KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THE INTERNET

GRADUATE THESIS

ŞULE KARATAŞ

Şule Karataş

M. A. Thesis

2014

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THE INTERNET

ŞULE KARATAŞ

Submitted to the Graduate School of Social
Sciences in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts in
Communication Sciences

KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY

MAY, 2014

KADIR HAS UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THE INTERNET

ŞULE KARATAŞ

APPROVED BY:

(Asst. Prof. Dr. Eser Selen) (Advisor) (Kadir Has University)

(Prof. Dr. Şule Toktaş) (Kadir Has University)

(Assoc. Prof. Dr. Mary Lou O'Neil) (Kadir Has University)
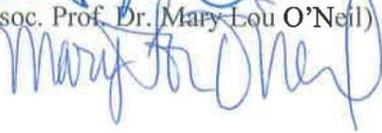
APPROVAL DATE: 20 MAY 2014

"I, Şule Karataş, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis."

_____

ŞULE KARATAŞ

ABSTRACT

WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT THROUGH THE INTERNET

Şule Karataş

Master of Arts in Communication Sciences

Advisor: Asst. Prof. Dr. Eser Selen

May, 2014.

This thesis aims to investigate the possibility of women's empowerment through the Internet. Examining women's empowerment in three major topics: health, politics and economy, this study argues that the Internet empowers women by providing them the cyberspace to access information, to share their experiences and to communicate about different issues which have impacts on women's lives. Through analyzing various websites and blogs operated by women around the world, the study suggests that women challenge their offline realities by conveying them into the cyberspace. The thesis further explores virtual communities to discuss that the Internet is an empowering medium for women in the issue of activism against ignorance, discrimination, and violence.

Key Words: women's empowerment, health, politics, economy, the Internet

ÖZET

İNTERNET ARACILIĞIYLA KADINLARIN GÜÇLENMESİ

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

Şule Karataş

İletişim Bilimleri, Yüksek Lisans

Danışman: Yard. Doç. Dr. Eser Selen

Mayıs, 2014.

Bu tez İnternet aracılığıyla kadınların güçlenmesinin mümkün olup olmadığını incelemektedir. Kadınların güçlenmesini üç temel konuda; sağlık, politika ve ekonomide inceleyen bu çalışma, kadınların yaşamlarını etkileyen konularda iletişim kurulması, tecrübelerin paylaşılması ve bilgiye ulaşılması için İnternet'in siber bir alan sağlayarak kadınları güçlendirdiğini savunmaktadır. Dünya çapında kadınlar tarafından yönetilen çeşitli web siteleri ve blogları analiz eden bu çalışma, kadınların çevrimdışı gerçekleriyle bu gerçekleri siberuzama taşıyarak baş etmeye çalıştıklarını göstermektedir. Bununla beraber, bu tez İnternet'in bilgisizliğe, ayrımcılığa ve şiddete karşı yürütülen aktivizm konusunda kadınlar için güçlendirici bir araç olduğunu savunmak için sanal toplulukları araştırmaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: kadınların güçlenmesi, sağlık, politika, ekonomi, İnternet

Acknowledgments

Table of Contents

Chapter 1

Introduction

When it first came out, the Internet was designed for military purposes and coded with "masculine values" (van Zoonen 2002: 6). Today the Internet becomes the most significant medium to access information for both women and men. "The internet is ubiquitous in everyday life" (Fuchs 2008: 1) and besides information, the Internet allows people to become active participants in communication with others. The Internet is a venue where users generate information by sharing ideas, images and videos. The accessibility to the digital technology and the Internet enhances social and political awareness among women. The interaction between women also encourages them to do something to sort out the substantial problems. Through the Internet, women have an opportunity to contact with people from all over the world. Women can go beyond the borders and reach sometimes thousands of people through blogs and web sites. Thus, the availability of information and the connectivity via the tools of the Internet empower women in enhancing life conditions. The usage of the Internet by women and men are nearly close to each other as the Internet World Statistics revealed in March, 2013 illustrates that the ratio of women's Internet usage is 37% compared to men's that of 41%[1]. In other words, we can suggest that gender difference in the ratio of Internet usage is not too much when compared to gender difference in the use of power.

Cyberfeminism

To understand the connection between women's empowerment and the Internet, it is necessary to clarify the term of cyberfeminism which aims to eliminate the boundary

---

[1] See http://www.internetworldstats.com/usage.htm for more detail.

between women and power in the digital sphere. Susan Hawthorne and Renate Klein (1999) define cyberfeminism in their *Cyberfeminism: Connectivity, Critique and Creativity*, as a "philosophy which acknowledges, firstly, that there are differences in power between women and men specifically in the digital discourse; and secondly, that CyberFeminists want to change that situation" (2). In other words, cyberfeminism comes out as a consequence of imbalance in power between women and men in the digital sphere.

Cyberfeminism have been affected by Donna Haraway's manifesto published in 1991. In her *A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist- Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century*, she uses the term, "cyborg" to challenge gender binaries in women's relation with new technologies. Haraway defines cyborg as "a cybernetic organism, a hybrid of machine and organism (1991: 149). This cybernetic organism is not made up of identity items such as sex, race and religion. The purpose of Haraway is to set the cyborg free from the definitions of West on women and men. Furthermore, she protests the concept of femininity by claiming that "there is nothing about being 'female' that naturally binds women. There is not even such a state as 'being' female, itself a highly complex category constructed in contested sexual scientific discourses and other social practices." (1991: 155). The idea of disembodiment becomes significant with the cyborg theory of Haraway because the organic body and its lived-experiences have been ignored by this theory.

The Embodiment of Lived-Experiences through the Internet

Haraway's disembodiment theory is utilized along with several other cyberfeminist theorists (Langellier and Peterson 2004; Brophy 2010) and it is inferred that the notion of embodiment of lived-experiences from gender to race, can support

women's empowerment through the Internet. Brophy (2010) suggests that erasure or mechanization of the body means that the offline reality is ignored. However, "online virtuality" and "offline reality" are interconnected with each other (McGerty 2000: 897). In other words, the lived-experiences have been conveyed into the cyberspace which therefore turns the Internet into an activist space for women while they are trying to express their problems and the hypocrisy of society.

Aim

The aim of this thesis is to discuss the possibility of speaking about women's empowerment through the Internet by examining websites and blogs operated by women around the world. To explore the lived-experiences of women, we need to closely read the writings and visual images of women in the cyberspace. The verbal and visual languages that women have used in the cyberspace give us signs to elaborate the relation between women's empowerment and the Internet. Therefore study aims to illustrate the lived-experiences of women through their verbal and visual languages in websites and blogs to argue that the Internet is an arena which empowers women in public and private life.

Objective

Throughout the thesis, we will focus on the idea that women can be empowered through the Internet. By exploring virtual communities, we will be able to realize that the cyberspace becomes a safe space for woman activism against ignorance, discrimination and violence. The study clarifies the significant characteristics of the cyberspace which enhances women's participation in the virtual space.

The thesis tries to give answers to the basic questions based on the relation between women's empowerment and the Internet: Can women be empowered

through the Internet? In which ways does the Internet empower women? What does the cyberspace offer its women users? Which characteristics of the cyberspace increase women's participation into the digital sphere? Can offline reality and online virtuality function in the same way in the cyberspace? How do women deal with their offline realities in the cyberspace? Are websites and blogs essential in the ways to access and to generate the information which makes women be aware of crucial subjects? Can personal and economic empowerment be interrelated while women try to improve their life conditions through the tools that Internet suggests?

The thesis examines women's personal and economic empowerment as the significant parts of the idea of their empowerment. Throughout the study, various websites and blogs administrated by women around the world are investigated to illustrate the embodiment of lived-experiences of women in the cyberspace. Examining websites and blogs via making content analysis on women's writings and visual images are the parts of qualitative method applied in the thesis. Thus, the objective of the thesis is supported by the content analysis and the theories focused on the keywords of the study.

Review of the Literature

The main idea of this study is based on the discussion of women's empowerment through the Internet by examining three major topics: health, politics and economy. The thesis is divided into three chapters to indicate that women's empowerment can be succeeded in three different fields through the Internet.

The first chapter is about the relationship between health discourse in the cyberspace and women's empowerment. In this chapter, the article of Barbara Sharf, *Communicating Breast Cancer On-Line: Support and Empowerment on the Internet,*

becomes prominent while arguing the importance of awareness and cyber support for women with breast cancer because the primary focus is to examine the role of the Internet in the lives of women with breast cancer. Sharf discusses in her article that the Internet creates opportunities for women with breast cancer to exchange information, get social support and achieve personal empowerment. Her idea is also supported by the article written by Barbara Arroyo and Diana S. Tillinghast, *Information Needs and Self-Efficacy: Internet Use by Women with Breast Cancer.* Arroyo and Tillinghast argue that the availability of information makes women with breast cancer be in charge of their own health, which increases a sense of empowerment. In both articles, empowerment is used to as a keyword in analyzing the Internet as a significant arena to access the information where women with breast cancer can take control over their own health and care. At this conjecture two blogs, *Bu da Geçer Yahu- Seni Yeneceğim Kanse*r! (This Will Also Pass: I Will Beat You, Cancer!) and *Breast Cancer? But Doctor… I Hate Pink* which are owned by two different women with breast cancer, have been analyzed. Through the analysis the issues of connectedness, exchange of information, social support and controlling the content through the Internet- which sign empowerment for women- have been discussed.

Besides the issue of breast cancer as a part of health discourse, the first chapter also discusses women's sexual emancipation in the cyberspace. While analyzing women's sexuality, this part particularly focuses on the theory of Luce Irigaray about creating the female language to escape from false and the biased definitions of West on women's sexuality. Irigaray's *This Sex Which is Not One* discusses the necessity of creating the female language to express womanhood more accurately and this part supports the theory of Irigaray by examining a virtual

community known as the Suicide Girls. The Suicide Girls creates a visual language to overcome the Western perception of beauty and women's sexuality as Irigaray suggests.

The last aim of the first chapter is to make comparative approaches to women's health websites, healthywomen.org and kadinsagligi.com to discuss the goals of women's health websites as Christine Marton mentions in her article, *Evaluating the Women's Health Matters Website*. Marton sees women as the gatekeepers of family and supports the main idea of the first part through his article by suggesting that women's health websites empower their women users in terms of accessing health information.

The second chapter analyzes the relationship between political resonances and women's empowerment. The primary question asked in the second part is about being a woman in the conflict zone where is infested with skirmishes and chaos. As Jill Walker Rettberg claims in his *Blogging: Digital Media and Society Series* that the most influential blogs belong to people who are stuck in the middle of conflict, the blog of an Iraqi woman, *Baghdad Burning* has been analyzed to indicate the obstacles which women have to face besides the war itself. Jessie Daniels' *Rethinking Cyberfeminism(s): Race, Gender, Embodiment* becomes useful while arguing the Internet as a provider of safe space for women because Daniels supports the idea that the anonymity of cyberspace helps women overcome social and political discriminations. The owner of *Baghdad Burning*, Riverbend, prefers writing about her social and political struggle against war and patriarchy.

The second chapter is also focused on the idea of Wendy Harcourt involved in his *Women @ Internet: Creating New Cultures in Cyberspace,* which suggests that

when the political reality is conveyed into the cyberspace, then it becomes an empowering tool for women. The community of Guerilla Girls actions and performances are analyzed in this section to indicate that offline reality and online virtuality can function in the same way while reflecting a social problem. In their works, the Guerilla Girls deals with discrimination and corruption in art, politics and pop culture by being active in both online and offline worlds.

The issue of women's voice is the final topic discussed in the second chapter of the thesis. In their article, *Theorizing Cyberspace: The Idea of Voice Applied to the Internet Discourse* Ananda Mitra and Eric Watts claim that the voice means being visible, and the Internet provides visibility for women by offering a safe space-to be heard by others. Zeren Göktan's virtual monument *The Counter Monument* gives a voice to the issues of domestic violence and women killings similar to Mitra and Watts's theory of the voice. In her project, *The Counter Monument*, Göktan conveys the issue of domestic violence and women murders in Turkey into the cyberspace while this project becomes a cyber-monument for the voice of women murdered by men in Turkey.

The third chapter deals with the relationship between economy and women's empowerment. In the article of *Microfinance and the Empowerment of Women: A Review of Key Issues,* Mayoux claims that economic strength is a requirement for social, political and psychological power in the society. In the light of Mayoux' theory, the impacts of economic strength on women's lives have been discussed in the first part of the chapter. Particularly, there comes out a significant bond between economic strength and domestic violence women are exposed to in their daily lives. Balabanova argues in her *Women's Economic Dependency: Nature, Causes and Consequences* that economic dependency is one of the significant reasons for

domestic violence. In *Organizing for Economic Empowerment of Battered Women,* Sanders and Schnabel also supports the idea that money and financial resources are vital for women to live a safer life.

The online shopping is another subject discussed in the third part of thesis. The aim of this part is to indicate that the cyberspace turns into an online bazaar for women. Liu and Forsythe explain the motives of online shopping as usefulness, enjoyment, information search and online purchase in their *Sustaining Online Shopping: Moderating Role of Online Shopping Motives*. However, Sandra Risa Lieblum takes online shopping one step further in her *Women, Sex and the Internet* by claiming that the cyberspace provides an opportunity for limitless shopping of sexuality-related purchases. The aim of this part is to discuss that the online retail shops offer anonymity for their female customers in purchasing, and the availability of products around the world.

In the final part of the third chapter, it is argued that personal empowerment and economic empowerment are interrelated with each other. Regarding the subject of personal empowerment, self-efficacy, self-esteem and collective efficacy theories of Albert Bandura become essential to discuss that economic strength creates positive changes in women's inner feelings. Bandura's self-efficacy theory in his *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control* is based on one's capability of achieving her or his goals. In other words, self-efficacy is related to one's inner thought about herself or himself in accomplishing a task. According to Bandura, self-efficacy also constitutes self-esteem which is about self-worth. A sense of self-efficacy enhances personal empowerment by providing ability to overcome the obstacles in the way to success. Bandura's collective efficacy theory is also related with the capacity in a broader sense when compared to self-efficacy. In collective efficacy theory, the

shared beliefs in a group become important to achieve a goal. At this conjecture the online project, *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü* (Women Empowerment in Economy) has been investigated to suggest that economic strength results in personal empowerment because the availability of financial resources has a positive impact on women's inner strength and their lives.

Regarding the self-efficacy theory of Bandura, personal empowerment is about one's capacity to take control over a woman's life. At this point the availability of information gains importance to increase the capacity of women in decision-making process. As a source of information, the Internet becomes an empowering tool for women and the study aims to illustrate the empowering side of the Internet for women through the analysis of websites and blogs.

The topics of health, politics and the economy are all parts of the discussion of women's empowerment through the Internet. Throughout the main chapters and their sub-sections, this study explores the lived-experiences of women which juxtapose offline reality with online virtuality. The thesis, thus, aims to illustrate that women's empowerment can be achieved through the cyberspace with the embodiment of lived-experiences in three major topics: health, politics and the economy.

Chapter 2

Health Discourse and Women's Empowerment

Health discourse is one of the main ways to argue women's empowerment through the Internet. Marina Levina (2012) discusses that connectivity is located in the core of feminism and health issue becomes an important tool to facilitate the connection among women in making vital decisions in their lives. Hardey (2001) claims that the Internet is a new provider of health information, advice and treatment. It is significant that the online resources' availability in terms of access makes the Internet as a major resource for health information (Ziebland and Wyke 2012). It is known that creating and gathering information creates awareness about health issues and sharpens thinking abilities about health (Song et al. 2012). When the empowering side of the Internet about health discourse is considered, the first thing comes to mind is the changing effect on the users position from being just consumers to producers of information (Hardey 2001). At this conjecture, women have a chance to empower themselves in health subjects like illnesses and sexuality. This chapter discusses the awareness of breast cancer and the emancipation of sexuality regarding the issues of connectivity and cyber support. The availability of information 24/7 is another issue to be discussed through analyzing women's health websites in this chapter.

First of all, breast cancer and the importance of early diagnosis becomes the initial discussion subject of this chapter. It appears that the Internet and its tools create awareness and provide cyber support for women with breast cancer. In this context, Barbara Arroyo and Diana S. Tillinghast (2009) suggest that the Internet empowers cancer patients by enabling information which makes them be in charge of their own health. Besides, Barbara Sharf (1997) emphasizes that supportive

relationship is more powerful in the cyber space than anywhere else. What does cyber support mean for women with breast cancer? The answer of this question becomes clear with the examples of blogs written by women with breast cancer, Yasemin Kahvecioğlu and Ann Silberman. The stories of these two women can be read by everyone, which means connection is inevitable. This connectedness results in mutual support among women. Kahvecioğlu and Silberman achieve personal empowerment by controlling the content what they write. They have a chance to share their experiences and feelings about breast cancer while they have been fighting against it. Spiegel (1993) suggests that social support among women with breast cancer increases the quality of life and the life chance by 50%. Kahvecioğlu and Silberman suggest support to their readers who might have breast cancer by demonstrating the ways of living with breast cancer in the everyday life.

The second discussion topic in the chapter of health discourse and women's empowerment is women's sexual emancipation in the cyberspace. The perception of West on women's sexuality becomes the starting point to discuss the importance of creating female language (Irigaray 1985) free from the codes of patriarchal values. At this conjecture, Elizabeth Anne Wood (2008) suggests that through women's sex blogs the Internet enables the cyberspace for women to create the language of desire which is necessary for communication of their desires. As Amy Muise (2011) claims, in real life it can be hard for women to express their sensual feelings without being judged. It appears that the Internet provides a safe space for women's sexual emancipation. The community of SuicideGirls achieves to demonstrate the relation between the cyberspace and women's sexual emancipation. The aim of the SuicideGirls community is to evaluate the idea of beauty and women's sexuality. The SuicideGirls resists against the passive perception of women's sexuality by

portraying women sexually empowered. Being actively sexual, the SuicideGirls destroys the biased sexual norms. The community of SuicideGirls can be thought as a marginalized group. However, lesbian, bisexual and transsexual communities are categorized as marginal in the society. The issue of connectedness is important for these communities to be in communication actively. At this point, the Internet empowers these groups by providing the cyberspace in which communication is available every hour in a day. The cyberspace becomes a safe space for these marginalized groups to meet and share their experiences and feelings. Thus, women's sexual emancipation is succeeded in different ways.

The last but not least subject discussed in this chapter is the subject of women's health websites. As health websites, healthywomen.org and kadinsagligi.com succeed to prove that health information is available 24/7. Firstly, healthywomen.org aims to inform and empower women around the world. This website is consisted of a community in which it is members create their own blogs and discuss the health subjects. The articles published in healthywomen.org are useful because they support women in their making decisions. This website is open for anyone around the world and becomes the voice of people concerned with health. Healthywomen.org is an American women's health website but kadingsagligi.com is a Turkish women's health website consisted of interactive articles, which means the writer and the reader can communicate through these articles. Although healthywomen.org is mainly based on women's health, kadinsagligi.com is more about women and family health. Both healthywomen.org and kadinsagligi.com make their users be directly in communication with health care professionals. Therefore, women can reach information which is about their health anxieties 24/7.

Consequently, health is a broad concept but the basic subjects of it are much more about women. It is discussed that health affects women's lives and women should be empowered regarding health information. Health information makes women take decision in their lives (Marton 2000). At this conjecture, the Internet both enables 24/7 availability of information and the cyberspace in which they will be in charge in their own health. For this chapter, breast cancer and women's sexuality become the main concern regarding the issue of women's empowerment. Besides, it discusses the features of women's health websites. It is claimed that awareness, cyber support (psychological support), exchange of information and controlling the content empower women related to the health discourse.

2.1 Awareness Saves Lives: The Case of Breast Cancer

Today, the second leading cause of deaths from cancer among women is resulted from breast cancer. (Arroyo and Tillinghast 2009). One woman in eight has a risk to be diagnosed with breast cancer (American Cancer Society). Being a life threatening disease for women, breast cancer is an important subject to be aware in the everyday life. Being aware of breast cancer enables early diagnosis which increases the life chance. At that point, the Internet creates an opportunity for women to access information immediately regarding breast cancer (Arroyo and Tillinghast 2009). The access to information creates consciousness among women about their disease and condition. Particularly, the connective part of the Internet provides a social space for women with breast cancer regarding the issues of cyber support and personal empowerment (Sharf 1997).

Women with breast cancer have to deal with mastectomy, chemotherapy and even with the possibility of death. During this process, they need both social and psychological support. Barbara Sharf (1997) touches on the subject of cyber support by emphasizing the importance of psychological support among women with breast cancer. According to Sharf, the virtual community created through the Internet empowers patients because it enables psychological support for them. The cyber space provides a safe place for women to discuss their problems and support each other. She suggests that psychological support is another important way for empowerment. At this conjecture, a Turkish blog, *Bu da Geçer Yahu- Seni Yeneceğim Kanse*r! (This Will Also Pass: I Will Beat You, Cancer!) becomes a useful illustrator of the importance of psychological support. The owner of the blog is Yasemin Kahvecioğlu who was diagnosed with breast cancer at the age of 39. From what Kahvecioğlu writes in her blog, it is inferred that she had a healthy life before cancer. She does not smoke or use alcohol frequently and she has a healthy diet. Kahvecioglu's description of her healthy life before cancer creates awareness about the knowledge that having only healthy life conditions are not enough to prevent yourself from breast cancer.

The first post of Kahvecioğlu in her blog titled *Merhaba* (Hello) is mostly about the issue of awareness. She particularly mentions that after her sister was diagnosed with breast cancer, she went to her gynecologist for routine control. When her doctor palpated her breasts, he realized that there was something unusual in her breast. After that, there began a different life with cancer for Kahvecioğlu. While describing how she was diagnosed with this fatal illness, she warns her readers about being aware of their own bodies. Kahvecioğlu's experience illustrates that the routine control is necessary for diagnosis of breast cancer and early diagnosis saves lives. By

sharing her experience, Kahvecioğlu gives women a lead. Her experience can empower healthy women about breast cancer as Sharf (1997) claims that "different version of empowerment is benefitting from other's knowledge in meeting new challenges" (75).

The blog of Yasemin Kahvecioğlu supports the idea of Sharf about the importance of psychological support for patients with breast cancer. After she published her first post, Kahvecioğlu got many comments from her readers which are mainly about staying strong. She emphasizes in one of her replies to the comments that "Actually the stronger my spiritual being becomes, the more my stamina strengthens. Like the title of blog, I say let it pass too"[2]. The connectedness between Kahvecioğlu and her readers demonstrates psychological support resulted from the feeling that she is not alone while fighting against this fatal illness. In her case, it becomes clear that the Internet makes the connection among people possible and this connectedness gives way to empowerment (Shields 1995).

Sharf argues that empowerment is also in the control of the content and when we look at the blogs written by women with breast cancer, as it appears that these women are in charge of their own health. By exchanging information, they get informed about possible ways of treatments for their disease. Ann Silberman is an American patient with breast cancer stage IV and she shares her experiences about breast cancer through her blog, *Breast Cancer? But Doctor… I hate Pink.* Silberman gives detail about her appointments with doctor and she mostly complains about the jargon of breast cancer. When she gets home, she googles every word she could not understand. Particularly, Silberman uses the term "Dr. Google" while describing how she gets information about her illness. Googling enables Silberman to take

---

[2] http://budageceryaw.blogspot.com.tr

control over her disease and treatment. Silberman emphasizes in the description part of herself that she only shares her experiences in her blog and she is ready to answer all questions about diagnosis and treatment. At this point, it becomes clear that the Internet becomes a social space in which women with breast cancer share their feelings and experiences. This connectedness and exchange of information increases the feelings of hope and power (Van Uden- Kraan et al. 2008). It is known that one of the important ways to defeat this illness is to have hope and support. The blogs written by Kahvecioglu and Silberman instil hope for new patients with breast cancer. Their posts also raise awareness for healthy women about being conscious of their bodies.

The issues of connectedness, exchange of information, social support and controlling the content through the Internet lead to empowerment of women with breast cancer. The second leading cause of deaths among women is breast cancer and sometimes age and social conditions do not matter to get this fatal illness. The blogs written by women with breast cancer illustrate that these women take action for themselves and other women. Taking control over their illness reduces the feelings of isolation, depression and loneliness (Arroyo and Tillinghast 2009). The information gains importance at that point because it awakes patients about diagnosis and treatment. Being aware of the ways of diagnosis for breast cancer saves lives because early detection of this illness is the major way for beating it.

2.2 The Cyberspace: A Safe Space for Women's Sexual Emancipation

Western's understanding of the issues of woman has been prevailed by one model of sexuality since the ancient times. Particularly, the cave allegory of Plato seen as the

model for the entrance of consciousness from unconsciousness is interpreted as the man's salvation from the womb of woman and his reaching to the real world. In other words, in the cave allegory, woman herself represents the illusionary world described as full of false implications and the salvation of man is dependent on his breaking with the womb of mother (Diamond 1989). Like Plato's cave theory, Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis put woman lower place than man and further more Lacan does not hesitate to claim that woman does not exist (Fink 1995). Freud (1963) ignores women's sexuality and reduces sexuality to phallus. According to the Western thought, woman is a passive participant of sexual affairs.

Lacan takes Freud's redefinition of sexuality ahead and suggests that in the Symbolic Order dominated by culture, there does not exist any signifier for woman because "the phallus is somehow the signifier of Man and Man's essence" (Fink 1995: 115). It is clear that in the Symbolic order woman herself becomes the image of phallus. In other words, woman cannot be the subject for Lacan in the field of language. Thus, women's sexuality is tried to be repressed by the male oriented Western culture. To reverse this situation, one of the most significant feminist thinkers, Luce Irigaray (1985) suggests that female language should be constructed to demolish the annihilation of women's sexuality by supporting the idea that

> If we keep on speaking the same language together, we're going to produce the same history… If we keep on speaking sameness, if we speak to each other as men have been doing for centuries, as we have been thought to speak, we'll miss each other, fail ourselves (1985: 205).

From what Irigaray says, it is understood that the female language is needed to be constructed to set femininity free from the codes of stereotypes. At this conjecture, the Internet provides a safe space for women's sexual emancipation through creating a visual and verbal language.

Although women's sexuality has been ignored by the Western thought which considers women as passive objects in sexual affairs, this idea has been reversed by an online community called as SuicideGirls. The motto of this community, "What some people think makes us strange, or weird, or fucked up, we think is what makes us beautiful" (http://suicidegirlspress.com), demonstrates that this community is in charge of their sexual beings. SuicideGirls creates a feminine visual language with the images of girls, which are different from mainstream. The girls with excessive piercing, large tattoos and dyed hair are not the products of sexual culture but the producer of it (Magnet 2007). It is clear that the Internet has a power to shape sexual culture (Ross 2010) and SuicideGirls gets benefit from it while performing unstable nature of gender (Butler 1999).

SuicideGirls has been a virtual community since 2001 and it only accepts girls which are appropriate for its beauty definition which does not fit into society's social norms (http://suicidegirlspress.com). According to this group whose aim is to portray the images of young and punk women though its own website, women are active sexual beings rather than passive objects. Being the illustrator of women's sexual emancipation, the images of nude girls facilitate women's empowerment (Magnet 2007). It appears that the nude and sexy photos of girls with large tattoos and many piercings attract women's attention more than men's because the highest subscription rate is belonged to women with 51% (http://suicidegirlspress.com). This virtual community prefers to exhibit the sexual identity of women rather than failing it by sustaining the sameness which Irigaray (1985) rejects it to accomplish the subjectivity of women. The visual language used by SuicideGirls demonstrates that the Internet facilitates to construct the language of desire which signifies women's sexual emancipation.

18

Through the Internet, women have a chance to get information about their bodies and sexuality (Daneback et al. 2012: Lieblum 2001). Besides getting informed about sexuality, women could create their own diaries with which they share their experiences and give some advices about sexual issues. Especially, the anonymous feature of the Internet provides a safe place for women who live in conservative societies. These women are able to create an anonymous profile with which they show their sexual desire and passion (Muise 2011). Not only women surrounded by conservative social rules but also women, who have access to sex education in their real lives, uses the Internet as a source of sexual information (Daneback et al. 2012). While referring women, it should be also considered that there are lesbian, bisexual and transsexual communities which need to gather and support each other. (Rothblum 2010). Particularly, Rothblum (2010) suggests that the connectedness is an important issue for these marginalized groups isolated from society. The connectedness makes these marginalized people know that they are not alone and provides opportunity to develop romantic relationships or friendships (Lieblum 2001). At that point, the Internet enables connection for people from all over the world through its anonymous and safe space.

From Plato's cave allegory to the Lacanian psychoanalysis, the significant Western theories based on the patriarchal structure ignore the sexual identity of women. In the light of these biased theories, Luce Irigaray (1985) suggests to create a female language to demolish the annihilation of womanhood. At this conjecture, Wood (2008) argues that the Internet provides a safe space to develop vocabularies of desire which women need them to reveal their sexual identity free from the codes of social norms. The online community, SuicideGirls becomes a useful illustrator of women's sexual emancipation through creating the visual language. By using the

19

naked, heavily tattooed and pierced bodies of young girls, the community of SuicideGirls makes people question the Western perception of beauty and women's sexuality. Emancipation of women's sexuality is succeeded thanks to the visual and verbal language of the cyberspace.

2.3 Comparative Approaches to Women's Health Websites: Cases of healthywomen.org and kadinsagligi.com

Questionnaires conducted among women suggest that one of the reasons for women searching the Internet is to find answers to their health concerns (Judkins 2000). The websites offering health information become crucial for the ones looking for medical data (Rains 2008). Women's health websites facilitate women's empowerment regarding the health information. Marton (2000) discusses the objectives of women's health websites by emphasizing that supporting women via providing educational health materials and resources can make women choice their healthy lifestyles. Furthermore, women's health websites encourages women to share their experiences by creating safe online communities through the Internet (Marton 2000). The websites such as healthywomen.org and kadinsagligi.com make the communication between users, members and health care professionals easier by enabling 24/7 connection opportunities. The availability of information empowers women in making decisions about their health (Marton 2000). Significantly, the interactive characteristic of these websites improves mutual support among women.

As a useful illustrator of women's health websites, healthywomen.org is not only a health website but also a virtual community whose aim is to empower women by "providing a forum for women to connect, exchange advice, and discuss a range

of topics, including fitness, beauty, nutrition, illness, disease, parenting, and work and family life" (http://community.healthywomen.org). The HealthyWomen Community gathers women from all over the world and it provides a chance for these women to share experiences and connect with others experiencing similar health information needs and conditions (Marton 2000). Women can create their own profile or read others' without login in. Furthermore, "ask the expert" part in the website provides professional help for women who have questions about their health conditions. Even if women do not ask directly, the articles guide them by creating awareness towards health issues. In one of the articles published in the website, "Questions to Ask at Your Breast Exam," the crucial questions about breast exam that one should ask to her health care professional are discussed. In other words, women are informed about breast exam through reminding women to ask important questions which can reduce the anxiety of illness. The website uses social media

tools for its users to share this article with everyone. The communication between patient and doctor is shaped for the benefit of patient with this article. When this article is open in the page, the reader also sees the titles of related articles which prove to be helpful to read.

As Marton (2000) discusses, one of the objectives of women's health websites is to enhance the capacity of women using the Internet for obtaining information. At that point, the women's health website, kadinsagligi.com is so functional that a woman can both read an article and make comment on it by sharing her experience related to the subject of article. There is an online consultation part in the website which functions like a chat program. Thus, the readers have a chance to develop the content through participation. In this part, the user can send the direct message to health care professionals. This feature of the website illustrates that

connection and support are available in everyday life through the Internet (Ziebland and Wyke 2012). The other important feature of this women's health website is that it directs its users to other websites consisted of information about health. One of them is kurtajmerkezi.com which claims that abortion is a right. To inform women about their rights empowers them while making decision about their lives. The content of kadinsagligi.com is based on women and family health. Women are seen as the "gatekeepers" of family health (Marton 2000: 747) and the Internet reinforces this statue of women by providing information about various topics from pregnancy to childcare. Briefly, both the issues of motherhood and abortion have been discussed in this women's health website and women are informed that they should be in charge of their own decisions.

In conclusion, women's health websites, healthywomen.org and kadinsagligi.com provide educational health materials and fully functioning resources for women. It is thought that these health websites empower their users in relation to health information (Marton 2000). The perpetual availability of information and connection enables mutual support for women who have health anxieties. Ask the expert and online consultation parts of women's health websites improve the communication between the patient and the health care professional. Besides, reading other patients' experiences can reduce the feeling of despair and isolation (Zeibland and Wyke 2012). Both healthywomen.org and kadinsagligi.com provide anonymous space for women to share their feelings and experiences. Furthermore, the articles published in these websites become helpful for women in making decision about their health. Readers have a chance to develop the content of the articles with their comments. Women's health websites become the significant way to reach health information and support.

Chapter 3

Political Resonances and Women's Empowerment

Women are repressed by men in the society structured by unequal social positions and that's why women develop apparent standpoints (Wood 2005). The feminist standpoint theory comes from the Marxism thought which suggests that identities of women and men are shaped by their social positions (Haraway 1988: Hartsock 1983). Furthermore, the feminist standpoint theory claims that the knowledge of subjugated group, who is suppressed and outcast by the mainstream society, is more close to reality as compared with the authoritative group (Johnston et al. 2011). As a subjugated group, women can use tools of the Internet to resist against the politics of authoritative group. This chapter discusses that the cyberspace free from boundaries provides a safe space for women while they reflect standpoints about politics. Women adopt their own standpoints and they should be the ones who take a stand for their own rights. Women's works analyzed in this chapter give voice to significant problems of women, which are oppression, annihilation of women in art and domestic violence, and these works converts the cyberspace into a new political arena for women (Keren 2006).

The first subject involved in this chapter is about being woman in the conflict zone where is infested with skirmishes and chaos. Woman's standpoint is to be perceived to get an idea about being a woman surviving in a chaotic area. At this conjecture, blogs written by these women become useful as Rettberg (2008) suggests that the most influential blogs are belonged to people who are part of the ongoing events. Riverbend is an Iraqi woman who started to write her blog in 2003 when American troops invaded her homeland. Riverbend was a witness of American

occupation in Baghdad so she named her blog as *Baghdad Burning* and started to write about changes in women's lives during the war. Her blog becomes a new meeting point for Riverbend with other people and specifically with women. Riverbend's writings demonstrate that when there comes out a conflict resulted from the power of patriarchy; politics have been changed against women's rights. However, Riverbend achieves personal empowerment by writing in her blog which makes her emancipated from the oppressive gender regime. Riverbend emphasizes that rape and women's are highly widespread throughout the country as the owners of power are mostly interested with tethering women into their houses by preventing them from going to school and work. Under these circumstances, Riverbend tries to confront with the new feeling of oppression resulted from war by writing.

The other topic discussed in this chapter is the cyberspace as a new political arena for women. When the cyberspace is structured by the political reality, it becomes an empowering way for women (Harcourt 1999). The community of Guerilla Girls becomes successful while reflecting the offline reality through its online website. The realization lived by the Guerilla Girls in 1984 when they perceived that women artists were ignored by the most known galleries and museums throughout the world made the Guerilla Girls take an action.

Firstly, they constructed the community of Guerilla Girls formally in 1985 and made posters to attract attention of people towards the issue of discrimination in art. Since 1985, the Guerilla Girls has been using visual materials while illustrating discrimination and corruption in art, politics and pop culture. In addition to women's rights in art and other areas, the Guerilla Girls work on racism and queer. In other words, the Guerilla Girls are against fall discrimination in the social life. By using the face of gorilla as the mask, the Guerilla Girls tries to demolish female

stereotypes. The Guerilla Girls use the cyberspace actively by converting it into a political arena in which feminist issues are discussed and pervaded.

The last part of this chapter is about the voices of women in the cyberspace. The idea of voice is stand for the relation of people with the world and others and this relation is important in terms of visibility. In other words, the voice makes people known by others in the world. However, the voice of subjugated groups is tried to be suppressed in the real world by ignoring the rights of these groups. The discursive space of the Internet enables these groups opportunity to give voice to their racial, gendered and ethnic other (Mitra and Watts 2002).

At this conjecture, Zeren Göktan (2013) created a monument in the cyberspace to give voice to the issue of violence against women. In her project, Göktan get murdered women's lives recognized in a way by devoting the monument for these women. Göktan's project, *The Counter Monument*, creates awareness towards the problem of domestic violence and violence against women in Turkey. This project is based on a counter system which is updated itself by Göktan as a new data is entered. The new data means that a woman is killed again by the hands of a man. *The Counter Monument* will end when there are no further women's murder by men. Although this mission seems hard to accomplish, this project keeps the identities of murdered women and continues to struggle with violence against women.

This chapter claims that Riverbend, the Guerilla Girls, and Zeren Göktan take advantage of the cyberspace while confronting the social and political problems. While Riverbend prefers to write a blog to criticize the ongoing events in Iraq after the American occupation, Göktan creates a monument dedicated to women killed

from men's violence. On the other hand, the community of Guerilla Girls turns the cyberspace into a political arena while discussing the place of women in art, politics and pop culture. Nouraie- Simone (2005) claims that the Internet offers a safe space for women to escape from the oppressive gender politics. Although it seems that the cyberspaces used by Riverbend, the Guerilla Girls and Zeren Göktan belong to them, it should be noted that the cyberspace is open to everyone from different locations. These women reflect their standpoints in politics while taking action through the Internet.

3.1 Being a Woman in a Conflict Zone

The Internet provides a safe space for women because its discursive space consisted of anonymity is convenient for social and political struggle (Daniels 2009). Women who lack of opportunity to express their ideas and values due to the conservative structure of society can choose to write as a way for unveiling and making themselves visible (Amir- Ebrahimi 2008). Particularly, Nouraie- Simone (2005) suggests that the safe space of the Internet is the way to escape from the gender oppression in the offline world. If the oppression is mixed with the conflict in the society, the condition of a woman is much harder regarding the issues of freedom and equality. However, some women living in the areas full of chaos choose to write to disturb the power of patriarchy which dominates their lives (Pierce 2010). While doing this, they prefer to be in a safe place, which becomes the new meeting point with other people around the world. Through their writings, they indicate that women living in the conflict zone have to cope with oppression imposed by men besides war itself. The blog written by an Iraqi woman, *Baghdad Burning*, reveals that women

nearly lost all their rights during the conflict due to the fact that the patriarchy gets benefit from the chaos and tethers women into their houses.

The writer of *Baghdad Burning* uses a pseudonym, Riverbend to protect her life while discussing the political situations in Iraq during the American occupation. Riverbend started to write her blog four months after the occupation had begun (August 17, 2003) when she was 24 and lived in Baghdad. She especially used the word of occupation to illustrate that the conflict happened in Iraq is not the outcome of the so-called freedom and democracy war but the outcome of American occupation with heavy tanks and bombs. Riverbend analyzes the ongoing situation in Iraq by mentioning the changes in her life as well as in the country's politics. Before the war, she was a computer programmer and the first think she lost is her job during the war. This situation is not unique for Riverbend as she writes about that two women school principals were killed due to the fact that they did not give up working. In her post titled "We've Only Just Begun…" Riverbend compares the working conditions of women pre and post war by saying "before the war, around 50% of the college students were females, and over 50% of the working force was composed of women. Not so anymore" (http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com.tr). She emphasizes that the Islamic fundamentalism is on the rise and this new formation mostly restricts the opportunities of women in every part of life from education to work.

Riverbend's opens a new gate for women from all around the world, who fight for freedom and equality. Riverbend does not hesitate to discuss for women's rights during the war although surviving is the first priority for everyone living in Iraq. Through her blog, she criticizes the politics which ignore rape and women's abduction from streets. After the occupation, women can no longer walk alone in the

streets because of the fear of abduction. Riverbend feels humiliated whenever she has to go out with male escorts but she has no choice otherwise she can be raped, abducted, and even killed. Women do not prefer to go out until it is obligatory and most of them quit going to school or work. That result in invisibility of women in the new society compared to the past when women had freedom to attend universities and work on their own.

Women could empower themselves by being active in both academic and working life before the occupation but the chaos created by the power of patriarchy deprived women from freedom in every part of life ranging from social life to financial life and shackled women into their homes which lead to disempowerment of women. As Rita Stephan (2013) points out that the Internet becomes one of the few spaces used by repressed minorities and women. By blogging, the 24-years- old Iraqi woman used the cyberspace to demonstrate the social changes in Iraq after the occupation by discussing the new restrictions in the lives of women. Riverbend chose to write not only to come face to face with the oppression but to make other people feel in the same way with her. Her writings reached people from different locations (Pierce 2010) and demonstrated that being woman in the conflict zone is much harder but she has to survive to fight against oppression.

3.2 The Cyberspace: A New Political Arena for Women's Empowerment

The Internet offers a space known as the cyberspace for women when they go online. Ananda Mitra and Eric Watts (2002) define the most important aspect of the cyberspace as being free from the boundaries which exist in the real world. Furthermore, Plant (1996) suggests that the cyberspace becomes a way for women

around the world to escape from the patriarchal control and find a safe space in which they can accomplish their subjectivities. Michael Keren (2006) puts the idea of cyberspace forward and claims that the cyberspace is a new political arena. When it is considered the political side of the cyberspace for women, it should be noted that women find a communicative space to announce their ideas about political issues related to gender and race. Wendy Harcourt (1999) suggests that the communicative space of the Internet structured by the political reality can facilitate women's empowerment. When women express their thoughts related to politics through the Internet, the cyberspace gains a realistic aspect which paves an empowering way to display sexism and racism in politics.

Women have opportunity to make feminist activities public and known by other people around the world via the cyberspace. The community of Guerilla Girls becomes a significant feminist group which is active both offline and online. The main aim of Guerilla Girls and the feminist and activist community they are leading is to criticize the annihilation of women (Tuchman et al.1978) by the male dominance in art world. Particularly, members of the Guerilla Girls use dead women artist names as pseudonyms to stay anonymous. The Guerilla Girls started in 1984 when there was an exhibition, *An International Survey of Painting and Sculpture,* in the Museum of Modern Art in New York (http://www.guerrillagirls.com). In the exhibition, there were 169 artists but only 13 of them were women. The other feature of this exhibition criticized by the Guerilla Girls is that there were only white artists from Europe or the US. After that, the founders of Guerilla Girls have begun to question the visibility of women in art. While doing research, they saw that the invisibility of women artists in the exhibition in New York was everywhere. The other known museums also ignored the works of women artists. This bitter reality

made the founders of Guerilla Girls take action in 1985 and they created an activist community which uses "facts, humor and outrageous visuals to expose discrimination and corruption in politics, art, film, and pop culture" (http://www.guerrillagirls.com).

The motto of Guerilla Girls is that "we could be anyone; we are everywhere" and the Guerilla Girls website is the only place where people receive news from the Guerilla Girls about their tours around the world and actions. The cyberspace makes their motto real by providing the Guerilla Girls both anonymity and place. Furthermore, people can send e-mails to Guerilla Girls and there is a page in the website in which e-mails from people are published. The communication facilitates the relation between the Guerilla Girls and their audience. As an example, a young girl nicknamed as High School Activist claims that "you (Guerilla Girls) have encouraged me to be active instead of waiting. I am hopeful and I can change the world" by sending a mail in 2007. She mentions her efforts to raise awareness by using Guerilla Girls stickers and posters which make fun of stereotypes.

The main subject discussed by the Guerilla Girls is equality between sexes and the slogan which appears on the page, "reinventing the "f" word: feminism!" conveys the idea of woman rights. Not only has this social community redefined the notion of feminism but also the place of women in politics, art, film, and pop culture. The Guerilla Girls claim that some people hesitate to call themselves a feminist while supporting feminist issues. Regarding this hesitation, the Guerilla Girls work mostly on the idea of feminism by making workshops and posters about woman rights. Apart from the web site, Guerilla Girls have also Facebook and Twitter accounts with which they share videos and the latest news about their gigs and events. These girls especially use the mask of gorilla covering their faces to criticize women

stereotypes and the ongoing sexism in the society. The web page becomes the cyberspace for woman activism and via it Guerilla Girls announce their upcoming gigs and ask people to join these protests. At this conjecture, the web site and protests work with together and it becomes clear that Internet enables Guerilla Girls to reach much more people through visual images.

Harcourt's idea of political reality as an empowering tool for women succeeds when it becomes the part of cyberspace. The community of Guerilla Girls is successful while conveying political acts into the cyberspace with which they make feminist issues known by people. Particularly, the Guerilla Girls motivate the readers of their websites to take action in woman rights. It should be considered that the Guerilla Girls also take action for civil rights like homosexual rights. The racist and sexist politics are harshly criticized through visual images created by Guerilla Girls. While questioning the invisibility of women in art, they try to go beyond borders to illustrate that this invisibility is global and there should be an action to reverse this situation. At this conjecture, the cyberspace makes the Guerilla Girls exceed the limits in reaching out to people. As a new political arena, the cyberspace helps feminist groups to take a stand for women's rights.

3.3 The Voices of Women in the Cyberspace

The Internet provides the cyberspace for communities and groups to have visibility in contrast to the real world in which their appearance is ignored (Mitra 2001). Particularly, women as a subjugated group in the real world gain visibility thanks to the discursive side of the Internet (Daniels 2009). At this point, the idea of voice appears as a signifier of the visibility. Mitra and Watts (2002) claim that women

make their presence known in the cyberspace consisted of the capacity of voice. The voice can be interpreted in different ways and *The Counter Monument* by Zeren Göktan (2013) can be taken as an illustrator of voice in the cyberspace. The murdered women give voice to the issue of domestic violence and women killings in Turkey with their names located in the website of *Counter Monument*[3]. Their names are stand for domestic violence to which women are exposed in everyday life. As a significant problem violence against women is heard with the voice of murdered women through the project of *The Counter Monument* based on a digital monument.

Zeren Göktan's project in the cyberspace becomes the effective sign for the women's empowerment through the Internet via enabling presence for women killed by men. First of all, it should be noted that Göktan is an artist and *The Counter Monument* is not her first project but her idea of creating a monument makes difference regarding the issue of violence against women. This project unites the power of internet with the woman activism and it enables a safe space for the topic, violence against women. Indeed, the project of *Counter* has two sides and while one of them is based on the cyberspace movement; the other is about the art exhibition. The idea of monument on the Internet which is part of the project of *Counter Monument* is not unique but Göktan looks from a different point of view to the monument. This monument lives with death. It has a counter system that gets updated each time a new data is entered and the data is related to woman murders. When a woman is murdered, the counter updates the numbers which illustrate the number of women died from the violence of men. The name of website is *The Counter Monument* and when a user enters the website, she will easily notice the numbers and the list of names of woman. When it is clicked on the name of women,

---

[3] http://www.anitsayac.com

it gives the details about the killed woman such as by whom she was killed, when and where. This project makes people notice these murdered women and it becomes the cyber monument for these women. At this conjecture, Göktan's activist project becomes the voice of women who lost their lives due to men's violence.

Zeren Göktan defines her project as a consequence of violence against women:

"The monument is a consequence, not a cause. This counter turns into a monument by way of many different factors coming together. It is a monument that lives on. It gets updated, archived, tied to links and it creates a memory. There is an important contradiction here. The purpose of the monument is, in fact, to destroy its own reason for existence. The monument, which takes life in an unavoidable, unstoppable wave of violence, holds a message to end this violence. It is a mechanism that vies for its own demise. In short, the monument will have fulfilled its purpose when it parishes and the women live" (Göktan 2013).

Although a monument is generally made to last forever, the aim of this monument is to demolish itself in the end. But it proves being increasingly difficult with the frequent notices of women's murders on the media. The counter will continue to exist as long as there is femicide.

Regarding the issue of virtual community, this monument represents a virtual community but in a different sense. The monument designed as a counter for murdered women aims to get these murdered women recognized by others. However, murdered women's identities will live with this monument whenever people enter the website of *Counter Monument*. As a virtual monument, this project sustains itself with the data entrance. The most significant characteristic of the monument is that it creates deep emotion on viewers by combining digital with real. As Goldman (2007) claims that these viewers can make other people hear the voice as well. In other

words, *The Counter Monument* becomes the voice heard through the cyberspace and conveyed in the real world.

The idea of voice gets meaning when it is combined with the cyberspace. The voice of women as a subjugated group gains volume with the discursive space enabled by the Internet. Especially, the women prevented from voicing their problems like domestic violence in the real life get a chance to escape from the patriarchy. The project of Zeren Göktan, *The Counter Monument*, comes out as a different version of voice by providing presence for women who killed at the hands of men. There is an inverse proportion between the numbers located in the website and hope as a signifier of end of violence against women. Briefly, when the numbers rise, hope vanishes. *The Counter Monument* will fulfill its job when it shatters itself. However, this seems hard as far as men continue to suppress women and even take their lives from them. As Zeren Göktan's project which becomes the voice of these women, the cyberspace provides visibility for women suppressed by men's violence by making their presence known by others.

Chapter 4

Economy and Women's Empowerment

The availability to financial resources leads to women's empowerment in different ways. When women's empowerment is considered, the capacity of decision- making and well- being becomes main priorities (Datta 2003). In other words, women should be in charge of their own decisions and life standards to be empowered. At this conjecture, economic power gains importance regarding the issue of personal empowerment.

In a study conducted by Naila Kabeer (2001), it is proved that microcredit programs organized for women's participation in economy led to the rise of power in social and political activities and the reduction of domestic violence. Mayoux (2000) suggests that economic strength is located in the background of social, political and psychological power in society. Starting from this point of view, women's economic strength has been discussed within the context of personal empowerment related to the positive changes in one's internal beliefs (Lord 1991). It is illustrated that through the Internet women can be supported financially which leads to liberation of women from dependency, freedom in sexual purchasing and fading of economic boundaries in women's lives.

Firstly, the impacts of economic strength on women's lives have been analyzed to indicate the importance of economic strength for women. The relation between economic strength and women's empowerment becomes clear when women's dependency on their husbands results in brutal treatment and abuse. Russel (1982) claims that there is a link between women's economic dependency and domestic violence which women are exposed to. In other words, unequal economic

power between couples and poverty put women into greater risk of abuse. Furthermore, Sanders and Schnabel (2006) regards financial power as one of the essential needs for women's safety plan.   Besides women are exposed to bad treatment and abuse due to the inefficiency of financial resources, these women cannot abandon their abusive partners due to the same reason. For this reason, *Mor Çatı* (Purple Roof): a Women's Shelter Foundation was found to help women who are in need. *Mor Çatı* provides mainly security for battered women and their children. Women to stay with their abusive partner have found a safe home in the shelter of *Mor Çatı*. Primarily, these women get psychological help from professionals about domestic violence they experienced. When they become ready, they are encouraged to work and earn their own money. At this point, the Internet enables *Mor Çatı* to connect with volunteers whose purpose is to empower battled women. Through its website, *Mor Çatı* aims to inform women about every kind of violence from physical violence to sexual violence.

The other subject discussed in this chapter is the cyberspace which can double as an online bazaar for women. To have financial resources sometimes cannot be sufficient to satisfy women regarding the issue of freedom. Liu and Forsythe (2010) discusses that the cyberspace becomes a new shopping avenue with the motives of usefulness, enjoyment, information search and online purchase. Furthermore, Lieblum (2001) claims that the cyberspace provides an opportunity for limitless shopping related to sexual purchasing. Both heterosexual and homosexual women have a chance to find every sexuality-related products they want to search and purchase through the online retail sites. Going to the erotic shops in some countries are perceived as degrading and mostly women avoid going to such places. Even if women are interested in sex toys, erotic books or sex costumes, they cannot

feel comfortable about searching or purchasing these goods in the real life. With the feature of anonymity enabled by the cyberspace, women can feel comfortable and freedom while doing their shopping on sexual products from sex toys to erotic books.

The last part of this chapter is based on the relation between economic strength and personal empowerment. The capacity of decision-making becomes the part of process of having control over economic resources. It has been discussed that when women are supported financially, they gain a sense of self-efficacy associated with one's realization of her potentials about achieving something (Bandura 1997). In other words, positive changes in one's inside have happened when she has control over economic resources with which she accomplishes her goals. The project of *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü* (Women Empowerment in Economy) has been analyzed to discuss the characteristics of personal empowerment such as self-efficacy, self-esteem and collective efficacy. This project aims to make women's participation in economy possible with the financial support. The project of *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü* is based on an online and innovative model in which women's entrepreneurs and volunteers come together to advance the life standards of women. In the website of *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü*[4] there is a money counter which shows the amount of money collected through donations. The collected money will provide the opportunity for women who desire to generate business or expand their existing business. This project can be a successful example that enhances a sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem and collective efficacy by enabling economic empowerment.

Personal and economic empowerment is interrelated in terms of facilitating the life conditions of women. Economic power of women is necessary for the guarantee of a safe life otherwise women can be under the risk of abuse and domestic

---

[4] http://ekonomiyekadingucu.com

violence from their partners. Women should have a voice to be visible in private and public life but the economic status has significant effect on the idea of voice. The lower the economic status of a woman can mean the weaker women's voice in the social life. Economic and personal empowerment of women can be achieved if economic resources become available for them. At this juncture, the Internet becomes a useful way to the financial support for women in need. Besides the financial support, the cyberspace creates an alternative way for retail shops. Women are free to do shopping whatever they desire to purchase in the cyberspace due to the fact that it enables anonymity and delivery across the world. Personal empowerment comes out as an important consequence of economic power with a sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy.

4.1 The Impacts of Economic Strength on Women's Lives

The relation between economic strength and women's dependency becomes significant when the individual freedom of women in public and private life is considered (Balabanova 2007). Lister (2003) and Hobson (1990) suggest that women's economic situation is related to the idea of voice. In other words, when a woman is dependent economically, her voice becomes weaker and she loses visibility in public and private life. Lister (1990) discusses that women's financial dependency on a man is resulted in the lack of control and rights. According to Balabanova (2007), economic dependency prevents women from social rights and opportunities. The social theory of feminism claims that married women's economic dependency on their husbands is one of the significant roads for the subordination of women in the society (Hartmann 1976; Delphy 1984). Economic strength becomes a

vital issue for women regarding the issue of personal empowerment and there appears a strong connection between economic strength and personal empowerment in the social lives of women. When a woman is financially dependent on others, she feels insecure and loses the ability of self-assessment related to her personal achievements (Balabanova 2007).

Women's economic dependency on their husbands can have severe consequences such as abuse and domestic violence as American psychologists have proven that wives' financial dependency on their husbands can increase the possibility of brutal treatment and domestic violence (Kalmuss and Straus 1982). Russel (1982) claims that economic dependency and domestic violence are connected to each other. Particularly, battered women assert a claim that economic factors become significant reason to expose to abusive partner (Strube and Barbour 1983). Many battered women have to stay with their abusive partners because of economic reasons. Mostly they are deprived of financial resources to stay safe from brutal treatment and abuse (Lerman 1984).

Domestic violence experts prove that poverty and financial worry are highly related to reasons of partner violence but few communities do something to reverse this situation in the real life (Sanders and Schnabel 2006). Regarding the issue of domestic violence, *Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation* was found in 1990 to provide a secure shelter for battered women. First of all, the Solidarity Center of *Mor Çatı* tries to empower women psychologically by creating awareness on the issue which suggests that women do not deserve any kind of violence. In the first step, the psychological support is important because many women feel guilt, shame and fear due to their violence experiences. When these women apply for *Mor Çatı Women's Shelter*, they get psychological counseling to overcome bad feelings. They have a

chance to meet with women who escape from the spiral of violence. The Solidarity Center aims to inform women about solution ways for every kind of violence from physical violence to sexual violence. Most importantly, volunteers of this center assure the battered women that they are not responsible for the violence they are suffering.

Apart from psychological counseling, *Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation* provides a safe home for women as well. It should be noted that this foundation does not hand over financial resources directly but helps women to feel secure and psychologically empowered. However, for the financial needs of shelter *Mor Çatı* accepts online donations and creates advertisements about its products on sale through its website[5]. The Internet becomes a useful way for *Mor Çatı* to reach other women who need help or volunteer. As an important financial problem, the need for security under a dorm to escape from abuser is provided by *Mor Çatı Foundation*. Through its website, women's present needs are announced such as clothes, food, cleaning materials, and stationary supplies. Volunteers have different options to provide financial aid from donating money to doing social responsibility projects which make women participate into financial and social life. Women can be also subjected to economic violence and *Mor Çatı* gives information about what to do when exposed to economic violence through its website.

Both personal empowerment and economic empowerment are interrelated and *Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation* enables a shelter and security which is the basic resource for empowerment. The need for shelter pushes battled women for living with their abusive partners. *Mor Çatı* also meets this need by creating a safe home away from violence for women and their children. According to Sanders and

---

[5] https://www.morcati.org.tr

Schnabel (2006), economic strength is essential for women to continue their lives safely. It is known that women are under risk for brutal treatment and domestic violence if unequal economic strength and poverty exist (Sanders and Schnabel 2006). Women's economic dependency leads to their weakness in public and private life. However, *Mor Çatı* listen the voice of battered women and make the voice of them heard through its website. Anyone who listen this voice can be volunteer for women's struggle against violence and empower women psychologically and financially.

4.2 The Cyberspace: An Online Bazaar for Women

The issue of shopping is one of the hobbies of women. According to a report conducted by comScore[6] in 2010, women are active shoppers as much as men in the cyberspace but the items they prefer to purchase can be diverse. Women also spend more time on retail sites than men and that means women use the cyberspace as an online bazaar. The online retail sites provide the product information used for comparison and the delivery from different locations across the world (Bhatnagor and Ghose 2004). Liu and Forsythe (2010) define the motives of online shopping as usefulness, enjoyment, information search and online purchase. These reasons are valid for women but the online shopping can also mean freedom for many women in terms of sexuality- related purchases (Lieblum 2001). The anonymity enabled by the cyberspace can motivate women to purchase sexual products such as sex toys, erotic books and sex costumes.

---

[6] The report "Women on the Web: How Women are Shaping the Internet" is available at http://www.comscore.com

Although sex shops exist in the real world, women are mostly embarrassed to go to such places for shopping. However, homosexual women living in the countryside may not have an access to sex shops but the virtual sex shops are available 24/7 through the Internet and these women can find every kind of products they want in these shops. Lieblum (2001) suggests that the cyberspace provides limitless shopping opportunity for women who are willing to sexuality- related purchases. At this conjecture, two women entrepreneurs, Sonay Onur and Selin Keleşer, created an online retail site on sexual products in 2011 when they realized Turkish women feel uncomfortable about going to sex shops. Then, they decided to break sexual taboos of these conservative women by offering an alternative way for sexual purchases. They began with a small budget but the demand was so high that they increased the product range day by day.

While establishing their online retail shop[7] on sexual products, Onur and Keleşer try to melt different identities of women in the same spot. Their aim is to illustrate that women are mothers, wives, children and lovers but at the same time women are just women who need to be satisfied like men. Starting from this point of view, Onur and Keleşer created a virtual space free from sexual taboos for women who will realize the magic of touch. Women are offered to discover their inner desires through the products of online sex shop such as sexy underwear, sex toys and fetish materials. Moreover, homosexual women can find the appropriate sexuality-related products in the retail shop. The delivery of goods across the country is possible with the warrant of anonymity. It should be noted that this website is open to men as well but the main target is women consumers. The theme of the website is

---

[7] https://www.sihirlidokunuslar.com.tr

about the secrets of women and these secrets are revealed which means women's sexual emancipation is being released from its shackles in the virtual space.

The online retail shops on sexual products can be the small part of online shopping but the freedom they provide for women becomes an essential issue to discuss in terms of motives of online shopping. According to a research (Sebastianelli et al. 2008), there does not exist gender- based differences in the frequency of online purchasing, but the types of products vary from women to men. The statistics of comScore (2010) illustrate that women are much likely to buy apparel, accessories and jewelry while men prefer online electronics and computing products to purchase. One of the significant motives for online shopping for women is the information search. Women can easily compare the prices of product with each other and pick up the best one among them to purchase. With the motives of usefulness, enjoyment, information search and online purchase, the online shopping turns the cyberspace into an online bazaar for women. Briefly, with the anonymity of the cyberspace online retail shops offer different spectrum of products to women consumers and for whom they need a magic of touch in their lives.

4.3 Overcoming Economic Obstacles through the Internet

Economic empowerment is related to economic strength of the individual or group (Moyle et al. 2006). It is believed that economic strength leads way to social, political and psychological power in society (Mayoux 2000). Personal empowerment then comes out as a consequence of economic strength. According to Moser (1989), empowerment is the capacity of women to have self- reliance and internal strength by gaining control over economic resources. In other words, personal empowerment

can be succeeded when the control over available resources is attained. There are types of personal empowerment that one constructs psychologically such as self-efficacy and collective efficacy (Lord 1991). However, to achieve self-efficacy and collective efficacy one should overcome economic obstacles because economic empowerment is an essential way to gain self-confidence and internal strength. At this conjecture, the Internet provides opportunities for women to overcome economic obstacles through offering alternative ways to access economic resources.

The project of *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü* (Women Empowerment in Economy) becomes a useful indicator of the relationship between personal empowerment and economic strength. The aim of the *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü* project is to "promote the participation of women with limited means in the economy and contribute to their social and economic empowerment by helping them start up an income generating business or expand their existing business" (http://ekonomiyekadingucu.com). In other words, with the project of *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü* women entrepreneurs who need economic support for their business and volunteers who donate directly or indirectly come together thanks to the cyberspace. In the website of project women entrepreneurs create their own profile in which they remark amount of donation they need to expand their existing business. The volunteer is able to choose the woman she or he wants to donate and track her or his contribution online. The volunteer does not need to log in the website to donate and the identity of volunteer can remain anonymous.

The project of *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü* facilitates financial conditions of women and empowers them by enhancing self-efficacy. The self-efficacy theory of Bandura (1997) is based on the capability of achieving goals to accomplish a task. With a sense of self-efficacy, women can realize their capacity of doing something.

"In Turkey one out of every 5 women is on the verge of poverty and is waiting to realize their own potential" (http://ekonomiyekadingucu.com). Women's hidden potentials can come out with donations as the *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü* claims through its website. The sense of self-efficacy is also related to self-esteem which can be the part of empowerment process (Blascovich and Tomaka 1991). Both self-efficacy and self-esteem are connected with economic strength and women financial supported via the project have a chance to realize their potentials. The ability of achieving something increases one's sense of self-efficacy and self-esteem and that means economic strength becomes an essential way to enhance the capacity of women entrepreneurs.

Regarding the relation between personal empowerment and economic strength, collective efficacy is another step to accomplish a goal. In the collective efficacy theory (Bandura 1986) the potential of a group gains importance. Biswas (2004) suggests that a community can empower its individuals with a sense of collective efficacy by bringing their potential out for the sake of a strengthened community. The project of *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü* run by the Turkish Foundation for Waste Reduction (TİSVA), the Turkish Grameen Microfinance Program and Turkcell aims to support women with the innovative model based on online donations. This project claims that "investing in women is investing the community" (http://ekonomiyekadingucu.com) and for the future of Turkey women should be empowered economically with a sense of collective efficacy. If women have shared beliefs and goals, they work collectively and they expand their business to improve their social and economic lives. The success of women is belonged to economic strength and group-oriented goals. The sense of collective efficacy motivates

volunteers to donate women who try to generate their business to fulfill their capacities.

The innovative model based on virtual support becomes the indicator of personal empowerment through improving the sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy. At this conjecture, the Internet puts the project of *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü* into effect for women in need. Women entrepreneurs create their own virtual space in the website of project and describe their business to get the financial support from volunteers. The virtual space provides the opportunity for women entrepreneurs to be in charge of their own business to generate and expand. The financial support given to women can change their lives in a positive way. With the support, these women realize their own potential to improve their life standards. Both self-efficacy and self-esteem have been affected by economic strength (Moyle et al. 2006) and the *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü* project overcomes economic obstacles via the virtual space in which women entrepreneurs and the volunteers come together to create better life standards for women and their families. Briefly, by overcoming economic obstacles through the Internet women can achieve personal empowerment with a sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem and collective efficacy.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

Today the Internet is becoming more and more common space for people to access information, express their opinions on anything and trade pictures and files. It also has an activist means for women, which provides opportunity to deal with their offline realities. Through the Internet, women challenge the difficulties emanating from being ignorant, discriminated and subjected to violence. The availability of information and connectivity in the cyberspace become advantage for women in respect to topics of health, politics and economy. The communicative space of the Internet empowers women and this argument has been supported with the works of women conducted through the Internet.

This study has been an attempt to comprehend women's empowerment through the Internet over three topics: health, politics and economy. Primarily, the first chapter which is about the health discourse discusses that women are empowered with the availability of information, connectivity and social support acquired thanks to the Internet. As Hardey (2001) claims that the Internet has an empowering characteristic because users are not only the receiver of information but the producer of it via the Internet as well. At this conjecture, two blogs *Bu da Geçer Yahu- Seni Yeneceğim Kanse*r! (This Will Also Pass: I Will Beat You, Cancer!), and *Breast Cancer? But Doctor… I Hate Pink*, owned by Yasemin Kahvecioğlu, and Ann Silberman have been investigated and it has been argued that Internet establishes connectivity between women with breast cancer, which results in mutual support. Examining these two blogs, we have reached the conclusion that both Kahvecioğlu and Silberman achieve personal empowerment by increasing their inner

strength through their blogs which make them be in charge of their own health and care.

The issue of sexuality is another subject emphasized in the first chapter to indicate that women's sexual emancipation has been accomplished with the Internet. The community of SuicideGirls has been chosen as a topic to be analyzed because the SuicideGirls achieve to create a female language focusing on women's active sexual desires. As opposed to the Western point of view over women's sexuality, the SuicideGirls makes their own definition on beauty and sexuality. Besides women's sexuality, sexually marginalized groups like lesbians and bisexuals have been investigated to emphasize that the anonymity of cyberspace creates a safe place for marginalized groups in this part. Then, it has been found that the Internet makes women's sexual emancipation possible and offers a safe space for the sexually marginalized groups.

The first chapter ends with comparative approaches to two women's health websites: healthywomen.org and kadinsagligi.com. Through women's websites, not only do women have an opportunity to access information, but they also produce and share their lived-experiences made up of information. Women's health websites empower their users by offering wide range of information to enable them to cope with their health problems. All in all, through the first chapter we have made a deduction that women's empowerment in the health discourse has occurred thanks to the availability of information, connectivity, mutual support and sexual emancipation through the Internet.

In the second chapter, the relationship between political resonances and women's empowerment is observed. Throughout the chapter, it is argued that women

in the cyberspace try to deal with oppression, discrimination and violence to which they are exposed in every walk of their lives. To define being a woman in the conflict zone, Riverbend's blog, *Baghdad Burning* has been firstly examined. Riverbend as an Iraqi woman illustrates the hardships women have to face such as oppression, abduction and captivity besides war itself. Then, as a both offline and online community, the Guerilla Girls has been analyzed in terms of the cyberspace as an empowering tool when it is deep-seated in the political reality. Lastly, the idea of having voice has been examined through Zeren Göktan's virtual monument, *The Counter Monument*. It has been discussed that this virtual monument gives voice to the problem of domestic violence and women killings committed by men. In the second chapter of thesis, it is inferred that the cyberspace is an empowering tool regarding the subject of politics because it becomes an activist space against oppression, discrimination and violence when political reality has been conveyed into the virtual space.

The last focus of the study is on the relationship between economy and women's empowerment. In the third chapter, the impacts of economic strength on women's lives have been investigated and it is argued that there is a strict connection between the availability to financial resources and women's safety plan in their public and private lives. At this conjecture, *Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation* has been taken as an indicator of importance in providing security to the struggling women. Besides having economic strength, women also sometimes need freedom in shopping. This part suggests that the cyberspace becomes an online bazaar for women and it offers anonymity in purchasing sexuality-related products which women do not generally feel comfortable in the real life. Sonay Onur and Selin Keleşer's online retail site on sexual products has been analyzed in terms of offering

an alternative way for conservative women in their sexual purchases. In this online shopping, not only are heterosexual women considered but also homosexual women.

The last discussion topic in the third chapter is about the connection between economic strength and personal empowerment. This part suggests that personal and economic empowerment is interrelated in terms of facilitating the life conditions of women. At this point, the *Ekonomiye Kadın Gücü* project, which is based on online donations, is analyzed to discuss that economic strength increases a sense of self-efficacy, self-esteem and collective efficacy which are about one's inner strength and belief in herself and others. Throughout the third chapter, it is argued that personal empowerment comes out as a consequence of economic strength. Finally, it is inferred from the third chapter that the economic status has an important impact on women's visibility in public and private life and the Internet becomes an empowering medium for women to reach financial resources.

After the content analysis of websites and blogs operated by women and the literature review, the study has reached the conclusion that we can talk about women's empowerment through the Internet. However, for being able to develop a comprehensive understanding, women's empowerment through the Internet should be examined not only theoretically but also practically. For further research, this thesis forms a theoretical base for an empirical study through which women's participation in the cyberspace and its consequences can be examined by making an online survey. The current study only includes the lived-experiences of women in the cyberspace. Future research may include online interviews with women to get substantial data on their impressions covering the use of the Internet in different issues: health, politics and economy.

Reference

American Cancer Society, 2014. *Breast Cancer Overview: How Many Women Get Breast Cancer?* [online] Available at: <http://www.cancer.org> [Accessed on: 08 February 2014]

Amir-Ebrahimi, M. 2008. "Transgression in Narration: The Lives of Iranian Women in Cyberspace." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 4(3): 89-118.

Arroyo, B., and Tillinghast, D.S. 2009. "Information Needs and Self-Efficacy: Internet Use by Women with Breast Cancer." *Social Marketing Quarterly* 15(102): 102-117.

Balabanova, E.S. 2007. "Women's Economic Dependency: Nature, Causes, and Consequences." *Sociological Research* 46(2): 5-21.

Bandura, A. 1986. *Social Foundations of Thought and Action: A Social Cognitive Theory.* Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bandura, A. 1997. *Self-Efficacy: The Exercise of Control*. New York: Freeman.

Bhatnagar, S., Ghose, S. 2004. "Segmenting Consumers Based on the Benefits and Risks of Internet Shopping." Journal of Business Research 57(12).

Biswas, S.N. 2004. "Empowerment: From Self-Efficacy to Collective Efficacy." *The Quarterly Journal of Foundation for Organizational Research and Education* XXI9(4).

Blascovich, J., and Tomaka, J. 1991. "Measures of Self Esteem." In *Measures of Personality and Social Psychological Attitudes.* Ed. Robinson, J.P., Shaver, P.R., and Wrightsman, I.S. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Brophy, J.E. 2010. "Developing a Corporeal Cyberfeminism: Beyond Cyberutopia." *New Media & Society* 12(6): 929-945.

Butler, J. 1999. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

Daneback, K., Mansson S.A., Ross, M.W., and Markham C.M. 2012. "The Internet as a Source of Information about Sexuality." *Sex Education: Sexuality, Society, Learning* 12(5): 583-598.

Daniels, J. 2009. "Rethinking Cyberfeminism(s): Race, Gender, and Embodiment." *Women's Studies Quarterly* 37(1): 101-124.

Datta, R. 2003. "From Development to Empowerment: The Self-Employed Women's Association in India." *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 16(3).

Delphy, C. 1984. *Close to Home: A Materialist Analysis of Women's Oppression*. Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press.

Diomand, E. 1989. "Mimicry, Mimesis, and the 'True Real'." *Modern Drama* 32(1): 58-71.

Fink, B. 1995. *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Freud, S. 1963. *Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality*. New York: Basic Books.

Fuchs, C. 2008. *Internet and Society: Social Theory in the Information Age.* New York: Routledge.

Goldman, P. 2007. "'Imagining Ourselves': Cultural Activism for Women through Technology and New Media." *Museum International* 59(4): 80-87.

Göktan, Z. 2013. *There is Another Possibility: A Conversation.* [online] Available at: <http://www.zerengoktan.com/websitetext/katologlowic.pdf> [Accessed on: 12 December 2013]

Haraway, D. 1988. "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective." *Feminist Studies* 14(3).

Haraway, D. 1991. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." In *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (pp.149-181). New York: Routlegde.

Harcourt, W. 1999. *Women@Internet: Creating New Cultures in Cyberspace*. New York: Zed Books.

Hardey, M. 2001. "'E-Health': The Internet and the Transformation of Patients into Consumers and Producers of Health Knowledge." *Communication & Society* 4(3): 388-405.

Hartmann, H. 1976. "Capitalism, Patriarchy and Job Segregation by Sex." *Signs* 1: 137-68.

Hartsock, N. 1983. *Money, Sex, and Power*. New York: Longman.

Hawthorne, S., and Klein, R. 1999. *Cyberfeminism: Connectivity, Critique and Creativity*. North Melbourne: Spinifex Press.

Hobson, B. 1990. "No Exit, No Voice: Women's Economic Dependency and the Welfare State." *Acta Sociologica* 33(3).

Irigaray, L. 1985. *This Sex Which Is Not One, Ithaca*. New York: Cornell University Press.

Johnston, A., Friedman, B., and Peach, S. 2011. "Standpoint in Political Blogs: Voice, Authority, and Issues." *Women's Studies* 40: 269-298.

Judkins, D.Z. 2000. "Women's Health on the Web: An Overview." *Health Care on the Internet* 4(2/3): 1-18.

Kabeer, N. 2001. "Conflicts Over Credit: Re- Evaluating the Empowerment Potential of Loans to Women in Rural Bangladesh." *World Development* 29(1).

Kalmuss, D.S., and Straus, M.A. 1982. "Wife's Marital Dependency and Wife Abuse." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 44: 277-86.

Keren, M. 2006. *Blogosphere: The New Political Arena*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.

Langellier, K., and Peterson, E. 2004. *Storytelling in Daily Life: Performing Narrative*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Leiblum, S.R. 2001. "Women, Sex and the Internet." *Sexual and Relationship Therapy* 16(4): 389-405.

Lerman, L.G. 1984. "A Model State Act: Remedies for Domestic Violence." *Harvard Journal on Legislation* 21(61).

Levina, M. 2012. "Our Data, Ourselves: Feminist Narratives of Empowerment in Health 2.0 Discourse." In *Cyberfeminism 2.0* (pp. 13- 28). Ed. Gajjala, R., and Ju Oh, Y. New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Lister, R. 1990. "Women, Economic Dependency and Citizenship." *Journal of Social Policy* 19(4).

Lister, R. 2003. *Citizenship: Feminist Perspectives*. New York: New York University Press.

Liu, C., and Forsythe, S. 2010. "Sustaining Online Shopping: Moderating Role of Online Shopping Motives." *Journal of Internet Commerce* 9(2).

Lord, J. 1991. *Lives in Transition: The Process of Personal Empowerment*. Kitchener, ON: Center for Research and Education in Human Services.

Magnet, S. 2007. "Feminist Sexualities, Race and the Internet: An Investigation of Suicidegirls.com." *New Media & Society* 9(4): 577-602.

Marton, C. 2000. "Evaluating the Women's Health Matters Website." *CyberPsychology & Behavior* 3(5): 747-760.

Mayoux, L. 2000. "Microfinance and the Empowerment of Women: A
        Review of Key Issues." Geneva: ILO, Social Finance Unit.

McGerty, L.J. 2000. "Nobody Lives Only in Cyberspace: Gendered
        Subjectivities and Domestic Use of the Internet." *Cyberpsychology &
        Behavior* 3(5): 895-899.

Mitra, A. 2001. "Marginal Voices in Cyberspace." *New Media and Society*
        3(1): 29-48.

Mitra, A., and Watts, E. 2002. "Theorizing Cyberspace: The Idea of Voice
        Applied to the Internet Discourse." *New Media & Society* 4(4): 479-498.

Moser, C.O.N. 1989. "Gender Planning in the Third World: Meeting Practical
        and Strategic Gender Needs." *World Development* 17(11).

Moyle, T.L., Dollard, M., and Biswas, S.N. 2006. "Personal and Economic
        Empowerment in Rural Indian Women: A Self-help Group Approach."
        International Journal of Rural Management 2(2): 245-266.

Muise, A. 2011. "Women's Sex Blogs: Challenging Dominant Discources
        of Heterosexual Desire." *Feminism & Psychology* 21(3): 411-419.

Nouraie-Simone, F. 2005. "Wings of Freedom: Iranian Women, Identity, and
        Cyberspace." In *On Shifting Ground*. Ed. Nouraie-Simone, F. New York: The
        Feminist Press.

Pierce, T. 2010. "Singing at the Digital Well: Blogs as Cyberfeminist Sites of
        Resistance." *Feminist Formations* 22(3): 196-209.

Plant, S. 1996. "On the Matrix: Cyberfeminist Simulations." In *Cultures of
        Internet: Virtual Spaces, Real Histories, Living Bodies.* Ed. Shields, R.
        London: Sage.

Rains, S.A. 2008. "Seeking Health Information in the Information Age: The
        Role of Internet Self-Efficacy." *Western Journal of Communication* 72(1).

Rettberg, J.W. 2008. *Blogging: Digital Media and Society Series*.
        Cambridge: Polity Press.

Ross, M.W. 2010. "Typing, Doing, and Being: Sexuality and the Internet." *Journal
        of Sex Research* 42(4): 342-352.

Rothblum, E. 2010. "Where is the 'Women's Community?' Voices of
        Lesbian, Bisexual, and Queer Women and Heterosexual Sisters." *Feminism &
        Psychology* 20(4): 454-472.

Russel, D.E.H. 1982. *Rape in Marriage*. New York: Macmillan.

Sanders, C.K., and Schnabel, M. 2006. "Organizing for Economic Empowerment of Battered Women." *Journal of Community Practice* 14(3).

Sebastianelli, R., Tamimi, N., and Rajan, M. 2008. "Perceived Quality of Online Shopping: Does Gender Make a Difference?" *Journal of Internet Commerce* 7(4).

Sharf, B. 1997. "Communicating Breast Cancer Online: Support and Empowerment on the Internet." *Women & Health* 26(1): 65-84.

Shields, L.E. 1995. "Women's Experiences of the Meaning of Empowerment." *Qualitative Health Research* 5: 15-35.

Spiegel, D. 1993. *Living beyond the Limits*. New York: Time Books/Random House.

Song, F.W., West, J.E., Lundy, L., and Dahmen, N.S. 2012. "Women, Pregnancy, and Health Information Online: The Making of Informed Patients and Ideal Mothers." *Gender & Society* 26(5): 773-798.

Stephan, R. 2013. "Creating Solidarity in Cyberspace: The Case of Arab Women's Solidarity Association United." *Journal of Middle East Women's Studies* 9(1): 81-109.

Strube, M.J., and Barbour, L.S. 1983. "The Decision to Leave an Abusive Relationship: Economic Dependence and Psychological Commitment." *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 45(4): 785-793.

Van Uden-Kraan, C., Drossaert, C., Taal, E., Shaw, B., Seydel, E., and Van de Laar, M. 2008. "Empowering Process and Outcomes of Participation in Online Support Groups for Patients with Breast Cancer, Arthritis, or Fibromyalgia." *Qualitative Health Research* 18: 405-417.

Van Zoonen, L. 2002. "Gendering the Internet: Claims, Controversies and Cultures." European Journal of Communication 17(1): 5-23.

Tuchman, G., Daniels, A.K., and Benet, J. 1978. *Hearth and Home: Images of Women in the Mass Media*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Wood, E.A. 2008. "Consciousness-Raising 2.0: Sex Blogging and the Creation of a Feminist Sex Commons." *Feminism & Psychology* 18(4): 480-487.

Wood, J.T. 2005. "Feminist Standpoint Theory and Muted Group Theory: Commonalities and Divergences." *Women and Language* 28(2): 61-64.

Ziebland, S., and Wyke S. 2012. "Health and Illness in a Connected World: How Might Sharing Experiences on the Internet Affect People's Health?" *The Milbank Quarterly* 90(2): 219-249.

Websites

http://www.internetworldstats.com   [Accessed on: 15 April 2014]

http://budageceryaw.blogspot.com.tr   [Accessed on: 20 October 2013]

http://www.butdoctorihatepink.com   [Accessed on: 20 October 2013]

http://suicidegirlspress.com   [Accessed on: 03 November 2013]

http://www.healthywomen.org   [Accessed on: 06 December 2013]

http://www.kadinsagligi.com   [Accessed on: 06 December 2014]

http://riverbendblog.blogspot.com.tr   [Accessed on: 15 January 2014]

http://www.guerrillagirls.com   [Accessed on: 21 January 2014]

http://www.anitsayac.com   [Accessed on: 02 March 2014]

https://www.morcati.org.tr   [Accessed on: 25 March 2014]

https://www.sihirlidokunuslar.com.tr   [Accessed on: 04 April 2014]

http://ekonomiyekadingucu.com   [Accessed on: 09 April 2014]