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BOOK REVIEW

A BOOK REVIEW: IDENTITY PHENOMENON IN WOMEN'S NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS IN TÜRKIYE

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ABSTRACT

A descriptive and a critical review regarding the book entitled "Identity Phenomenon in Women's Non-Governmental Organizations in Türkiye" written by Cansel Uslu and Didem Doğanyılmaz Duman is provided.

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Identity is a complex phenomenon that involves both defining oneself and being defined by the social environment. In a modern society, being in many organizations, institutions, and communities brings with it many identity definitions.

In this work, it has been researched how the concept of identity is constructed in women's non-governmental organizations in Türkiye. The authors conducted in-depth interviews with five women's non-governmental organizations originated from socio-political cultures. These organizations are İlerici Kadınlar Derneği (IKD), Havle Kadın Derneği, Kadın Adayları Destekleme Derneği (KA.DER), Kadının İnsan Hakkı Yeni Çözümler Derneği (KIH-YC), and Kadın Merkezi Vakfı (KAMER). It is evident that the selection of organization has been handpicked to analyze how identity construction in different ideologies affects similarity/difference. Therefore, the similarities and differences in the selected women's non-governmental organizations were comparatively analyzed on the basis of culture, ideology, discourse, power, and society. Authors used the obtained data from the interviews to complete the discourse analysis, one of the qualitative research data analysis methods, within the scope of similarities/differences in relation to identity and political culture.

The aim of the book is to investigate how the phenomenon of identity is formed in women's non-governmental organizations and by what components it is consciously and/or unconsciously affected. In addition, while focusing on the impact of non-governmental organizations on democracy, discourse in the public sphere, and socio-political decision-making elements, it has also been analyzed how they construct discourses on this issue and how they differ among themselves.

Studies on the phenomenon of identity constitute a rich theoretical accumulation in interdisciplinary literature. By carrying this knowledge to the field, the book examined how identity construction took place in women's non-governmental organizations. In addition, there is no similar comprehensive study in the literature on the formation and reflection of the phenomenon of identity in women's non-governmental organizations and its effects that occur and/or may arise in the socio-political framework. The focus of the book on the relevant gap

and its planned contribution to the literature reveals the originality of the work. Although the book aims to emphasize the importance of the interaction of identity with society, it is also important how the construction process and similarities/differences are formed. Non-governmental organizations are in a critical position in terms of finding a place in the public sphere, constructing discourse, and establishing solidarity/unity in society through similarities. For example, while some of the interviewed women's non-governmental organizations have a religious position, others define themselves ideologically. Since the adopted views and cultures differ, the discourses are shaped accordingly. Therefore, in the book, a holistic perspective is presented by making a comparative analysis of discourses in different socio-political cultures. It was aimed to reveal the identity, political culture and ideology adopted by non-governmental organizations through discourse analysis and to determine the changing/transforming discourses within the framework of the determined sample group. One of the advantages of the method is that, due to the selection of typical case sampling, mainstream identities that are active and visible in the public sphere can be analyzed and the existing differences/similarities can be presented comparatively. Thus, it is aimed to raise awareness within the framework of solidarity/unity in both non-governmental organizations and society. The disadvantage is that only selected socio-political identities are examined nevertheless it varies even wider. Additionally, it could be thought that more comprehensive results could be obtained by expanding the study further by adding women's non-governmental organizations in different socio-political cultures. However, the identity typologies adopted by the selected non-governmental organizations represent the leading mainstream identities in society, offering the reader a holistic perspective and thus minimizing the disadvantage.

The book consists of three parts. In the first part, identity was focused as a conceptual framework, in the second part, the place of civil society was explained, and in the third part, in-depth interviews were examined with discourse analysis.

In the first part, the subheadings of identity phenomenon are individual identity, collective identity; and pertaining to identity approaches, primordial, modernist, instrumentalist, social constructionist and ethno-symbolist approaches are explained. Within the scope of the social constructionist approach, which forms the theoretical basis of the study, it is emphasized that identities are transformed and constantly reconstructed as a result of interaction with social processes

(p.34). It is also accepted that the identity characteristics of the individual are "given" at birth. However, within the scope of social relations, the identity of the individual is transformed and reconstructed by cultural, ideological, economic, and psychological factors (p.35). Therefore, it is stated that the phenomenon of identity is reconstructed politically, sociologically, economically, and psychologically in women's non-governmental organizations. How this occurs and what factors change are among the research questions (p.38).

From another perspective, examining the concept of identity in terms of power, subject and discourse (p.42) reveals how identity construction occurs in the context of power relations. Here, not only political but also patriarchal, economic, and social power elements are focused. Transforming one's identity is related to the relevant areas of power. Thus, it is important to be able to engage in discourse in the public sphere within the scope of social interaction and relations with spheres of power (p.44).

The title "identity conflicts" (p.45) aims to question whether there is a conflict between women's non-governmental organizations due to differences in individual and collective identities. In the study, it is emphasized that if there is a conflict, this conflict situation can be turned into an advantage by making visible the effects such as the emergence of different opinions, raising awareness, developing a sense of empathy, creating tolerance, and a relative reduction in alienation (p.48).

In the second part (p.49), civil society is discussed as a conceptual framework. The classical understanding of civil society, the transcendent State understanding, and the understanding of civil society as a necessity were mentioned. Following the theoretical explanation of civil society, the history of civil society in Türkiye was examined in the single-party, multi-party period, then in the 1960s, 1970s, after 1980s and in the 2000s.

The third part (p.79) is the section where the interview transcripts are analyzed. The interviews were analyzed using the interpretative view method from discourse analysis. The remarkable elements obtained as a result of the interviews are titled as categories. The category headings in question are: organizational structure-decision-making processes, identity definitions, conflict element-joint activities, solidarity networks-sisterhood, gender-political power, multiple identities, public sphere-political mobilization.

As a result, it was concluded that the non-governmental organizations included in the sample agreed on women's rights and used an inclusive language in their events.

"According to the interview data, IKD focuses on the struggle for socialist rights, Havle Kadın Derneği primarily focuses on the struggle for the rights of Muslim feminist women, KA.DER focuses on the struggle to ensure equality between women and men in decision-making mechanisms, KIH-YC focuses on the struggle for gender equality and human rights, and KAMER focuses on the struggle for coping with violence and gender equality." (p.131-132).

Sisterhood is an important concept within the framework of feminist terminology and the authors included it in the interviews to determine how the non-governmental organizations embraced the concept. It is noteworthy that every single organization has a completely different view on the concept (p.134). While Havle Kadın Derneği embraces the concept of sisterhood, IKD focuses on the concept of solidarity instead. KA.DER emphasizes that not only sisterhood but also men's contribution to the struggle is important, and KIH-YÇ, criticizes that sisterhood and sexual identity are ignored. Last but not least, KAMER highlights sharing and solidarity and emphasized the importance of men's contribution to the gender struggle. Although the women's non-governmental organizations in the sample have different identities, ideologies, and cultures, it is concluded that each organization contributes to women's rights with different issues and tools (p.137-138).

To conclude, the book creates a rich accumulation of knowledge in terms of the coexistence of theory and field work over a complex issue. However, as a criticism, studies on women's non-governmental organizations could have been given in depth in the literature review section. In addition, it is possible to say that the category titles would be reduced, and they would be more associated with the information obtained.

DISCLOSURE OF CONFLICT

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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