. The way family members in the series support each other in complex situations and create solid relationships made Algerian female viewers consider it the main constructive topic across these operas.

Examining gender representation in Turkish soap operas will help me examine feminist concerns such as power, independence, marginalization, and discrimination. Leavy (2011, p.4) states that feminists can utilize content analysis to examine the occurrence of feminism in a range of cultural artifacts. Finally, the audio-visual content analysis method within this study will be conducted through analysing the top watched historical Turkish TV drama nominated by Algerian females in the online-focus group discussion entitled *Harim al-Sultan*. The quantitative approach of this section is based on numerical data used for statistical analysis to measure the dominant features of Turkish TV dramas' content and then develop these statistics into arguments to justify those numbers. To sum up, this study seeks to emphasize the power of Dizi series on Algerian females. This power is shaped by different measurable variables that will be identified in the following sections.

#### **4.10. Conclusion**

This chapter demonstrates the research methodologies used to address the research questions and aims. My study involves a mixed-method approach. Its philosophical position stands on the post-positive paradigm that seeks to explore a social phenomenon resulting from globalization and the increase of transcultural relationships due to television and other social media platforms. Thus, my experiment was undertaken through online-focus group discussion as an initial step to begin the investigation to address research questions. At this stage, I detected the top-watched Turkish TV drama genre among Algeria females and subsequently the title of the top watch TV series to be a case study of this research. In addition, online questionnaires have been disseminated to Algerian females from different educational and geographical backgrounds to understand how Turkish soap operas represent women and whether it contributed to any cultural hybridization of their identity. The snowball sampling is a complementary tool for accomplishing the online questionnaire, while the interpretative phenomenological analysis technique is used to decode participants' answers. On the other hand, content analysis, is a strategy used to answer the first research question: what are the salient features of Turkish TV series' content? At this stage, the relational and conceptional approaches of the content analysis method have been conducted.

## Chapter 5: Algerian Female Audiences and Dizi TV Series Consumption

### 5.1. Introduction

This chapter addresses Algerian females' viewing habits relating to Dizi TV series broadcasted on Algerian, Arab TV channels, and YouTube and includes the online questionnaire analysis, which is divided into a quantitative and a qualitative section. First, in the quantitative section, I used different theories to explore how media affects audiences, focusing on Algerian females' consumption of Turkish soap operas. Theories consist of uses and gratification theory introduced by Katz, Blumer, and Guervitch (1974), reception theory (Stuart Hall, 1973), soft power theory by Joseph Nye in (*Bound to Lead*, 1990; *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics*; 2004, *Hard, Soft, and Smart Power*; 2013), and finally the resistance feminist theory. This quantitative section aims to examine the widespread and perception of Turkish TV dramas by Algerian female participants, why they seem attached to them, and what kind of satisfaction it provides them. Second, their media consumption in the qualitative section is examined by applying the interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA)<sup>12</sup> introduced by Jonathan Alan Smith, Michael Larkin, and Paul Flowers (2009) as a qualitative approach. Using the IPA method in this study is because it allows multiple groups of viewers/participants who experienced similar TV products to tell their perspectives and thoughts. These approaches and theories are dedicated to the second research question of this study that aims to identify the extent to which Turkish TV series are contributing to the cultural hybridization of Algerian females' self-identities. The online questionnaire was conducted between (October 28<sup>th</sup>, 2019, to January 12<sup>th</sup>, 2020). The data was collected throughout Algerian females who have access to the questionnaire format available on the internet or reached via the snowballing method.

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<sup>12</sup> IPA: the interpretive phenomenological analysis

Across this thesis, I am using two interchangeable terms (female/women) relying on different reasons for using each of them. “Female” for instance has a biological connotation typically referring to sex assigned at birth. While “women” is a gender term that depends on social and cultural factors like social position. Hence, sex is distinguished by being female or male and gender by being a woman or a man. The use of the term “female” in this research signifies the female sex of Algerian audiences over the male sex whatever is their age. “Women” on the other hand, signifies an adult female human subsequently my participants aged between 20-25 years old who represents the majority of Algerian female participants.

## **5.2. Quantitative Section : Demographic Statistics of Algerian Female Participants**

The total sample in this study comprises 213 females defined by their age, region, occupation, social status, and level of education.

The result shows that the majority of Algerian female participants in this research are from the West of Algeria, representing (100/47%), (47) from the East, (41) from the South, and (25) from the North representing 22%, 19%, and 12% respectively (see appendix B, Graph 1). The unequal regional distribution of respondents and the females’ dominance of the West region could be explained by the fact that the researcher herself is from the West and that the snowball sampling method employed her network and friendship. Thus, some participants and family members were friends and/or in a relationship with each other. Out of 213 female participants I can consider 12 of these women are either my friends or relatives. The remaining 201 were strangers to me and were asked to participate by females already involved in this study. Charlie Parker et al. (2020, p.3) clarify:

The agreeable participants are then asked to recommend other contacts who fit the research criteria and who potentially might also be willing

participants, who then in turn recommend other potential participants, and so on. Researchers, therefore, use their social networks to establish initial links, with sampling momentum developing from these, capturing an increasing chain of participants.

According to Oakley (1981) and Skeggs (1999), the friendship between the researcher and her participants will give different accounts of their opinions and experiences than a stranger or a distant acquaintance does. Oakley and Skeggs argue that they were embedded in the social network with participants. Thus, it would have been difficult to become a detached researcher (cited in Kath Browne, 2007, p.56). I consider myself a member and part of this study because of the share life experience with participants, research findings that includes me, and reflexivity. Hence, it is hard to remain outside while conducting research.

The Algerian females who took part in this study are classified into four age groups: 15-20 years old, 20-25 years old, 25-30 years old, and 30 years old and more. It appears that the largest number of female participants are young aged between 20-25 years old. At the same time, the smallest number of participants representing less than 20%, are aged between 15-20 years old (see appendix B, Graph 2). The reason behind selecting the age of 15 as a starting age to select participants is that females at that age live in a transitional period from adolescence to adulthood. Thus, teenagers' cognitive, social, behavioural, and emotional development will be gradually shifted at this age in which they tend to be more concerned about their body shapes and appearances. They also become more interested in developing romantic relationships and creating their own emotional and social life. According to Sedra Spano (2004), adolescence concern physical changes, cognitive, social, emotional, and interpersonal. Spano argues that young people between the ages of 15 and 16 are influenced by outside factors such as the media. She suggests that the age of adolescents can be categorized into four zones: moving toward independence, future interest and cognitive developments, sexuality, ethics and self-direction, and physical changes.

Similarly, Patti M. Valkenburg and Jessica Taylor (2017, pp.86-90) state that there are three key social-emotional subgoals for the development of autonomy for the teen: identity, sense of intimacy, and sexual identity. First, identity, according to Valkenburg and Taylor, consists of self-concept and self-esteem, and girls at the age want to see feminine girls and live up to the feminine 'ideal'. They also note that girls are curious to know how famous actresses solve their problems. They start appreciating and focusing on entertainment programs that tackle social relationships, romance, and love. Second, for the sense of intimacy and sexual identity, girls became curious to know how famous actresses solve their problems. Accordingly, they start seeking out media products and television to express their identity, including movies, music, and social media. Teens are also beginning to understand their sexuality which is prominently in most TV dramas and movies. Valkenburg and Taylor assert: "They particularly seem to seek out television and movie content that features sexual scenes or sexual innuendo" (2017, p.90). Algerian female teens are no exception as they are also exposed to different mass media and social media platforms. There is a high probability that they are spending a long-time watching Turkish TV series. This hypothesis could be explained by the fact that Algerian teenage girls are not allowed to venture out at night, like boys of the same age, so perhaps they stay at home watching TV programs, and possibly Turkish TV dramas are one of these shows. According to Alexandra Bucciante, Mazen Hayek, the Director of Marketing at MBC group, states that 80 million viewers above 15 years of age in the Middle East and North Africa region watched the romantic TV series *Noor*, out of whom 50 million are female (2010, p,2). The statement of Mazen Hayek validates the decision of counting Algerian female teens of 15 years old in this study.

Regarding social status, participants were asked three different questions to explore the features of Algerian females who watch Turkish soap operas. The first question describes

their civil status: single, married, divorced, or widow. The second question identifies their occupation, whether they are students, housewives, or employees, and the third question demonstrates their educational level. The result shows that 75% of Algerian female participants in this research are single, 22% are married, 2% are divorced, and 1% are widows (see appendix B, Graph 3). In terms of occupation, the findings illustrate that 115 participants are students, 72 are workers, and 26 are housewives. It seems that almost all respondents are educated because out of the total number 213/191 females are university students, 15 are secondary students. Only 5 participants have interrupted their studies in the middle school and 1 did not attend school (see appendix B, Graph 4 &5). Subtracting 115 female students from the total of 191 university students equals (76) qualified females, which means that some housewives, employees, or both are university students or have graduated. As I have discussed in chapter 3, despite the significant role of Algerian women in the Algerian revolution and independence war, in the postcolonial era, they were expected to return to the traditional domestic roles of wife and mother. However, women began demanding their legal rights putting pressure on the Algerian government and society. Caroline Rohloff considers that Algerian women's movements gradually enabled Algerian females to reach a higher level of education and a career. Since the 1990s, many organizations have been advocating for women's access to education and work. Thus, due to these efforts, Algerian women became more educated, confident, independent, and successful in different workspaces (2012, p.28-34). She explains:

Over the next three decades the situation of women began to gradually improve, particularly as educational opportunities increased. By the 1990s, primary school enrolment rates for girls had reached nearly 90 percent and the percentage of women in secondary education had more than doubled. (2012, p.2)

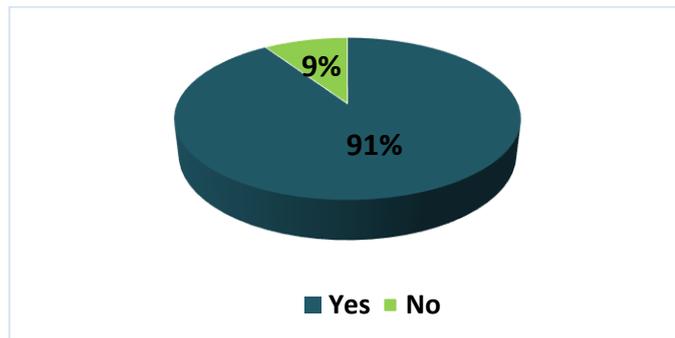
Zahia Ouadah-Bedidi (2018, p.89) argues that at the beginning of the 2000s, the number of females in Algerian universities was higher than males. They account for about 60% of those enrolled compared to just 14% during the immediate Algerian independence and 23% during the late 1970s. According to the Algerian National Office of Statistics (ONS) (2013), Algerian females attend universities more than males (see Ouadah-Bedidi,2018, p.89). Ouadah-Bedidi explains that during the 2011-2012 school year, 60% of the graduated students from the Algerian universities were girls:

When it comes to university degrees, the female advantage is just as evident. Since the 2009-10 school year, nearly 2 out of 3 graduates have been girls in all areas of study combined. In some disciplines, girls represent an overwhelming majority, making up 65% of graduates in medicine, the social sciences, and the humanities, 80% in the natural and earth sciences, and 83% in languages. Even in a previously male-oriented discipline like “the hard sciences. (2018, p.91)

Regarding women’s work Zahia Smail Salhi insists on the necessity of work in promoting their status. she declares: “Women's work was fundamental to the struggle for national liberation and, therefore, equally important to their own liberation” (2010, p.117). Since the beginning of the postcolonial era, Algerian women recognized that education and work are the substantial solutions to level up themselves and obtained their rights. That might justify why most of this research participants are students (115 females) and workers (72 females).

### **5.3. Algerian Female Audiences’ Viewing Habits’**

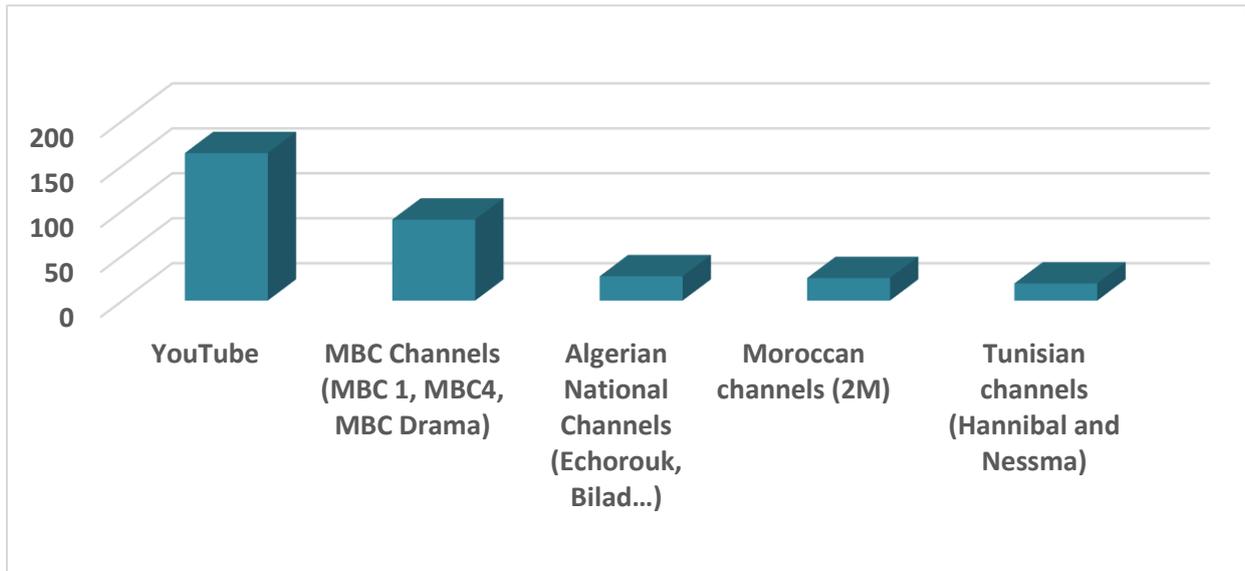
The first question of this section was a yes/no question, in which participants were asked if they watch Turkish TV dramas. The following pie chart concludes that the majority of them are Dizi TV series viewers. 193 females or 91% say yes, they are watching Turkish TV drama, while only 9% representing 20 females from the total of 213, say no.



**Figure 5.1:** Average number of Turkish TV drama Algerian females' viewers

Moreover, they were also requested to state how often they watch Turkish TV dramas. The largest sample representing 40% (86 females) declared that they watched them 'sometimes. 21% always, 23% often, and a small number of respondents representing 14% and 2% proclaimed that they rarely and never watch Turkish soap operas, respectively (see appendix B, Graph 6). In comparison to 91% who stated earlier that they watch Turkish soap operas, a few of them seem to watch Dizi series constantly, representing 21% who selected 'always. The third question in this section was about the average number of Turkish TV series each participant watches. Respondents were given five suggestions: 1, 1 to 5, 5 to 10, and more than 10. Out of the total number, 79 of them said that they watched more than (10) ten Turkish TV dramas, 59 watched 1 to 5 TV series, 57 of them watched 5 to 10, and 18 viewed only one Turkish TV series. Since the majority of Algerian female participants in this study declared that they watched more than 10 Turkish TV dramas, the subsequent question was about the average number of episodes they view every day. Almost half of the respondents (102) admitted that they watch one episode per day probably because most of them are university students. Hence, they may have time constraints and academic commitments. 52 admitted that they watch two episodes a day, and the other 59 females seem to spend more time per day watching Turkish TV series with than two (2) episodes every day (see appendix B, Graph 7).

Steve Sussman and Meghan Bridgid Moran (2013, p.4) explain why viewers spend a long-time watching television, suggesting that audiences may continue watching TV many hours instead of 30 minutes as planned with unsuccessful persistence to cut down or control this behaviour. According to Eylem Yanardağoğlu and Imad N. Karam (2013, p.565), the sales specialist Ezgi Ural of the Turkish TV channel Kanal D, in an interview (2011), confirms that the universality of topic such as love is the key reasons for the attractiveness and the popularity of Turkish TV series, especially for females. These factors probably make Algerian female participants more gripped by Turkish soap operas. They may have experienced a similar situation in resisting and controlling the number of episodes they watch. However, they are likely to watch them gratify their emotional and cognitive appetite, as discussed in the following paragraphs. Yanardağoğlu and Karam (2013, p.561) indicate that the Saudi-owned MBC satellite television started airing Turkish TV series to Arab viewers in 2006. However, due to globalization, new suppliers of audio-visual content emerged, which creates competition between audio-visual media markets, mainly between television and YouTube. In this vein, it is worth questioning to what extent Algerian female audiences consider MBC as their primary source to watch Dizi series or whether they prefer a new online media market. The sample of this research was provided with five options of the most popular TV channels in the Middle East and the Maghreb world: MBC, Algerian channels, Moroccan channels, Tunisian channels, and the online social platform 'YouTube'. Participants were allowed to select more than one choice because they may watch this genre on different channels and platforms.



**Figure 5.2:** Most popular TV channels and online platforms in watching Turkish dramas for Algerian females

The bar graph shows that MBC is no more the primary source for Algerian female audiences to watch Turkish TV dramas as YouTube is the first and most preferred social platform. 164 respondents selected YouTube, 90 chosen MBC, 27 the Algerian national TV channels, 25 the Moroccan channels, and finally, 19 preferred the Tunisian channels. Although MBC was the first Arab channel that broadcasted the dubbed Turkish TV series, it has been classified as the second after YouTube. It seems that many reasons lead Algerian audiences to favouring YouTube rather than MBC or any other channel. First, due to a political crisis between Turkey and some Gulf countries, MBC prohibited and stopped airing any Turkish TV series. Due to this political decision, YouTube became the preferable alternative to watch them. Elif Binici Erşen (2018) mentions that the Middle East Broadcasting Centre (MBC) decided on March 1, 2018, to stop diffusing Dizi TV dramas. In an interview conducted by Erşen with Ziyad Varol, the licensing and digital manager at ATV, a part of Turkey's Turkuaz Media Group. Varol asserts that loyal viewers will find a new way to watch Dizi, arguing that "Turkish content reaches audiences no matter what we see the numbers on YouTube and see amazing demand". It appears that audiences as well as the licensing and digital manager Ziyad

Varol consider YouTube as the best alternative solution to watch Dizi soap operas as it is banned in MBC groups. Damian Radcliffe and Hadil Abuhmaid (2019, p.6) indicate that more than 60% of YouTube viewers in MENA<sup>13</sup> are millennials and that TV dramas see an increase in viewership on YouTube during Ramadan. Damian Radcliffe and Payton Bruni (2019) proclaim: “the number of YouTube channels in MENA has risen by 160 percent in the past three years”. It can be argued that the absence of Turkish TV dramas on MBC is one of the main reasons that led to the rise of YouTube channels in the Middle East and North African countries. Perhaps some of these channels are specialized in subtitling and airing Dizi TV series to substitute the Absence of MBC. Global Media Insight (2020) clarifies:

Think with Google MENA, an online resource from Google with data, analysis and insights on the digital world in the MENA region. The report throws light on the online trends present among the younger generation in the Arab world and has revealed the pre-eminence of video content among millennials in the Arab world. With 68% of people in Saudi Arabia and the UAE consuming video through digital rather than TV, YouTube tops the list of social channels with 26.25 million viewers, which is a whopping 76% of the total social media users.

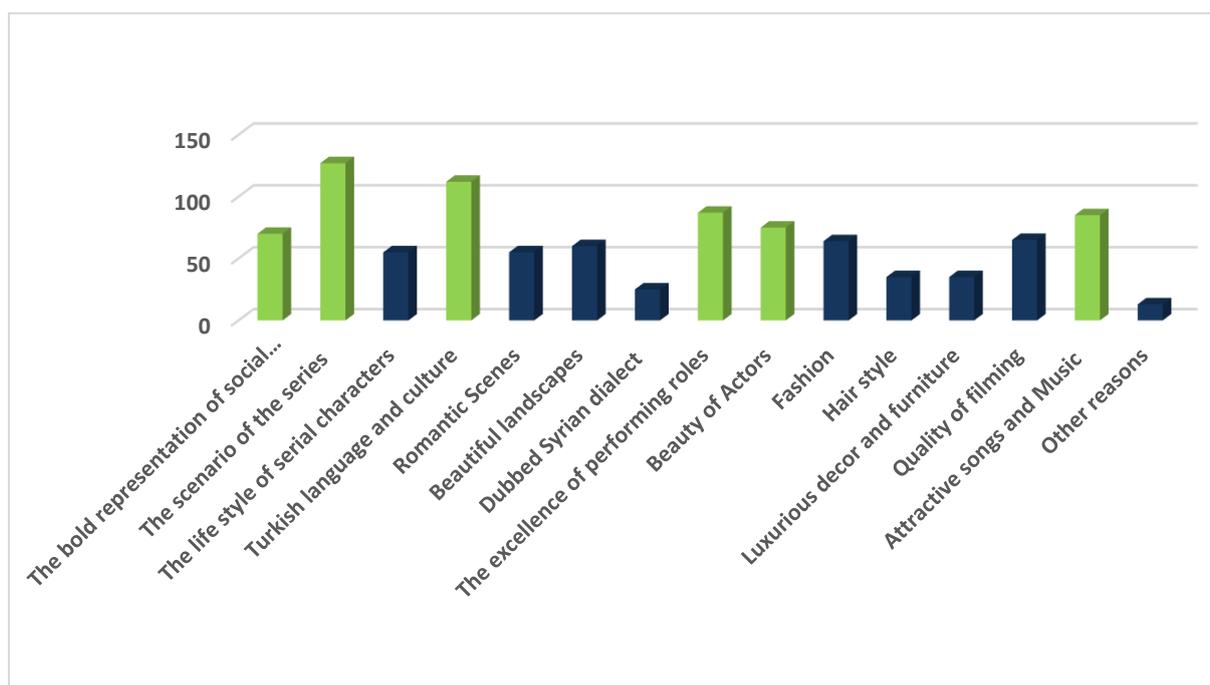
The second reason that pushes Algerian females to choose YouTube is probably related to the audio-visual translation and the use of the Syrian dialect in dubbing this TV series. Thus, the initial hypothesis of this study was that they prefer watching them in their original language or subtitled rather than dubbed. Since MBC was dubbing them into the Syrian dialect, Algerian females seem to prefer watching them in their original language because YouTube is broadcasting them subtitled and not dubbed. The third reason is that on YouTube, viewers can gain access to unabridged and uncensored material and offers the possibility to watch many episodes at the time they want, unlike TV channels that often air one adapted episode a day, excluding weekends at a specific timing.

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<sup>13</sup> MENA: The Middle East and North African Countries

#### 5.4. Turkish Public Diplomacy: The Promotion of Turkish Language and Culture

Algerian female participants were given 15 suggestions and were allowed to tick more than one answer depending on their experiences and perspectives to gain an in-depth understanding of the reasons behind the popularity of Dizi. The bar graph demonstrates that there are many features behind the popularity of Turkish TV dramas among Algerian females: the scenario of TV series (127 respondents), Turkish language and culture (112), quality of acting different roles (87), music and songs (85), beauty of actors and actresses (75), and finally (70) participants picked the bold representation of social issues. To a lesser extent, other participants are impressed by the lifestyle of the serial protagonists (55 respondents), Turkish landscapes (60), luxurious decor and furniture (35), fashion (64), hairstyles (35), romantic scenes (55), quality of filming (65), and (25) participants are gripped by the dubbing Syrian dialect. These elements seem to be used as soft tools to attract or persuade audiences to watch these TV shows.



**Figure 5.3:** Motives that inspire Algerian females' audiences to watch Dizi TV series

Following Nye's soft power theory, the above statistics evidence that Dizi TV series promote the Turkish way of life and changes perceptions about Turkey as a modern and rich country. To clarify, Dimitra Laurence Larochelle (2021) cites the statement of Egemen Bagis, the former minister of the European Union Affairs (2009-2013) in which he declares: "Turkish series are a perfect tool for us to reflect Turkey's image and Turkish lifestyle. This, not only for our economic but also for our diplomatic and sociological interests. Turkish series have become one of the most effective means of our soft power". The soft power of Turkish TV dramas had successfully promoted the Turkish lifestyle to the world. One of the Turkish soap operas' soft power instruments are scenarios used as comprehensive techniques to attract audiences and introduce Turkish cuisine, history, fashion, languages, and rituals.

Plots of Turkish TV drama scenarios and their bold representation of social issues and taboos are salient features that make Dizi appealing to Algerian female viewers. According to Ekant Veer and Cagri Yalkin (2018, p.1050), Buckley and Gottlieb (1988), Costos et al. (2002), Kulick and Willson (2003), and Rubin (2009) taboos of contemporary societies are related to gender, religion, and sexuality. Yalkin and Veer conducted an interpretive research through to examine how religion, gender, and sexuality are depicted in Turkish TV series. They conclude that plots of Dizi series reflect different taboos in societies such as mode of dress (modest vs. non-modest), alcohol consumption, and sexual relationships. Likewise, Ahu Yigit (2013) presumes that the combination of modern lifestyle and the Islamic society presented in Turkish TV dramas makes them more appealing to Arabs. He argues:

From the Arab perspective, modernity is especially inherent in certain types of gender relations and gender equality. In these series, women enjoy a freer standing in society compared to most of their Middle Eastern counterparts,

take part in professional life and have rather liberal relations with men.  
(2013, pp.2-3)

Dizi TV production seems to present a model of TV series in which modernity coexists with Islam, and Islamic values will not be eroded by modern values. Hilal Erkazancı Durmuş explains that the success of *Gümüş* in the Arab world is due to the combination of Islamic depictions mixed with modern life. He elucidates: “Although the protagonists violate Islamic taboos by drinking alcohol, dancing in nightclubs, having sex before marriage, having children outside of marriage and so forth, they observe certain religious traditions by praying, fasting, and respecting their family’s patriarchal model” (2016, p.492). In terms of broadcasted Dizi content, MBC has heavily censored the inappropriate scenes for the Arab society, such as stories of virginity and premarital sex, to assuage the anxieties of more conservative viewers (Buccianti,2010, p.4).

Nonetheless, Yigit observes that Turkish TV dramas that tackle conservative topics have low viewership rates among Arab viewers. He asserts “it is notable that other Turkish series, produced by conservative television channels and promoting an Islamic morality, have not garnered any spectacular success in the Middle East” (Ahu Yigit, 2013, p.3). In this sense, Middle Eastern, and Algerian audiences, consider conservative topics as old-fashioned and traditional which they watched for a long time in their national channels and are now looking for innovative, liberal, and bolder topics. Therefore, it appears that Dizi TV series that treat taboos and risqué subjects is satisfying their appetite. This may be one of the reasons that push Algerian female viewers to prefer YouTube more than TV channels like this online platform air without tampering with the content.

Jomanah El Delaimi (2010) argues that Turkish soap operas threaten authentic Arab culture because they broadcast content that hardly represents Muslim society and Islam. El Delaimi provides examples of alcohol scenes, disrespect of parents, premarital relationships, sexuality,

and pregnancy outside the marriage. Senem Çevik proves that and states: “the soap operas include pre-marital sex, nudity, adultery, and love triangles, which are perhaps topics not too risqué for a Western audience but are considered risqué for Middle Eastern markets. (2014, p.88). In Algeria, such scenes are considered to be opposed to the Algerian values and traditions. Nevertheless, Algerian females do not seem to disapprove of them. The Algerian government is strict on the censorship of TV content; for example, the Official Journal of the Algerian Republic (2014, pp.13-18) lists laws of the Algerian Audio-visual Control Authority related to the censorship of media and television topics, content, programs, and advertisements.

According to *The Official Journal of the Algerian Republic* (2014), ‘Article 48’ of the Algerian Audio-visual Regulatory Authority emphasises the necessity of respecting patriotism, religion, and other ethnicities. It also emphasizes the respect of principles of the Algerian society, standards, and the quality of TV shows. In the case of irregularities, the Official Journal states that the ‘Article 101’ of the Audio-visual Control Authority warns the concerned people, such as TV producers, journalists, TV channels, and broadcasters for cancellation of the show or paying fines. If the concerned media organization does not respond to the warnings, the Audio-visual Regulatory Authority order for provisional or definite cessation of the aired program. For instance, recently, the committee of Audio-visual media decided to suspend the social TV program titled *Ma Waraa el-Jodran* in English *Beyond the Walls* (my translation) broadcasted in the Algerian private channel Ennahar TV. This program was used to tackle social problems such as violence, divorce, homelessness, and child abuse.

The authority decided to temporarily suspend it due to ethical irregularities and the discussion of taboos that affect the morals and social values of the Algerian society. Two weeks ago, Ennahar TV channel broadcasted an episode of this program that sparked wide social

disapproval and caused controversy in Algeria. Because it shows a female child threatening her father with a knife for being aggressive against her. According to Algérie Press Service, the program and the channel received several warnings, but they did not respond. Thus, on January 28, 2021, the Algerian Audio-visual Regulatory Authority suspended the broadcasting of this TV show. Algérie Press Service report that another social TV show titled *Li Fat Matte* in English, *What Passed Is from The Past* (my translation) broadcasted in Echrouk TV has been cut by the Audio-visual Regulatory Authority on January 27, 2021, because of moral transgressions while discussing a story of two girls with their father.

According to the authority addressing familial topics requires professionalism and the engagement of experts to provide viewers with solutions. But what happened in this TV show has negatively affected the family ties and its sacredness. In the same context, the authority blamed this TV program for misrepresenting the parent-child relationship, which might stir dissatisfaction and controversy in the Algerian society. Even comedy TV shows that tackled political or inappropriate social issues were suspended. *Djornane el Gosto* for instance, was aired on the private channel El Djazairia TV later on KBC TV in 2015 during the month of Ramadhan. This TV program is a comic performance used to reflect the daily events of Algerian citizens and discuss the lifestyle and political decisions of Algerian leaders. Although its popularity, the program was stopped. Reporters Without Borders (2016, p.16) explains the decision of the authorities:

In 2015, the Audio-visual Regulatory Authority produced a verbal warning against the show. On June 23rd, 2016, the program was censored during filming by the national gendarmerie, and its team was expelled. The program was later renamed “Ness Stah” This violent raid came a few days following the stopping and sealing of the recording studio of another KBC critical talk show called “Ki hna Ki Enass”.

Moreover, as mentioned in chapter 3, one of the main reasons that make Algeria females drawn to with the bold representation of social issues and Turkish TV series scenarios, in general, is the absence of the Algerian TV drama production, which appears and multiplies only in the month of Ramadhan. According to Houria Sayyad October (2010), Algerian TV drama is still struggling with problems of local production and scenarios meanwhile, Algerian viewers are looking for entertainment in other Arab channels. Sayyad reports the speech of the Algerian director and screenwriter Hadje Rahim in which he clarifies that the problem of the local TV drama sector is financial and the lack of interest in culture. The TV director Baya Hashemi seems disappointed with the policy used by the Algerian national television. Hashemi wonders how the primary financier of local TV drama production is obstructing dramatic projects, exporting other Arab TV series, and giving them priority at the expense of the local production. Hashemi concludes by arguing that one TV drama per year (Ramadhan's TV series) will never achieve advancement or improvement to the Algerian TV drama to compete for other TV productions such as the Syrian and the Turkish TV drama (Sayyad, 2010).

The censorship and the high restrictions of the Audio-visual Regulatory Authority, lack of sponsorship by the Algerian national television, and the unbridled and ferocious competition of Arab and Turkish TV dramas are the main reasons that led to the decline of the Algerian local TV drama production (Houria Sayyad, 2010). The Algerian playwright Faouzi Saidani in an interview with *Noon Post* (2020), states that Algerian TV drama producers imitate and rely on foreign TV shows to produce their works, especially Turkish ones (Rabia Khurais, 2020). Consequently, Algerian female viewers seem to have searched for an alternative that compensates for the lack of local TV series by watching other Middle Eastern, North African TV channels or YouTube. It seems that Algerian female viewers in this study were not

looking only for ordinary scenarios that tackle social issues in a conservative way like Algerian TV series do, but, more liberal and daring storylines.

Furthermore, addressing cultural taboos on Algerian TV screens is not tolerated and any criticism or negative depiction of Islam is highly unwelcome and may lead to the cessation of the TV channel. For that reason, local TV dramas scenarios are often deliberating only familial ties and some social problems such as social classes, divorce, mafia, and inheritance. In Algeria, religion plays a central role in defining social and cultural norms that affect consumption behaviours. Salim Bouherar (2020) asserts that religion is the first and the strongest in Algeria. He adds: “the main cultural and social legislation in Algerian societies is religion along with history and other elements that shape the Algerian cultures” (2020, p.5). According to Dina Mansour, there are heavy restrictions on locally produced TV productions to preserve culture and religion in the Arab world. She proclaims:

The relationship between film and culture is portrayed rather vividly in traditional societies of the Arab world that aim to safeguard themselves from the inflow or emergence of cultural norms and values that are either deemed inappropriate or defy shared norms. (2012, p.3)

As part of this study, I wanted to examine to what extent the dubbed and the subtitled Turkish TV series promote Turkish culture among its viewers. In the current study, 112 Algerian female participants assert that the Turkish language and culture make these series more appealing. This soft power paves the way to the Turkish popular culture which stimulates Algerian females to learn the Turkish language and visit filming locations. Cansu Arisoy (2016, p.134) likens globalization as a sword over the head of “weak societies” and their cultures. He confirms that globalization helps powerful countries and their culture affect other nations in which weak countries can neither resist this power nor enter into this universal competition.

Regarding the relationship between Arab Turkish TV drama viewers, globalization, and Turkish popular culture, the Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet Daily News* (2011) reports that Turkish TV series are hugely popular. It points out that the historical TV drama *Harim al-Sultan* (2011) and the romantic TV series *Forbidden Love* (2010-2011) have promoted Turkish lifestyle breaking viewership records in the Middle East and North African countries. *Hürriyet Daily News* (2011) interviewed the sociologist Nilüfer Narli regarding Dizi and their influences abroad. Narli notices that Turkey's soft power through TV series has increased, and significantly, some nations started learning the Turkish language. "As the circulation of soap operas in the international arena has increased, learning Turkish language and culture have become very important in the Arab and Balkan countries. This is what we call 'soft power' within the context of the culture industry".

Almost 50% of Algerian participants mention Turkish language as one of the key factors that makes them ardently consume Turkish TV series. The shared phonetics and phonological structure of Arabic loanwords integrated into the subtitled and the dubbed TV series make them feel familiar with the Turkish culture and language. In the Arab-speaking world and Turkey, there are borrowed words, expressions, and idioms in common because of the Ottoman Empire with Arabic words being integrated into the Turkish language and vice versa. Shadiya al-Hashmi states: "The corpus of the Arabic loanwords into Turkish comprises 1118 words from which vowel mappings and residual effects of gutturals on neighbouring vowels were identified" (2016, p.14). The Ottoman Empire's official language with a mixture of Persian and Arabic languages. Al-Hashmi explains: "Arabic and Persian influence was prevalent in Osmanli, which was a synthetic language composed of mainly Turkish with a large number of vocabulary words and idiomatic expressions from Persian and Arabic" (2016, p,20).

Equally, the Algerian dialect is a mixture of many varieties used in everyday life conversations. According to Salima Harrat et al. (2016, p.385), the vocabulary of the Algerian dialect is based on Arabic. Nonetheless, the original words have been phonologically changed, with strong Berber substrates and numerous new terms and loanwords taken from French, Turkish, and Spanish. Thus, in subtitled and dubbed Turkish TV dramas, Arabic words are heard and written on the screen because storylines contain Muslim religious rituals, such as fasting Ramadhan, reading Quran verses at funerals, and weddings. Marwan Kraidy and Omar Al-Ghazzi illustrate: “Since most Arabs and most Turks are Muslims, expressions of religiosity uttered by Turkish characters sound natural in Syrian Arabic” (2013, p.7). Tayseer Mohammed el-Ziyadat and Samira Yayar (2014, pp.11-12) provide some examples of some integrated Arabic in the Turkish language with the same meanings and pronunciation. These words also exist in the Algerian dialect with the same sense and phonetic pronunciation which may make Algerian female viewers more familiar with it. The following table shows some of them and their equivalence in the English language.

<b>Turkish</b>	<b>Arabic</b>	<b>English</b>
İntizar	انتظار	Waiting
Burhan	برهان	Evidence
Bühtan	بهتان	Falsehood
Rüşvet	رشوة	Bribe
Terbiye	تربية	Education

**Table 4.4.** Borrowed Turkish words from the Arabic language

According to Rashida Boubaker (2015), the number of Algerian students who are learning the Turkish language tripled in recent years. Boubaker points out that Algerians from different age groups and regions join universities and private schools to learn this foreign language. She justifies that this significant demand is due to the long existence of the Ottoman Empire in Algeria hundreds of years ago in which its effects are still recognized today. In addition to the actual Algerian-Turkish political and economic relations. Rashida Boubaker (2015) clarifies: “Since the academic year 2013-2014, the Turkish language has become officially taught at the University of Constantine, Tlemcen, and the University of Algiers”. She continues: “this language has been included after the augmented requests to learn it. In the beginning, the department of languages opened with about 65 students in the first year, after a short period they became more than 170 students enrolled in the 2014/2015 academic year” (my translation).

Moreover, Boubaker suggests that the second reason Algerian students joining Turkish classes is the popularity of Dizi TV series, which leads to the spread of Turkish products in Algeria such as Turkish fashion, accessories, and home decoration. She argues that Turkish TV series promote Turkish culture and reviving the Ottoman culture and the linguistic repertoire existing in Algeria. Rashida Boubaker illustrates her point using examples from Algerian terms and sorts of food of Turkish origins such as (postagy and kahwaji) means Barista and mail deliver. Turkish-Algerian food like (Dolma and Reshta), and Algerian cities of Turkish names like Daly Ibrahim and Hussein Day. Relating to the soft power of media, Lucrezia Lopez et al. explain that TV programs and movies are powerful as they can strengthen the destination’s attractiveness of the worldwide. Lopez et al. (2015, p.20) proclaim:

The audience’s feelings can be touched by several different film elements, such as the scenery, storylines events and actors. These attitudes towards

places enhance the construction of the tourism attraction to the country.

People tend to visit particular places by specific images, memories, emotional attachments to places and meanings.

Considering Dizi achievements in promoting Turkish popular culture and tourism, Nehir Ağırseven and Armağan Örki say: “When the term soft power is reconsidered via this series, attracting tourists to Turkey should be regarded as an achievement” (2017, p.847). According to the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), Turkey became one of the main tourist destinations in the world in 2014 and the 6th most visited country with its 39.8 million visitors and 29.5-billion-dollar revenue (2015, p. 8). In the Arab world, millions of Arab visitors chose Turkey as their holiday and shopping destination. Sare Selvi Ozturk interviewed Izzet Pinto, the Turkish film distributor company Global Agency’s CEO. He confirms that the number of visitors from the Middle East increased, and that Turkey owes this mainly to the historical TV drama *Harim al-Sultan* as it is very trendy overseas. He continues: “it is definitely *Muhteşem Yüzyıl (Magnificent Century)* and it attracted a lot of audiences wherever it is aired and become top-rated TV series” (Anadolu Agency,2014).

Likewise, the dubbed version of the romantic TV drama *Gümüş* significantly reinforced the number of tourists to Turkey. Nichole Sobecki (2010) notes: “Noor has become a phenomenon across the Middle East, sparking a tourism boom to Turkey that drew 105,000 visitors from Arab countries in May alone this year an increase of about 33% on last year”. In the United Arab Emirates, for example, Alphan Melis (2011) indicates that the number of tourists visiting Turkey increased to 30% after releasing the romantic TV drama *Gümüş* (cited in Nehir Ağırseven and Armağan Örki, 2017, p.849). In Algeria, Dalila Henache (2019) asserts that the adviser at the Turkish Embassy in Algeria, Mustapha Kara, says that the number of Algerians who visited Turkey in 2018 reached 300,000 tourists compared to 215,000 tourists in 2016. Mustapha Kara considers: “Number of Algerian tourists increased remarkably in recent years in line with the distinguished relationships between the two

countries”. Thus, the spokesman confirms that visa application processes for Algerians will be simplified adding that six new Turkish visa centres will open soon in other Algerian provinces mainly in the South of Algeria.

### **5.5. Dizi Soft Power Instruments of Attraction and Gratification in Dizi**

Turkish music, songs, the beauty of actors, and their performances are considered part of Dizi’s soft power used for the attraction of its viewers. 87 Algerian female participants in this research proclaim that they admire the quality of acting in different roles, 85 chose music and songs, and 75 the beauty of actors and actresses. According to Hall’s reception theory, media texts are encoded by the producer and then decoded by the reader or audience. Hence, reception theory offers a means of understanding media texts and how audiences interpret them. Regarding the meaning of these texts, Hall clarifies: “If no ‘meaning’ is taken, there can be no ‘consumption’. If the meaning is not articulated in practice, it has no effect” (1993, p.508). Music, for instance, is one of the media texts produced by Dizi and read by Algerian female viewers. According to Ayca Tunc Cox (2013, p.3), music is a universal language-related that can also be related to one’s social and cultural identity. Anessa L. Howell identifies the role and the relationship between music and television. She says: “Music has long since played an important role in the life of television. It adds aesthetic to moving pictures, evokes emotion, and can aid in the narrative aspect of a storyline” (2017, p.4).

Regarding Dizi genre, Burcu Yıldız describes the music used in the Turkish TV series, explaining that Dizi music is a new genre in the Turkish popular music market and TV industry. She considers that: “One of the defining characteristics of narratives in audio-visual media is their use of two information tracks, a soundtrack, and a visual track. Dizi musicians basically construct the soundtrack, but Dizi music as a new genre has its production conditions, dynamics, and practices” (2016, p.211). Yıldız finds that music in TV series has

three functions: diegetic music, non-diegetic music, and the combination of diegetic music and non-diegetic music. She defines diegetic music as: “where the music and its source are present onscreen and comes from within the 'narrative sphere' of the story [Gorbman 1987:22]. For example, if Dizi portrays a character playing the piano, the sound of the piano performance is heard”. The non-diegetic music, according to Yıldız, is music that exists in the scene that has no recognizable source not heard by the character (performer) by heard by the audience. This sort of music is used to create suspense or interpret the events of the story. She explains: “Only the audience hears it, and as background music, it may typically influence the viewer's emotional reaction to a scene”. The third function of music represents a combination of diegetic and non-diegetic music that offers the possibility of making a smooth flow in the TV series (Burcu Yıldız, 2016, pp.210-211).

Burcu Yıldız emphasizes the importance of the opening Dizi TV dramas music. She confirms that most producers first hear and select the opening soundtrack then decide whether or not to work with that musician. She states: “Opening credits music is the most important section of dizi music because it is the most recognizable piece of music that the audience will associate with the dizi, and indicates the genre (comedy, drama, historical, action and so on). Also, the music for the opening credits music has a 'wake-up' function” (2016, p.211). It seems that the opening music of Dizi TV series obtained a high degree of attention from its Arab audiences. Alexandra Bucciante (2010, p.3) mentions that in 2008 the media noticed that Arab viewers are downloading Turkish TV series and their opening theme songs. Furthermore, one of the reasons that make Turkish TV series songs and music more appealing for Algeria female viewers is the originality and creativity. They integrate new soundtracks and songs for each genre to describe love, violence, doubt, happiness, evil planning, etc. Yıldız validates: “The producer, director, and TV channel manager demand an authentic, original, and identifiable musical sound for each TV series they produce. They expect that the audience will be able to

identify the series by its musical sound” (2016, p.212). Kimberley Bowen Çolakoğlu et al (2016, p.53) assert that music helps viewers associate TV drama personas with relevant identities. For example, in the historical TV drama *Harim al-Sultan*, there was a specific music background or a specific music instrument for the main character of the series. Violin, for instance, was either used as a background soundtrack or performed by the grand vizier of Sultan Suleiman Ibrahim Pasha and the husband of Sultana Khadidja. Kimberley Bowen Çolakoğlu et al. (2016, p.54) point out:

Ibrahim was kidnapped by pirates before making his way to the Ottoman courts and throughout the series viewers are reminded that his roots are in Parga, modern-day Greece, and that his village was Christian. His struggle with his identity is brought up in several episodes particularly through music and visual arts.

Likewise, Sultan Suleiman’s battles have their specific melodies to express the sweeping presence of the Ottoman sovereignty, like the rhythm of horse-hooves and military drums. Esra Doğramacı explains: “Military music accompanies the scene, titled ‘Bismişah’ which is a mix of Ottoman mehter (military) and contemporary music, as well as a religious invocation to Süleymans’ rallying call” (2014, p.23). *The Century* applied a variety of musical instruments and songs to indicate grief. They used two different soundtracks to announce the death of Prince Mustapha, titled "Zahit Bizi Tan Eyleme", and another epic music for the death of Sultana Huyam. According to Kimberley Bowen Çolakoğlu et al. (2016, p.53). *Harim al-Sultan* adopted 32 different forms of instruments released to the public in more than one album.

Algerian female participants’ attraction to the series actors in this study can also be read in relation to the cultural proximity of Dizi industry in comparison to Hollywood. According to Necati Anaz and Ceyhun Ozcan, Turkish TV drama stars are different from Hollywood’s stars. Turkish celebrities are no longer foreign or inaccessible. They justify: “In the minds of

Arab viewers, Turkish stars are reachable and their personal stories and narratives in which they act present cultural similarities with the everyday life of viewers from Arab countries” (2018, p.255). Jumana Al Tamimi mentions that the Lebanese Prime Minister Saad al Hariri offered a group of orphans a paid excursion when children surprised him with their preferred destination. She states:

When he asks the children there what they would want to have the most, their replies caught him off-guard. He expected, like everyone else, that children would ask for material things, such as toys or bicycles; instead, they asked to meet Noor, the main character in the Turkish TV series *Gümüş* (dubbed as Nour in Arabic) and played by the Turkish actress Songül Oden. Then Al Hariri asked his advisers to arrange a meeting with Noor. (cited Anaz and Ozcan, 2016, p.255)

It seems that Dizi TV drama stars have a substantial effect on Arab viewers. Alexandra Bucciante (2010, p.3) indicates that the press has reported some notable actions carried out by Middle East viewers such as naming new-borns after Noor and Muhannad referring to the heroes of the romantic series *Gümüş*. Bucciante continues: “the craze also included an economic dimension with best selling t-shirts and posters. The sales of these goods sometimes even surpassed those of Arab leaders like Saddam or Yasser Arafat in Gaza” (2010, p.3). Sangkyun Kim and Philip Long argue that the audience, before deciding to become a film tourist they create a deep relationship with the characters and actors of the film. They elucidate: “in the case of TV dramas, audiences are generally exposed to a longer screening period and in turn may develop a stronger attachment to the storylines and locations and affinity with particular characters” (2012, pp.174-175). Regarding the consumption of Turkish TV series by gender, B. Senem Çevik asserts that because women are the target audience for these series, stories tend to revolve around women and the man of their dreams. Çevik (2014, p.88) writes:

One notable feature of Turkish soap operas is what could be called as the beauty factor. The physical attractiveness of the actors and actresses is difficult not to notice; some are former models or trained actors who are chosen to look good on TV. Hence, the attractiveness of actors and actresses' function in drawing in more viewers.

For instance, the Turkish actor Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ/ Muhannad had successfully gained the Arab world's most feminine heartthrob. Buccianti (2010, p.5) indicates that the hero of *Gümüş* performed by Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ had earned a nickname "the Middle East's Brad Pitt" because he had western features, he is romantic, sexy, young, handsome, and the winner of the best model of the world award in 2002. She illustrates: "Tatlıtuğ became a real star and made several ads and a music video with Lebanese singer Rula Saad" (2010, p.5). Christina Salamandra (2012) explains that Arab women are impressed by the fine-boned, blue-eyed, and blond hair of Muhannad (Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ), so she calls this phenomenon 'Muhannad effect'. Salamandra justifies the reasons that make Arab females gripped by Muhannad. She clarifies:

Arab television puts a premium on women's attractiveness, while men's physical appearance is typically unmarked. Syrian TV dramas, and my ethnographic fieldwork among their creators, confirm that facial beauty and slender physique are much more important for actresses than they are for actors. the heroines of Arab drama conform to local and increasingly global standards of beauty, while the heroes are generally unprepossessing. (2012, p.57)

Çevik points out that Dizi actors and actresses did not gain only popularity in the Arab world, but they are also invited for television advertisement and partnership.

Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ, the leading actor in some of the most notable series was featured in a TV commercial for cologne in the Middle East and also in a music video by Lebanese singer Rola Saad. Another famous actress Tuba Büyüküstün starred in a shampoo commercial aired in the Arab world in

2011. Beren Saat, another actress, starred in a soap commercial for a Turkish company that was aired on Arabic TV channels. (2014, p.88)

Sangkyun Kim and Philip Long (2012, pp. 174-175) previously confirmed that viewers before becoming film tourists they create a relationship with the characters of that film. It seems that Arab viewers have developed this relationship with Dizi soap operas in which the number of tourists in Turkey increases because of the popularity of its TV dramas. Buccianti illustrates: “The palace where *Noor* was filmed on the Bosphorus was rented and transformed by tour operators into a sort of lovers’ museum destined for Arab tourists” (2010, p.4). Similarly, according to Haberturk (2014), audiences of the historical TV drama *Harim al-Sultan* visited the TopKapi palace, the mosque, and the tomb of Sultan Suleiman (cited in Ezgi Veyisoğlu, 2019, p.17). Ezgi Veyisoğlu mentions that even after the death of Prince Mustapha (son of Sultan Suleiman) in this historical soap operas, people started visiting his tomb. He continues: “After the episode of Mustafa’s death, thousands of people visited the tomb of Shahzade Mustafa which is in the Muradiye complex in Bursa” (2019, p.18). It is argued that Arab fans of Turkish TV drama prefer to experience and eyewitness filming locations in which their favourite TV series were filmed. According to the *Anadolu Agency* (2017), Ahmet Kirk, the chairman of the Arab Agencies and Tourism Development Association (ASATDER) declares:

The income each Arab tourist brings to Turkey is higher than the ones that tourists from other countries bring. Touching on the fact that Arab tourists like their comfort and are self-indulgent, Kirk said they want to spend money, with each Arab tourist spending more than \$600 a day. Moreover, Arab tourist groups that come with their families stay at least for a week - which means that they spend at least \$7,000 to \$8,000. “It is an incredible figure when compared to the expenses of tourists coming from other countries”. (*Daily Sabah*, 2017)

Concerning the soft power of Dizi in promoting Turkish products, Amer Aljammazi and Hilal Asil (2017, p.218) found that Turkish soap operas have positively influenced the perception of clothes of the majority of Saudi viewers, arguing that “this also led them to think about new fashion and trends based on what they saw in the Turkish TV drama. A certain majority also indicated that their interest in the clothes made in Turkey has also increased”. Aljammazi and Asil mention that Saudi people show their intention and tendency to purchase the newest Turkish garments even if they are costly. They illustrate: “several of them stated that they were willing to pay a higher price to purchase Turkish clothes and keep up with the latest fashion trends that were seen in the Turkish TV dramas” (2017, p.219). According to *Daily Sabah* (2016), a group of Turkish companies established an online shopping platform, “TVitrin” for local and international audiences to buy clothes they see characters of their favourite TV drama wearing. The same newspaper reports:

Many customers send photos to find the brand name of the clothes or accessories they see on the small screen. Turkish TV viewers search the clothes they like on a TV series character on the Internet or social media and the brands can get a share from the investments if the TV series is aired abroad. (*Daily Sabah, 2016*)

Furthermore, the power of the historical TV drama *Harim al-Sultan* that reached more than 70 countries also influences its viewers to buy its products. Ezgi Veyisoğlu states that Ottoman-themed products of this TV drama energized the Turkish economy. He clarifies: “The sale of the books about Hurrem Sultan rose threefold after the series. Furthermore, anything that Hurrem uses in the show has become a saleable product: her costumes, jewellery, accessories, perfume, and even her hair colour” (2019, p.17). Haberturk and Cumhuriyet (2011) declare that hair dye colour called “Hurrem’s Caramel” and Hurrem’s ring were successful products in which they broke the sales by selling over one million in a few months (cited in Ezgi Veyisoğlu, 2019, p.17).



**Figure 5.4:** Hurrem Ring

*Assawsana* (2008) reports that with the popularity of Turkish TV drama among Jordanian young women goes beyond imitating dressing styles. They even imitate Turkish actresses in hair colouring, and eyebrow tattoos like the heroines of the romantic TV series *Ihlamurlar Altında* (*The Lost Years*) and *Gümüş* (*Noor*). Marwan Kraidy and Omar Al-Ghazzi (2013, p.6) identifies the difference between Arab and Turkish TV dramas. He argues that Turkish TV dramas scored better than Arabic production in depicting fashion, beauty, and style. Compared to Turkish TV series, Syrian and Egyptian musalsalat it is common to see actresses with full makeup and styled hair in the house and even when they wake up. Kraidy and Al-Ghazzi note that: “many Syrian actresses appear to have surgically puffed lips and chiselled noses, marking stars and the characters they play as inaccessible. In contrast, Arab commentators argued that Turkish dramas depict modernity as a way of life accessible to average viewers, not only stars and celebrities” (2013, p.6). It seems that manipulating, cheating, and misleading facts to the Arab audience and the exaggerations in making up beautiful actresses touched the credibility of Arab TV drama. This is probably one of the reasons Arab viewers trust the Turkish production and became the biggest fans of it.

Moreover, there is no doubt that Dizi TV series has provided its viewers with a vast world of entertainment, offering different TV drama genres to make their fans satisfied. Gerbner and his colleagues (Gerbner and Gross 1976, Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorelli 1994 Morgana and Shanahan 1996) suggest that being exposed to television for a long time may shape the perceptions, beliefs, attitudes, and values of the viewers. Thus, they articulated a theory of television power termed ‘cultivation’. L. J. Shrum explains Gerbner’s and his colleagues’ philosophy; he says:

They suggest that the frequent viewing of television portrayals leads viewers to “cultivate” television information by integrating it into their real-world perceptions and judgments and that this the cultivation of television point of view occurs relatively more for those who watch more television. (1999, p.4)

Television or other media’s audiences often create a relationship with a particular broadcasted program when they feel that it satisfies their needs. According to Jafar Mehrad and Pegah Tajer, Katz and his colleagues (1973-1974) had the most influential role in describing the relationship between media and audiences. He clarifies: “They stated that Individuals are faced with their social and psychological needs and these needs create their expectations from mass media or other sources and ultimately lead to different patterns of media use or tendency” (2016, p.3). Mehrad and Tajer confirm that Katz and his colleagues (1974) were focusing on the cognitive needs of viewers and how media affect them because they believe that they are using it for distinct purposes. They justify:

The pioneers of this approach emphasized on the fact that people have different reasons for using media and its possible effects. They believe that one person likes a TV program to forget his/her problems, while another one likes that program to obtain information on how a specific group lives in the society. (2016, p.6)

For Dizi world, TV producers integrated various soft power instruments to satisfy their audiences, including fashion, music, and attractive actors and actresses. These factors made Turkish TV dramas among the top entertainment TV programs that Algerian females watch for different reasons. The result shows that 34% of Algerian female audiences watch these TV dramas whenever they get bored or feel stuck in a similar routine and are yearning for a change. 29% state that they are watching these programs for pleasure and enjoyment. 13% and 12% view them to fill an emotional void and escape from reality and pressure, respectively. Finally, 10% of them watch these series for educational or informative purposes (see appendix B, Graph 8).

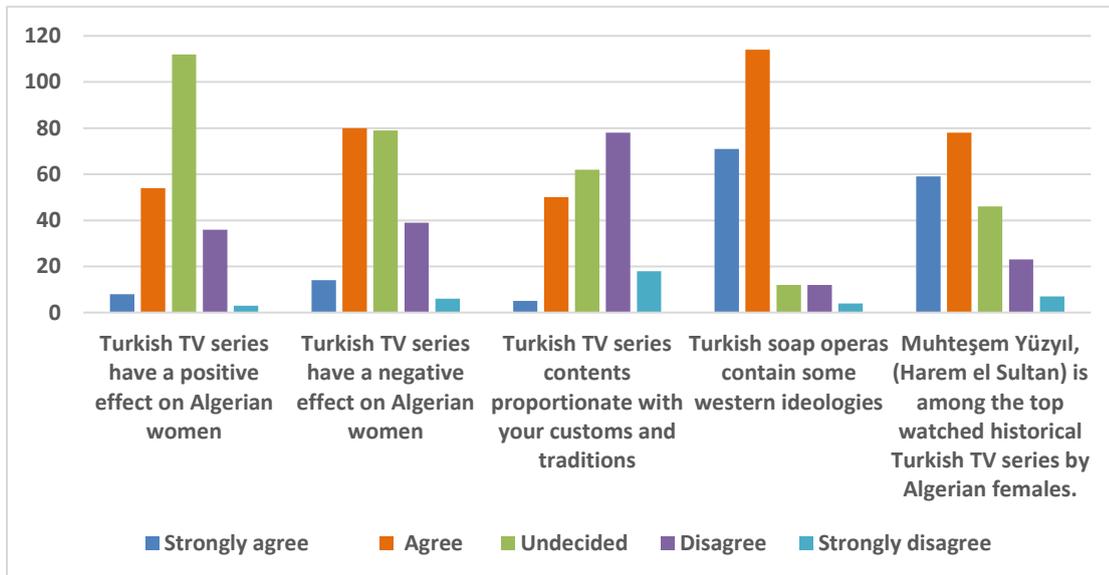
Sophia Moskalenko and Steven J. Heine (2003, p.78) mention that the displeased people with themselves are more likely to watch television. In a similar vein, R.E. Thayer, J.R. Newman, and T.M. McClain (1994) found that people turn to media when anxious and under pressure, Kubey and Csikszentmihalyi (1990) say that individuals watch media whenever they feel unhappy. Seth Finn and Mary Gorr (1988) found that shyness, loneliness, and self-esteem are the main reasons and motivations to watch television. Finn and Gorr see that people watch television to pass the time, mood management, or to cheer themselves up. They conclude that viewing television has positively increased self-feeling (cited in Dara N. Greenwood, 2008, p.3). According to Bernd Henning and Peter Vorderer (2000, p.1), reasons for watching television remain unexplained. However, Peter Vorderer (1996, p.311) points out that the frequent unsatisfying life circumstances cause cognitive and emotional escapism from reality. Robert Kubey (1986, p.110) notes that “it clear that television is an activity likely to be chosen by people wishing to escape from negative feelings and from the demands of reality”. In this respect, Kubey (1986, p.111) suggest three hypotheses:

1. That negative experiences at work would lead people to gravitate to television upon returning home.

2. That negative experiences while interacting with other people would be related to heavier viewing; and
3. That heavier television viewers would report feeling relatively worse than light viewers during “non-activities” such as waiting, daydreaming, sitting and not doing anything, or staring out a window. (cited in Bernd Henning and Peter Vorderer, 2000, p.2)

To conclude, Lewis Donohew et al. (1988), Dolf Zillmann, and Jennings Bryant (1994) confirm that people turn to media to manage their emotional state aiming to reach the best level of stimulation (cited in Eric R. Langstedt and David J. Atkin, 2013, p.5). It seems that Algerian females as well have created a parasocial relationship with Turkish TV series in which they consider it a source of company for information, entrainment, and relaxation; they escape to it whenever they feel lonely, bored, and unhappy.

### 5.6. Representation of Women and Gender Stereotypes in Dizi



**Figure 5.5:** Algerian female views about Dizi series

The diagram presents Algerian females' perspectives towards seven (5) statements related to Dizi. The Likert scale was used to specify their level of agreement and disagreement. The first and the second statement are about whether Turkish TV drama has a negative or a positive effect on them. The first bar graph shows that the majority of participants prefer being neutral towards the positive influence of Turkish TV drama. Respondents are in the majority in giving their opinion 'undecided' (112 participants). 54 agreed, and 8 strongly agreed that Dizi soap operas have a positive influence, while 36 disagreed and 3 strongly disagreed. Compared to the first bar graph, in the second bar graph, 80 participants agreed, and 14 strongly agreed that Turkish soap operas have a negative power. 79 are undecided, 39 disagree, and 6 strongly disagree. Furthermore, the third bar graph demonstrates that 78 (37%) female participants think that Dizi TV series do not match their culture, 62 (29%) undecided, and 50 (24%) see that it is proportionate. Likewise, the fourth bar graph shows that participants consider Turkish TV series as a source of western ideologies. The last bar graph embodies the level of agreement of Algerian female participants to the statement that says *Harim al-Sultan* is one of the most watched Turkish historical TV dramas.

Out of the total number of respondents, 185/86% believe that it delivers westernized beliefs, 33% strongly agree, and 53% agree. 6% are undecided, and the other 6% disagree, and finally 2% strongly disagree. In the same context, they were asked about their perspectives regarding the representation of women in Turkish soap operas. The most significant number of respondents representing 74%, showed their pleasure and satisfaction with the way the Turkish TV series portrays women. 48% were very satisfied, 26% were slightly satisfied, 17% had not decided, and only 8% were slightly satisfied and 1% were very dissatisfied (see appendix B, Graph 9). Regarding the overall picture of women in Dizi, 32% believe that Turkish soap operas represent women as powerful and independent. 26% see them as educated and smart, 28% consider them as fashionable and elegant. However, 8% of

respondents think they are represented as icons of sex and lust, 4% find them rebellious and aggressive, and 2% are weak and illiterate (see appendix B, Graph 10).

The majority of Algerian female participants believe that Dizi TV dramas have a negative influence on them. They seem aware of the cultural gap between what the Turkish series tackle and their culture and tradition. They also consider it a source of western ideologies and practices. Nevertheless, they continue watching them regularly and seem impressed and satisfied with how these TV series represent women. The power of Dizi TV series on its audiences is unclear so far, in this case, B. Senem Çevik points out:

Muslim yet modern Turkey, as the producer of these shows can trigger the identification effect. It might be easier for the audience to identify with these shows and the source country because of religious and regional connections. Viewers may therefore be comfortable with these shows despite their modern and secular settings. (2014, p.19)

The former General Secretary of the United Nations, Kofi A. Annan and The United Nations (2000, p.6), declare that the biggest war of humanity is making globalization a constructive power for people worldwide. Arisoy (2016, p.11), on the other hand, emphasizes the present challenge faced by the world to make globalization a positive phenomenon despite all of its negative effects. Turkish TV series seems to be one of these globalized media tools that tend to support women's rights through focussed scenarios that discuss many feminine topics such as violence against women. In the Arab world, for instance, Samia A. Nossier (2015, p.1) argues that violence against women continues to be common and tolerated under the garb of cultural norms or misinterpretation of religious guidelines. Nossier explains the reasons behind violence against women, but it is more related to some Arabic social norms that create gender inequalities. She illustrates: "Most importantly are the social norms that support male authority, control over women, and approve or tolerate VAW. Sex inequalities in access to formal employment and secondary education, discriminatory family laws, and childhood

exposures to violence are also important risk factors” (2015, p.1). Nossier adds that a United Nations study shows that 99.3% of Egyptian women always experienced sexual harassment, and 11% of teenage girls experienced early marriage in the Arab world (pp.1-2). She provides the coming types of violence in the Middle East:

In the Middle East, specific types of domestic violence (DV) are common, including honor-related violence directed at both unmarried and married women, abuse by other family members (such as in-laws, parents, and brothers), early, forced, and/or temporary marriages, sexual harassment, violence against girls and women in school, work, and healthcare settings, female genital cutting/mutilation, sexual abuse of female children in the household, violence perpetrated against domestic workers, and other forms of exploitation.

In Algeria, the struggle of Algerian women against violence dates back to the French colonization. Smail Salhi (2003, p.2) mentions that the rebellion of Algerian females during the national liberation fight was on two fronts: “a rebellion against the colonial occupation of Algeria by France, and against the restrictive attitudes of traditional Algerian society”. Adrienne Leonhardt (2013, p.3) comments on the role played by Algerian women in changing the Algerian society during the struggle for Algeria’s independence and how they resisted the backward forces of Islamic fundamentalism and terrorist violence to keep their country and their rights preserved. Rape, for instance, was one of the violence types practiced against Algerian women. Smail Salhi elaborates:

Rape here was disseminated as an act of violence performed by a dominating colonial power on the dominated colonised women. It was practiced as a punishment not only against the victims of rape but also on their menfolk whose honour was tarnished. (2009, p.4)

Despite their efforts, suffering, and risks they experienced during the revolution against the French colonizer, their contributions to the Algerian victory did not help them reach their

rights once the independence was declared in 1960. Adrienne Leonhardt (2013, p.12) clarifies:

The post- revolution reality could not have been more different. Attitudes towards women's rights in Algerian society continued to evolve in the form of strict marriage and divorce laws, increased rates of domestic violence, lack of women's education, forced veiling, banning of birth control, unemployment, harassment, and seclusion.

According to Alena Rusnáková (2014, p.4), World Health Organization (WHO) 2013 declares that Islamic countries have the highest rates of violence against women and that those women are unaware of their rights. In the same context, Paschalidou's documentary film about the Turkish TV series *Kismet: How Turkish Soap Operas Changed the World* shows how these TV dramas become new tools of women's empowerment to tackle violence and raise awareness among females. *Kismet* is an inspirational 48-minute film aired by *Al Jazeera English*. The documentary movie covers the impact of Turkish TV soap operas on women across the Arab world and beyond. It was filmed in Turkey, Egypt, the United Arab Emirates, Bulgaria, and Greece. Pashalidou added different scenes from popular romantic and historical Turkish TV series like *Harim al-Sultan*, *What Fatmagul's is Fault? Gümüş*, *Hayat*, and others. She also tackled Turkish Actresses like Songül Öden (heroine of *Gümüş*), Meryem Uzerli (heroine of *Harim al-Sultan*), and Beren Saat (heroine of *What Fatmagul's is Fault?*).

Pashalidou includes interviews with female fans and female social activists and asked them how they identify with the series heroines and whether they consider these TV dramas a stimulus for social change and emancipation. The heroine of *What's Fatmagul's Fault?* Beren Saat commented that "this model of marriage and religion and the pressure women are under is very similar to the Middle East. They know that we are a Muslim country... Fatmagul seems very familiar to them. [...] The possibility of making your own decisions give these

women hope”. As a witness, Pashalidou interviewed a woman fan of *What’s Fatmagul’s Fault?* She admits:

[...] My life was full of fatigue and torture[...]I wasn’t allowed outside the house[...]I couldn’t bring my friends over without his permission (she means her husband) I was very affected by Fatmagül’s TV series she was mistreated until someone helped her stand up on her feet and go to the court, the Turkish series encouraged me to dare to go to the court and ask for divorce, Thank God I won.

Alena Rusnáková (2014, p.3) also argues that TV dramas dealing with social issues can make a social change in developing countries regarding literacy and women empowerment. On the other hand, Dannielle Blumenthal (1997, p.22) adds: “As a cultural feminist I find soap operas viewing empowering”. Rusnáková illustrates a Latin American (Peruvian) telenovela titled *Simplemente Maria* aired in 1969. She puts in:

[...] following the path of poor girl from a countryside and her successful progress in socioeconomic status thanks her hard work of seamstress. Besides fact that it raised the merchantability of Singer sewing machines, this soap opera had an effect on women literacy. (2018, p.3)

Rusnáková examines the popular TV drama *What’s Fatmagul’s Fault?* broadcasted between 2010 and 2012 as one of the top TV series that focus on rape and violence against women. First, she finds that this soap opera teaches women courage and patience. She argues: “The main protagonist represents in the beginning of the show a typical rural young woman, not well educated, hard working in farm [...]. Later on, she is more autonomous, educated, successful in own business” (p.7). Second, she demonstrates that the TV drama is full of prejudices, stereotypes, and traditional boundaries: “[...] The prejudicial thinking of people in village caused that people didn’t believed Fatmagul that was raped, they viewed her as unclean, they blamed her for being provocative and causing her rape, she should not walk alone so late at night” (p.7). Concerning the prejudicial thinking and stereotypes in the Arab

world, during a discussion between Pashalidou and one of the Egyptian Turkish TV drama viewers and activists, Samira Ibrahim, mentions that she was sexually harassed:

Where speaking about such a matters [sic] is considered taboo [...] my aunts and other family didn't want me to go to the court [...] I filed a lawsuit for sexual harassment [...] on December 27th 2011 I succeeded in stopping virginity tests [...] many girls thanked me because they began speaking openly about being sexually harassed[...] Fatmagul has the keys to Turkish society, we that here as well someone must know how to enter our society and deliver the message (17-21 minutes).

Third, Rusnáková finds that common sense is one of the positive features of this soap opera. For example, Meriam is a single mother who adopted Karim (the protagonist) after the death of his mother and his father's neglect and stood for "common sense, wisdom, deliberation, and strong women". The goal behind this character is to show that even a single mother can successfully raise a morally strong person. The role of Meryem breaks the stereotypical image that countryside women are simple and uneducated. Fourth, autonomy is a significant attribute of the series' females. Meltem and Perihan are high-class female characters who decide despite the risks, Rusnáková explains:

Meltem, wife of Selim, one of the rapists, despite that he got engaged that night. After she found out what her husband did, she decided to divorce him and support Fatmagul, [...] Perihan, Selim's mother and wife of a head of big business family clan. At the start of series, she represents typical housewife in a wealthy family, who has to endlessly overlook her husband's cheatings with other women.

Success is the fourth element as the TV show represents Fatmagul as a successful woman who won in front of the court and as a restaurant owner. The TV drama director also improved the stereotypical image of the rural areas' women capable of doing some jobs predominated by men like journalism, doctors, and management cooperation. During Paschalidou's interview

with the scriptwriter of *Harim al-Sultan*, Meral Okay comments on the success of women of *The Century*. She declares: “the women character in the series fight against her family and society pressure, they are not afraid to dare to change their lives, [...] they work at the same time they raise their children”. In the same context Pashalidou talked to Meryem Uzerli, who played Huyam (protagonist) in the same TV series about her role; she replies: “many women come and tell me ‘I wish I was courageous as Hureem in my Life’”.

Fifth, Rusnáková believes that *What Fatmagul’s is Fault?* could be a model of a successful Turkish TV drama that hybrids different cultures (clothing and cultural symbols). Both Arabic and non-Arabic countries can watch the show. It includes scenes where mostly older or village women and sometimes young women visiting the cemetery wear headscarves. She also observes that outfits are modest, not very provocative, and make-up not too exposing. For European audiences, the sign of Europeanization could be seen during Christmas (Christmas tree and Christmas decoration). She concludes that this series also tackled domestic violence, marital rape, and a case of rape within the family. Rusnáková ends the discussion by affirming that *What is Fatmagul’s fault?* TV drama is a real source of women empowerment in which the heroine teaches females to be brave and autonomous while calling for their rights. She adds that the source of Fatmagul’s empowerment is the real women, not actors in the scene who came to protest and support the main character in the court. The screenwriters of *What’s Fatmagul’s Fault?* Ece Yörenç and Melek Gençoğlu in *Kismet* documentary movie re-count to Pashalidou the story of women protestors and supporters, they say:

Lawyers and NGOs<sup>14</sup> for abused women asked us how they could help, I sent them an email saying that I wanted real women to be present...[...] during a crucial scene, the final court scene, the email spread so fast that an army of women came with banners to support Fatmagul.

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<sup>14</sup> NGO: Non-governmental Organizations

Nevertheless, *What Fatmagul's is Fault?* was controversial and the first series discussed in the Turkish parliament. Rusnáková points out that some people were dissatisfied with the scene of rape which seems realistic and inappropriate for public discussion. The opponents consider that the series is advertising rape instead of preventing it. Furthermore, they disagreed with the idea of falling in love and coupling the female protagonist with a man who was previously suspected to be one of her rapists. Although she discovered that he did not rape her, they insisted that he was with them and did not help her. Opponents consider their marriage as a promoting idea of justification: marrying women after rape purifies the crime. For example, the women's Branch of the Opposition Party Coalition of the Radical Left SYRIZA<sup>15</sup> raised a complaint to ESRT<sup>16</sup> about the credibility of the series concerning rape culture and the idea of coupling a victim with her rapist. "The women's branch also called for all women in the country not to watch the TV series" (cited in Rusnáková, 2018, p.6).

Yasmine Yener (2013, pp.15-16) finds that media represent a frequent fictional or real image of violence against women, and some of these violent portrayals become common. She argues that the repetitive occurrence of violent images in media is in fact, a reflection of the high violence rates against women in reality. She suggests that the term 'sociological normalization' is used to refer to the social process in which specific uncommon ideas or practices turn into socially accepted and become 'normal'. Yener argues that: "normalization of violence against women, therefore, refers to accepting violence against women as it is and responding to this action as if it is a normal and even expected behavior". She emphasizes that the normalization of violence means the normalization of rape scenes in scenarios. She demonstrates that Turkish TV scenarios are one of those scenarios that utilize rape themes aiming to study its effect on Turkish women and family structure. However, it seems that these scenarios have backfires leading to the normalization of rape discourse. She justifies:

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<sup>16</sup>ESRT: The Higher Board of Greek Radio and Television

One of these normalization of rape discourses distorted feminist discourse and utilized feminist discourse to reinforce patriarchal rhetoric. Another normalization of rape discourse ultimately utilized rape myths to endorse dominant patriarchal rhetoric, as well. Even those mass media texts criticizing television series for normalizing rape reproduced normalization of rape discourses. (p.17)

From a similar standpoint, Yener also select *What Fatmagul's is Fault?* as a model of TV series that tackled the rape issue. She emphasizes that the gang rape scene of Fatmagul was vivid, which provoked a number of disputes about the ethics of representation of violence and sexuality. Some newspapers admired and supported the series and the people who take part in it for bravely representing such a serious subject. However, Yener believes that both positive and negative criticisms of the series employed a discourse that normalized rape. *Hayat Devam Ediyor (Life goes on)* 2011) is another Turkish soap opera that deals with rape, premarital sex, child brides, and polygamy. The story is about Hayat, a girl of 15 years old who was secretly in love with a wealthy boyfriend (Kerem) and slept together before marriage. The latter refuses to marry her; thus, her family sees that the best solution to purifies their shame and save their honor is to marry her off an older man of 70 years old. Esra Erol (2011) states that *Hayat Devam Ediyor* focuses on sensitive social issues like honor, honor killing, virgin girls, women as a tradable commodity, forced marriage, and child sexuality (cited in Melek Merve Mutlu, 2013, p.117). According to Melek Merve Mutlu (2013, p.122), both series *Hayat Devam Ediyor* and *What Fatmagul's is Fault?* represent women as dependent characters who cannot live without a man. She also confirms that these TV dramas connect the protection of women's honor on the man. For that reason, victims end up marrying their rapists to save their reputations.

In understanding cultivation theory, George Gerbner emphasis the role of cultural indicators of public message systems. They argue that: "there is a need for more sensitive and

comprehensive indicators of the structure of assumptions cultivated in public-message systems than we have yet been able to develop” (1976, p.11). According to Gerbner, these indicators can help place the cultural policy in perspective. He mentions that we can recognize how much violence should be broadcasted on television. Therefore, he distinguishes between fictional and factual violence, stating that if violent representations exceed fiction, they will falsify the truth of cultural and social values. Thus, he stresses using symbolic representation for the fictional violence, while the real violence should be addressed as reality. He insists: “symbolic representation of violence is, therefore, a vital function of information and art in their illumination of its real-life manifestations and consequences” (p.12). Yener mentions that the scenario of *What Fatmagul’s is Fault?* is based initially on Vedat Türkali’s screenplay, which was adopted to a *Yeşilçam*<sup>17</sup> (*The Green Pine*) movie with few adjustments in the original script in 1986 by Süreyya Duru. According to Yener, both in Türkali’s original screenplay and in Duru’s movie version, there is a frank patriarchal and masculine discourse. Allen Johnson (2014, p.29) explains that patriarchy is about the primary importance of males and the secondary status of females, he elaborates:

Patriarchy’s defining elements are its male-dominated, male-identified, and male-centred character[...]patriarchy is a set of symbols and ideas that make up culture embodied by everything from the content of everyday conversation to literature and film. [...] It is about defining man and woman as opposite, about the “naturalness” of the male aggression, competition, and dominance, and of female caring, cooperation, and subordination. It’s about valuing masculinity and maleness and devaluing femininity and femaleness.

In the Turkish TV drama *What Fatmagul’s is Fault?* Duru and Türkali consider that the rape story is overshadowed by Karim’s story (protagonist). Türkali (2011, p.35) asserts that this

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<sup>17</sup> Yeşilçam: also known as Turkey’s “Hollywood,” continues to draw people to watch its unforgettable old Turkish films, reminding an array of Turkish audiences of the legendary characters and scenes. *Hürriyet Daily News* (2020)

series is created based on stereotypes and the dominant patriarchal ideology. According to him, the female protagonist was weak and timid as she did not resist or protest against her situation, while she was thinking of suicide several times after being raped. Türkali and Duru confirm that the most important series' events surround Karim, "He is forced to marry his victim, he is forced to live with her, he is humiliated and mocked by society, he has to bear all snide comments and fight back any rape attempt against Fatmagül, and so on and so forth". Türkali (2011, p.50) reminds viewers about the role of male heroes in the earlier TV dramas, "he is the savior. He has to stand up to public humiliation for marrying a girl who was raped and soiled" (cited in Yener, 2013, p.48).

According to Emrah Güler (2015), İsmet Uçma, a deputy from the Justice and Development Party (AKP), affirms that Turkish TV series are the primary cause for the augmentation of violence cases against women in Turkey. He argues that these series are responsible for deteriorating the institution of the Turkish family through the representation of inappropriate relationships that resulted in rape. Bersun Kiliç (2020) points out to a report called *Series Violence Report 2* specialized in reporting the negative outcomes of Turkish TV series including gender discrimination and violence against women. The report blames these TV series for stimulating viewers to do the same. Kiliç justifies:

The series were analysed in the research were found to be detrimental in different aspects. The scenes of violence to women in one of the Turkish series called "Sen Anlat Karadeniz" (episode 56) can be described as the following: 'The man was pulling the woman by her arm'; 'the man grabs his wife by the head and pushes her to the ground'; 'the man slaps the woman'; 'the man drags the woman to the bedroom'; 'the man grabs the woman by her arm and throws her to the house'; 'the man pulls the woman by her hair out of the car at gunpoint, and takes her hostage'; 'the man throws the woman into the car at gunpoint'; 'the man drags the woman by

her hair and then slaps her'; 'the man forcibly injects the woman with drags'.

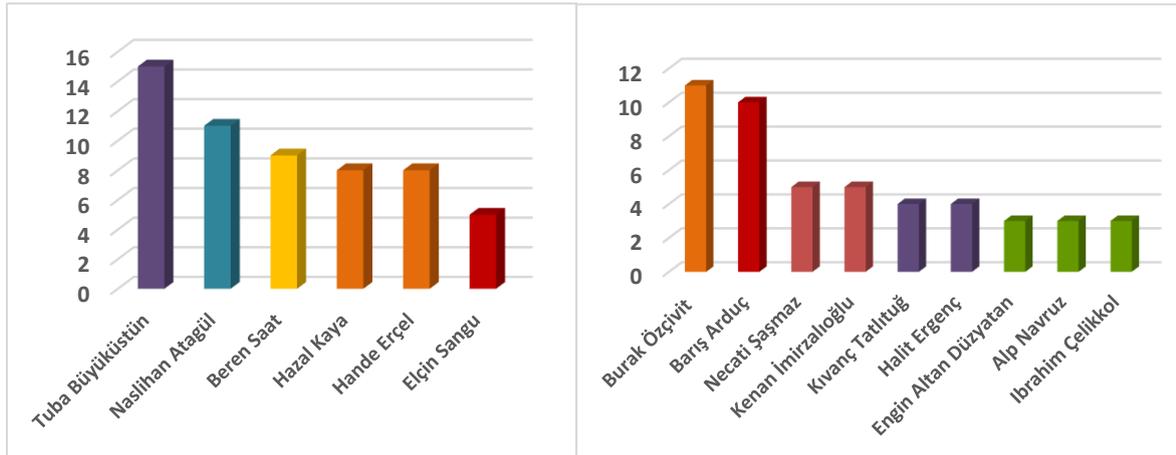
Consequently, the regular portrayal of violent behaviours against women in these TV dramas seem to normalize violence against women. According to Kiliç, a platform report called "Kadın Cinayetlerini Durduracağız (We Will Stop Femicide)" in 2020 announces that 474 women were killed by men in 2019. Regarding the verbal and psychological abuse practiced against women in the Turkish TV dramas, Mutlu (2013, p.36) declares: "The most psychological abuse types carried out by males towards women are: silence, not sharing, preventing, and mocking. Women's suppression is a way of loyalty to the husband's family, and she should serve her husband and her family". From the above, it seems that Turkish soap operas can have positive or/and negative or both impact and consequences depending on many variables that concern the viewer herself like age, gender, ethnicity, culture, and region. In this context, Musa Khan and Nilüfer Pembecioğlu (2019) researched the reception and perception of international audiences regarding the representation of history and women in the Turkish historical TV drama *Harim al-Sultan*. They used the online survey to cover audiences from two countries: Egypt and Pakistan. They found that audiences from these two regions have distinct perspectives regarding the representation of history and women. In general, Pakistani viewers think that women in *The Century*, have been depicted as powerful and independent, unlike Egyptian audiences who believe the opposite. However, both countries consider that women were portrayed as an icon of lust and sex mainly in seducing the rulers to get their attention and gain high status in the Empire. Khan and Pembecioğlu conclude that perceptions differ depending on the way women are being treated in a particular area and culture. For example, in patriarchal and non-monogamous societies, females usually have restricted liberation even with personal life decisions like marriage (p.23).

Finally, the last bar graph in the diagram shows that 65% of Algerian female participants consider *Harim al-Sultan* one of the most watched TV series. 28% strongly agree, and 37% agree. 21% are neutral, 11% disagree, and the other 3% strongly disagree. According to *Hürriyet Daily News* (2013), *Harim al-Sultan* has been sold to more than 40 countries, including Balkan countries, the Middle East, Russia, and China. It is also the first Turkish TV drama sold to Italy. *The Century* attracted over 500 million viewers from 70 different countries (*Hürriyet Daily News*, 2019). *Harim al-Sultan* is a historical Dizi drama that narrates the life story of the tenth Ottoman ruler Suleiman The Magnificent and the slave girl ‘Huyam’ who later became his wife and queen. This TV drama glorifies the Ottoman Empire era (the sixteenth century) by depicting Turks and their kingdom as the world’s super economic, political, and military power. This Empire expanded its borders in different European and North African countries like Algeria. Deniz Özalpman and Katharine Sarikakis (2018, p.254) mention that the series was aggressively sold and gained unprecedented popularity. The following map demonstrates countries to which *The Century* has been sold and viewed.



**Figure 5.6:** Global distribution map for *Harim al-Sultan*. Source: Global Agency. Deniz Özalpman and Katharine Sarikakis (2018, p.254)

Deniz and Sarikakis (p.255) also describe the reasons behind the success of *The Century*. First, the diversity of topics in one story like the use and the abuse of power, political intrigue, war, and conflicts between harem women. Second, the multi-ethnic characters were represented by handsome actors and beautiful actresses, in addition to royal clothes and jewellery. Finally, romance, painful love stories, rivalries, and historical settings transformed the TopKapi palace into a fantasy world. Regarding their position as fans and viewers of Turkish soap operas, Algerian females were asked two questions. First, to mention if they have ever searched for personal information about Dizi stars. Second, to indicate if they have been impressed by any Turkish actor or actress. The result shows that 47% of respondents are eager to explore the private life of Turkish TV stars. 25% say no, and 28% prefer not to say. Accordingly, 75% are impressed by Turkish celebrities compared to 16% who declare that they are not influenced by any Turkish TV start. Finally, 9% of answers were ambiguous as they included random actors' names without their last names (see appendix B, Graph 11). Sometimes they write their favourite characters with their popular names in the Syrian dialect instead of their real name. It is hard to guess the persona they mean; thus, the ambiguous names list has been created. This general question was forwarded with another specific sub-question that asks for exact celebrities' names and the reason behind choosing them. Therefore, the following bar graphs will introduce the top 5 nominated Turkish actors and actresses.



**Figure 5.7:** Top 5 Turkish actresses and actors ranked by Algerian females

Siegwart Lindenberg et al. (2011, pp.99-101) suggest that people love celebrities and wish to imitate them; thus, they start adopting celebrities' attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours. They clarify: "In short, fans can be influenced by celebrities if they identify with them". Siegwart Lindenberg et al. consider the prestige and success of celebrities make them special to people and give them extra significance, and consequently increases the weight of their opinions (p.104). According to Soo Jin Lee (2007, p.15), Morgan and Pritchard (1998) confirm that celebrities are considered supporters of and icons of tourism. Lee observes that 'Hallyu', which means the Korean wave led to the spread of Korean popular culture in China, Taiwan, Japan, and other Southeast Asian countries. Subsequently, Korean trends and products such as movies, soap operas, and songs contribute to the fast-growing Korean popular culture in these regions. Accordingly, people's interest in Korean popular culture became higher as they learned Korean language, tasted Korean foods, and experiencing the Korean way of life. Lee found that the Hallyu also brought a great impact on tourism to Korea. He illustrates: "since the booming of Korean cultures in Asian countries, the number of tourists visiting Korea has increased considerably. The Korea National Tourism Organization (KNTO) reported that approximately 3 million Hallyu fans visited Korea as of November 2004" (p.14).

Equally, Turkish TV series, and celebrities, make Turkey the first destination for Arabs on holidays. Turkish film distributor company Global Agency's CEO Izzet Pinto in an interview with *Arab News* (2017), reports that the Turkish TV series reached a popularity peak with the historical TV drama *Harim al-Sultan*. Thus, Arabs fans started buying Ottoman costumes and organize Ottoman-themes parties. Regarding which Turkish series gained more popularity abroad, Pinto said that *Harim al-Sultan* attracted many audiences wherever it was aired and became the top-rated TV drama. *Arab News* also reports that Senem B. Çevik, a lecturer at California University and an expert in public diplomacy and political communication, confirms that the Turkish series increased incomes generated from tourism. Because fans want to witness first-hand where their favourite series is filmed. In a similar vein, Ahmet Kirk, chairman of the Arab Travel Agencies and Tourism Development Association (ASATDER) (2017), noted that Gulf and Arab people like TV series filmed in historical places, especially in Istanbul, and that once they come to Istanbul, they prefer to visit settings where these TV series are filmed (*Anadolu Agency*, 2017)

*Harim al-Sultan* viewers, for instance, visited the tomb of Sultan Suleiman and Prince Mustapha and the palace wherein the series has been filmed. The top-nominated stars list of Turkish TV stars created by Algerian female participants Meryem Uzerli (Sultana Huyam) and Halit Ergenç (Sultan Suleiman) have been mentioned several times. Participants agreed that these two actors performed their roles professionally. For example, the participant (A) states: "I love the role performed by Halit Ergenç in *Harim al-Sultan*". Participant (B) says: "I adore the role of Suleiman the Magnificent in the series of *Harem-Al Sultan* because he had mastered the role and for his prestige". Other female participants were impressed by the role and the personality of the female protagonist Meryem Uzerli (sultana Huyam). The revolutionary shift of Huyam from a weak and emotional character to a powerful and independent seems to be the most appealing and inspiring aspect for Algerian females. For

that reason, they have selected her as a source of inspiration and a model of woman who changed her destiny from a servant and mistress to a queen of the Ottoman Empire. For instance, the respondent (C) explains: “I love Huyam because she is very powerful and intelligent”, the respondent (D) proclaims: “I adore Huyam because she has an interesting and mysterious character”. The actresses Tuba Büyüküstün also has been mentioned several times for her courageous role in the *Kara Para Aşk* (*Black Money Love*, 2015) is a series that combines romance, action, mystery, and drama in one genre. Tuba performed the role of a successful designer named Elif, who works in jewellery business. In this context, the respondent (E) clarifies: “I love Tuba of The *Black Money Love* because she has an independent and strong personality, and she is very modern”.

Participant (F) continues: “I love the character of Tuba because she is a person who was able to perform kindness, strong character, and self-esteem all in one character”. Some others mention Hülya and Eylül from the romantic drama *Hayat Şarkısı* (2016) and *Kalp Atışı* (2017) respectively. Hülya is a lively girl who does the impossible to be with the person she loves, and Eylül is a schoolgirl who turns up to be a strong professional surgeon. Respondent (G) says: “I adore the bravery of Hülya in the series of *Hayat Şarkısı*”. Commenting about the character of Eylül, the respondent (H) says: “I am fascinated by the character of Eylül of the series *Kalp Atışı* for her power and the way she faces difficulties and obstacles during her journey in achieving her goals. Moreover, Beren Saat is one of Algerian females’ top five nominated actresses for her role in the romantic drama *What’s Fatmagul Fault?* (2012). The series is about the unforgettable tragedy of a beautiful and naïve girl named Fatma, whom three guys have raped, and her fiancée breaks their marriage promise so she was forced to marry one of her rapists to save her family’s honor. Despite her poverty and weakness, she confronted her rapists and won in the end. Participant (I) elucidates:

I am impressed by the character of "Fatima", who played the role of a girl whom three men raped. I was influenced with her confidence in changing her life and how she broke silence and her decision to make her experience like public opinion to reach her goals.

Differently, others focused more on the physical appearances of actresses. For instance, participant (J) states: "I love Hande Erçel because she is beautiful and talented". Another participant considers the role of Halima in the historical TV drama titled *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (2014) as an ideal of Muslim wife. Halima is a loyal wife of the founder of the Ottoman Empire. She fought against enemies along with her husband to protect her tribe. She says: "I love Halima, the wife of Ertuğrul because she is a good example of the ideal Muslim wife".

It seems that some Algerian female participants feel engaged with certain series narratives. According to the uses and gratification theory, audiences choose a specific media product to consume for a specific reason. In this research, participant (K) confesses that the love story of Omer and Defna from the romantic drama *Love for Rent (Kiralık Aşk, 2017)* reflects and looks like hers. She explains: "I love Omer and Defna because their love story is like mine". Regarding the curiosity behind searching for personal information about Turkish celebrities, respondents admit that they do that to check the age of their favourite actors, marital and social status, and popularity. They believe that their performance is convincing and that stimulates them to check how different their real personality is from their role. Concerning male actors, Turkish TV series often depict male protagonists as rich, strong, and certainly have a good-looking. Algerian female participants note that they like male actors because of their performance, masculinity, and physical appearances.

In this context, participant (L) asserts: "I love Kamal of *The Endless Love* series, because he is tenacious, powerful, attractive, and a true lover". Participant (M) says: "I adore Firat Çelik for his beauty and masculinity". Other female participants show their tendency towards men who combine romance and strength in one character. Participant (N) states: "I love the

character of Ömer Iplikce of *Love of Rent* series, he has a strong personality and romantic at the same time”. Participant (O) stresses: “I love Ertuğrul because he performed his role brilliantly, he also combines romance and power in one character”.

Other female respondents express their willingness to marry a man who has the same moral and physical attributes as Turkish celebrities. For example, the respondent (P) declares: “I love Muhannad (Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ) because he have the beauty that I hope to find in my future husband”, in a similar vein, participants S and T proclaim: “I love Ertuğrul (Engin Altan )because I find in him the features of the man of my dreams”, “I am very impressed by the personality of Engin Altan (Ertuğrul) and how he behaves with his wife, and I wish I have a husband like him in the future” (see appendix B, Graph 12 & 13). After spending considerable time watching Turkish TV series and analysing female participants’ perspectives, I noticed that gender representation differs in these TV shows. Almost all Algerian female participants often choose male actors for their physical appearances and maleness and female actresses for their bravery and strong personality. From the above, it seems that Algerian women seem to embrace traditional stereotypical images about femininity and masculinity as represented in Dizi TV series. In this regard, Julia T. Wood (1994, p.2) points out that media presents stereotypical portrayals for both genders. She explains that TV programs for all ages excessively depict men as powerful, competent, serious, and in high-status positions. However, women are generally depicted with femininity-subservience, passivity, beauty, and an identity linked to one or more men.

### **5.7. Qualitative Section: Algerian Female Perspectives Towards Dizi**

This section focuses on different questions aiming to identify Algerian females’ perspectives, opinions, and beliefs towards the salient features that distinguish Dizi series. In this context, it is worth noting that all participants’ quotations in this section are translated from Arabic to

English. In order to carry out the data analysis of their responses, I have used an interpretative phenomenological approach to better understand their perceptions. The IPA method focuses on qualitative psychology on how people make sense of their experiences. Smith and Osborn (2007, p. 1) argue that participants are trying to make sense of their world while the researcher is trying to make sense of the participants' world through three analytical stages: multiple reading and making notes, transforming notes into emergent themes, and seeking relationship and clustering themes (see Pietkiewicz and Smith, 2014, p.9).

The first question of this part is: from your perspective, what distinguishes Turkish TV dramas from other TV series productions? Participants stressed storylines, quality of filming, filming in different locations, even poor villages, the beauty of actors and actresses, etc. Other respondents like the combination of modern and traditional lifestyles. For example, participant A states: "for me, the mixture between Oriental and Western cultures makes them unique". In a similar vein, participant B argues: "there is a diversity of cultures, [...] Turks have a strict customs and traditions, but some live like Westerns". Similarly, respondent C explains how the inclusion of Western styles in a traditional form makes Dizi series successful:

I think that Turkish TV drama combines modern and traditional lifestyles. They give some forms of modernity from the western world, like women's freedom, fashion, modern and sophisticated buildings, and design. But, at the same time, they don't away cultural context. They highlight taboos, religious and cultural ideologies, and how sometimes women are disadvantaged because of them. As for our society, I think some similarities like food such as 'Baklawa' and some ceremonies like 'the Brides Henna Ceremony create a feeling of pride [amongst Algerian viewers]and demonstrate the cultural exchange between the two countries that took place years ago, yet it never disappeared. There are also some similar taboos

about women, like minding people's talks and preserving one's honour to satisfy families and society.

Others prefer the way they represent taboos, bold social issues that appeal to young people, such as love and romance, besides the way they are reflecting reality. They also mention the shared Arabic and Islamic culture and the cultural proximity between Turkey and Algeria as a point of attraction. Finally, some believe that the variety of genres such as comedy-romance Dizi offers to its viewers makes them different from other Western and Arab TV dramas. The second question in this section is: do Turkish soap operas contribute to your attraction to the Turkish language? If yes, what Turkish vocabulary you learned from them? Most respondents said that they learned some vocabulary, while others said that they became fluent in it. For instance, participant D points out: “I became fluent in the Turkish language, I can understand everything they say, and I am now more acquainted with many of their traditions like food etiquettes”. In the same context, respondent E says: “I learned a lot of words, I can speak the Turkish language and even watch Turkish series without subtitles [...] I can understand everything”.

Interestingly, some females show their deep affection towards the Turkish language and culture. For example, participant F confesses: “I love the Turkish language, so I moved to Istanbul because of my attachment to places I watched in the Turkish TV dramas”. Similarly, participant I states: “I registered myself in a private school to improve my level of the Turkish language, and I am now watching Turkish TV series on Turkish national channels”. Respondents also indicate some Turkish words and expressions they learned from watching Dizi series listed in the following table.

<b>Turkish Words</b>	Söz	kardeşim	Evet	Neden	Hayir	Biliyorum	Nerde	Hanim	Özür dilerim
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<b>English</b>	Promise	My	Yes	Why	No	I know	Where	Lady	I am
<b>Translation</b>		brother							sorry

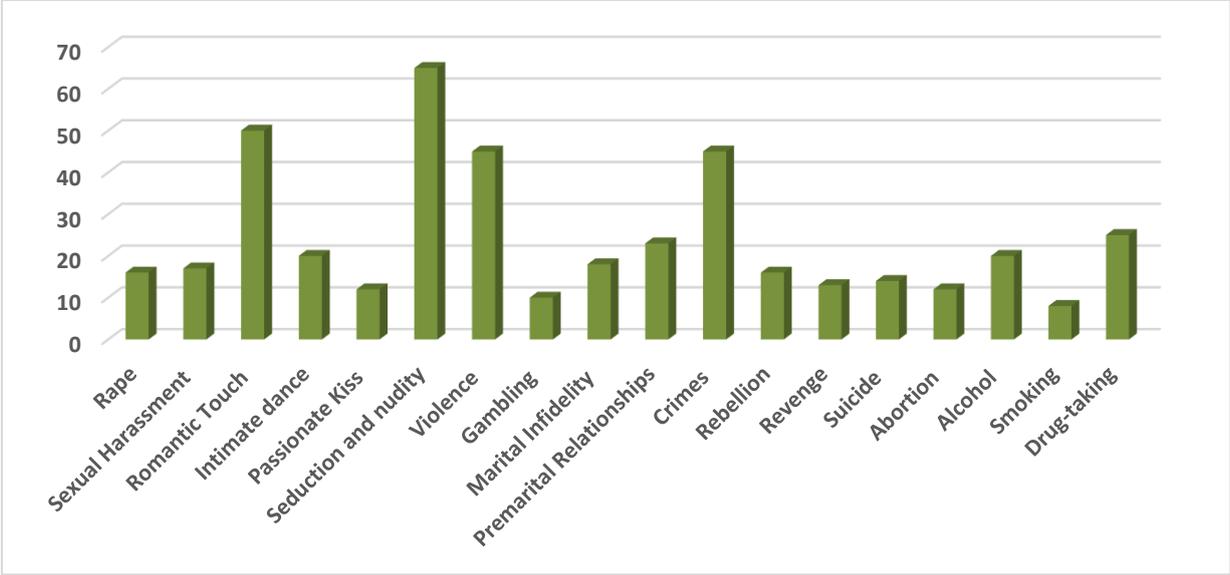
**Table 4.5.** Turkish words learned by Algerian females

<b>Turkish</b>	Teşekkür ederim	Seni seviyorum	Çok Güzel	Ben iyiyim	Iyi geceler
<b>Expressions</b>					
<b>English</b>	Thank you	I love you	Very	I am fine	Good night
<b>Translation</b>			beautiful		

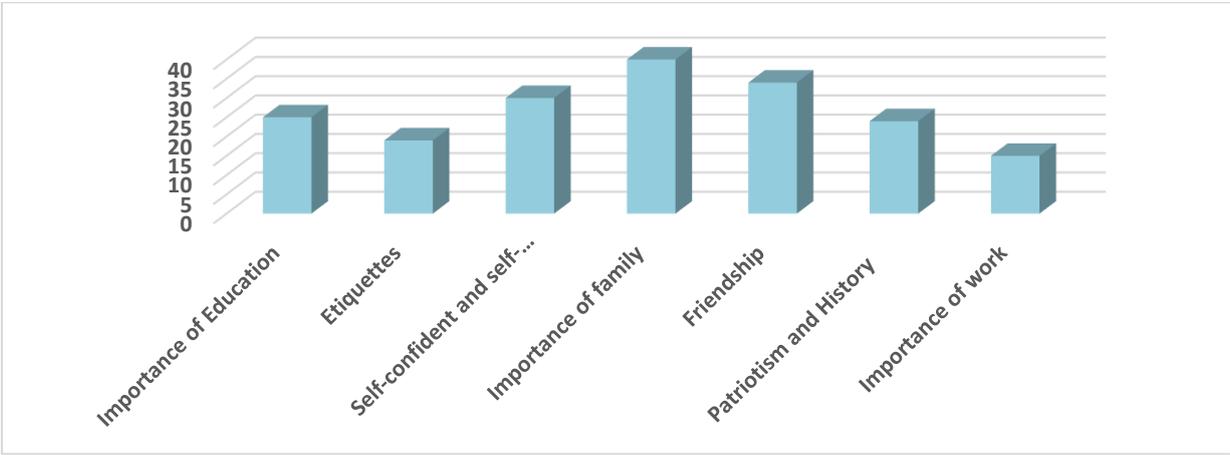
**Table 4.6.** Turkish expressions learned by Algerian females

The third and the fourth question in this section aim to identify the perspective of Algerian female audiences towards the content of Turkish TV series: what are the most dominant positive and negative depictions of the Turkish TV series? Algerian female participants in this research suggested different positive and negative topics related to their personal life experiences in Dizi series. Thus, many random codes emerged in their answers. Here, Smith and Pietkiewicz specify that the vital stage of the IPA involves looking for connections between emergent themes and grouping them according to their conceptual similarities. For negative topics, for instance, Algerian female viewers proposed: killing, carrying a weapon, terrorism, and terrorist operations. After multiple readings of these codes, I categorized them under ‘transgression’ as one emergent theme and a comprehensive topic for all these codes. Accordingly, the same technique was applied to all positive and negative codes. The overall classification of all emergent themes relies on their semantic group, as mentioned previously in the coding sheet section. Four major themes emerged in this investigation: sexual content,

antisocial content, health risks content, and positive input content. The following graphs present the most dominant positive and negative topics of Dizi series suggested by Algerian female participants.



**Figure 5.8:** Top nominated negative depictions in Dizi for Algerian females



**Figure 5.9:** Top nominated positive depictions in Dizi for Algerian females

As I have shown in the previous sections, the exported Turkish TV series play a critical role in promoting and spreading Turkish popular culture and tourism. Therefore, the fifth question aims to explore whether Dizi also have the power to influence their viewers to buy and consume Turkish products: have you ever bought any Turkish product such as outfits,

accessories, makeup, furniture? Participants in this question were asked to list some products in case they did. Out of 213 participants, 109 (51%) say that they do not buy Turkish products. The remaining respondents confirm their admiration for Turkish brands. However, some of them mention that consuming Turkish products does not necessarily mean that they are attracted or influenced by Turkish TV series, but because they are accessible in Algerian markets, are of good quality, and reasonably priced. For example, one participant argues: “I like to buy Turkish clothes, but this has nothing to do with TV series, but for the quality of their manufacture”. According to previous studies, consumers in developing countries prefer international companies for a variety of reasons. Foreign brands are thought to be of higher quality than local brands, as they employ more sophisticated technology and are more stylish and well-designed (see Junaidi Sagir et al., 2020, pp.35-36). Algerian female Turkish products’ consumers, including myself, believe that Turkish-made products are of better quality since they are from a modern country with a positive commercial image.

The Turkish Industry and Technology Minister Mustafa Varank declares that Turkey ranks sixth among all countries in the world in terms of clothes manufacturing and ready-wear industry exports (*Daily Sabah*, 2020). World Integrated Trade Solution (2021) reports that in 2017 the top partner countries from which Algeria imports textiles and clothing include China, Turkey, Morocco, Spain, and India, respectively. In the same context, Ceyda Caglayn (2020) states: “Turkey exported some \$18 billion in textiles last year, accounting for 10% of its total exports, according to an industry group. Total exports to Algeria were \$1.9 billion”. Female respondents who consume Turkish products list various types, including garments, accessories, vessels, makeup, and furniture. All Turkish accessories’ consumers mention they are impressed by the Ottoman jewellery collection of the 16<sup>th</sup> century that was shown in the popular historical drama *Harim al-Sultan*. Participants A and B point out: “I bought silver

accessories of Harrem el Sultan, and many clothes”, “I bought the same Huyam’s style of rings and necklaces”, respectively.

Regarding the consumption of Turkish garments, respondents list many imported products they purchase, like dresses, coats, shoes, T-shirts, scarves, and handbags. For example, participants C, D, and E profess: “I bought some clothes from Turkish brands, such as coats and shirts”, “I often buy Turkish dresses and jackets”, “I buy Turkish dresses because they are fashionable and modest and seem to be accepted in the Algerian society” correspondingly. Others who prefer modest clothing styles buy from online Turkish famous brands such as Modanisa, a Turkish fashion platform for hijab, modest dresses, and skirts. Participants F and G assert: “for the past 3 years, I only wear from Modanisa”, “I buy many things from Turkey (Modanisa website) because it's modern, beautiful and still covering (Islamic clothing)”. The consumed Turkish product by Algerian females also comprises vessels, home furniture, and other decorative items. Participant H contends: “I prefer Turkish furniture and bed covers because they are very luxurious”.

TV dramas can influence audiences’ psychology, behaviours, beliefs, and stereotypes toward specific groups or individuals. As mentioned earlier, the integration of attractive actors, music, fashion, and appealing filming locations led Turkish TV drama audiences to internalize and perform things they watched in these soap operas by buying from popular Turkish clothing and furniture brands, cosmetics, visit Turkey, listen to Turkish music, and imitate actors’ way of talking and behaving. The sample of this research was asked to mention whether they have ever imitated Turkish celebrities in their way of speaking, hairstyle, dressing, or behaving and in what ways. Mirroring another person’s actions can be both positive and negative, depending on the social and psychological outcomes of the person who is copying. Harry Farmer et al. (2018, p.2) state: “People may imitate with their hands, bodies, faces or speech and vocalisations”. 65% of Algerian female participants argue that they never

imitated Turkish actors, 35% said they copied the Turkish celebrities in their way of speaking, walking, vocalizing, dressing, hairstyles and hair colours, hijab style, and make-up. For the imitation of accents and speech styles, participant I explains:

I imitate the Turkish actress (Asia) of the TV series (Lifeline) because of her unique Trabzon's dialect that she uses which I didn't use to hear in the other Turkish TV dramas (Istanbul's dialect). The actress adds her own tones that make her different from other actors in the series who use the same dialect.

Other respondents show their impression towards the speaking style of Huyam, the protagonist of the historical TV drama *The Century* performed by Mariam Uzerli. Participant J and K elucidate: "I am imitating Huyam's manner of speaking at home", "I am using Huyam's famous expressions with my family members". Huyam is known as the first woman in Ottoman history to concern herself with political affairs. They are copying Huyam because she represents a mentally strong person who knows what she wants, steps outside her comfort zone with well-studied plans, and is someone who is walking boldly in the palace with a controlling and confident tone and eye contact. Others, however, prefer the comedic characters, such as Louaay Sargin in the romantic-comedy-drama *Love for Rent* (2015) performed by Onur Büyüktopçu, where he played the role of photographer and spy of the wife of the protagonist's uncle in the company.

Louaay is a character who makes jokes that make him look bad, funny dances, and imitations of others' ways of talking and walking. Participant L says: "I adore the way he walks". Some participants confess they imitate the same angry manners of Turkish actresses. Respondent M and N state: "I am describing my dissatisfaction like them", "when I am annoyed, I use Turkish expressions of anger like them, such as Allahım yarabbim". Turkish actresses for Algerian females are also seen as a source of inspiration for modernity and femininity.

Participant O illustrates: “Sometimes I copy the way of sitting and eating because the actresses are more feminine”.

Audiences admire the lifestyle of celebrities because they seem to live a different and more fascinating lifestyle than ours: “we still imitate what we can because our brains are programmed to associate prestige with adaptive behaviour. And because fame is the primary cue of prestige, the more attention celebrities get, the more they attract” (BBC News, 2013). Physically, Algerian females admit that they copy fashion trends from Turkish actresses like hairstyle, make-up, and dresses, participant P, Q, R, and S explain: “I wore a similar dress of an actress in wedding ceremony”, “Now I want a long hair because I liked long hairstyles of actresses in the Turkish TV drama that I am watching, so I kept it growing”, “I am trying to imitate them in their make-up because it is light, simple, and easy”, “I am following some famous Turkish actors' make-up tutorials on YouTube”.

My original hypothesis was that Algerian females are not conscious about what they are consuming. However, after decoding their answers, my findings showed that they are aware that Turkish TV series are transmitting Western ideologies that are not compatible with Islamic values and the Algerian society standards. Nonetheless, their attraction is centred on the positive elements of these TV shows, using them to develop their skills. Linguistically and culturally, they have enriched their linguistic repertoire through learning a new language and becoming aware of the cultural proximity between Turkey besides the Turkish popular culture and lifestyle. Concerning the behaviouristic and the psychological perspective, Algerian female audiences are focusing on the constructive and the positive side of imitation that can develop their life skills such as self-awareness, self-esteem, and building confidence. Jenna Garvey (2020) states: “imitation is a crucial aspect of skill development because it allows us to learn new things quickly and efficiently by watching those around us”. However, some others are copying Turkish actors' behaviours, including ways of talking and speaking, to

have fun and to feel a sense of belonging and closeness. For instance, it has been discovered that people are more likely to imitate pro-social gestures than anti-social gestures. Thus, copying others enhances sentiments of affiliation or like for one another, which promotes pro-social conduct (see Oliver Genschow et al., 2018, pp.1-2).

## **5.8. Conclusion**

Soft power theory, reception theory, cultivation theory, feminist theory, and uses and gratification were applied in this chapter to analyse Algerian female audiences' consumption, viewing habits, and perspectives towards the Turkish soap operas. Besides the interpretative phenomenological analysis method, these theories were applied in answering the second research question of this study that aims to identify the extent to which Turkish TV series contributed to the cultural hybridization of Algerian females' identity. I expected to find strong evidence suggesting that Algerian females are committed fans of Turkish TV series who regularly watch them. Even though 91% of them said that they watch these TV shows, the largest sample representing 40% declared that they watched them just occasionally. From this experiment, I conclude that my hypothesis and what media report about the massive consumption and the abnormal influence of Turkish TV series on Algerian females might not be fully accurate and that it is might be instead a stereotypical image.

According to Arab and foreign media, the romantic drama *Noor* attracted over 85 million Arab viewers above the age of 15, and nearly 50 million of them were women. However, the number of viewers doesn't necessarily mean that those females are detraditionalized or influenced and that their identity is hybrid. 48% of this study's respondents declared they watch only one episode a day, although 75% of the sample are single and young aged between 20-25 years old. This could be explained their time constraints and academic commitments because 97% of them are educated. Again, the Algerian National Office of Statistics (ONS)

(2013) argues that Algerian females attend universities more than males. It can also be interpreted that they have self-awareness as they use these soap operas for entertainment, break the routine, self-education. It may be also deduced that Turkish TV series are no longer as attractive for Algerian females as they were before.

They express their admiration for the Turkish language and culture, creative scenarios, and the bold topics Dizi tackle that are not common in the Algerian local TV productions and combine modernity and conservatism in one story. They also acknowledge that they are mindful that those soap operas' content is neutral. For instance, from a feminist perspective, Dizi TV dramas are considered a source of inspiration for feminists like the social TV drama *What Is Fatmagul's Crime?* to protest against oppression, marginalization, and inequalities. Almost all respondents representing 74%, showed their pleasure and satisfaction with the way Turkish TV series portrays women. However, at the same time, they normalize and romanticize some taboos such as rape and violence that are not compatible with the Islamic culture. Finally, Algerian female participants feel engaged with certain series narratives, so eager to know more about their favourite actors. Some others feel a sense of affiliation when they imitate fames' lifestyles and behaviours.

## **Chapter 6: Dizi Historical TV Drama: *Harim al-Sultan***

### **6.1.Introduction**

Dizi historical genres grew dramatically since 2011 when Show TV and Star TV broadcasted a series about the Ottoman Emperor Suleiman the Magnificent. The series is originally titled *Muhteşem Yüzyıl*, which narrates two major subjects; a romantic love story between Huyam and sultan Suleiman and the bloody epics between brothers to gain the throne. This historical TV drama revived the Turkish TV drama production achieved a massive global export to many countries, including North African countries and gained millions of viewers worldwide. In addition, it was translated and dubbed into many languages, such as Arabic, English, Farsi, Spanish, French, and Vietnamese. *Daily Sabah* (2017) interviewed the Chairman of ASATDER<sup>18</sup> Ahmet Kirk, in which he states that Turkish historical soap operas are watched with great interest.

According to the research conducted for the current study, Algerian female participants in the online questionnaire and the online focus-group discussion agreed that Dizi historical genres are considered one of the most-watched Turkish TV genres among Algerian females. They also confirm that the fictional TV drama *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* (*The Magnificent Century*, English and *Harim al-Sultan*, Arabic) is one of the most-watched Turkish TV series. Therefore, this chapter will introduce and identify the most prominent attributes of this international TV drama. The content analysis method is used to answer the first research question, which seeks to identify and evaluate the salient features of the historical TV drama *Harim al-Sultan*. This method is accomplished by counting frequencies and analysing portrayals of the most dominant themes tackled in these soap operas that Algerian women pay attention to.

These themes were suggested previously by Algerian female viewers who already took part in the online questionnaire and online focus group discussion. Earlier in the qualitative section the online questionnaire chapter (chapter 5), Algerian female participants were asked to list the most prevalent traditional and challenging subjects tackled in Dizi series. Hence, they

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<sup>18</sup> ASATDER: Arab Travel Agencies and Tourism Development Association

proposed several positive and negative topics, which have been classified in a coding sheet into four (4) categories (intimate performances, antisocial performances, health threats performances, and social appreciated performances). The content analysis process began with watching all four seasons dubbed into the Syrian dialect and counting frequencies of the most prominent themes for each scene. The following sections will summarize the main events of *The Century*, interpret themes and codes suggested by Algerian female viewers, and identify how women, history, power, and religion are depicted in this historical TV drama.

## **6.2. Content Analysis of Dominant Positive and Negative Portrayals in *Harim al-Sultan***

As discussed earlier, the online focus-group discussion and the online questionnaire findings demonstrate that the historical genre is a popular Dizi TV genre for Algerian females. Robert Burgoyne (2008) suggests that historical film comprises five subtypes: the war film, the epic film, the biographical film, the metahistorical film, and the topical historical film. He notes that three types are comparatively familiar. However, the metahistorical film deals with the explicit critique of the method of history are represented, and the topical historical film focuses on events or periods rather than on a grand narrative. These subcategories realize their coherence as historical films through re-enactment, which refers to the act of imaginative re-creation of past events to allow the audience to witness an event from the past (cited in Stubbs, 2012, p.16). Dizi TV production has produced several historical films and TV series such as *Fetih 1453 (The Conquest 1453)* released in 2012, directed by Faruk Aksoy, and starring Ibrahim Çelikkol, Dilek Serbest, and Devrim Evin. The film's story is based on the events surrounding the fall of Constantinople (now Istanbul) to the Ottoman Turks during the reign of Sultan Mehmed II.

According to Dan Bilefsky (2012), *The Conquest 1453* has become the highest-grossing film in Turkey's history, broadcasted in 12 countries across the United States, the Middle East, and

Germany. However, it seems that films' real influence can be evidenced by how Turkish viewers received and interacted with them. Bilefsky states that: "its biggest impact may be the cultural triumphalism it has magnified at home". He continues adding that it has produced a TV programme with the same title and has motivated companies and clubs of proud Turks to re-enact battles from the Empire glory days and dress up as Sultans and Ottomans nobles. The social media specialist Esra Dođramacı argues that historical TV series reminds Turkish people about their connection to the glorious past of the Ottoman Empire and the greatness of historical personalities such as Mehmet el Fetih and Suleiman the Magnificent. She confirms:

Ottoman-Turkish identity stretches from a nostalgic basis of greatness from Fetih Sultan Mehmet's conquest of Istanbul in 1453, to the breadth and military prowess of the Empire at its largest under Sultan Süleyman to the extent European powers attached to him the sobriquet 'magnificent'. (2014, p.14)

The proliferation of Ottoman-themes TV dramas became very popular such *Harim al-Sultan* released in 2011 written by Meral Okay and Yilmaz Şahin and starring Halit Ergenç, Meriam Uzerli, Okan Yalabik, and others. This TV drama narrates the intrigues of the imperial household and harems. *Harim al-Sultan* is also one of the historical Turkish soap operas with global audiences recognized by its historical text, plot, filming location, characters, costumes, and performance style. Historical TV series can do more than entertainment and pleasure. They reflect the social construction, culture, and economy, hence the Turkish people's identity. These soap operas have the power to connect Ottoman history to the contemporary Turkish people's identity through tackling contemporary Turkey's political issues, such as religion, regional power, and minorities. In addition, the revival of the Ottoman Empire's old times and victories seems to reinforce their national pride.

According to Dan Bilefsky (2012), Faruk Aksoy, the director of *The Conquest 1453*, declares: "The Turks are proud about *The Conquest* because it not only changed our history, but it also

changed the world". Hence, the use of television in shaping attitudes and cultivating behaviours of viewers has been the central point of interest for Dizi historical series producers. Denis McQuail argues TV handles a significant cultivating and acculturating process in which people are exposed to selective perspectives of society. This view tends to shape their beliefs and values accordingly (see Senem B. Çevik, 2020, p.179).

As mentioned in chapter 2, George Gerbner and Larry Gross (1960-1976) argue that the more time people spend watching television, the higher probability of believing in the constructed social reality transmitted through TV programmes. It can be assumed that Dizi TV companies determined the needs and wants of their target audiences since they recognized that historical TV dramas are playing a substantial role in reminding the Turkish audiences about their ancestors and the power of the Ottoman Empire in the last centuries. Hence, it is conceivable that the more time contemporary Turkish audiences are exposed to these historical narratives about the Ottomans' glory eras, the prospect of believing and being influenced by what these TV series deliver will be higher. In this sense, Turkish TV producers are heavily interested in constructing and reinforcing narratives of authenticity and Islamic identity, so they started developing in it more sophisticated depictions of the Ottoman Empire.

Bilefsky notes that the film studies professor Melis Behlil declares: "The Ottoman revival is good for the national ego and has captured the psyche of the country at this moment when Turkey wants to be a great power". The interest of Turkish audiences in historical soap operas focusing on Ottoman emperors and their periods indicates that there is a great desire to learn Ottoman history, establish a bond with their ancestors, how the Turkish nation wants to exercise its power at this moment. Historical narratives offer viewers to explore their history through audio-visual means. Even though *The Century* was criticized for being broadcasted on a private TV channel and misrepresenting Turkish history, viewers have enthusiastically watched it for four seasons.

They were able to increase their knowledge about the religious, political and military developments during the heyday of the Ottoman Empire. It even created sympathy toward the historical figures of that time. The period, clothing, lifestyle and social structure were the leading visual effects. (*Daily Sabah*, 2014)

According to Çevik, Turkish Radio and Television Corporation (TRT<sup>19</sup>), historical drama series have got President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's support. They have been approved as an appropriate representation of Turkey's history, religion, and tradition. It can be said that the Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan discovered the importance and the role of Turkish historical narratives such as *Diriliş Ertuğrul* (2014), *Filinta* (2014), and *Payitaht: Abdulhamid* (2017) in reflecting Ottoman Empire principles on the contemporary Turkish identity, culture, and tradition. Erdoğan stated: "today, in a similar vein, *Diriliş Ertuğrul* has a follower base in Turkey and outside of Turkey. If my six-year-old and thirteen-year-old grandkids are becoming familiar with the Ottomans by watching the re-runs of this show, then this means we have done a good job" (see Çevik, 2020, p.186). Although *Harim al-Sultan* did not highly focus on Ottoman Empire policies, it represents how Sultan Suleiman began his rule by securing justice and power to the Ottomans. The series also reflects the proudness and the power of the Ottoman Empire, in which Sultan Suleiman expanded the Ottoman territories to include Hungary, Belgrade, and other regions.

Historical representation in *The Century* includes historical events, romance, adventures, and fiction. The storyline is based on a biographical drama in which the life story of an Ottoman Emperor is narrated. Historical film genres contain other subgenres of biographical films usually referred to as biopic as the cinematic portrayal of a real-life subject (Courtney N Gregg, 2016, p.1). Biopics dramatize the real-life story of a historical character and his/her most historically important years, achievements, and journeys. Dizi TV production released

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<sup>19</sup> TRT: Turkish Radio and Television Corporation

many biographical historical TV dramas such *Diriliş: Ertuğrul* (2014), *Kurulus: Osman* (2019), *Payitaht Abdulhamid* (2017), and *Harim al-Sultan* (2011).

The biographical TV drama of *The Century* relies on the autobiography of the Ottoman Emperor and warrior Suleiman el Kanuni. Interestingly, this historical TV drama does not rely on one biography of the main protagonist Suleiman the Magnificent. It also comprises other sub-biographies. It implicitly narrates the life story of Huyam as a historical leading persona during the Ottoman era who was the favourite concubine and later the beloved wife of Sultan Suleiman and the mother of Prince Selim, who governed the Ottoman Empire after the death of his father. The series' events identify Huyam as the second most significant character in the storyline across all seasons. Her life story started from her first appearance in the first episode of the first season when she was taken as a slave gift to the TopKapi palace, then her laborious journey against her adversaries towards the throne, including her victories and defeats. The following section will introduce the main events and characters of the *MC*.

### 6.3.Synopsis of Major Events of *Harim al-Sultan*



*MC* is based on the life of the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent, also known as el Kanuni (lawmaker). He is the longest-reigning Sultan of the Ottoman Empire and his wives, mainly his wife Huyam; a slave girl who later became his wife and queen. *MC* represents the state of the Ottoman military, politics, and economic power in the world during the 15<sup>th</sup> century, which was expanded in different regions such as Baghdad, Budapest, and Mecca. *Harim al-Sultan* is reported with over 500 million viewers in over 50 countries. It was initially aired in Turkey and later exported to transnational screens in almost five continents.

Fatima Bhutto (2019) stated: “Global Agency estimates that, even without counting its most recent buyers in Latin America, *The Century* has been seen by more than 500 million people worldwide. It was the first Dizi bought by Japan”. In July 2019, South Korea purchased the serial, then Uzbekistan, Colombia, and Tanzania bought it in December, respectively (cited in Khan and Pembecioğlu, 2019, p.218). Likewise, it was watched by the Algerian females in different broadcasting Arabic channels such as Nessma (Tunisian Channel) and Dubai One, starting from 2013 to 2014. *Harim al-Sultan* was filmed at TopKapi Palace in Istanbul, built between 1460 and 1478. The palace was turned later into a national museum in which thousands of visitors visited the tomb of Sultan Suleiman and the other famous historical personalities in the series.

The series’ international success raises an important question about its content and attributes that enhance its popularity. Thus, the primary aim of this section is to explore what makes Turkish TV series popular among Algerian female audiences starting from a general overview of its main themes and events. First, *The Century* consists of 4 seasons with a total number of episodes of 376 episodes dubbed into the Syrian dialect. In comparison, the original release language (Turkish) consists of only 139 episodes lengthened between 1 hour and 30 minutes to 2 hours, while the dubbed episodes into the Syrian dialect are shortened between 40 and 45

minutes. It is also known for its animated scenario, which creates suspense in almost every episode.

The first season of *Harim al-Sultan* includes 55 episodes and narrates how Sultan Suleiman I occupied the throne after the death of his father, Selim I. After that, the focus of the story shifts to a slave woman named Aleksandra Lisowska also known as Roxelana who came from Ukraine. Roxelana, was bought to TopKapi Palace to be a maid; however, she is represented as self-confident and broad-minded, who refuses to accept and adopt servant's life. Therefore, she learns what makes her strong to improve her status. She learns that if she gives birth to a boy from Sultan Suleiman and wins his heart, she can rise to the top and become his favourite and beloved wife. Despite the privilege and beauty of Suleiman's first spouse Sultana Nahiddoran, the mother of Prince Mustapha, Roxelana uses her beauty and boldness to win Sultan Suleiman's heart, renamed her Huyam as a symbol of passion and affection. Besides giving birth to her first son, Prince Mohamed, this position offers her first step towards the crown. The second season comprises 97 episodes and includes more conflicts, suspense, and tensions than the first season. First, the conflict between Huyam and the new beloved of Sultan Suleiman Princess Isabella ends with the disappearance of Isabella as planned by Huyam and her servants.

This part also features several unsuccessful attempts to kill Huyam by Sultan Suleiman's sisters and his first wife, Nahiddoran. This season also includes leading characters' suicide attempts, and others have been accused of sexual affairs, spying, and treachery. After that, Huyam's war for reaching the throne starts with Prince Mustapha (the son of Nahiddoran). Later, she sends one of her female servants to poison him, but the servant changes her mind because she falls in love with him and falls pregnant with his child. The failure of poisoning Prince Mustapha brings disappointment to Huyam for losing this round. Subsequently, she reveals to Sultana Hafsa (Suleiman's sister) the pregnancy of the servant, and Sultana Hafsa

ordered her nurse to get rid of the baby. During the abortion, both the servant and the baby died because of intensive bleeding. The unfaithfulness and the failure of Huyam's servant are intolerable. Other servants recognized that anyone fails in being loyal to her would undoubtedly be punished or murdered, which establishes her power and authority in the harem from a palace servant to the queen of the Ottoman Empire in the sixteenth century.

The third season of this historical drama contains 112 episodes. It mainly revolves around the unfaithfulness of the grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire Ibrahim Pasha with one of the palace maids' and the arrival of a new concubine for Sultan Suleiman. Once Huyam learns about the secret intimate relationship and the new-born baby of Ibrahim Pasha and his mistress, she tries to profit from it. She offered Ibrahim Pasha a deal of killing the new lover of the Sultan in return for telling him the place of his missing baby daughter. Ibrahim Pasha pretended to banish Sultan's mistress, but the latter turned back to the palace, which caused a death blow to him. Huyam sent one of her spies to kill Ibrahim Pasha however he survived. Thus, she started ruining the relationship between him and Sultan Suleiman, and because of the accumulation of doubts created by Huyam, Suleiman executed him. Sultana Khadidja (Sultan Suleiman's sister) and sultana Nahiddoran tried to murder Huyam for her evil behaviours by sending her a more professional murder. However, the latter ended up serving her loyally. This season's events ended with the suicide of Sultana Khadidja and the death of Huyam's oldest son Prince Mohammed by Nahiddoran's spy.

Similarly, the last season of *Harim al-Sultan* comprises 122 episodes. Almost all scenes focus on tragic events. Huyam kept plotting to keep prince Mustapha away from the throne and pass it to one of her sons. She destroyed the relationship of Sultan Suleiman and his son Mustapha. As a result, sultan Suleiman asked for assassins to execute him, and subsequently, the authority was given to one of her sons. However, her youngest son Prince Jhangir deeply loved his brother Mustapha became depressed after his death and died of heartbreak. A short

period later, Huyam also died because of her illness. At the end of the story, the war to gain the throne began between her sons, Bayazid and Selim. The conflict ended with the execution of Prince Bayazid and his sons by the soldiers of his brother Prince Selim. A few years later, despite his unstable health, Sultan Suleiman went to war for the last time to encourage his soldiers to defeat the enemy, he died during the battle and Prince Selim became the new Sultan.

Though the series is considered a historical genre, it includes many political, romantic, and comic scenes. As shown above, *Harim al-Sultan's* storyline contains a variety of topics like corruption, crime, revenge, love, and power. These themes present a model of the daily life of the Ottomans during the fifteenth century. The series presents two different categories of women who differ according to their social class and beauty level. First, the wealthy women who belonged to the ruling class, including the family of Sultan Suleiman, such as his wives and sisters were the dominant figures who controlled and led the harem palace with the help of their assistants. This category of females was independent and powerful, unlike maids who came from poor villages as hostages of wars or gifts to the Sultan. Huyam is one of those maids who presents a model of a strong and cunning woman who takes part in controlling the Ottoman Empire. At the beginning of the story, the loss of her family and her boyfriend made her spiteful, so she started planning to gain high status in the palace. She first wins the heart of the Sultan Suleiman, and then she gained her freedom when she became legally married to the king and gave birth to several male Princes.

*The Century* tackles different themes such as preferences over the sex of children. *The Century* shows that boys were considered an investment while girls were a liability, which was a very common trope in many cultural contexts. For instance, Huyam was thrilled when she gave birth to her first son as it suggested future power and privilege. However, when she learned that her second child was a girl, she was upset and refused to see her and asked for

forgiveness from Sultan Suleiman for giving birth to a girl. Veyisoğlu states: “we understand from the series that the value of woman increases when they give birth to a son. Hurrem successfully gives birth to her firstborn Mehmet, thus, she rises in the ranks” (2019, p.37).

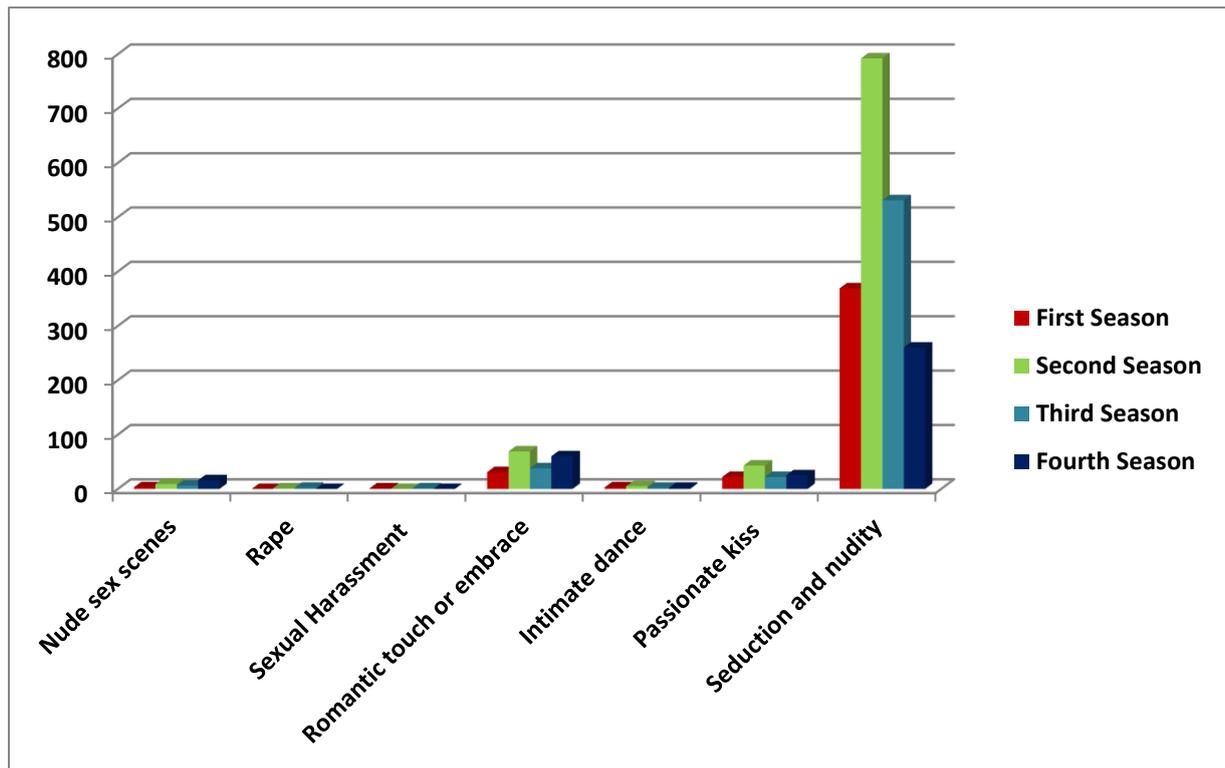
Similarly, Sultana Khadidja gave birth to twins (boy and girl), but she looked after the boy more than the girl whom the palace servants have raised. Nevertheless, women of the ruling class were also characterized by ambition and desire in building the Ottoman civilization. For example, Sultana Hafsa, the wife of Sultan Selim I and the mother of Suleiman the Magnificent established a complex in “Manisa” that includes a mosque, a school, and a restaurant for the poor people. Equally, Sultana Hüsem built many charitable facilities in the ottoman capital, like schools, restaurants, and hospitals. Indeed, the Topkapi palace was a playhouse of several pleasant and unpleasant events.

The series also focuses on how insignificant events in the palace changed Ottoman history in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. This historical Dizi genre used a linear narrative structure to develop its events in which all events are interrelated, so there is a cause and effect. The chronology and linearity began in the first episode when Sultan Suleiman occupied the throne and Hüsem came to the palace as a servant. The ordinary confrontation between characters striving for power and the competition of females in order to win the Sultan’s heart turned into tragic events. For example, a simple disagreement between Hüsem and the Grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha was accumulated and became a big war in which he was executed.



**Figure 6.1:** The Execution of The Grand Vizier Ibrahim Pasha (A real picture taken from the TV drama *Harim al-Sultan*, season 3)

Recep Tayyip Erdogan, conservative Muslim nationalist, and Turkish audiences have criticized *MC* characters and events, considering it a challenge to construct the Islamic identity. Hence, the overall objective of this study is to comprehensively examine this TV drama's content using audio-visual analysis to identify the amount, type, and context of positive and negative themes across the soap opera. The main findings indicate that sexual performances are the most dominant acts in *MC*.



**Figure 6.2:** Sexualisation in *Harim al-Sultan*

The bar graphs present the most dominant sexual acts in four (4) seasons of the Turkish historical TV drama, *Harim al-Sultan*. The diagram demonstrates that nudity and seduction are the most prevailing frequent representations across all seasons. Jensen & Jensen (2007) and Kunkel et al. (1999) identify four categories for describing the sexual content: sexual behaviour, sexual talk, involuntary sexual activity, and sexual explicitness. First, Kunkel et al. (1999, p.231) define sexual behaviour as manners conveying sexual intimacy, such as passionate kisses and intimate touching between two characters. Second, sexual talk refers to conversations and discussions between partners before or during the sexual relationship about one's own or others' sexual actions or interests. Third, involuntary sexual activity, according to Kunkel et al. (2007, p.602) it refers to the forced or aggressive intimate activity, such as rape and reluctant kissing. Finally, sexual behaviours such as removal of clothes that expose private body parts such as the breast (cited in Kathryn Greene et al., 2011, p.282)

Sexual performances presented in the graphs shows that *Harim al-Sultan* contains all four categories of sexuality that is based on different intimate behaviours; it could be an individual act such as a sensual dance wherein female maids dance for the sultan and princes. Huyam, for instance, gained the purple handkerchief given by the sultan Suleiman during a dance evening party as a cue for her designation as one of his favourite concubines. The sensual dance takes place in a party usually organized in the palace a night before the sultan goes to the war to entertain and support him. The famous dance in *Harim al-Sultan* is the Middle Eastern dance, also known as belly dance. Gülşah Dark (2016) states: “Belly dancing was also widely performed during the Ottoman Empire. In the imperial harems, women used to dance for sultanas as well as sultans”. According to Dark, the belly is the most ancient dance form in Egypt and India that was performed to reach different purposes such as fertility goddess worshipping ceremonies, some others practice it to strengthen pelvic muscles for childbirth or to collect coins in the marketplace. In this TV drama, dance was a technique to get attention and status.

As mentioned in chapter 3, Richard Schechner (2002) argue that performance and drama is not related only to the stage but also to everyday life activities. Hence the concept of “performing in everyday life” is the central aspect of performativity and an effective strategy to mark identities, tell stories, and reshape and adorn the body. He states that performers of these actions aim to either maintain their status, change things, or find or make a shared ground and that those players or actors have their techniques to achieve effects toward a specific goal. He clarifies: “all paid performers all seeking attention, adulation, re-election, and money” (2002, p.171). Similarly, it could be argued that female dancers in *The MC* perform belly dance in special organized parties in the palace for two primary purposes: either to appeal to a man of high status or to entertain Sultan and Princes. The belly dance in the palace demands seductive body movements that come from the hips and pelvic region besides

the isolation of shoulders and chest for a fluid-looking performance. This dance was performed within oriental music and special tight dresses at the waist and open at breasts. The following picture represents belly dance taken from *The Century* in the first season when Huyam was trying to draw sultan Suleiman's attention. She gained the purple handkerchief as a signal of a future concubine.



**Picture 6.3:** Belly Dance performed by Huyam to Attract the Sultan Suleiman (Season 1-3<sup>rd</sup> episode)

Female dancers in the palace intended to show their femininity and agility. In return, they were looking to improve their position as maids by attracting high-class men. However, it seems that practice further perpetuates women's oppression rather than enhancing empowerment since women are still performing as sexual objects, exposing their bodies continually under the surveillance of the male gaze to entertain and serves them. İşıl Eğrikavuk is a contemporary artist in performing arts at Istanbul Bilgi University, argues: "belly dance, Middle-Eastern Dance or Oriental dance, whatever we may call the form has long been seen as a dance form that is exotic, sexual and susceptible for the male gaze" (2017, p. 80). Belly dance was also performed in front of sultanas; however, it was significantly used to show off in front of males. The theory of "gender performance" or "gender performativity"

coined by Judith Butler in 1990 in *Gender Trouble* explains how performative gender roles depend on repetition and re-iteration in creating identity. Butler emphasizes that gender identity relies on a repeated and interpreted behaviours or performances in a cultural and social context. Indeed, female gender identity in the palace was expressed by belly dance by shaking bodies to show off and express themselves and their identity. Daniel Otero (2020, p.1) clarifies:

The special dance she would have to perform would show-off her femininity. [...] Belly dancing was made invented to adapt to a woman's body. In this art form, the center piece of the entire dance were/are the hips and belly area. The latter usually was the main focal point[...] Other forms of the dance or dance techniques use the following: arms, legs and head movements.

Belly dance for Huyam, for example, was the fastest strategy to win the heart of the sultan. Her fluid and seductive performance in the night party dance was organized to entertain the sultan Suleiman. She embodies fertility, desire, and beauty and pushes him to offer her the purple handkerchief and shift her status from a servant to one of his favourite mistresses. Although there are some exposed male body scenes in *The Century*, such as bathing scenes, nearly all almost nude scenes across all seasons refer to females like bathing scenes, dressing off during intimate relationships, and sensual dancing. In addition, females in the palace, including sultanas, princesses, and servants, used to wear exposing breast dresses in the first, second, and third seasons while in the fourth season, dresses became covered to some extent, especially for the leading female protagonist Huyam. Apparently, the scriptwriter made some amendments in terms of exposed body scenes because of the high tension raised in some Turkey viewing public spheres who complained about the misrepresentation of Suleiman the magnificent. The following pictures demonstrate the different levels of Huyam's nudity

between the first and the fourth season, in which open breasts and tight dresses became large and covered.



**Figure 6.4:** Huyam's Dressing Style in the 1<sup>st</sup> Season



**Figure 6.5:** Huyam's Dressing Style in the 4<sup>th</sup> Season

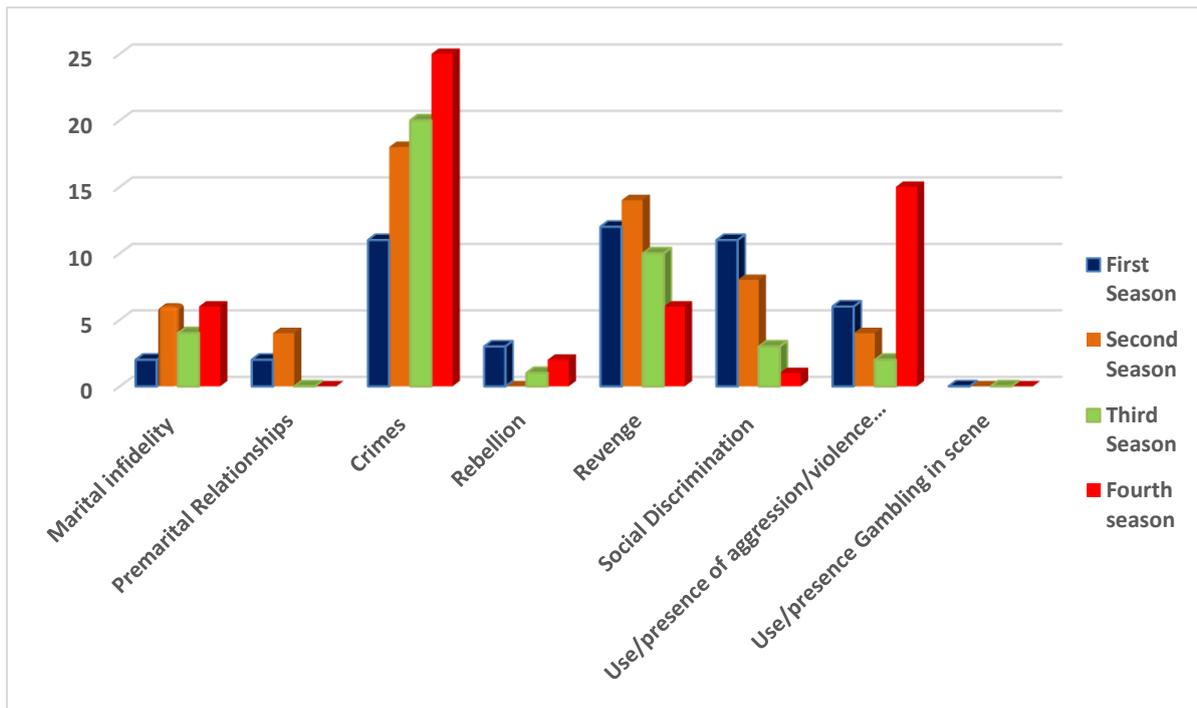
Nevertheless, the attempts to cover the exposed bodies in the fourth season was not practical because it features the highest number of nude sex scenes (16 scenes) in comparison to three (3) scenes, nine scenes (9), and six (6) scenes in the first, second, and third seasons respectively. This increase can be justified due to the change of the number of the male protagonists from one couple in the first, second, and third seasons which is Sultan Suleiman and Huyam, into five couples who are the Princes (Muhammad, Mustapha, Bayazid, Selim, Jihangir and their concubines). In addition to other supporting characters and their female partners such as the grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha and Sultana Meriam's husband, Rustem Pasha. According to Bhutto (2019), *The Century* has been called by the foreign press "Ottoman-era Sex and the City", referring to the romantic comedy American drama Sex and the City created by Darren Star (*The Guardian*). Jane Gerhard mentions that the story of the TV drama *Sex and The City*<sup>20</sup> is about a single woman of thirty years old who came to the city and dated married and unmarried men in order to enjoy a romantic and sexual life (2005, p.37).

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<sup>20</sup> Sex and The City: is an American romantic comedy-drama television broadcasted in 2004 created by Daren Star with 94 episodes over six seasons.

According to Gerhard, *Sex and the City* is a soap opera that explores the sense of women's sexual equality during the emergence of the social and cultural achievement of the second wave of feminism (2005, p.37). Conceivably, *The Century* and *Sex and the City* have two common aspects: sexual practices and women's social status. In both series, almost all sexual scenes refer to unmarried women. While *The Century* represents women of the sixteen century of the Ottoman Empire, *Sex and the City* represents a group of liberated American women in the millennium. It seems that there are common elements that these two series shares, such as passionate kisses and sensual dance. However, unlike the overall purpose of the American series *Sex and the City* that tends to explore the sense of women's sexual equality and the life of liberated women who practice sex with men from their choice to have fun and pleasure.

*The Century* does not promote gender equality or empowerment as almost all sex scenes are dominated and controlled by men (usually Sultan or Princes). In addition, females' partners in the sexual relationship are usually either servants or concubines who seem to have no agency over their bodies and decisions. It could be concluded that all categories of sexual content, namely: sexual behaviour, sexual talk, involuntary sexual activity, and sexual explicitness occurred in this drama. The content analysis technique also investigates the challenging social attitudes in this Dizi genre. According to Algerian females' perspective, there are eight major anti-social behaviours in Turkish TV drama production: marital infidelity, premarital relationships, crimes, revenge, rebellion, social discrimination, and gambling. The following diagram illustrates the dominant antisocial manners for each season, though some antisocial behaviours did not occur in this biographical genre, such as gambling.



**Figure 6.6:** Anti-social behaviours in *Harim al-Sultan*

The bar graphs illustrate a list of disruptive attitudes in the historical drama *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* across four seasons. Noticeably, crime events have increased progressively from the first season to its peak in the fourth season. Crime scenes rose dramatically in the fourth season to 25 scenes compared to 11 scenes in the first one. However, what makes the average of criminality high in the fourth season more than the other ones? Once more, according to Fatima Bhutto (2019), the foreign press compared the story of *Harim al-Sultan* to the real life of the American fantasy drama *Game of Thrones*.

The foreign press probably compared the TV dramas because both share substantial central goal all over the seasons which is “the acquisition of the throne”. Thus, in order to reach power and authority, adversaries and competitors combat each other, and consequently, the high levels of crime scenes will be augmented. According to Sowmyya Thotakura, crime is antisocial behaviour disapproved by societies. Thotakura argues that the term crime is originated from the Latin word “crimen” which means offense and a wrongdoer: “crime is defined as acts or omissions forbidden by law that can be punished by imprisonment or fine. Murder,

robbery, burglary, rape, drunken driving, child neglect and failure to pay taxes are examples of crimes” (2014, p.196).

Thotakura clarifies that there are five key causes of crime: social, economic, biological, geographical, and psychological (2014, p. 197). The social, economic, and geographical states seem to be the main reasons behind criminality in this historical narrative. Regarding the geographical causes, there was high tension between Christian Europe and the Ottoman Empire in which Sultan Suleiman and his army conducted many battles, so many bloody scenes appeared. For economic and social reasons, crime scenes are related to the palace’s females as doers or leaders. Criminality in this drama can be divided into two categories depending on gender male’s and female’s crimes. The difference between male and female crimes rests in the choice of weapons and strategies used. Man’s crime processes are revealed and straight using sword, spear, and dagger, while females use crime strategies without evidence such as poisoning.

Regarding men’s criminality, the series represents the biography of a historical warrior and emperor who reigned the Ottoman Empire and defeated many Christian powers in central Europe and the Mediterranean. For that reason, the protagonist made several wars in which he murdered many of his enemies and their spies. The disagreement between princes mainly, Bayazid and Selim and their opposition in getting the throne caused many crimes mainly in the fourth season when Prince Selim killed his brother Bayazid and his four sons. Grand viziers in the palace were fighting and plotting against each other to improve their political position. Comparatively, females’ crimes at the story’s beginning were usually of jealousy, disloyalty, and disobedience. While, in the end, the aim became bigger, in which the throne became the most dominant reason for crime events. For example, Sultana Huyam plots to kill Ibrahim Pasha because he supported her adversary, Prince Mustapha. Then she conveyed to Sultan Suleiman that Mustapha was planning for rebellion, so he executed him.

The diagram demonstrates that violence and revenge are among the top three prevalent portrayals in *The Century* singled out by my chosen sample as least enjoyed. These two depictions are justified or mistaken depending on the assigned status of the actor who acts. Unlike crimes, revenge plans increased in the first and the second season, and they were mostly carried out by female characters driven by jealousy and hate, which dramatically increased to be crimes in the third and the fourth season. Other antisocial behaviour such as marital infidelity and social discrimination were not very frequent in the series for two main reasons. First, social discrimination mostly appeared only in the first season when Huyam came to the palace as a gifted servant, so she was treated as a concubine who should obey the rules of the ruling class.

The marital infidelity scenes in this drama were rare because of the limited official marriages in which most sexual relationships of the male protagonists were with single concubines and mistresses. However, the exceptional marital infidelity of the married couples happened because of the disagreement between partners, forced marriage, or marriage for benefits. Sultana Mariam, for instance, betrayed her husband Rustem Pasha as she was forced to marry him for her mother's political plans and status. Money, power, jealousy, and prestige were often the main reasons behind revenge, crimes, and violence. These motives implicitly lead to the appearance of unfortunate outcomes such as suicide and abortion.

Finally, it can be seen that rebellion in *The Century* has prominently increased in the first and the fourth seasons, while it reached its peak in the first season because of many reasons. First, rebellion in this fictional TV drama is performed by both genders. However, it takes different forms regarding the disapproval of a situation and the goals behind being a rebel. Male characters conduct almost all rebellious actions in the fourth season. For example, Prince Bayazid organized a military coup against his oldest brother Prince Selim. The revolutionary deeds of the male gender were performed by using force, looking to ascend to the throne and

gain authority. Interestingly, during the first season, most rebellious behaviours were performed by female characters. Unlike males, females often protested to survive. For instance, in the first seasons, Huyam intended to protest to survive because Sultana Hafsa (Suleiman's mother) made her live an unpleasant experience in the palace.



**Figure 6.7:** The queen mother (Sultana Hafsa) warning Huyam of being disobedient

Thus, it can be argued that rebellious behaviours performed by Huyam in the palace are considered forms of feminist resistance to claim the right to live. Mona Lilja and Evelina Johansson (2018, p.82) describe feminist resistance:

When looking at feminist resistance, the resistance takes different expressions that indicate an assemblage of resistance practices that interact with each other. Overall, this resistance is performed by different subjects in different contexts through large organized groups as well as by individuals.

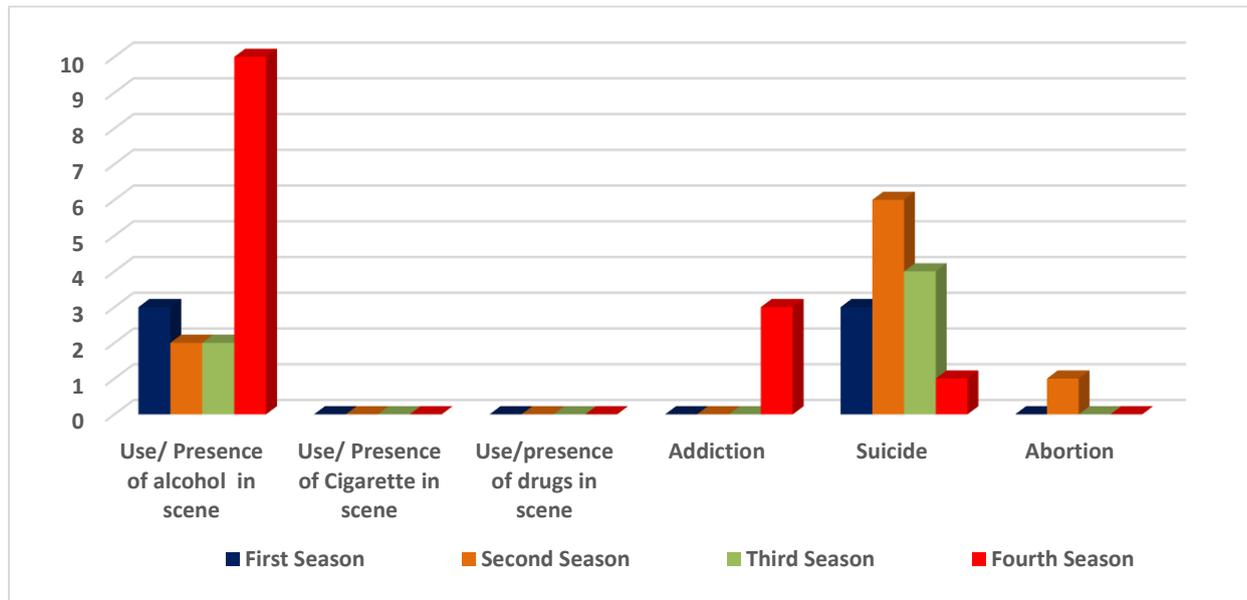
However, the feminist resistance in *Harim al-Sultan* emerged through rebellion started when Huyam broke the Ottoman tradition and challenged the policy of the palace “one mother-one son”. She is the first wife allowed to bear multiple sons as she gave birth to over one son (Mehmed, Selim, Bayazid, Jihangir, and Mariam). Huyam also defied another royal law by remaining in Constantinople (the capital of the Ottoman Empire, now Istanbul) rather than accompanying her son Prince Mehmed to his first administrative post in the province of

Manisa. Previous wives of the Sultan were sent away with their imperial heirs to other Ottoman provinces. The first wife of Sultan Suleiman (Sultana Nahiddoran), for instance, was sent with her son Prince Mustapha once he became a governor of Manisa. Huyam also became the first slave concubine in Ottoman history to be freed. She became the Sultan's wife and advisor and stayed in the court with him for the rest of her life. Her presence in the palace near the Sultan, rather than moving to other Ottoman provinces, proves her rebellion against palace laws.

While the Sultan handled projects in the capital alone, Huyam established many charitable endowments such as Quranic schools, hospitals, and a kitchen for the poor. From the above, it can be seen that feminist resistance during the Ottoman era, as depicted in the TV series, has taken a different form. While first, second, and third feminist waves refer to the belief in fairness between genders in opportunities, social rights, treatment, and respect, aiming to end discrimination, oppression, categorization, and identity issues. Feminist resistance in *The Century* is performed individually, often by a female against females to survive.

To clarify, Huyam in the series is shown as the other woman who seduces the Sultan away from his wife (Nahiddoran). For that reason, the conflict started between Sultanas of the palace, including the mother of Suleiman, his sisters, and his wife, against Huyam. The rejection of the slave girl to become an Ottoman Empress was another reason Sultanas confronted and attempted to get rid of her. Therefore, Huyam's resistance does not echo any discourses of feminism that demand gender or social equality but represents different forms of rebellion that suggest disobeying the palace's traditional values and rules to make her life and her children safe. In this context, Elaine Aston (1995, p.17) notes that bourgeois or liberal feminism advocates improving women's status in society without changing the country's political, economic, or social structure. She explains: "the aim of the bourgeois –feminist dynamic is to persuade the spectator of the case for improving the position of women within

society without any radical transformation of political, economic, or familiar structure, etc”. Abuse of power the high number of plotting to gain authority leads to critical health outcomes such as suicide. Thus, the following diagram illustrates the most prevalent health menaces suggested by Algerian females and depicted in *The Century*.



**Figure 6.8:** Global Health threats in *Harim al-Sultan*

The bar graph also describes several global health threats exist in the historical soap operas *Harim al-Sultan*. Alcohol and suicide scenes seem to be the most repetitive actions across four seasons. Alcoholism appeared mainly in the fourth season compared to the other seasons. *The Century* is a historical drama that was supposed to represent the life of a muslim Ottoman emperor and his conservative population. Nevertheless, there was a secret venue like a small bar called “el Khamara” in which males and females gathered to drink and spend the night together in the series. However, in the fourth season, about 90% of drinking scenes refer to Prince Selim who sometimes drinks to celebrate and forget his grief. Because since his return from the execution of his brother Prince Bayazid, he started hearing the voice of his brother. He felt remorse and tried to take these voices away by drinking alcohol until he became an alcoholic.

Suicide and suicidal behaviours in this drama can be classified into two categories: forced and self-decided suicide. Around 80% of suicide events are related to females, in which out of the total of 14 suicide scenes, only two of them are for men. The main reason behind the spread of suicide among the female gender over the male in this narrative is that the story's focus was more on harems (sultanas, concubines, and servants), and almost all scenes were filmed in the palace. In addition, the game of thrones started first with jealous females. After that, they begin looking for power and revenge, leading to many confrontations and pressure, consequently, many suicide events.

Both categories suggest a reaction of pressure, fear, escaping from punishments, and the ruthless surrounding circumstances of the palace in which female servants and concubines were treated as slaves. Hence, they preferred to put an end to their worthless life. Suicide in *The Century* has been attained using different methods; hanging, for instance, is the most common suicide technique in the palace, then self-poisoning, self-slaughtering, and finally suicide through jumping from tall buildings. The above suicidal behaviours are reserved for females of the lower class and more so for women of the ruling class. Sultana Huyam, for example, tried to poison herself because of the high pressure that comes from jealousy from the other mistresses of sultan Suleiman. Likewise, Sultana Khadidja poisoned herself because Sultan Suleiman accused her that she was responsible for the disappearance of his wife, Huyam. Therefore, she couldn't tolerate his accusations against her, and executing her husband, Ibrahim Pasha. The following pictures demonstrate different suicidal behaviours and methods for different social classes of women.



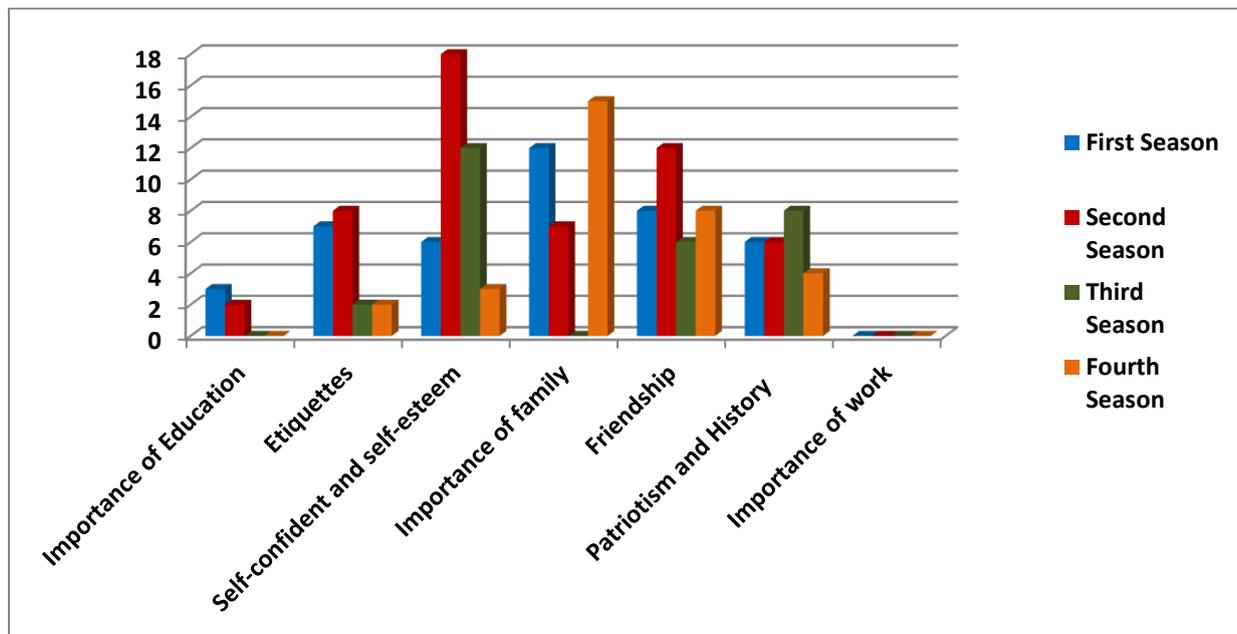
**Figure 6.9:** Suicide of Sultana Hafsa's Servant



**Figure 6.10:** Suicide of the Prince Mustapha's Wife (Sultana Mihronissa)

In comparison to other Dizi TV dramas, there are no smoking and drug-taking scenes in this historical soap opera. According to Ekrem Buğra Ekinci, tobacco was an important crop in Turkish agriculture introduced to the Ottomans in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century by the European merchants. According to Ekrem Buğra Ekinci (2017), the Ottoman historian Ibrahim Peçevî narrates: “the British brought tobacco to Istanbul around the 1600s. They sold it, claiming it had medicinal values. It quickly became popular first among the men of pleasure and then other people. Even intellectuals and state leaders became addicted to it”. However, Sultan

Ahmed I in 1609 banned farming, purchasing, and consuming tobacco. He argues that tobacco is preventing people from doing their jobs. Therefore, he destroyed coffeehouses filled with smokers and warned them who would continue smoking would be exposed on the street with the stick they smoked stuffed up their noses. *The Century* represents a story life of a historic emperor who governed the Ottoman Empire in almost the same era (the 16<sup>th</sup> century), which probably coincided with the prohibition of cigarette consumption in that era. Nonetheless, this historical soap opera tackle not only negative subjects but also depicts some decent topics. The following diagram illustrates the most appreciated themes tackled in *The Century*.



**Figure 6.11:** Positive topics tackled in *Harim al-Sultan*

The bar graphs show that self-confidence, family, and friendship are the prominent positive topics tackled. Almost all the self-confidence and self-esteem scenes in *The Century* are related to Huyam. Huyam character seems to be the most controversial figure in the series; she sometimes became ruthless and executed anyone who stood in her way. However, her charitable works of an Ottoman Empress who cares for the poor dispossessed people make her a great queen. Although she was a slave before becoming the lady of the Sultan, her self-

confidence began when she made Sultan Suleiman her own and wanted to make sure that the throne would be for one of her sons. Through time she became the third most powerful woman in the palace after Suleiman's mother (Sultana Hafsa) and the first consort (Nahiddoran, the mother of Prince Mustapha). Huyam gains Suleiman's love and keeps it for years and succeeds in becoming his political advisor. Susanne Flower (2011) illustrates: "she did play the politics, but mothers of Princes were expected to do that".

Friendship also seems one of the most prevalent positive themes of *The Century*. The relation between Sultan Suleiman and the grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire Ibrahim Pasha, for instance, was close and faithful. Sultan Suleiman liked Ibrahim, and the young men became friends. Sultan took Ibrahim with him to the capital, making first the keepers of chambers of the palace. Since the first episode, Sultan Suleyman shares his power with Ibrahim and discusses his plans and decisions. He even says that he sees Ibrahim as a brother. Thus, his position rises swiftly. One of the first decisions that Sultan Suleyman made when he took the throne was to make Ibrahim pasha the grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire. Later, Sultan learns Ibrahim is in love with his beloved sister Sultana Khadidja and marries them although Ibrahim was previously salve. Their relationship was close, and we can even see that Suleiman values Ibrahim's decisions and tries to protect him from himself because he was shown as a character who has an inner conflict about his identity. Ibrahim was always in between two worlds: that of a royal and that of a salve. However, Sultan Suleiman shares his authority with him and makes him feel like a royal family member.

One of the Turkish TV dramas appeals is that they take family values and stories seriously mainly the old traditional values of everyday life such as family ties and respect for the elderly. Apart from societal morals, this TV drama significantly focused on matters of familial closeness and loyalty. The depiction of the royal family in the series seems to be very disciplined, although conflict between brothers to reach the throne and the daily confrontation

between females in the palace Sultana Hafsa (Suleiman's mother) was very careful about the events and the rules of the palace. Therefore, she employed Dora Khanum as the head of the palace to make sure everything was managed and controlled.

Usually, complicated issues at the palace, such as rebellious servants or even royal family members, were reported to the grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha or officially to the head of the state Sultan Suleiman. Sultan Suleiman tried to be fair enough with his sons from Huyam and Nahiddoran in terms of love, education, advice, and teaching them how to be warriors and good governors. He was careful to accompany his oldest sons, Prince Mustapha, and Prince Mehmed with him to the colonies in order to train them to use swords and deal with difficult political issues. Sultan Suleiman was a careful father about behaviours of his sons, therefore, emphasis teaching them Islamic morals and principles such as loyalty, faith, and justice. Thus, we can see that relationship between Prince Mehmed and Prince Mustapha was close and that they even made a promise never to kill each other. Finally, the different positive and negative depictions that come from the audio-visual content analysis of this historical soap opera can be classified into four comprehensive themes that are: history, women, power, and religion.

#### **6.4. Representation of Women, Power, and Religion in *Harim al-Sultan***

Evidence about women of the Ottoman era is scarce; as Eric R. Dursteler et al. (2010, p.1) state: "the study of Ottoman women is relatively new; before the late 1970s little had been written". Existing research suggests that women had important status and rarely mixed with men in Ottoman society. Haim Gerber (1980) argues that the patriarchal family was supposedly the backbone of the social system across Islamic society, contributing to women's status. He justifies: "women, it was supposed, were often secluded in harems and, therefore, were barred from participating in public life, which meant that they could not pursue economic occupations, or go to court to defend their interests and legal rights" (p.2).

Harem is a part of the palace dedicated to women and was not entered by any men other than the family member themselves. The Ağa of the haremlık were castrated slaves prevented from entering the harem zone. In case of critical issues that should be reported to the Sultan, the Ağa of the harem would be informed, and he subsequently notifies the maidservant of Sultan's room to apprise the Sultan (Ekrem Buğra Ekinci, 2017). In contrast, *The Century* shows mixed gatherings between females of the palace, men, and Ağas. Sümbül Ağa, for example, accompanied Huyam along her journeys from the first season until her death in the last season.

Sümbül is a castrated man employed as a chamberlain and one of the slaves' managers in the haremlık. *The Century* TV drama shows him organizing affairs of the haremlık. He is responsible for training the slave girls to dance and teaching them the etiquettes of the palace, so he is always in touch with females. He first served the queen mother and Sultana Nahiddoran; after that, he served Sultana Huyam. Huyam and Sümbül Ağa were very close and established a good relationship as he became her right-hand man in all her plans. He used to escort her in almost all corners of the palace, even her bedroom. Other Sultanas also established multiple intimate relationships with males outside and inside the haremlık. Sultana Khadidja, for instance, had a secret love relationship with the grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha and they were repeatedly meeting in the palace's backyard. Sultana Mariam (Huyam's daughter) also had love relationships with different men even when married. The palace servant Ferial Khanum had a sexual relationship with Ibrahim Pasha and gave birth to him, though they were married to different characters.

This historical drama also shows that Jariyahs (female servants of the palace) were concerned to get Sultan Suleiman's or Princes' attention to secure their survival. Almost all women in the series, especially slaves, were depicted as a symbol of sex and desire. Whenever new female slaves came to the capital, they were showered and classified according to their beauty

and intelligence. Hence, the most beautiful and clever ones were selected to be concubines of the Sultan and Princes. Accordingly, if the Sultan or Prince bedded one of these slave girls, she might become the mother of the future Sultan, a position which would offer her power. However, those who were not selected might continue as servants. Nevertheless, Jariyahs were paid and offered gifts regularly on certain occasions. They were also educated and married off. Jariyahs' and women's costumes in general in *The Century* are supposed to reflect conservative Ottoman garments. Dursteler et al. (2010, p.1) explain: "the Ottoman sultans came to see themselves as the defenders of the faith, and they gradually embraced the practices of classical Islam. Among these were the veiling and cloistering of women". Nevertheless, females of *The Century* are shown with sexy open-neck dresses. The following pictures illustrate *The Century's* female fashion compared to the authentic fashion of the sixteenth century.



**Figure 6.12:** Royalty Females' costumes in *Harim al-Sultan* and those of the 16<sup>th</sup> century

As reported in the Turkish newspaper *Hürriyet Daily News* (2012), the international fashion designer Zuhale Yorgancıoğlu (2012) mentions that costumes of the TV series *Harim al-Sultan* are not historically accurate. Yorgancıoğlu notes that females of that era, especially during the reign of Sultan Suleiman wore caftans and baggy trousers rather than tight scoop-neck dresses. She argues that women in *The Century* are not wearing Ottoman style but French-

inspired clothing. Emine Koca and Fatma Koç (2007, p.57) point out that attempts to be westernized through costumes during the Ottoman era were common. They explain: “westernization in the Ottoman society started in the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, accompanied by attempts at modernizing and/or westernizing of fabric, patterns, and colours”.

Emine Koca and Fatma Koç believe that the westernization of the Ottoman female clothing style emerged until the 17<sup>th</sup> and the 18<sup>th</sup> century and not in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as Yorgancıoğlu said. However, lady Mary Montagu who came to Istanbul with her husband, the British ambassador Edward Wortley Montagu, wrote a letter in which describing the Ottoman culture and women’s dresses between 1717 and 1718. She states: “No women of any social status can go out without wearing Muslim or Yashmak. One part of the Yashmak covers the whole face except for the eyes the other part covers the hair and hangs down to the waist from the back” (Emine Koca and Fatma Koç, 2007, p.61). The description of lady Montagu of the 18<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman women’s clothing style proves that females of that era used to wear modest Islamic styles rather than scoop-necked and tight dresses, as shown in *The Century*.

On the other hand, the religious practices in *The Century* demonstrate the centrality of Islam in Ottoman life and rule. The Ottoman Empire shown in *Harim al-Sultan* shows that Islam and Islamic institution inspired and sustained this kingdom. Sultan Suleiman was offered the total authority to legislate laws and decisions as he was called Lawmaker and Caliph of Muslims. In addition, there was a leading clerical position called “Sheykhu el Islam<sup>21</sup>” who was shown as the advisor of the Sultan in complicated religious issues. Almost all the five pillars and beliefs of Islam exist in this historical drama, like the Muslim declaration of faith. Ottomans represented in *The Century* were Muslims believing in one God and that the prophet Muhammad is the messenger of God. They proclaim the profession of faith in wars and when new people convert to Islam as Huyam did. The criminal who was going to be

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<sup>21</sup> Sheykhu el Islam: is a honorific title for outstanding scholars of the Islamic sciences.

executed was offered some time to state el shahada. It was also whispered into the ear of a new-born Muslim baby. Sultan Suleiman, for instance, was professing faith and reciting the Islamic call when his children and grandchildren were born. Hence, religion is a strong impetus that holds the family and traditions together.

Second, *The Century* also shows the Sultan Suleiman and Sultana Huyam performing the Muslim prayers, fasting Ramadhan, and reading some chapters from the holy book (the Qur'an). Suleyman attended Friday prayers with his retinue. During Ramadhan, the royal family officials and palace attendants all participated in fasting and fast breaking. The following pictures are taken from different seasons to illustrate the Islamic practices performed in this TV drama. *The Century* shows palace Sultanas donating to community members in need. Sultana Huyam, for instance, built many charitable endowments for the poor such as kitchen, hospitals, and Quranic schools. When Princes were circumcised, a public celebration was organized, and circumcision was made available to other poor boys of the same age. Weddings were also legitimized by a religious service and took place in the presence of a religious dignitary.



**Figure 6.13:** Sultana Huyam praying Qur'an for her son



**Figure 6.14:** Sultana Nahiddoran reading the



**Figure 6.16:** Suleiman is whispering el shahada for a new-born baby



**Figure 6.15:** Huyam is converting to Islam

This soap opera seems to promote the idea that other ethnicities and religions were tolerated during the Ottoman Empire. The series shows that the sixteenth century's ethnic, linguistic, and religious diversity featured the Ottoman Empire. *The Century* represents a plurality of minorities like Greeks, Christians, and Jews. For example, the delegations of foreign envoys and Princesses who came to the capital were protected and welcomed by the Ottoman palace. Non-Ottomans or other minorities who appear in this TV drama were distinguished by their clothes and the way they utter the Turkish language. However, palace members were not tolerated to practice other religions except Islam. For example, once Ibrahim Pasha brought the spoils of the conquest to his home (the marble statues of Artemis, Herakles, and Apollo) the public accused him of idolatry. However, Sultan Suleiman protected him. The public protested against Ibrahim Pasha because the presence of statues in a Muslim home means that God is portrayed in an image or an idol form. Thus, pictures and statues were avoided during the Ottoman era, as they could be mistakenly worshiped, which would be idolatry, which is one of the biggest sins in Islam.

Regarding power, *Harim al-Sultan* glorifies the Turks by portraying the Ottoman Empire as the world's superpower during the sixteenth century. This narrative depicts Sultan Suleiman as the historic warrior who degraded European armies and makes them helpless against the Ottomans' power. The depiction of power in *Harim al-Sultan* is mainly related to three

dominant characters: Sultan Suleiman, Sultana Huyam, and the grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha. While the position of Sultan Suleiman was stable, and he represents a powerful character in the series. Huyam's and Ibrahim's power and status were increasing and decreasing according to their relationship with the Sultan. Both of them were slaves, close to the Sultan, and power-hungry. Sultan Suleiman's power started in the first season when he accessed the throne at the TopKapi palace. He later surrounded himself with strong and skilful administrators and politicians such as his grand vizier Ibrahim, Rustem, and Sokollu. Sultan Suleiman prepared military forces and enlarged his realm and the Ottoman lands. Everyone appears before him, including attendances of his court and meetings, concubines, ministers, and Princes. They subordinate themselves by either bowing or kneeling to kiss the hem of his royal Kaftan. He was always escorted by his bodyguards or appeared with others. Even his headgear, clothing, and jewellery are unmatched by any other character in the series, demonstrating that he has absolute power and supremacy.

Ibrahim and Huyam were taken forcefully from their hometowns to become slaves of the Sultan. When Sultan Suleiman takes the throne, he makes Ibrahim Pasha his private chamberlain. They became close friends and started making plans together. Ibrahim at that period was loyal, so his position was raised quickly, and he became the grand vizier of the Ottoman Empire. Huyam, on the other hand, is shown in the series as the strong rebellious woman who suffered in the harem to survive. This role seems to make audiences sympathize with her. The difference between Huyam and Ibrahim is that Huyam knows what she wants. Although she became powerful, she continues to be loyal to the Sultan, unlike Ibrahim, who wants to share Sultan Suleiman's power.

Huyam first took advantage of her beauty to seduce the Sultan by gaining the purple handkerchief and becoming one of the favourite concubines instead of a slave. Then she gave birth to her firstborn son Prince Mehmed after that to other Princes and was freed by the

Sultan, and then he legally married her. Huyam and Ibrahim were fighting for Sultan's affection. They started conflicting with other thought Ibrahim was the first person who presented Huyam to Sultan Suleiman. Huyam did not want to share Suleiman's love with Ibrahim, so she began planning to remove him from his political position. Thus, the first mistake Ibrahim made was being her competitor in Sultan's love and rank. The other issue that caused their fight was Ibrahim's support of Huyam's throne adversary Prince Mustapha and his mother. Therefore, Huyam started overcoming the obstacles that would prevent her from reaching her goals, namely Prince Mustapha and the grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha, making her sons sovereign, and improving her status to be the queen of the Ottoman Empire. She believed that Prince Mustapha was trying to dethrone his father, Sultan Suleiman, with the support of Ibrahim Pasha. She knows that if Prince Mustapha took the throne, she would lose everything, even her children. Consequently, she planned for their execution. She first started with Ibrahim Pasha to make Prince Mustapha lose his biggest support and later get rid of him.

### **6.5. Representation of History in *Harim al-Sultan***

“Neo-Ottoman” is a new term used by Western media to describe Turkish foreign policy. The current Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his moderate Islamist Party called Justice and Development Party (AKP) are seeking to revive the historical influence of the Ottoman Empire. First, the AKP is a Turkish political group elected as a ruling party since 2002. AKP is an Islamist entity that aims to fuel Islamic principles into Turkish society. Ihsan Dagi elucidates: “the AKP leadership did emerge from the cadres of the first organized political representative of Islamism in Turkish politics, known as the “national view movement,” led then as now by Necmettin Erbakan” (2008, p.26). As reported by the leading Istanbul *Daily News Hürriyet* (2012), Erdogan proclaims, “we move with the spirit that

founded the Ottoman Empire”. He continues: “we must go everywhere our ancestors have been”.

Meanwhile, Turkish audiences were captivated with the historical drama *Harim al-Sultan* that glorifies the Ottomans and perfectly reflects the AKP’s propaganda about the Ottoman past. The conservative Turkish people criticized the production and complained about the role of Sultan Suleiman in the series. Their primary objection is that the central persona in the TV drama is not Suleiman the Magnificent himself, but his main concubine and later his wife, Sultana Huyam. They also criticized *The Century* for focusing on intrigues and the supremacy of the harem instead of exhibiting a successful military leader (Veli Sirin, 2013). President Erdogan blasted *Harim al-Sultan* for its portrayals of the Ottoman emperor Suleiman as manipulated by a woman. He claims: “we alerted the authorities on this and we wait for a judicial decision on it”. “[...] those who toy with these values should be taught a lesson within the premises of law”.



**Figure 6.17:** Demonstrators throw eggs and attack billboards advertising the TV series " *Harim al-Sultan* " during a protest near the show TV headquarters in Istanbul, Jan. 9, 2011. Photo by REUTERS/Murad Sezer (Tulin Daloglu, *Al Monitor*, 2014)

*The Century* content was heavily criticized nationally and internationally by both audiences and authorities. The series attracted a wave of protests from viewers and the Turkish

government, saying that it was disrespectful to Suleiman the Magnificent because it showed him drinking alcohol, banned in Islam. They also complained about his relationships with women and concubines in the harem. These factors angered the protesters, so they blamed the scriptwriters for misinterpreting and misrepresenting historical events and characters. The Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK) warned the Turkish private channel Show TV of broadcasting a programme that contradicts Turkish society's values. Immediately after broadcasting the promotional materials and posting billboards to advertise *The Century*, a group of protestors gathered in front of a television station to express their opposition and dissatisfaction. They demanded to cancel the series. According to Erol Önderoğlu, the General Assembly of the Turkish Parliament (2011), the responsible Deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç says: "I am also personally concerned and worried". He continues:

Sultan Suleyman who brought so many laws is known for his greatness in the world and during the Ottoman era. He is known as 'Suleyman the Magnificent'. It was aimed to show him in his harem, fond of drinking and even in certain scenes that I cannot express in words... The fragments suggest that one could think that way. It makes me sad that the series was produced with such a huge budget and that its broadcasting was started a few days ago.

Likewise, Erhan Üstündağ (2011) mentions that Alım Işık, a member of the parliamentary group, asserts: "This series blasphemes our history. If the channel itself does not stop the broadcast, RTÜK has to do it immediately". Turkish people also complained to the RTÜK and disapproved Ottoman History's misrepresentation and Suleiman the magnificent. Ezgi Veyisoğlu reports the reaction of the Turkish public when they first saw the trailer of *The Century*:

When we watch it, we see women dancing to an oriental music, Sultan Suleyman waiting in his room with a woman in his bed, arrival of Hurrem

and the enthronement of Sultan Suleyman followed by woman bathing in a Turkish bath and so on. (2019, p.46)

*The Century's* advertisement focuses on provocative scenes of Turkish people, such as sensual dance, sex scenes, and bathing passages, more than the heroic and glorious achievement of the series' protagonist. Probably, the target of this series' producers was to attract attention and appeal to audiences. However, many Turkish people disliked the TV drama and asked for an apology and cancellation. According to Kumru Berfin Emre Cetin (2014, pp.15-16), Sibel Aydos (2013) explains that the discontent surrounding *Harim al-Sultan* arose because of the depiction of sexual relations within harem life, and that is an insult to the Turkish nation. In the same context, the deputy Prime Minister Bülent Arınç comments about the trailer stating that he feels sorry that the Magnificent Suleiman enjoyed his harem (wife) and alcohol in the trailer.

The promo of *Harim al-Sultan* is lengthened for 1 minute and 40 seconds and is widely available on YouTube. It contains around 11 scenes taken from the first season because they started airing the show before filming the other seasons. Almost all scenes of the promotional advertisement of this historical TV drama focus on a sensual belly dance performed by females supplemented with oriental music. A nude sex scene in Suleiman's bed and a bathing scene in which a group of half-dressed females was showering in a shared bathroom (Ottoman Hammam). A little attention at the end of the trailer is given to the heroic side of Suleiman the Magnificent; he was shown fighting during one of his battles (YouTube, 2014).

The trailer was expected to introduce the glorious scenes about the tenth Ottoman, as it is expected from the title *Muhteşem Yüzyıl* means the magnificent era of the Ottoman Empire ruled by the lawmaker Sultan Suleiman. However, out of 11 scenes, only 3 seem to refer to this period; the scene in which Sultan Suleiman introduces himself, his inauguration to the throne, and the penultimate quick battle scene. Thus, it is valid to say that the promo of *The*

*Century* had focused more on intimate scenes (dance, nude sex scene, and bathing scene) than the achievement of the tenth Ottoman Emperor. Jörg Finsterwalder et al. (2012, pp.590-593) argue: “Individuals form expectations of a film based on the orientation of the advertising and thus are more likely to be satisfied by the film if it meets these expectations”. They add: “in order to most effectively influence consumers’ expectations of the overall style and quality of the film, the style of the trailer should be consistent with the style of the film”.

Therefore, from the Turkish public’s reaction against the trailer, it became clear that the series challenged perceptions and ideologies regarding the Ottoman past. They believe the series present Suleiman the Magnificent as a drinker and womanizer, which looks abusive to Turkish history and Suleiman al Kanuni. Such criticisms were raised because the viewers’ expectation of the series content was based on the magnificent sixteenth century of the Ottoman Empire and emphasized the lawmaker’s (Sultan Suleiman) battles and victories. However, they have been surprised by the private life and the romantic story of Sultan Suleiman. Ersan Arsan and Yıldırım Yasemin (2014, p.5) note:

While the series was hitting rating records and started to be broadcast on national channels of seventeen more countries, because of the sexual scenes related to Ottoman seraglios, a total of 70,000 complaints were made to the Turkish Radio and Television Supreme Council (RTÜK).

Josh Carney distinguishes three main reasons for this controversy: content, mode, and contexts and how they played into the problem series raised for the AKP. Regarding the series content, Carney argues that: “century broke taboos related to the depictions of a past that many in Turkey considered sacred, portraying the private lives of Sultan Suleyman and his family” (2019, p.103). Such depictions of Turkish history sparked indignation in social and political domains. The AKP, for instance, was not satisfied with the understanding of the Ottoman past shown in *The Century*. For that reason, they considered it a threat. In an

interview with the Ottoman descendent, Osmanoglu, the journalist Banu Given expressed his concern about the representation of Suleiman the Magnificent in *The Century*. He explains:

It's shown in such an unceremonious way, that's what I'm against. For me it's a changed image. You're trying to destroy my image, and ... that's not my image. And what's in my head and the heads of a number of other people is not this. He [Suleyman] is a power, a symbol, a person. (cited in Carney, 2019, p.104)

Carney identifies the visual portrayals of women as the second reason for the controversy of the series. Because of its direction towards Orientalism due to the frequent Western depictions of the harem. He justifies: “such critiques were frequently also framed with reference to the orientalism inherent in many Western portrayals of the harem, which the *Century* producers are assumed to have adopted either through ignorance, laziness, or malicious intent” (p.5). Edward W. Said (1978) defines Orientalism as a style of thoughts established on an epistemological and ontological distinction made between “the Orient” and “the Occident”. He clarifies that Orientalism is considered as a Western style for dominating, influencing, and having authority over the Orient (1978, p.10). Carney predicted that the intimate scenes are the central reason for the controversy and the disagreement of audiences and authorities. According to Deniz Turkali, an actress had a role in the series *What Is Fatmagul's Crime?* (2012), *Century's* intimacy is normal that should not be hidden. She continues: “These ridiculous sacred untouchability arguments shouldn't even be part of artistic discussion”. Turkali believes that this historical series is based on the fiction that is inspired by Turkish history. She illustrates: “while there's a harem, saying the Sultans weren't interested in women is comical, isn't it? Don't we know that all the sultans had about thirty kids? Did they come from a stork?” (cited in Carney,2019, p.105).

Similarly, drinking alcohol in this historical drama opened debate and contention, especially when viewers saw Sultan Suleiman drinking from a goblet in the first episode when he

celebrated his first victory. However, after careful research into the frequency of alcohol consumption in the series, it appears that there is no evidence that Suleiman drank alcohol. In the first episode, while Sultan Suleiman celebrated his achievement with the grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha, he drank something unknown because the cup was made of metal. However, his subsequent behaviours prove he was mindful and aware. In an interview on the NTV channel with the journalist Banu Guven, the night after *Century's* aired, *The Century* scriptwriter Meral Okay in commented on this controversy by emphasizing that the drink on the goblet was not wine but a sweet drink flavoured with fruits and herbs called "Sharbet". Despite Okay's clarifications, interpreting the unidentified liquid is still debatable mainly for conservatives, Islamic AKP, and supporters. Besides the women's depictions and the content, context also posed an issue for AKP conservatives and its supporters. For example, in 2012, Turkey's current President Recep Tayyip Erdogan attacked the series publicly at the opening ceremony of the new airport declares:

Our [Ottoman] ancestors went on horseback; we take an interest in all those places. But I think some may be thinking of our ancestors as they're shown on the television screen in that documentary, 'Magnificent Century.' We don't have ancestors like that. We don't recognize a Kanuni like that. He [The real Suleyman] spent 30 years of his life on horseback, not in the palace like you see on the series. (cited in Carney, 2019, p.110)

Erol Mutlu (2008, pp.18-21), in his book *Televizyonu Anlamak (Understanding Television)*, explains that there is a mental relationship between audience and television. According to him, television is criticized either positively or negatively by its viewers. The negative criticism is not related to television as a means of communication but to its socio-cultural and economic aspects. Erdem Y. Hakan (2019, p.160) demonstrates the relationship between the Turkish people and television. He mentions that people in Turkey and TV characters have a para-social interaction in which audiences consider these characters a member of their

families. Some celebrities have been attacked because of the evil roles they performed in the series. Hakan states that some viewers confuse fiction with real actors and actresses by their stage names (see Ezgi Veyisoğlu, 2019). Ezgi Veyisoğlu (2019, pp.13-14) argues several reasons behind criticizing *The Century*. First, the most important point is the representation of Sultan Suleiman and the historical accuracy of events shown in the series and whether they are real or imagined, including the depiction of the palace life and the harem portrayals.

Second, gender roles in the palace and whether they reflect the real life of that era besides the romantic relationship between Sultan Suleiman and Huyam is one of the controversial topics that appeared after broadcasting *The Century*. Interpreting Huyam's character, for instance, among audiences differs, but they agreed that Huyam controls Suleiman in their relationship. Yücel Anil (2014, 24) notes that Huyam takes her power from Suleiman, and it can be concluded that the series idealizes men rather than women (cited in Ezgi Veyisoğlu, 2019, p.15). Third, the reason behind the death of Prince Mustapha, Jhangir, Bayazid, and the grand vizier Ibrahim Pasha are debatable topics in this soap opera. For instance, the execution of Prince Mustapha caused much criticism on social media. Veyisoğlu elucidates: "they accused Sultan Suleyman of being cruel, and not fit for the title Kanuni, meaning lawful. Mustafa, on the other hand, is accepted as a martyr who faced his death bravely" (2019, p.19).



**Figure 6.18:** The execution of Prince Mustapha (season 4)

According to *Cumhuriyet* (2014), one of *The Century* viewers blamed Sultan Suleiman for executing Prince Mustapha. He, therefore, fields a criminal complaint against him, emphasizing the restoration of honour that should be given to Prince Mustapha. He states: “I do not want to see this scene in the series so that I filed a complaint to stop the broadcast of the series”. The same audience of the series also claims to rewrite history books because TV dramas are showing the “official” history wrongly and inadequately (cited in Veyisoğlu, 2019, p.19-20). The series is also criticized because of the representation of modern women through the characterization of Huyam. Huyam’s story looks like a contemporary businesswoman who fights to raise her power against her competitors. Susanne Flower (2011) reports that during an interview with *Tempo* magazine Meryem Uzerli, the actress who played Huyam in the series, said that modern women could learn many things from the character Huyam. Meryem Uzerli declares: “the most important being strategy. If you have those kinds of skills, you can get whatever you want”.

Çevik argues that due to the politicization of television, (TRT) Turkish Radio and Television are airing historical TV dramas driven by the AKP’s discourse of the Ottoman Empire to shape public opinion. She illustrates her arguments using the example of the famous Turkish historical TV drama *Payitaht Abdulhamid* (2017) that coincides with critical turning points that have shaped Turkish politics. It appears that historical TV dramas are used as cultural instruments to cultivate and present the current political reality in accord with the AKP agenda. Political depictions in these soap operas seem to be driven to indicate strong leadership, national leaders, and external threats. Çevik says: “these historical drama series, despite depicting the Ottoman era, carry undertones of Turkey’s current political climate” (2020, p.178). She believes that the series *Payitaht Abdulhamid* had re-written the Ottoman history in the AKP’ image: “In other words, history embodied in nostalgia is being restored

and glorified as if it is the only truth, the narrative that the AKP wants the audience to embrace” (2020, p.182).

The screenwriter of *The Century* Meral Okay explains that criticism of the series is baseless, and the TV drama should not be taken more than a show and art. She argues that *The Century* is a fiction TV series inspired by history. Its decor, costumes, visual effects make it the most ambitious TV series in Turkish TV history. Concerning the complaints of audiences, Okay says: “we believe that when the people watch future episodes, complaints will decrease” (see Susanne, 2011). Likewise, the scriptwriter Vatan (2011) declares that “making history” is not their job, neither pursuing the psychology of the characters in that era, seeing their wins, losses, and loneliness as there is not enough data about these (Veyisoğlu,2019, p.24). To sum up, it is assumed that the aim behind fictionalizing *The Century* is to show historical figures as human beings. For that reason, the screenwriter focused on the private life of sultan Suleiman and portrayed him to Turks and the world not just as a dynamic ruler and conquer of lands, but also a man who struggled to unify his empire and protect his family. Whether this TV drama represents the authentic life story of Suleiman the magnificent or not, it succeeded and was bought by more than 70 countries and watched by more than 500 million viewers all over the world.

#### **6.6.Discussion of Online Questionnaire and Content Analysis Findings**

For millions of people worldwide, television has become an essential source of education, entertainment, and information. For academic scholars and social scientists, the impact of television on human behaviour and cultural belief is a debatable topic, particularly for developing countries that import foreign TV content that led to cultural imperialism. Regina Acholonu (2016, p.2) explains: “The mass media in developing countries have been described as Trojan horses for the transmission of western values and the perpetuation of cultural

imperialism". Cultural imperialism in Algeria, for instance, results from foreign TV dramas' dominance. This dominance is primarily owed to the absence of local TV dramas due to a deficiency of filming equipment and Algerian Audio-visual Control Authority's strict rules that controls media and television content.

In Algeria, like other Arab contexts, Turkish TV series were met through a discourse of tradition and modernity though Algerian audience's engagement with Hispanic telenovelas given their global reach in 1980s/90s and 2000s, especially Argentinian and Brazilian telenovelas was very low compared to Turkish TV series. This study focuses on females because of the strong evidence that suggests that females watch more television to gratify their social and psychological needs. Regarding gender differences in TV use, Ingrid Lunden in Nielsen's research (2011) argues that women watch 40 minutes more than men (4 hours, 11 minutes for women; 3 hours 34 minutes for men). According to David Morley (1986, 1988), James Walker, and Robert Bellamy (1991), females are more likely to perceive television as a social setting. They use it to spend time with others, making television viewing a secondary activity centred on interpersonal or emotional goals (cited in Douglas A. Ferguson et al., 1997, pp.3-4). The *Noor* phenomenon was another motive to concentrate on female viewers. As I stated earlier, the media agreed that out of 85 million Arab viewers who viewed the last episode of *Noor*, 55 million of them are females, and Algerian women are part of this community. This research investigates the reception and consumption of Turkish TV series by Algerian females. It focuses on their preferred TV genre, favourite TV channel and actors, and reasons and motivations for watching them. The online questionnaire method has been used to identify their viewing habits, beliefs, and perspectives about Dizi. This study is based on two primary questions about the power of Dizi TV series and their influence on Algerian females, wherein a representative sample of 213 female television viewers took part.

Almost all female participants in this research are educated and single aged between 20- and 25-year-old from the West of Algeria. Although creating an imbalance, this geographical choice is justified by the fact that the researcher is from the West and that the snowball sampling method was developed through her network. The study's female participants acknowledged having watched over 10 Turkish TV dramas in total, but without exceeding one episode per day. For the women's educational level and watching of cable television, Zahid Khan et al. (2013) note a strong link between females' level of education and their amount of cable television viewing. For example, they claim that majority of the educated Pakistani women watch television for entertainment. MBC was the most prevalent source of Dizi TV shows, but in 2018, it stopped airing them as tensions rose between Ankara and some Arab states. Thus, Algerian women selected YouTube as an alternative for watching them. Among hundreds of Turkish TV series that have been aired in the Arab world, the sample of this study nominated *Harim al-Sultan* as one of the most popular Turkish soap operas in Algeria. It is Turkey's worldwide acclaimed TV show that reached over 40 countries been broadcasted on Chinese, Italian, Balkans, the Middle Eastern, and Russian television (*Hürriyet Daily News*, 2013). Throughout interpretative phenomenological analysis and the content analysis method, the proposed Algerian female viewers' positive and negative themes have been applied on 376 episodes of *The Century* (the case study). Those themes have been quantified, decoded, and interpreted. The overall findings of these methods reveal that Turkish TV series are more of a curse than a blessing.

Algerian females believe that Dizi focuses more on controversial topics, so they suggested 18 negative themes that comprise anti-social behaviours, sexualization, and social health issues such as suicide, rape, and abortion compared to 7 positive themes such as the importance of family and patriotism. Over 90% of them watched Dizi series because they are impressed and gratified by the scenarios that tackle taboos and provocative social issues, attractive actors,

music, filming locations, Turkish language and culture, and the high quality of acting, romance, and the Syrian dialect. But they assert watching them just when they got bored looking for enjoyment, not for serious social and psychological matters such filling the emotional void, escaping from reality, pressure, or educational and informative purposes.

As discussed in the second and the third chapter, Turkish soap operas are a marketing tool to promote the image of Turkey as a tourist destination. They increased the use of abandoned post-industrial areas as filming locations, museums, exhibition centres, and TV studios. Istanbul has been undergoing extensive city-wide renovations since the 1980s. For instance, an old factory in the industrial Bağcılar neighborhood was transformed into a shooting studio where a range of TV series was shot there such as *Harim al-Sultan*. According to Ipek A. Celik Rappas and Sezen Kayhan (2016, p.6), most Dizi TV series is being filmed at studios in Istanbul, so it became a part of the international competition between cities as centres of cultural production. They elaborate:

Istanbul aspires to improve its international visibility through screen tourism, hosting blockbuster films such as *Taken 2* (2012), *The International* (2009), and James Bond films *The World Is Not Enough* (1999) and *Skyfall* (2012)—turning touristic sites such as the Maiden Tower and the Grand Bazaar into “creative locales” of film production.

In terms of foreign viewers, Turkish soap operas have resulted in a rise of incoming visitors, particularly from the Middle East to Istanbul, where most of these shows are produced. Turkish actors, on the other hand, are supporters of and icons of tourism. They have become cultural ambassadors representing Turkey and the Turkish culture. Algerian females list 59 Turkish actors they admire, 27 females and 32 males. Tuba Büyüküstün, known as Lamis in the Arab world and the protagonist of the romantic TV drama *Ihlamurlar Altında* (*The Lost Years*, 2007) besides Naslihan Atagül, known as Nihan in *Kara Sevda* (*Black Love*, 2015) are on the top of the pyramid being selected by most of the participants. In the same context,

Burak Özçivit, known as Kemal in (*Black Love, 2015*) and Barış Arduç, known as Omer in *Kiralik Ask (Love for Rent,2015)* are chosen as top male characters.

Interestingly, a huge number of respondents select the undecided/neutral option in terms of the positive and the negative Turkish TV series power on them and whether it diffuses values and principles that are compatible with their culture and tradition. In this context, Seung Youn et al. (2017, p.3) explain: “respondents may use a midpoint as a dumping ground when they are responding to survey items that are unfamiliar to them or items that are ambiguous or socially undesirable”. Several reasons that make audiences uncertain whether these TV dramas are spreading positive or negative content. For instance, audiences are uncertain how and to what extent *Harim al-Sultan* TV series is historically accurate?

The series was heavily criticized for showing Suleiman el Kanuni as a drinker and manipulated by women and because it is more like a Turkish reproduction of the British TV drama *The Tudors* with more obscure but emphasized sex, gossip, and backstabbing stories. Ezgi Veyisoğlu (2019, p.30) clarifies: “One of the criticisms that is directed towards The Magnificent Century was its similarity to The Tudors TV series. When we look at the characters and the plot, especially in the first episodes, the critiques seem to be right”. Previous sections explained that experts mentioned that females’ clothes of *The Century* are not relevant to Ottoman history. Because royal ladies wear Western outfits, revealing their hair and chest to other men, however; in the Ottoman palace, women were prevented or rarely met with viziers, officers, and ambassadors. Leslie Peirce, a professor of Ottoman studies, notes: “we don’t have any Ottoman saying, ‘This is how the harem worked.’ [...] There’s a whole lot we don’t know about Hurrem and other successful products of the concubine track, so the producers would have to invent plausible scenarios there” (Susanne Fowler, 2011). Veyisoğlu argues that *The Tudors* influenced the screenwriter Meral Okay and that because of

the enormous similarities between *The Century* and *The Tudors* events and posters of advertisements, *The Century* was named ‘Turkish Tudors’.



**Figure 6. 19:** *Harim al-Sultan* and *The Tudors* poster of advertisement (Ezgi Veyisoğlu, 2019, p.32).

The uncertainty of historical events and the influence of *The Tudors* TV drama are two key reasons that may justify the undecidability of female audiences, so they prefer to be neutral. For instance, the story of Huyam and sultana Khadidja are identical to that of Anne and Margaret’s story in *The Tudors*. Huyam and Anne both aimed to earn the favour of the sovereign. Huyam's dancing scene in *Harim al-Sultan*, where the sultan chose her, is a recreation of Anne Boleyn's performance to the monarch in *The Tudors*. On the other hand, the marriage story of Henry VIII's sister Margaret and Charles Brandon, one of Henry VIII's closest friends, represents the same story of Sultana Khadidja, Sultan Suleyman's sister, with Ibrahim Pasha (see Ezgi Veyisoğlu, 2019, pp.34-36).

This undecidability also emerges from the complexity of themes that lead to favourable and unfavourable consequences. For example, some TV series such as *What Is Fatmagul's Crime?* normalizes violence against women and rape discourse because of repetitive violent images. *Harim al-Sultan's* intimate scenes normalize women’s sexualization because of the

high number of nude sex scenes, passionate kisses, sexual harassment, sensual dance, and marital infidelity. *Harim al-Sultan* has been labelled as a sort of Ottoman-era ‘*Sex and the City*,’ which arose from focused on Suleiman’s intimate life instead of emphasizing his battlefield successes. Females in *The Century* have no agency over their bodies and their decisions, particularly servants and concubines. Nevertheless, Huyam had the power to change Sultan Suleiman’s perspectives and decisions, and the same thing to the impact of Nurbanu on Prince Selim. Those women engaged themselves in domestic politics, foreign negotiations, and regency, so they became the source of inspiration for empowerment, autonomy, and self-confidence for Algerian females, mainly Huyam, who is arguably the most powerful woman of the Empire.

*The Century* has also been compared to the American fantasy TV drama *Game of Thrones* (2011) because of the multiple historical consultants, production team, costumes, and sex scenes. *Game of Thrones* and *The Century* received a variety of popular and scholarly feminist critiques as they focused on controversial issues such as nudity and sex. Statistically, females represent 42% of *Game of Thrones*’ viewers, and they account for almost half of all online *Game of Thrones* discussions, which means that *Game of Thrones* is not just a males’ TV show (see Valerie Estelle Franke, 2014). These data prove that romance and social TV dramas are no longer the only entertainment source for females. That explains why Algerian females have selected the historical Dizi genre over other TV series genres. Compared to *Game of Thrones* and *The Century* that focus on rivalry and blood spilling for a throne in the East or West, the romantic-comedy-drama *Sex and the City* tackles modern life sex and dating subjects. It investigates how changes in women's social positions, both at work and home, affect their relationships with males. *Game of Thrones* and *The Century* share several subjects such as plotting, poisoning, revenge, gossip, and bribing. However, because of the cultural differences between the two series, the Ottoman woman cannot set her eyes on the throne,

unlike the Mother of Dragons, Daenerys, in *Game of Thrones*. For that reason, the power of Huyam was on her sons.

Emilia Clarke, who plays Daenerys in *Game of Thrones* comments about the status of women in the same TV series. She states: “you turn on the television at any point, and nine out of ten times, you’re going to see more naked women than naked men” (see Valerie Estelle Franke, 2014, p.1). Estelle Franke argues that a few women enjoy being female because of the number of characters who resort to sex to get ahead or discard every trace of gender as a road to power. In the same context, in “*Game of Thrones: Making Sense of All the Sex,*” critic Scott Meslow (2011) notes that sex is the most common way for women to assert their authority and to survive, which represent the same goal for Huyam and other female servants in *The Century*, “all the women in the series can be divided into two categories: noblewomen and prostitutes. For women without money or a bloodline to protect them, sex is the greatest means of survival”.

Compared to *The Century* that contains only few rape attempts scene, in *Game of Thrones*, there are several rape scenes; some of them are romanticized wherein the victim fell in love with her rapist. For example, “Daenerys begins the story raped and abused, before she falls in love with that very rapist”. Estelle Franke (2014, pp.9-130) lists some rape practices examples: “The Dothraki consider rape an acceptable practice”, “Robert Baratheon drunkenly rapes Cersei”, “Mirri Maz Duur, like many other Lazareen women, is raped by the Dothraki”, “When the Targaryens fell, Clegane raped Princess Elia and murdered her children”, “Sansa is nearly raped. After being abandoned by Joffrey and rescued by the Hound”. These findings indicate that *The Century* represents a combined friendly version of the Western soap operas *Sex and The City* and *Game of Thrones* for Arab audiences as it depicts less sexual practices. However, in *Game of Throne*, there is a huge number of taboos performed by/against both genders, for instance, there are male victims of sexual assault “Theon is nearly raped during

his escape attempt, the first male rape or attempted rape shown on the series” (p.13). Some scenes also portray women as interested in each other “Daenerys shares her bed with alternating servant women after Drogo’s death”.

Crime events, premarital sex, marital infidelity, suicide, and violent scenes in *The Century* are also reasonable reasons that make Algerian female audiences hesitate whether Dizi is exerting positive or negative influence. Suicide, for example, is one the most repeated acts across all seasons. Females commit about 80 percent of suicidal acts. In parallel, the soap operas also promote inspiring topics such as positive attitudes and behaviours, consisting of consideration, humility, respect, and kindness that are important for the female servants to enter the palace and live in it. Slaves were trained to speak, write, dance, and live with the royal family. Etiquettes also include the royal family, grand viziers, retainers, and officials dressed during working days, ceremonies, religious events, and protocols of guests and militants to greet the sovereigns when they enter and leave the palace.

Moreover, the trope of the family has a significant value in Dizi TV dramas. They often depict fatherhood as the protector of the family and the struggle of mothers to raise their children correctly. Children’s lifestyles and ways of thinking are the primary sources of conflict in most family dramas. Parents are an embodiment of patriarchal conservative norms in the ways they attempt to control their children’s lives. In contrast, children are raised according to a modern, independent, and luxurious lifestyle. The concept of family in *The Century* is associated with nationalism and traditions and framed by adherence to particular social norms and values. A different representation of motherhood can be found in these soap operas wherein both sultan Suleiman’s wives Nahiddoran and Huyam kill, bribe, protest, and rebel to secure the throne for their sons.

Sociocultural taboos have been selected as one of the most appealing factors that make Algerian females impressed by Turkish soap operas. However as shown in the fifth chapter,

these TV dramas are often criticized for transmitting and spreading Western ideologies. The sample of this study praised Turkish TV series scenarios that tackle risqué topics that cannot be found in their local TV dramas. The sexualization of the female body and gender relations are the prominent controversial topics for Algerians, as they said that these subjects are incompatible with their values and traditions. As I have clarified in chapter 4, the romantic TV drama *What is Fatmagul's Fault?* aimed to increase consciousness to society about rape issues, but it ends with normalizing and romanticizing rape stories: “Fatmagul is being romanticized and turned into a love story, which appears to be the only way for the rape victim, Fatma, to overcome the past sexual abuse and start a normal marital life” (Ouidyane EL Ouardaoui, 2019, p.2). Raping Fatima is one of the provocative scenes of contemporary Turkish TV drama. Four young drunk males sexually assaulted her. The rape scenario lasted for about five minutes, during which they took turns raping her. Although MBC censored some inappropriate scenes for Arabs, the rape scene of Fatmagul is shot in detail.

Likewise, marital infidelity, pregnancy outside marriage, and abortion are common taboos across Dizi. For instance, the romantic TV drama *Aşk-ı Memnu (Forbidden Love, 2009)* tackles a forbidden love relationship between nephew and his uncle's wife. The story is about Muhannad, who betrayed his uncle Adnan, fell in love with his wife Samer and spent a few intimate nights with her. This TV drama ends with Samer's tragic suicide after her affair with Muhannad is revealed. The Turkish Cabinet has given the Supreme Board of Radio and Television (RTÜK) the authority to set a restriction on the length of love scenes in Turkish television shows, characterizing them as “extremely lengthy and unethical” and criticizing them for not adhering to the Turkish family structure: “The Cabinet made the decision after approving RTÜK's decision to fine a Turkish channel for airing a lovemaking scene between the leading characters of the soap opera *Aşk-ı Memnu (Forbidden Love)* that lasted five minutes and 30 seconds”( *Hürriyet Daily News, 2013*). For pregnancy and abortion, Samer

fell pregnant by her husband Adnan however, she tells him that she is not interested in having the baby, so she gets rid of him. She then became pregnant again, due to her illicit affair with her husband's nephew Muhannad. She tried to get rid of her second baby, but her doctor warned her that she might not have children in the future, so she decided to keep him (*Forbidden Love*,2009).

The cultural, linguistic, and religious proximities between Turkey and Algeria resulting from the long-lasting of the Ottomans and the modern geopolitical, economic, and diplomatic relationships between the two countries contributed to the popularity of Dizi. It also helped create an imagined community that associates female Turkish TV drama audiences regardless of their nationalities, ethnic groups, and beliefs. Arab females' imagined community has been also created because of MBC 4 and MBC 1 as a reunified channel and the Syrian dialect as a reunified dialect. MBC dubbed all the Turkish TV dramas they purchased into Syrian dialect, giving them a new formula for the Arab speaking world, with names and titles that corresponded to Arab culture. Şirin Okyayuz, (2017, p.11) points out: "the choice to dub Turkish soap operas in a Syrian dialect made the audience feel closer". According to Habib Battah, a Beirut-based media critic finds that the Syrian dialect makes the storylines more interesting and the actors' voice more convincing. Fatma Sapci, head of acquisitions at Production Firm Ay Yapim, notes that the use of Syrian dialect in dubbing Turkish soap operas makes them easier and more accessible for fans across the area to think of the show's performers as a family member (see Nathan Williams, 2013).

Because of interaction and cultural overlaps between two societies, the influence of foreign TV dramas on identity is unavoidable. Overall findings indicate that Turkish TV series for Algerian females are just a source of entertainment. However, they have slightly influenced their cultural identities as some bought Turkish products, imitated Turkish actresses in their way of behaving and talking, and learned and memorized Turkish words and expressions. In

this context, Vivian Hsueh-Hua Chen (2014, p.1) explains: “In the globalized world with increasing intercultural encounters, cultural identity is constantly enacted, negotiated, maintained, and challenged through communicative practices”. Turkish TV series have attracted millions of viewers all around the world, particularly females. These TV dramas present female characters who can be considered liberal in their adherence to traditional cultural values, which softly appealed and affected Arab and Muslim female audiences, and Algerian females are no exception. For example, a recent study about the effect of Turkish TV series on Moroccan women shows that Moroccan females believe Turkish culture is a combination of Eastern and Western traditions, and Turks are more open-minded than Moroccans. Some viewers claim that several Turkish soap operas cannot be viewed with families despite the censorship and the amendments. Nevertheless, they want their societies to be open-minded like the Turks: “viewers want relatively modern, romantic and egalitarian relations, as in the Turkish TV series and that Moroccan young girls dreaming relations in this way” (see Serpil Aydos, 2018).

Merfat Alardawi and Ayman Bajnaid (2021) examined the Turkish drama series’ influence on the perceptions and attitudes of Saudi female viewers. The sample showed their acceptance of independent women’s presentation and their rejection of topics that deal with pregnancy outside marriage, marital infidelity, alcohol consumption, dating, and confining religion to older people. For Pakistani female Turkish TV drama audiences, Muhammad Rehan and Syed Hassan Raza (2015) state: “the exposure to foreign culture by forecasting their dramas and programs has a heavy impact on our youth especially on the female’s viewers thus these dramas and programs affecting our cultural identity, norms, and values”. Western styles heavily influence Turkish women's lifestyles in terms of outfits and how they live with men without marriage. Even so, Pakistani females show their willingness to adopt the different things and habits in the characters of the Turkish dramas. A significant number of respondents

who were emotionally attached to the plays and characters were more likely to imitate the behaviours and habits of the characters than those who were emotionally attracted.

Despite my prediction, the results show that 51% of Algerian females didn't buy any Turkish products, and 65% didn't imitate any Turkish celebrity. The influence of Dizi TV series on Algerian females is superficial as they argue they are aware of the Western ideologies in Dizi TV series; thus, the probability of copying and integrating Western lifestyles is low and infrequent because of the conservative society they live in. It is almost impossible to separate culture and religion in Algeria because of the considerable overlap between the two. Despite the globalized world we live in now, the Algerian society is still a conservative country and strictly engaged in religious laws in social life. Although we now live in a globalized world, most Algerian societies remain traditional. It is almost impossible to separate culture and religion in Algeria because of the massive overlap between the two (see Salim Bouherar, 2020).

## **6.7. Conclusion**

This chapter provides a detailed description of *Harim al-Sultan*, which is considered one of the prominent Turkish historical TV dramas that have been watched worldwide. This chapter started with a general introduction explaining the popularity of *The MC* followed by an overview of the main events and characters of this historical soap opera across all seasons. The empirical part of this chapter examines the most dominant positive and negative portrayals in the same TV drama that has been identified using audio-visual content analysis. Findings show that alcohol, sexuality, crime, violence, and suicide are the most dominant negative themes of all seasons, while self-confidence, family, and friendship are prominent positive topics. In general, women in *The Century* were shown as icons of sex, mainly seducing the rulers aiming to improve their status in the palace. However, at the same time,

they have been depicted as powerful, ambitious, strong-willed, and intelligent who took part in politics and history. I concluded this chapter by outlining and discussing the major qualitative and quantitative findings of the online questionnaire and audio-visual content analysis method.

## **Chapter 7: Final Conclusion**

### **7.1. Introduction**

This thesis investigated the consumption of Turkish TV dramas and their power on contemporary Algerian female viewers. It explored perspectives, attitudes, and how Algerian women engage with Dizi content and internalize it in their daily life performances. Dizi, in this research, refers to the second-largest TV exporter in the world after the United States. I argued that despite the distinct history of the emergence and development of soap operas, telenovelas, and Dizi TV dramas, they share similar interests in romantic relationships, family values, and culture. Thus, using other terminologies such as soap operas to label Turkish TV series is also appropriate.

As this thesis argued, the performative aspect of such an internalization is apparent through how Algerian female viewers learn the Turkish language, imitate actors, consume Turkish products, and adopting a modern Turkish lifestyle. Accordingly, they are not passive and oblivious but rather able to consume, enjoy and be ambivalent or critical in their viewership of Turkish series. This study examined to what extent those viewers accept, negotiate, or challenge Dizi content according to their religion, cultural background, and aspirations; it introduced the main soft power tools used in the Dizi TV series for the attraction and gratification of viewers and how these benefit from the historical legacy of Ottoman the Empire as well as the economy and tourism of modern Turkey.

I have argued that Turkish TV dramas are influential in the lives of some Algerian females. Their cultural identity is affected by the Turkish actors and products to an extent. They buy Turkish clothes, furniture and imitate actors in their way of talking and behaving. However, the majority agreed that these soap operas are no more than a source of entertainment for them. On the one hand, they accept and express their satisfaction towards the representation

of women. They are impressed mostly by the Turkish culture and language, the actors' beauty, the creative scenarios, and filming locations. At the same time, they believe that these TV series tackle critical topics and taboo issues that carry Western ideologies thus contradicting their principles and threatening their identity; that is to say, they deal with Dizi TV dramas with a combination of desire and anxiety.

Therefore, this study proposes that Algerian female viewers embody an 'ambiguous identity' as Hamasaeed Hussain (2011) describes: a combination of an authentic conservative identity and a modern hybrid identity. Due to the Algerian female participants admiration towards the Dizi content, they incorporated some of its features in a way relevant to their traditional values and lifestyles. Still, they are aware of the transmitted liberal ideologies of Western modernity. I have also argued that the consumption and popularity of the Dizi are enhanced by the following reasons: the cultural proximity between Algeria and Turkey and the poor quality and insufficiency of Algeria's local TV dramas which drive Algerian TV audiences to search for an alternative. This research advances discussions in the field of gender performance and media consumerism with an explicit focus on Muslim Arab audiences; in this sense the originality of this research can be located in a specific geographical context it examines.

This investigation is filling a gap in literature because most previous studies on women and how they are affected by television focusing on the impact of Western television. However, I am exploring the impact of a secular Muslim country TV production on another Muslim consumer country through cross-cultural consumption. According to Ahmet Erdi Ozturk (2021, p.16), Turkey is a Muslim state with a secular identity. Hence, this study examined how cultural proximity and interculturality between the Turkish and the Algerian cultures narrowed down geographical distances and created a sense of belonging with other Dizi viewers.

In my thesis, I drew on research and background literature on women and globalized media, mainly television, for a number of reasons. Modern female viewers are exposed to capitalism and liberalism through soap operas (Mesirin Kwanjai, 2018; Hussain Hamasaeed, 2011; and Md Azalanshah Md Syed, 2012) which contradict their traditional cultural norms. For instance, young Malaysian women watched Asian soaps to keep up with the newest brands and trends whilst also being mindful of strictures posed by local culture (Md Azalanshah Md Syed, 2012). Second, modernity and impact of the global media are often associated with female audiences. Studies have consistently shown that TV is a powerful source in shaping women's opinions and attitudes towards their body images, relationships, and lifestyles. Moreover, women's roles and gender relationships are significantly influenced by TV shows.

For instance, Ruoxi Chen (2015) indicates that younger females are more receptive to parental influence than older participants because older people are more likely to have been independent of their families. Thirdly, TV genres' consumption is often studied following gender stereotypes. Women are expected to enjoy romantic, dramatic, and comedic films more than historical, horror, and action genres. My study shows that Algerian female participants challenge those stereotypes regarding gender preferences in movie genres. Empirically, this study analysed one of the most popular and controversial Dizi TV series across contemporary Dizi dramas titled *Harim al-Sultan* and identified the dominant positive and negative depictions in it to find out whether it is a curse or a blessing for Algerian females' identity.

## **7.2. Summary of Research Findings**

This study investigates the extent to which Algerian females are influenced by Turkish soap operas and examines the content quality of these TV series and what they convey. The study's research questions are:

1. What are the most salient features of Turkish TV series' content that Algerian females pay attention to?
2. To what extent do Turkish TV series contribute to the cultural hybridization of Algerian females' identity?

In order to answer these research questions, I employed an online questionnaire, an online focus group discussion, and audio-visual content analysis methods. In addition, snowball sampling and interpretative phenomenological analysis were integrated as complementary techniques to reach a wider population sample and examine Algerian females' experiences and perceptions of Dizi TV dramas. Online focus group discussion results show that romantic and historical genres are the most-watched Dizi genres by Algerian females. Algerian women broke the stereotypical image about movie genres' gender preferences. They agreed that the historical TV drama *The Century* is one of the most popular and viewed Turkish TV series in the history of the Dizi.

The online questionnaire findings indicate that the majority of Algerian females watch Turkish TV series. However, I argue that they are mindful and selective viewers who can critically negotiate the content of soap operas without ignoring their cultural values or social norms. Algerian female identity is associated with Islam, Algerian traditions, patriarchy, gender roles, and society surveillance. Nevertheless, I found that Dizi TV dramas can affect the construction of the cultural identity of Algerian women. I argued that traditions are reconstructed and enhanced in new forms because of the globalized media and the need for modernization. However, I found Algerian females' aspirations are not confined to Turkish products such as makeup and clothes but also education, autonomy, and opportunities as women. They reconcile living in a traditional and patriarchal society with a modern lifestyle by creating a hybrid self-identity. These findings challenge Anthony Giddens' concepts of 'individualism' and 'detraditionalization' (1991, 1992). Giddens (1990, p.175) defines

globalization as “a consequence of modernity”. He notes that modernity and the growing individualism unavoidably led to the detraditionalization process. However, Algerian women’s traditions and lifestyles are not discarded in the face of modernity but renovated to keep pace with lifestyle trends broadcasted in the Dizi. Data show that Algerian females’ aspiration for modernity shown in Turkish TV series is highly linked to their age and level of education because most of participants and Turkish soap operas viewers are young university students aged between 20 and 25 years old.

The popularity of Dizi TV dramas among Algerian females is owed to many reasons. The shortage of Algerian TV drama to gratify and satisfy audiences’ needs pushed local producers to search for an alternative from a nearby or similar culture. Moreover, Turkish public diplomacy succeeded in promoting the Turkish language and culture through the power of attraction and persuasion. For instance, good-looking actors and filming locations impressed Algerian females’ viewers, so they followed the actors’ news and were impressed with the Turkish lifestyle. As a result, those famous TV series and actors became icons and promoters of Turkish tourism boosting Turkish economy. Furthermore, the role of the Syrian TV drama *The Neighbourhood Gate*, Syrian dialect, and Arabizing actors’ and TV series’ titles is one of the primary elements that paved the way to the success of the Dizi. For instance, the appeal of programmes like *The Neighbourhood Gate* effectively built a national identity for Syrians based on a nostalgic imagination of the past relying on historical settings, markets, life pace, and community closeness (Al Ghazzi, 2013). Similarly, Turkish soap operas allowed Algerian female viewers to create an imagined community and an imagined unified identity with other Arab female viewers relying on the desire for modern lifestyles (fashion and relationships). Finally, the mixture of traditional and stereotypical gender roles, patriarchal society, modern lifestyle, and romantic scenes attracted Algerian female viewers who sounded dissatisfied with local TV dramas.

Most of them preferred to be neutral when it comes to the content of these TV series. They believe that Dizi TV series transmit Western liberal ideas and tackle risqué subjects. Nevertheless, they consider them as a source that inspires and keeps them updated with new trends and brands and a source for women's empowerment that teaches them self-confidence and self-independence. For that reason, their desire to combine both, adopting modernity while keeping attached to local cultural norms, is explained in this thesis as ambiguous identity. Algerian females' anxiety of implementing modernity comes from religious and cultural restrictions, social surveillance, including patriarchy and gender roles. Many experts such as Joseph R. Gusfield (1967) argue that being modernized does not necessarily mean being detraditionalized from traditional family structure and principles. I note that identity and cultural hybridization for Algerian females is also attached to religious beliefs and other social standards such as level of education and self-awareness. For that reason, they accept part of the TV drama content and reject inappropriate sections.

Audio-visual content analysis method findings demonstrate that *The Century* contains more negative than positive representations as: sexuality, crimes, violence, suicide, and alcohol dominate the storyline. Women in this TV series are shown as dependent on men and with sole purpose to entertain them and bear their children. They use sensual dance, pregnancy revenge, and espionage to survive. *The Century* was likened to *Sex and the City* and *Game of Thrones* because of the high rates of intimate scenes and the conflict for the throne. It was heavily criticized by Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and Turkish conservatives and audiences because of the misrepresentation of historical characters and events, and it is more like a Turkish reproduction on the British TV drama *The Tudors*. Finally, content analysis findings showed that *The Century* promoted the idea that other ethnicities and religions were tolerated during the Ottoman Empire which could be a soft power tool and a public diplomacy to increase sales, attracting more audiences, and promoting the Turkish popular culture.

### 7.3. Contribution of this Study

This study is based on an interdisciplinary field of study that integrates different techniques, perspectives, concepts, and theories. Its interdisciplinarity draws on several academic fields, mainly politics, sociology, economics, psychology, linguistics, and cultural studies. For instance, my thesis builds on previous knowledge about Turkey's and AKP's propaganda about the Ottoman past discussed by Omar Al-Ghazzi and Marwan Kraidy (*Neo-Ottoman Cool: Turkish Popular Culture in the Arab Public Sphere*, 2013) to see how this impacts the Algerian context. It explains how Turkey is using soap operas especially historical genres to glorify and purify the reputation of the Ottoman Empire history through refreshing famous Muslim characters on screen with high production value. These TV dramas are also used to empower Turkish national identity using the discourse of populism fed by nationalism and conservatism. This investigation expands our understanding of the power of globalized media on sociocultural aspects of its viewers and how popular cultures are transmitted and received in conservative Muslim societies like Algeria. Dizi TV series in this research is considered a tool that enhances globalization and vice versa. The thesis argues that globalization leads to intercultural communication and connects people to modern trends that accelerate social, cultural, and economic exchanges. It also summarizes the emergence of the second-largest TV series exporter in the world and its features behind its popularity, particularly among Arab audiences.

Therefore, the study fills a gap in literature because of the absence of studies on the preference of TV content genres by Algerian women. It examined various interrelated political, social psychology, and media theories such as gratification, soft power, gender performance, and feminism to find out the relationship between transnational culture consumerism and identity formation. My study provides a detailed description of soft power tools integrated into Turkish soap operas to seduce and appeal to audiences and how they

promote Turkish products and tourism. It also examined the power of Dizi TV dramas' content on distinct identities, including cultural, social, national, and gender identity and media's effect on individuals' psychology, qualities, beliefs, and appearances. Methodologically, this study merges online ethnography based on observing people's behaviours and life experiences with media content analysis. Unlike other studies that examine just consumers' and viewers' perspectives, my thesis covers both sides: product, and consumer.

#### **7.4. Limitation and Ideas for Future Research**

Although I aimed to present a rich explanation about the power of globalization, mass media, and transnational TV dramas of women's identity, my research had multiple limitations. Firstly, this research project was not able to explore a large sample size which is vital to generate more accurate quantitative and nuanced qualitative data. Although this research represents Algerian women from different regions, educational backgrounds, social statuses, and occupations, the quantitative section includes a small sample size representing 213 women of almost 23 million Algerian women. In addition, even though I used random sampling, the majority of respondents were from the west of Algeria, and just a few of them are from the south, north, and east, which means that this study is regional. Therefore, I consider sample size insufficiency and unbalanced sample distribution a threat to the validity and generalizability of the thesis' results. Hence, any future research could include a large and balanced number of participants.

Moreover, globalized media are considered to have a more negative impact on teenagers' and youth's behaviours and attitudes and are big media consumers (Jan D' Arcy, 2004). Thus, future studies can focus more on TV dramas' effects on youth and consumption. Furthermore, filling in gender inequalities or gender gaps can enrich research findings. This thesis focused on female viewers over males as they are known to spend more time watching TV than men.

For instance, in the United Kingdom, females consumed 206 minutes of TV daily compared to 178 for males (Julia Stoll, 2021). However, compared to the previous years, TV viewing time is growing for both genders. Thus, for potential future research areas, I suggest gender balance between participants to compare and examine media's impact on each gender equally. Practically, this research used an online questionnaire as the primary tool for data collection. Some questions could not fully capture the emotional responses and perspectives of respondents because they were often general. In addition, it is predicted in this thesis that some respondents may have a hidden agenda because they hesitate to identify the psychological reasons that pushed them to watch the Dizi TV series and whether they are impressed by Turkish actors or not. They probably want to appear better than they are, or they do not want to answer questions about sensitive topics or behaviours (for example, TV series addiction). It is also expected that the sample wants to give the answers they believe will please the researcher. Therefore, for a more detailed study about media consumerism and its impact on psychology and behaviours I am proposing semi-structured interviews for more in-depth information because they allow participants time to open up about sensitive issues. To conclude, the focus of the online questionnaire method was on the Dizi content in general, whereas a further in-depth exploration of Turkish soap operas that focus on a specific TV genre would have allowed me to identify the characteristics and power of each genre.

Finally, this research has valuable implications for gender and media in general and gender in Dizi soap operas in particular. Practically and theoretically, this study could be useful to those interested in gender and TV series, particularly, representation of women in TV dramas that merge between traditions and modernity. This research has merged modern methods based on virtual ethnography through computer-mediated social interaction such as online questionnaires and online snowball sampling with old research approaches and theories like coding and decoding model (Hall, 1973), uses and gratification theory (Katz et al.,1974) and

soft power theory (Nye, 1990) in order to generate more insight into a non-western media power on identity and how this influence is reflected in everyday life performances. As Sauntson (2012) states, “no single approach can provide a comprehensive account of what is happening in a particular data-set. And each approach has its own set of limitations and critiques. Through a pragmatic combination, some of these limitations may be effectively addressed” (p. 203).

Equally important, decoding media texts using conceptual and relational content analysis as a video-based observation method allowed me to conduct an in-depth qualitative and quantitative examination of the most dominant positive and negative depictions in one of the top-watched Dizi TV dramas. On a personal level, this research provided a solid background for my future investigations in gender studies, media, film, and cultural studies, and sociology in the sense that it enriches my knowledge and experience about addressing gender performances and representation in media, politics, and public diplomacy, and interculturality.

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# Appendices

## Appendix A : Online Questionnaires

**Dear participants,**

The current questionnaire is designed to collect data about *A Curse and/or Blessing? Turkish Soap Operas and Their Impact on Contemporary Algerian Women: Audience Reception and Audio-visual Analysis of The Historical TV Drama Harim al-Sultan* as a PhD topic in the School of Creative Arts and Industries at Canterbury Christ Church University, UK. It aims at evaluating the motives and the causes behind the popularity of Turkish soap operas among Algerian females. I will be extremely grateful if you could take part in this research through answering the following questions.

**NB:** All your data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University's own data protection policies. In addition, you are free to withdraw consent at any time without having to give a reason.

**For any further questions please contact:** [z.khedimi47@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:z.khedimi47@canterbury.ac.uk)

**Regards,**

**Zahra Khedimi**

**I want to participate**

**I don't want to participate**

### **I. Part one: Quantitative Section**

#### **1. Choose the appropriate age group for you?**

- a. 15 - 20 years old
- b. 20 -25 years old
- c. 25 - 30 years old
- d. 30 years old and more

#### **2. In what region do you live in Algeria?**

- a. North
- b. South
- c. West
- d. East
- e. South east
- f. South west

**3. What is your current occupation?**

- a. Housewife     b. Student     c. Worker

**4. What is the highest qualification you have gained?**

- a. I didn't attend school at all     c. Primary school   
b. Middle school     d. High school   
c. e. University

**5. What is your social status?**

- a. Single     b. Married     c. Divorced   
d. Widow

**6. Do you watch Turkish Soap Operas?**

- a. Yes     c. No

**7. How much do you watch Turkish soap operas?**

- a. Always     b. Often     c. Sometimes     d. Rarely     e. Never

**8. How many series do you watch?**

- a. 1   
b. 1 to 5   
c. 5 to 10   
d. More than 10 series   
e. None

**9. How many episodes did you use to watch/are watching a day?**

- a. One-episode     b. Two episodes     c. More than two (2)   
episodes

**II. Part two (You can tick more than one answer)**

**1. In what channel(s) do you usually watch them?**

- a. Algerian National Channels (Echorouk, Bilad...)   
b. MBC Channels (MBC 1, MBC4, MBC Drama)   
c. Tunisian channels (Hannibal and Nessma)   
d. Moroccan channels (2M)   
e. YouTube

**2. For what reasons do you watch Turkish TV series?**

- a. The bold representation of social issues
- b. The scenario of the series
- c. The lifestyle of serial characters
- d. Turkish language and culture
- e. Romantic Scenes
- f. Beautiful landscapes
- g. Dubbed Syrian dialect
- h. The excellence of performing roles
- i. Beauty of Actors
- j. Fashion
- k. Hair style and Makeup
- l. Luxurious decor and furniture
- m. Quality of filming
- n. Attractive songs and Music
- o. Other  
reasons.....  
.....

**3. In your point of view, why do Algerian women watch Turkish TV dramas?**

- a. Escape from reality and pressure
- b. Fill an emotional void
- c. To break boredom and routine
- d. Entertainment
- e. Education and information
- f. Other.....  
.....  
.....

**4. To what extent you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

**A. Turkish TV series have a positive effect on Algerian women**

- a. Strongly agree
- b. Agree
- c. Undecided
- d. Disagree
- e. Strongly disagree

**B. Turkish TV series have a negative effect on Algerian women**

- a. Strongly agree  b. Agree  c. Undecided  d. Disagree   
e. Strongly disagree

**D. Turkish TV series contents proportionate with your customs and traditions**

- a. Strongly agree  b. Agree  c. Undecided  d. Disagree   
e. Strongly disagree

**F. “*Muhteşem Yüzyıl*” *Harim al-Sultan* is among the top earliest historical Turkish TV series watched by Algerian females.**

- a. Strongly agree  b. Agree  c. Undecided  d. Disagree   
e. Strongly disagree

**J. Turkish soap operas contain some western ideologies**

- a. Strongly agree  b. Agree  c. Undecided  d. Disagree   
e. Strongly disagree

**5. How satisfied are you with the representation of women in Turkish TV dramas?**

- a. Very satisfied  b. Slightly satisfied  c. Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied   
d. Slightly dissatisfied  e. Very dissatisfied

**6. According to you, how do Turkish soap operas represent women?**

- a. Powerful and independent   
b. Educated and smart   
c. Fashionable and elegant   
d. Weak and illiterate   
e. Rebellious and aggressive   
f. Seductive and Sexy

7. Have you ever searched for personal information of a Turkish actor or actress?

- a. Yes                       b. Sometimes                       c. No

8. Have you ever been impressed by a Turkish actor or actress?

- a. Yes                       c. No

If yes, who this character and why?

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**III. Part three: Qualitative Section**

1. In your perspective, what distinguishes Turkish TV drama from other TV series productions?

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2. Do Turkish soap operas contribute to your love for the Turkish language? If yes, What Turkish vocabulary did you learn from them? Please provide examples

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3. Have you ever attempted to buy Turkish outfits, accessories, makeup, furniture...? If yes, provide examples please

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4. Have you ever imitated Turkish celebrities in their way of speaking, hair style, dressing or behaving? How?

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5. What are the most common positive subjects that Turkish Soap Opera tackled?.....

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.....

6. What are the most common negative subjects that Turkish Soap Opera tackled?.....

.....  
.....

*I am so grateful to you, thanks a lot for your collaboration and for your time.*

## إستقصاء

### [Questionnaire Arabic Version]

#### عزيزاتي المشاركات،

تم تصميم هذا الاستبيان لجمع بيانات حول قوة الدراما التركية على الهوية الثقافية و الاجتماعية للمرأة الجزائرية .هذا الاستبيان يندرج ضمن مسار أكاديمي لنيل شهادة الدكتوراه من كلية الفنون الإبداعية والصناعات بالجامعة البريطانية ( Canterbury Christ Church University). يهدف هذا البحث العلمي إلى تسليط الضوء على أهم الدوافع و الأسباب التي تدفع المرأة الجزائرية لمشاهدة المسلسلات التركية، ولذلك أدعوك عزيزتي أن تكوني جزءا في تحقيق هذا النجاح. ن ممتة لك لتعاونك و للمشاركتك .

تحياتي،

زهرة خديمي

#### 1. الجزء الأول

1. ماهي الفئة العمرية المناسبة لك؟

- أ. 15-20 سنة
- ب. 20-25 سنة
- ت. 25-30 سنة
- ث. 30 سنة وأكثر

2. إلى أي منطقة جزائرية تنتمي؟

- أ. الشمال  ب. الجنوب  ت. الشرق  ث. الغرب

3. ما هي مهنتك الحالية؟

- أ. ربة بيت  ب. طالبة  ج. عاملة

4. ماهو مستواك الدراسي؟

- أ. لم ألتحق بالمدرسة أبدا  ب. ابتدائي  ت. متوسط  ث. الثانوي  ج. الجامعي

5. ماهي حالتك الإجتماعية؟

- أ. عزباء  ب. متزوجة  ت. أرملة  ث. مطلقة

6. هل تشاهدين المسلسلات التركية؟

- أ. نعم  ب. لا

7. كم تشاهدين الدراما التركية؟

- أ. دائما  ب. غالبا  ت. أحيانا  ث. نادرا  ج. مطلقا

8. ما هو عدد المسلسلات التركية التي شاهدتها؟

- أ. مسلسل واحد  ب. بين مسلسل واحد و 5 مسلسلات
- ت. بين 5 و 10 مسلسلات  ث. أكثر من 10 مسلسلات
9. ماهو عدد الحلقات التي تشاهدها أو إعتدت أن تشاهدها يوميا؟
- أ. حلقة واحدة (1)  ب. حلقتين(2)  ت. أكثر من حلقتين

## 2. الجزء الثاني (يمكنك اختيار أكثر من إجابة)

1. ماهي القنوات التي تتابعين فيها المسلسلات التركية؟

- أ. القنوات الوطنية مثل ( الشروق TV، البلاد.. )
- ب. قنوات MBC مثل (MBC1)، (MBC4)، (MBC Drama).
- ت. قنوات تونسية مثل قناة نسمة وحنبل
- ث. قنوات مغربية مثل 2M
- ج. اليوتوب

2. ماهي أهم المميزات التي تجعلك تحبين المسلسلات التركية؟

- أ. الجرأة في طرح القضايا الاجتماعية
- ب. سيناريو المسلسل
- ت. نمط حياة الشخصيات
- ث. اللغة والثقافة التركية
- ج. المشاهد الرومانسية
- ح. روعة المناظر الطبيعية
- خ. اللهجة السورية في الدبلجة
- د. البراعة في أداء الأدوار
- ذ. جمال الممثلين
- ر. الموضة والأزياء
- ز. تسريحات الشعر و الماكياج
- س. الأثاث الفاخر و الديكور
- ش. جودة التصوير
- ص. جاذبية الاغاني والموسيقى

ض. أسباب

أخرى.....

3. في نظرك، لماذا تشاهد المرأة الجزائرية المسلسلات التركية؟

أ. الهروب من الواقع

ب. ملأ الفراغ العاطفي

ت. القضاء على الروتين والملل

ث. للتعلم و جمع المعلومات

ج. للترفيه

ح. دوافع

أخرى.....

4. إلى أي مدى توافق على العبارات الآتية؟

1. المسلسلات التركية لها تأثير إيجابي على المرأة الجزائرية

أ. موافقة بشدة  ب. موافقة  ت. غير محددة  ث. أعارض  ح. أعارض بشدة

2. المسلسلات التركية لها تأثير سلبي على المرأة الجزائرية

أ. موافقة بشدة  ب. موافقة  ت. غير محددة  ث. أعارض  ح. أعارض بشدة

3. يتطابق محتوى المسلسلات التركية مع عاداتك وتقاليدك

أ. موافقة بشدة  ب. موافقة  ت. غير محددة  ث. أعارض  ح. أعارض بشدة

4. يعد "حريم السلطان" من بين أفضل المسلسلات التركية التاريخية القديمة التي شاهدتها نساء جزائر

أ. موافقة بشدة  ب. موافقة  ت. غير محددة  ث. أعارض  ح. أعارض بشدة

5. تحتوي المسلسلات التركية على بعض المحتويات من العالم الغربي

أ. موافقة بشدة  ب. موافقة  ت. ليست لدي فكرة  ث. أعارض  ح. أعارض بشدة

6. حسب رأيك ، ماهي الصورة التي تقدمها المسلسلات التركية عن المرأة؟

أ. قوية ومستقلة

ب. مثقفة وذكية

ت. متألقة وأنيقة

ث. ضعيفة وأمية

ج. متمردة وعدوانية

ح. عارية ومثيرة

7. ما مدى رضاك عن الصورة التي تعطيها الدراما التركية للمرأة؟

أ. راضية جدا  ب. راضية قليلاً  ت. لا أدري  ث. غير راضٍ قليلاً  ح. مستاء جدا

8. هل سبق لك أن بحثت عن معلومات شخصية لممثل أو ممثلة تركية؟

أ. نعم  ب. في بعض الأحيان  ج. لا

9. هل أعجبت من قبل بممثل أو ممثلة تركية؟

أ. نعم  ب. لا

إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم فمن هذه الشخصية ولماذا؟

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

### 3. الجزء الثالث

1. من وجهة نظرك، ما الذي يجعل الدراما التلفزيونية التركية متميزة عن غيرها من المسلسلات التلفزيونية؟

.....  
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

2. هل تساهم المسلسلات التركية في حيك اللغة التركية؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، ما هي المفردات التركية التي تعلمتها منها؟

يرجى تقديم أمثلة من فضلك

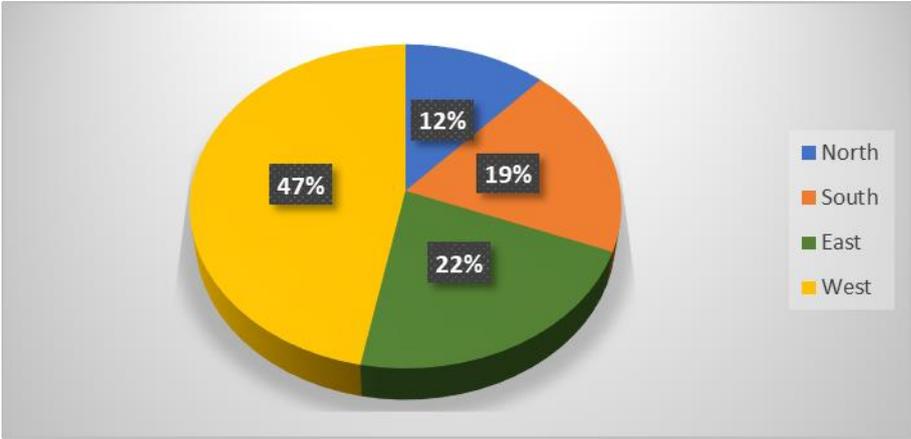
.....  
.....  
.....  
.....

3. هل سبق لك أن حاولت شراء ملابس تركية ، اكسسوارات ، ماكياج ، أثاث...؟ إذا كانت الإجابة بنعم ، يرجى تقديم أمثلة من فضلك

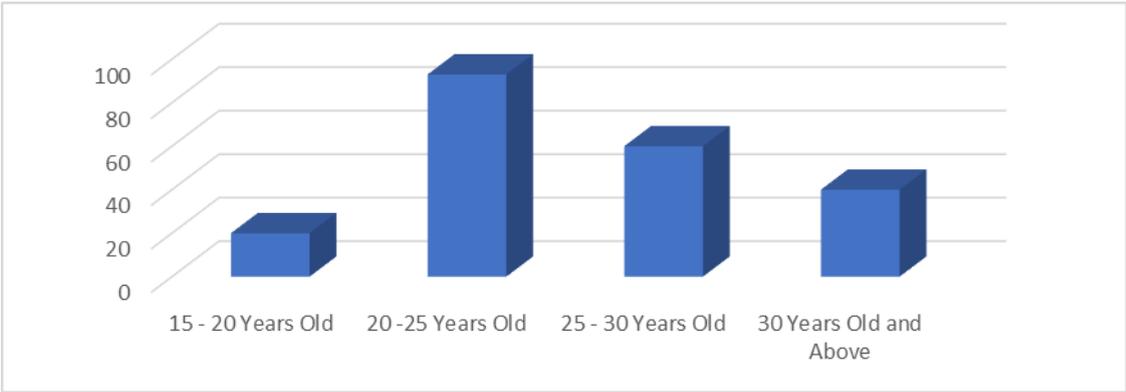
.....



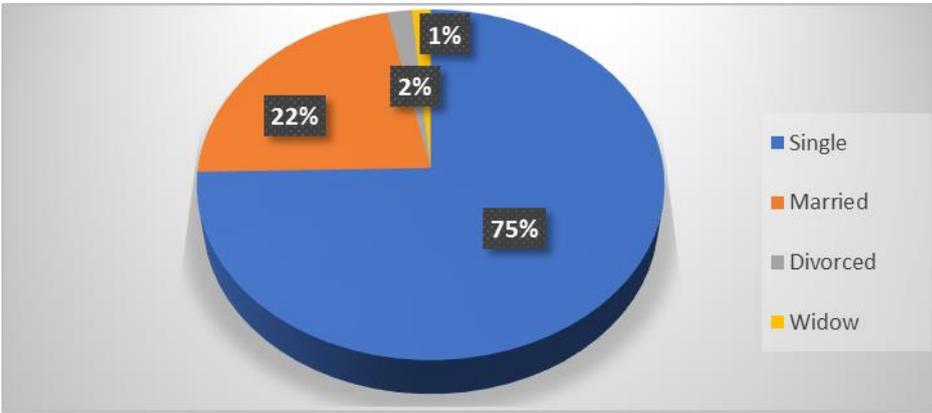
**Appendix B: Online Questionnaire Graphs**



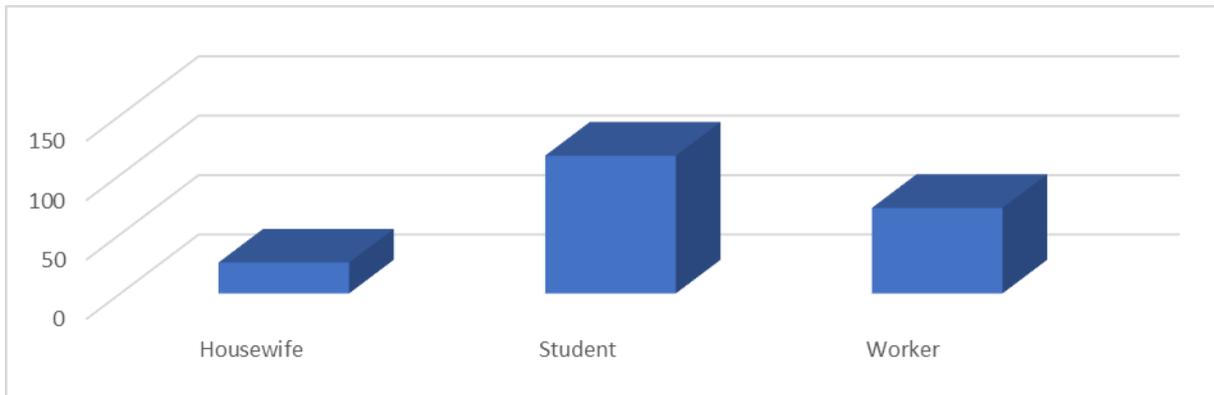
**Graph 1: Living region of participants**



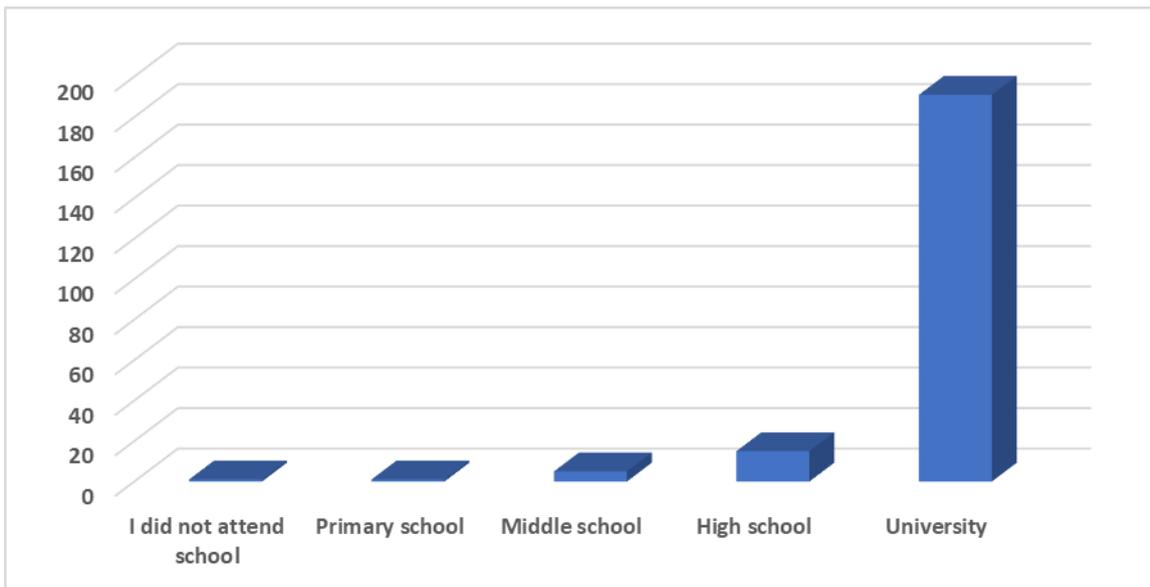
**Graph 2: Participants' age group**



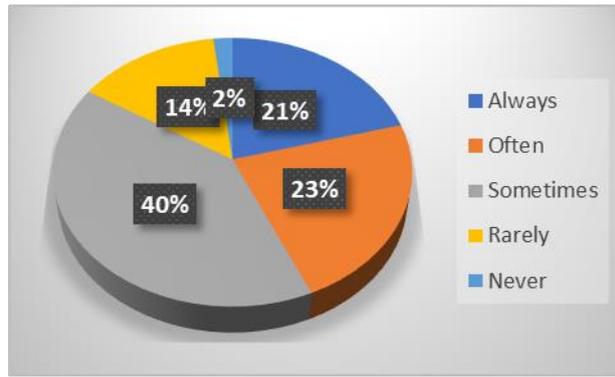
**Graph 3: Participants' social status**



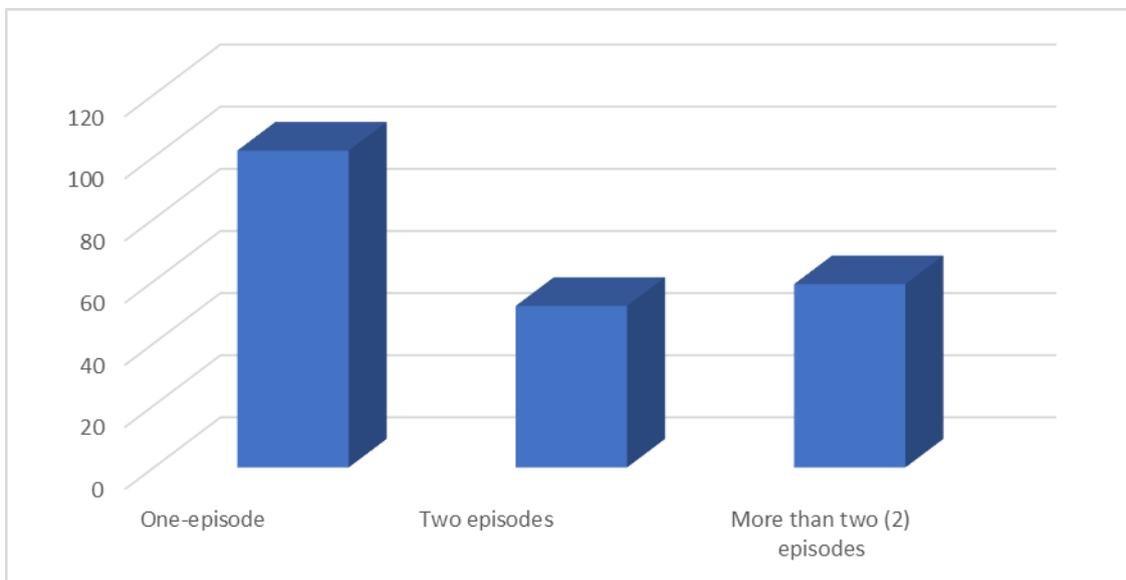
**Graph 4:** Participants' occupation



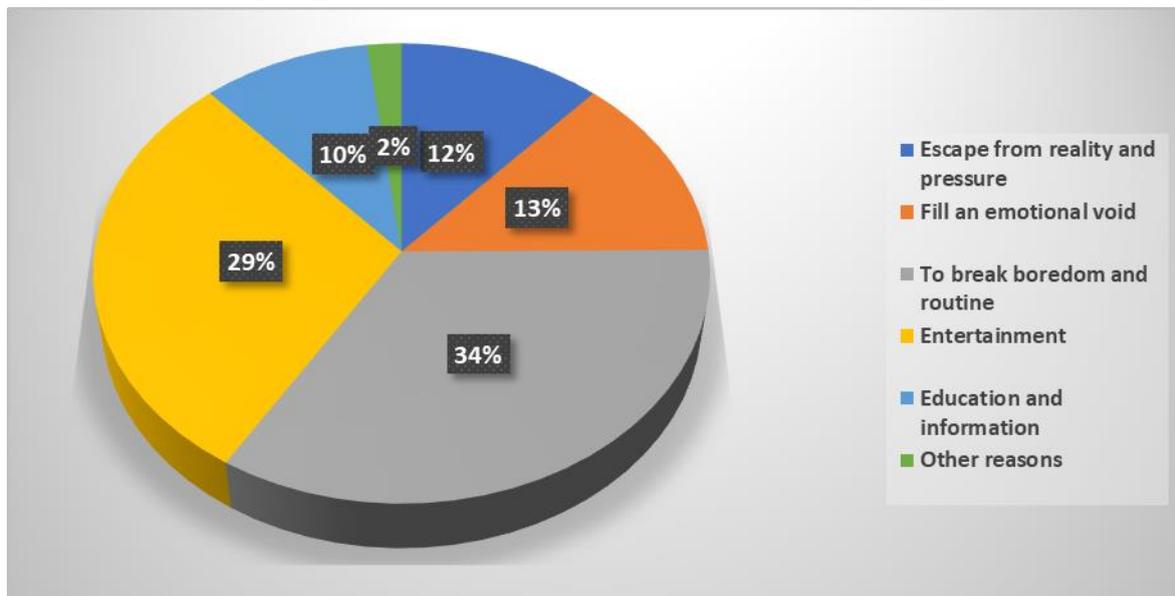
**Graph 5:** Participants' level of education



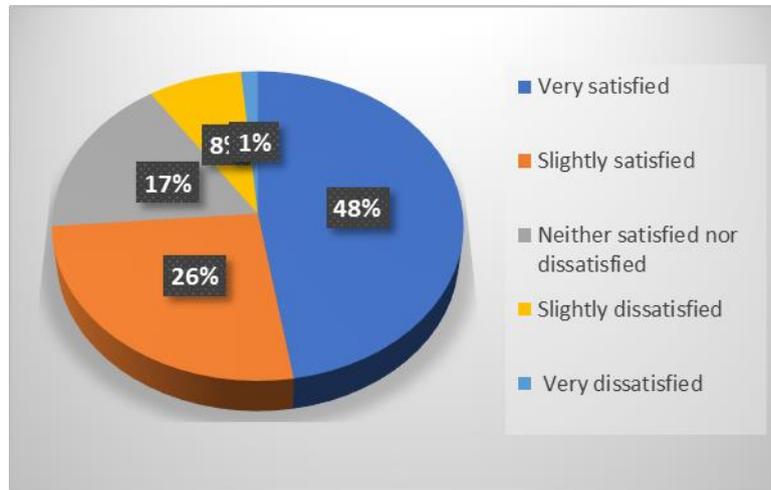
**Graph 6:** Participants' frequency of watching Turkish TV series



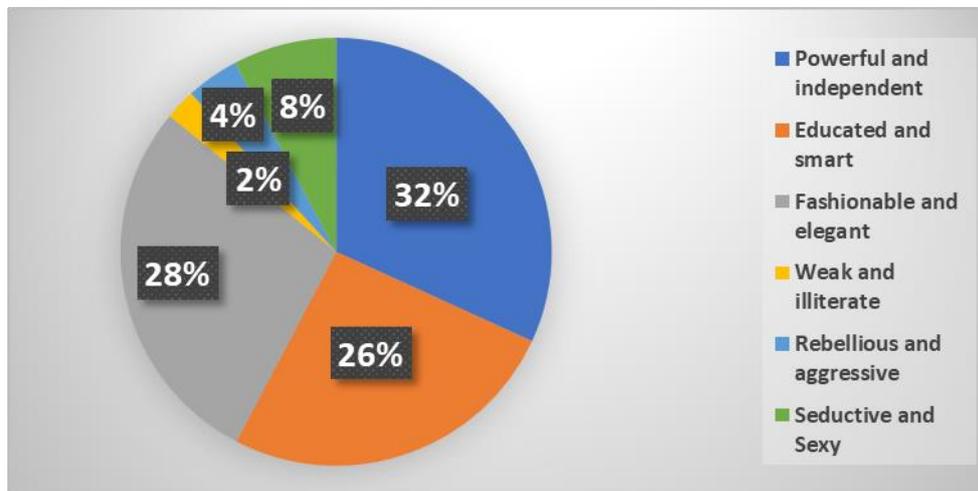
**Graph 7:** Number of daily episodes watched by Algerian female audiences



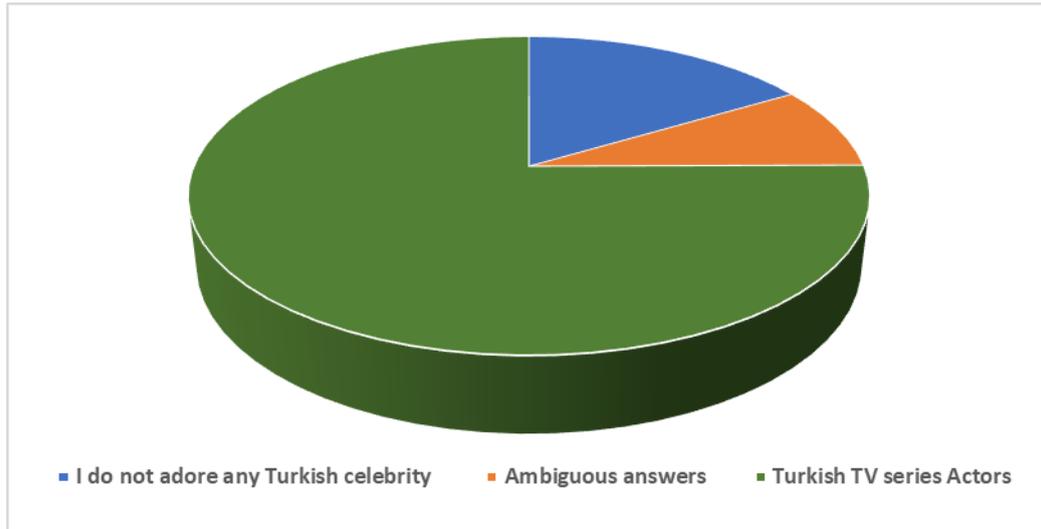
**Graph 8:** Algerian female reasons for watching Turkish TV series



**Graph 9:** Participants' level of satisfaction about the representation of women in Turkish soap operas

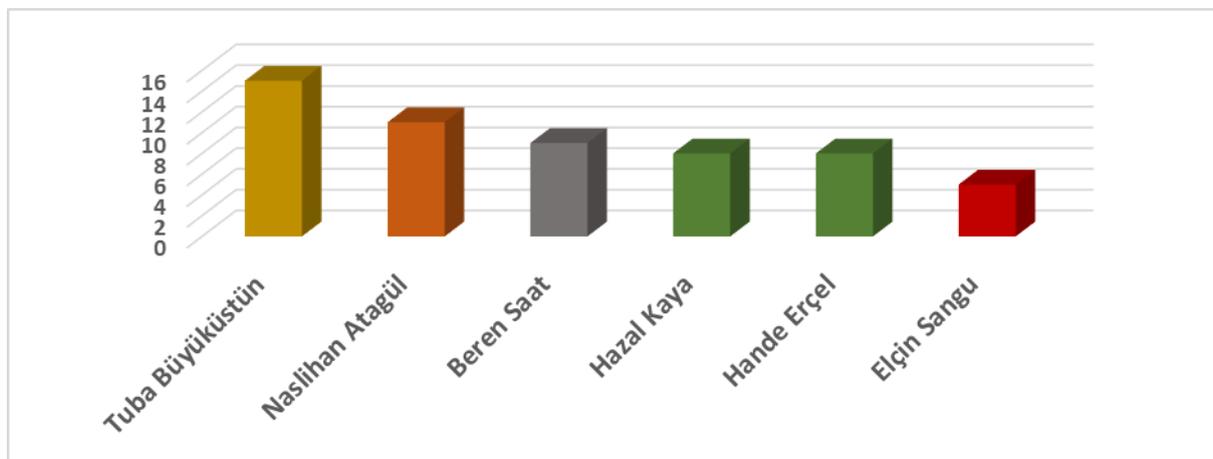
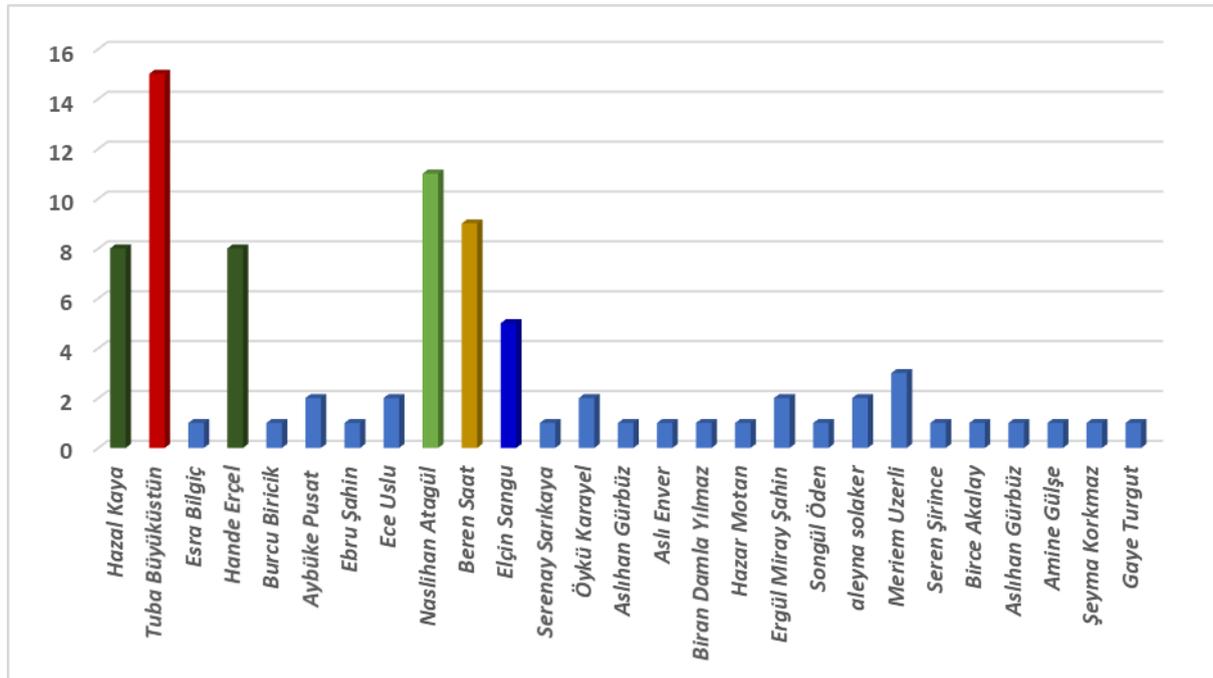


**Graph 10:** Participants' perspectives about the depiction of women in Dizi TV series



**Graph 11:** Participants' attraction towards Turkish actors

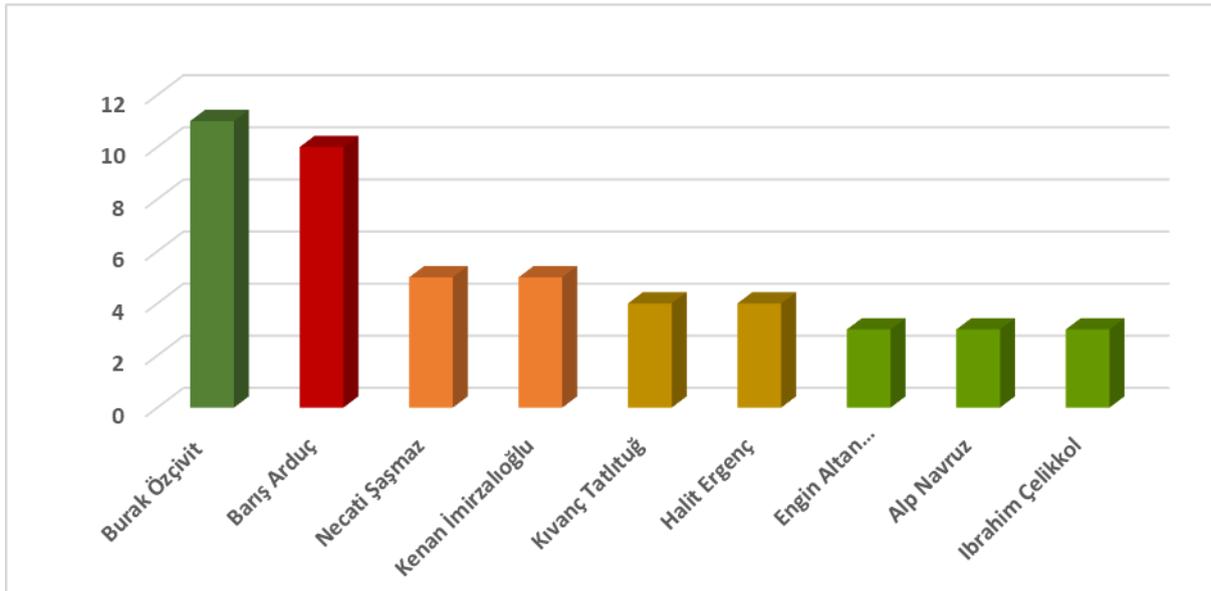
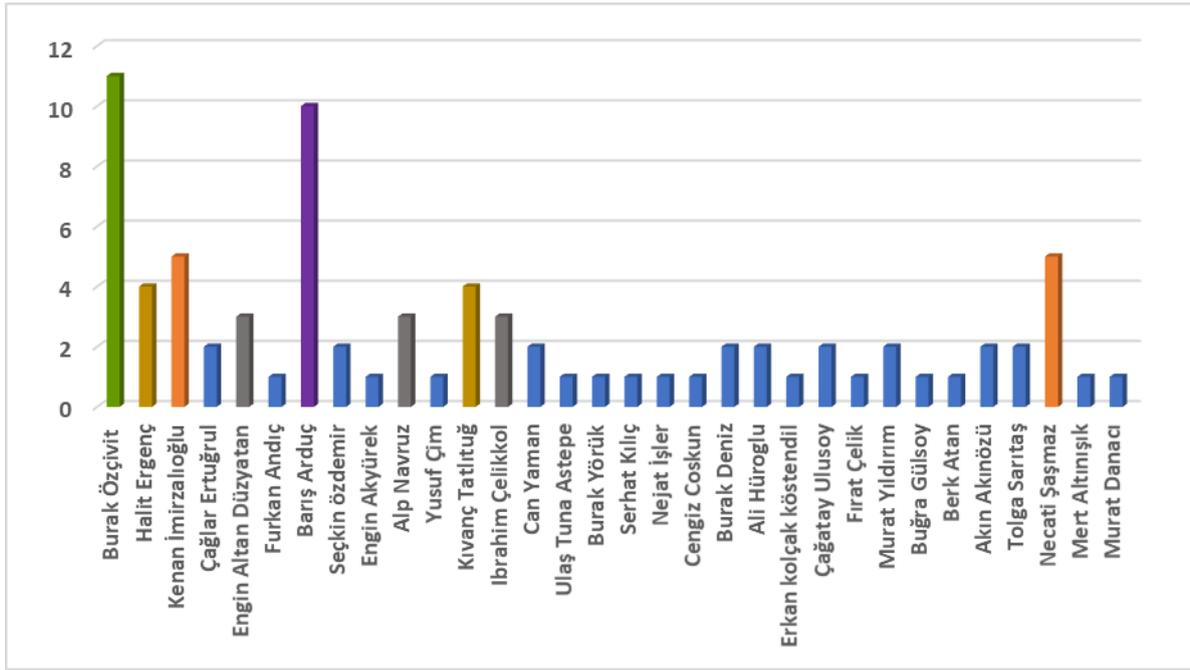
Name of female actors	Name in dubbed Syrian Dialect	Famous Series titles	Frequencies
Hazal Kaya	Fariha	<i>Adını Feriha Koydum</i>	7
Tuba Büyüküstün	Lamis	<i>Ihlamurlar Altında</i>	15
Esra Bilgiç	Halima Khanum	<i>Diriliş: Ertuğrul</i>	1
Hande Erçel	Hayet	<i>Aşk Laftan Anlama</i>	8
Burcu Biricik	Houlya	<i>Hayat Şarkısı</i>	1
Aybüke Pusat	Selin	<i>Her Yerde Sen</i>	2
Ebru Şahin	Rayan	<i>Hercai</i>	1
Ece Uslu	Fotoun	<i>Karagül</i>	2
Naslihan Atagül	Nihan	<i>Kara Sevda</i>	10
Beren Saat	Samar	<i>Aşk-i Memnu</i>	8
Elçin Sangu	Dima	<i>Kiralik Ask</i>	5
Serenay Sarıkaya	Mira	<i>Medcezir</i>	1
Öykü Karayel	Eylül	<i>Kalp Atışı</i>	2
Aslıhan Gürbüz	ola	<i>Ufak Tefek Cinayetler</i>	1
Aslı Enver	Souriya	<i>Istanbul Gelin</i>	1
Biran Damla Yılmaz	Eylül	<i>Kırgın Çiçekler</i>	1
Hazar Motan	Eylül	<i>Kırgın Çiçekler</i>	1
Ergül Miray Şahin	Elife	<i>ötesiz insanlar</i>	2
Songül Öden	Noor	<i>Gümüş</i>	1
Aleyna solaker	Miral	<i>Kırgın Çiçekler</i>	2
Meriem Uzerli	Huyam	<i>Magnificent Century</i>	2
Seren Şirince	Fetoun	İlişki Durumu: Karışık	1
Birce Akalay	Asli	<i>Iyah Beyaz Aşk</i>	1
Aslıhan Gürbüz	Soultana Halima	muhteşem yüzyıl kösem	1
Amine Gülşe	Nur	<i>Asla Vazgeçmem</i>	1
Şeyma Korkmaz	Ferida	<i>Beni Affet</i>	1



**Graph 12:** Most followed Turkish actresses among Algerian females and their famous series

Name of Male Actors	Name in dubbed Syrian Dialect	Famous Series titles	Frequencies
Burak Özçivit	Kemal	<i>Kara Sevda</i>	10
Halit Ergenç	Sultan Soliman	<i>Muhteşem Yüzyıl</i>	4
Kenan İmirzalıoğlu	Ezel	<i>Ezel</i>	5
Çağlar Ertuğrul	Yezen	<i>Fazilet Hanım ve Kızları</i>	2

Engin Altan Düzyatan	Ertuğrul	<i>Ertuğrul</i>	3
Furkan Andıç	Demir	<i>Her Yerde Sen</i>	1
Barış Arduç	Omar	<i>Kiralik Ask</i>	10
Seçkin özdemir	Barış	<i>ateşböceği</i>	2
Engin Akyürek	Karim	<i>Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne</i>	1
Alp Navruz	Senan	<i>Fazilet Hanım ve Kızlar</i>	2
Yusuf Çim	Morad	<i>Çilek Kokusu</i>	1
Kıvanç Tatlıtuğ	Muhanned	<i>Gümüş</i>	4
Necati Şaşmaz	Morad Alemdar	<i>Kurtlar Vadisi</i>	4
İbrahim Çelikkol	Farhat	<i>Siyah Beyaz Aşk</i>	3
Can Yaman	Jan	<i>Erkenci kuş</i>	2
Ulaş Tuna Astepe	Taher	<i>Sen Anlat Karadeniz</i>	1
Burak Yörük	Burak Yörük	<i>4N1K İlk Aşk</i>	1
Serhat Kılıç	Joulak	<i>Söz</i>	1
Nejat İşler	Ali	<i>Bıçak Sırtı</i>	1
Bıçak Sırtı	Tourgut	<i>Diriliş Ertuğrul</i>	1
Burak Deniz	Morad	<i>Aşk Laftan Anlamaz</i>	2
Ali Hüroglu	Ali	<i>Kimse Bilmez</i>	2
Erkan kolçak köstendil	Chahin	<i>Magnificent Century</i>	1
Çağatay Ulusoy	Amir	<i>Adini Feriha Koydum</i>	2
Fırat Çelik	Mustapha	<i>Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?</i>	1
Murat Yıldırım	Amir	<i>Asi</i>	2
Buğra Gülsoy	Morad	<i>Fatmagül'ün Suçu Ne?</i>	1
Berk Atan	Savaş	<i>Haluk Mertoğlu</i>	1
Akın Akinözü	Miran	<i>Hercai</i>	2
Tolga Sarıtaş	Ali	<i>Güneşin Kızları</i>	2
Mert Altınışık	Kemal	<i>Beni Affet</i>	1
<i>Murat Danacı</i>	<i>Jenied</i>	<i>Beni Affet</i>	1



**Graph 13:** Most followed Turkish actors among Algerian Females and their famous series

**Appendix C: Coding Sheet of *Harim al-Sultan***

Title	Year of Diffusion	Number of Seasons	Number of Episodes	Average Duration of Each Episode
<i>Harim al-Sultan</i>	2013	4	1 <sup>st</sup> season 55 2 <sup>nd</sup> season 97 3 <sup>rd</sup> season 112 4 <sup>th</sup> season 122	40-60 min

Variables	Frequencies
Premarital Relationships	
Marital Infidelity	
Crimes	
Social Discrimination	
Gambling	
Rebellion	
Revenge	
Suicide	

**Table 1: Sexualisation in *Harim al-Sultan***

Variables	Frequencies
Rape	
Sexual Harassment	
Romantic Touch or Embrace	
Intimate Dance	
Passionate Kiss	
Seduction or Nudity	
Nude Sex Scenes	

**Table 2:** Anti-social behaviours in *Harim al-Sultan*

Variables	Frequencies
Frequency of alcohol /drunk in scene	
Use/presence of drug in scene	
Frequency of Smoking in scene	
Addiction	
Suicide	
Abortion	

**Table 3:** Global Health threats in *Harim al-Sultan*

Variables	Frequencies
Importance of Education	
Etiquettes	
Self-confident and self-esteem	
Importance of family	
Friendship	
Patriotism and History	
Importance of work	

**Table 4 :** Positive topics tacked in *Harim al-Sultan*

	Nude Sex Scenes	Rape/Rape Attempts	Sexual Harassment	Romantic Touch	Intimate Dance	Passionate Kiss	Seduction and Nudity
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Season</b>	3	0	1	31	3	22	369
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Season</b>	9	1	0	69	5	43	792
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Season</b>	6	2	1	38	2	22	531
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Season</b>	16	0	0	60	2	25	260

	Marital Infidelity	Premarital Relationships	Crimes	Rebellion	Revenge	Social Discrimination	Use/Presence of Aggression/Violence In Scene	Use/Presence Gambling in Scene
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Season</b>	2	2	11	3	12	11	6	0

<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Season</b>	6	4	18	0	14	8	4	0
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Season</b>	4	0	20	1	10	3	2	0
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Season</b>	6	0	25	2	6	1	15	0

	Use/ Presence of Alcohol in Scene	Use/ Presence of Cigarette in Scene	Use/Presence of Drug in Scene	Addiction	Suicide	Abortion
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Season</b>	3	0	0	0	3	0
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Season</b>	2	0	0	0	6	1
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Season</b>	2	0	0	0	4	0
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Season</b>	10	0	0	3	1	0

	Importance of Education	Etiquettes	Self-confident and Self- esteem	Importance of Family	Friendship	Patriotism and History	Importance of Work
<b>1<sup>st</sup> Season</b>	3	7	6	12	8	6	0
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> Season</b>	2	8	18	7	12	6	0
<b>3<sup>rd</sup> Season</b>	0	2	12	0	6	8	0
<b>4<sup>th</sup> Season</b>	0	2	3	15	8	4	0

**Table 5:** Content Analysis of the Most Dominant Positive and Negative in *Harim al-Sultan*

## Appendix D: Ethical Approval



18th December 2019 Ref: 19/AH/12C

Zahra Khedimi

c/o School of Creative Arts & Industries Faculty of Arts & Humanities

Dear Zahra,

Confirmation of ethics compliance for your study: *A Curse and/or Blessing? Turkish Soap Operas and their Impact on Contemporary Algerian Women: Audience Reception and Audio-visual Analysis of the Historical TV Drama Harim al-Sultan*

The Faculty Ethics Chair has reviewed your Ethics Review Checklist application and appropriate supporting documentation for the above project. The Chair has confirmed that your application complies fully with the requirements for proportionate ethical review, as set out in this University's Research Ethics and Governance Procedures.

In confirming compliance for your study, you are reminded that it is your responsibility to follow, as appropriate, the policies and procedures set out in the Research Governance Framework (<http://www.canterbury.ac.uk/research-and-consultancy/governance-and-ethics/governance-and-ethics.aspx>) and any relevant academic or professional guidelines. This includes providing, if appropriate, information sheets and consent forms, and ensuring confidentiality in the storage and use of data.

Any significant change in the question, design or conduct of the study over its course should be notified via email to [red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk) and may require a new application for ethics approval.

It is a condition of compliance that you must inform [red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk) once your research has completed.

Wishing you every success with your research. Yours sincerely,

Penny

Penny Keogh

Research Integrity & Development Officer Email: [red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk](mailto:red.resgov@canterbury.ac.uk)

CC Dr Marissia Fragkou, Supervisor

Research & Enterprise Integrity & Development Office Canterbury Christ Church University

North Holmes Campus, Canterbury, Kent, CT1 1QU

Tel +44 (0)1227 767700 Fax +44 (0)1227 470442

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Professor Rama Thirunamachandran, Vice Chancellor and Principal

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## Appendix E: Consent Form



### CONSENT FORM

**Title of Project:** *A Curse and/or Blessing? Turkish Soap Operas and their Impact on Contemporary Algerian Women: Audience Reception and Audio-visual Analysis of the Historical TV Drama Harim al-Sultan (The Magnificent Century)*

**Name of Researcher:**

ZAHRA Khedimi

**Contact details:**

**Address:**

North Holmes Road, Canterbury, CT1 1QU  
School of Creative Arts and Industries.

**Tel:**

**Email:**

zK47@canterbury.ac.uk

**Please initial box**

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
3. I understand that any personal information that I provide to the researchers will be kept strictly confidential
4. I agree to take part in the above study.


---

Name of Participant:	Date:	Signature:
Name of person taking consent <i>(if different from researcher)</i>	Date:	Signature:
Researcher: ZAHRA KHEDIMI	Date:	Signature:

---

Copies:      1 for participant  
                   1 for researcher

## Appendix F: Informant Sheet



*A Curse and/or Blessing? Turkish Soap Operas and their Impact on Contemporary Algerian Women: Audience Reception and Audio-visual Analysis of The Historical TV Drama the Harim al-Sultan (Magnificent Century)*

### **PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET**

A research study is being conducted at Canterbury Christ Church University (CCCU) by ZAHRA KHEDIMI

#### **Background**

This study is a part of a PhD research, it is about exploring the power of Turkish TV series on Algerian female viewers identity using online questionnaire, online focus group discussion, and content analysis. This research is fully funded by the Algerian government.

#### **What will you be required to do?**

Participants in this study will be required to provide their perspective towards the content of Turkish TV series and to explain their viewing habits and how they are influenced by these TV programmes.

#### **To participate in this research you must:**

Participants in this research must be Algerian female aged between 15 years old and above.

#### **Procedures**

You will be asked to complete an online questionnaire accessed via google form.

#### **Confidentiality and Data Protection**

All data and personal information will be stored securely within CCCU premises in accordance with the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and the University's own data protection policies. No unrelated or unnecessary personal data will be collected or stored. Data can only be accessed by ZAHRA KHEDIMI. After completion of the study, all data will be made anonymous (i.e. all personal information associated with the data will be removed).

#### **Dissemination of results**

The results of the study will be part of my PhD research, and might be part of an article in a journal or conference paper.

**Deciding whether to participate**

If you have any questions or concerns about the nature, procedures, or requirements for participation do not hesitate to contact me. Should you decide to participate, you will be free to withdraw at any time without having to give a reason.

**Any questions?**

Please contact: ZAHRA KHEDIMI, Canterbury Christ Church University, Department of Creative Arts and Industries. North Holmes Road, Canterbury, CT1 1QU