

Gender Perception of University Students Receiving Formation Training in Turkey

Türkiye’de Formasyon Eğitimi Alan Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Toplumsal Cinsiyet Algıları

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ABSTRACT Objective: Discriminations such as women's access to fewer educational opportunities than men, their participation in decision-making, and working life difficulties continue to be experienced all over the world. The research is a cross-sectional study conducted to examine the sensitivity of students to gender equality since gender inequality continues in many areas of life and they are receiving formation training. **Material and Methods:** The population of the cross-sectional study consisted of students who took formation at Balıkesir University. Students (n=90), who agreed to participate in the research, were reached without sampling on March 3, 2018. The questionnaire form was composed of questions to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the students and their sensitivity to gender equality. Permission was obtained from individuals and institutions, and students were interviewed face-to-face to fill in questionnaires. The application, which took about 10 minutes, was done in the last 10 minutes of the lessons. Data were evaluated with frequency distributions and chi-square test in SPSS statistical program. **Results:** The mean age of the participants was 24.8±4.8. In the study, 52% of the students gave the answer "Men ensure the continuation of the lineage" and 81.1% said "Women should choose jobs that suit them", indicating that gender stereotypes are common. 90% of the students did not agree with the statement "It is normal for a woman to be subjected to violence by her husband when necessary", 91% did not agree with the statement "Girls do not need to be educated", 90% did not agree with the statement "Honor killing is necessary for the cleansing of honor", 90% did not agree with the statement "Women sometimes deserve beatings" and 92.2% did not agree with the statement "If resources are limited, boys should be given priority for education". **Conclusion:** According to the data obtained from the students, no gender-discriminatory approaches were detected in the use of health services by the public and in the provision of services by health personnel. In this case, students should be made more sensitive to gender inequality.

Keywords: Gender; student; equality; awareness

ÖZET Amaç: Kadınların erkeklere göre daha az eğitim olanaklarına ulaşmaları, karar mekanizmalarına katılmaları ve çalışma yaşamına ilişkin güçlükler gibi ayrımcılıklar, tüm dünyada yaşanmaya devam etmektedir. Araştırma toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin yaşamın birçok alanında sürüyor olması ve formasyon eğitimi alıyor olmaları nedeniyle öğrencilerin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğine ilişkin duyarlılıklarını incelemek amacıyla yapılmış kesitsel bir çalışmadır. **Gereç ve Yöntemler:** Kesitsel tipteki çalışmanın evrenini Balıkesir Üniversitesi’nde formasyon alan öğrenciler oluşturmuştur. Örneklem yapılmaksızın 3 Mart/8 Nisan 2018 tarihlerinde araştırmaya katılmayı kabul eden öğrencilere (n=90) ulaşıldı. Anket formu öğrencilerin sosyo-demografik özellikleriyle toplumsal cinsiyet eşitliğine ilişkin duyarlılıklarını belirlemeye yönelik sorulardan oluşturuldu. Kişi ve kurumlardan izin alınıp, öğrencilerle yüz yüze görüşülerek anket formları doldurulması sağlandı. Yaklaşık 10dk süren uygulama derslerin son 10dk’sında yapıldı. Veriler SPSS istatistik programında frekans dağılımları ve ki-kare testi ile değerlendirildi. **Bulgular:** Katılımcıların yaş ortalaması 24,8±4,8’dir. Çalışmada öğrencilerin %52,0’si “Erkekler soyun devamını sağlar”, %81,1’i “Kadınlar kendilerine uygun işleri seçmelidir” yanıtlarının verilmesi cinsiyetçi kalıp yarguların yaygın olduğunu göstermektedir. “Gerektiği zaman kadının kocasından şiddet görmesi normaldir” ifadesine %90’ı, “Kız çocuklarının okutulmasına gerek yoktur.” ifadesine %91’i, “Namus cinayeti namusun temizlenmesi için gereklidir” ifadesine %90’ı, “Kadınlar bazen dayağı hak eder” ifadesine %90’ı “Kaynaklar kısıtlı ise eğitim için erkek çocuğa öncelik verilmeli” ifadesine %92,2’si katılmamıştır. **Sonuç:** Halkın sağlık hizmetlerinden yararlanmasında ve sağlık personelinin hizmet sunumunda öğrencilerden alınan verilere göre cinsiyet ayrımcı yaklaşımlar saptanmamıştır. Bu durumda öğrencilerin toplumsal cinsiyet eşitsizliği konusunda daha da duyarlı hale getirilmesi sağlanmalıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplumsal cinsiyet; öğrenci; eşitlik; duyarlılık

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The term “sex” refers to the biological, physiological, and genetic differences between males and females, while the term “gender,” which we often use in daily life, refers to the socially constructed roles and responsibilities of men and women.^{1,2} Therefore, gender is about values and norms that define how we are perceived by society and expected to behave in society.³⁻⁵ One constructs gender by observing role models in the family and society. Gender-role socialization is a process through which one learns the norms and values internalized by women and men in the society in which they live.⁴ Research shows that the roles and responsibilities assigned to women and men are not natural and fixed but are socially constructed and shifting. Gender roles depend on dominant cultural norms and values and perceived differences between men and women.⁷

The concept of gender has made discrimination against women throughout history apparent. In Turkish society, gender refers to inequality between men and women. Male superiority manifests itself in the exclusion of women from the public sphere, denial of their rights to education, violence against them, femicide, and child marriage. Progress in gender equality requires social and cultural changes. Stereotypes should be challenged to create a society where women are respected and their rights protected. This can be achieved only by people with high awareness of gender equality.⁸ Family, society, and education also perpetuate gender inequality. They are a three-legged platform that works like one structure. Parents condition their children, intentionally or unintentionally, to internalize social norms and gender roles. Parents are also role models that determine children’s gender dispositions in different ways.⁹ Education is the second component that plays a significant role in introducing gender roles to children. Educated girls are less likely to become the subjects of gender-based violence and bullying.¹⁰ Schools play a key role in socialization because they are where boys and girls learn gender roles. In other words, the education system perpetuates gender roles.^{10,11} Research shows that teachers reproduce gender stereotypes in their lectures and interactions with students. It does not mean that they openly discriminate against girls or boys,

but what they expect of their students and what teaching and disciplinary methods they use in their lectures tell us a lot about their gender biases and stereotypes. Teachers treat male and female students differently, interact with them differently, and assign different roles and responsibilities to them, resulting in the perpetuation of inter-gender hierarchy and patriarchy. However, they do not realize that they discriminate between male and female students, which shows that they also have traditional gender stereotypes. Gender equality is defined as equal participation, empowerment, and representation in all spheres of life. For an equal society, educators should have two basic skills; gender awareness and gender sensitivity.¹²

Gender inequality prevails in every corner of life. This cross-sectional study examined university students’ perceptions of gender stereotypes and their awareness of and sensitivity towards gender equality.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

STUDY TYPE

This cross-sectional study investigated university students’ perceptions of gender stereotypes and their awareness of and sensitivity towards gender equality. No sampling was performed. The sample consisted of 90 nursing university students receiving formation training at Balıkesir University.

DATA TOOL

Data were collected (in the last ten minutes of classes) through face-to-face interviews using a questionnaire based on the researchers’ literature review. The questionnaire consisted of items on socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, economic status, employment, etc.) and gender equality (statements about gender stereotypes). Some examples of the statements are “Men keep the family name alive.” “Women should pursue job careers that fit their physiological makeup and feminine character.” “Women need their husbands’ permission to work.” “The man is the breadwinner.” “It is okay for husbands to beat their wives when they feel like they have to.” “Women are responsible for domestic chores, including child-rearing, cooking, etc.” “Women need

men's protection." "Girls do not need education." "Girls should be monitored more than boys." "Honor killings are necessary. "The only way out of the family home for a woman is in a bridal gown, and the only way back in for her is in a burial robe." "Men should receive a larger share of inheritance than women." "Sometimes women deserve a beating." "Boys' education should be prioritized over girls' if sources are limited." The questionnaire also included statements about healthcare service, such as "Avoiding being examined by a healthcare professional of the opposite sex," "Feeling uncomfortable receiving family planning counseling from a healthcare professional of the opposite sex," "Is contraception the responsibility of women or men?," "Finding tubal ligation/vasectomy suitable," "Avoiding being examined for urological problems by a healthcare professional of the opposite sex."

STATISTICAL ANALYSIS

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), at a significance level of 0.05. Frequency distributions and chi-square tests were used for analysis.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of Ufuk University. Informed consent was obtained from volunteers. Permission was obtained from institutions. Each stage of the research was carried out according to the ethical principles of the Declaration of Helsinki of the World Medical Association. The research was conducted between 3 March and 8 April 2018

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the participants' socio-demographic characteristics. They had a mean age of 24.8 ± 4.8 (minimum 19, maximum 42) years. Of participants, 54.4% spent a significant part of their lives in villages/towns, 83.3% had nuclear families, 50.0% were of high economic status, and 72.2% were unemployed.

Participants were asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the statements in Table 2 to deter-

TABLE 1: Socio-demographic characteristics.

Socio-demographic characteristics	No	%
Age Mean \pm SD 24.8 \pm 4.8	90	100
Place of residence		
Village/town	49	54.4
District	24	26.7
City	17	18.9
Family type		
Nuclear	75	83.3
Extended	15	16.7
Economic status		
Low	3	3.3
Moderate	42	46.7
High	45	50.0
Employment status		
Employed	25	27.8
Unemployed	65	72.2
Total	90	100.0

SD: Standard deviation.

mine their perceptions of gender roles and stereotypes. We believe that we have reached important information about gender roles in Turkish society. Participants agreed with the statements "Men keep the family name alive" (52.2%), "Women should pursue job careers that fit their physiological makeup and feminine character" (81.1%), "Women need their husbands' permission to work" (36.7%), "The man is the breadwinner" (48.9%), and "Women are responsible for domestic chores, including child-rearing, cooking, etc." (45.6%). Although most participants disagreed with the statement "Girls do not need education" (91.1%), some participants agreed with the statement "Girls should be monitored more than boys" (44.4%) and "Women need men's protection." (40%). Six participants agreed with the statement, "Honor killings are necessary." Although the number is small, it is still an issue of concern. Twenty participants agreed with the statement, "Men should receive a larger share of inheritance than women." Six participants agreed with the statement, "Boys' education should be prioritized over girls' if sources are limited." Seven participants agreed with the statement, "It is okay for husbands to beat their wives when they feel like they have to," and nine participants agreed

TABLE 2: Statements of gender stereotypes.

Items		Agree	Disagree	No idea	Total
Men keep the family name alive.	n	45	41	1	90
	%	52.2	46.7	1.1	100.0
Women should pursue job careers that fit their physiological makeup and feminine character.	n	73	16	1	90
	%	81.1	17.8	1.1	100.0
Women need their husbands' permission to work.	n	33	53	4	90
	%	36.7	58.9	4.4	100.0
The man is the breadwinner.	n	44	45	1	90
	%	48.9	50.0	1.1	100.0
It is okay for husbands to beat their wives when they feel like they have to.	n	7	81	2	90
	%	7.8	90.0	2.2	100.0
Women are responsible for domestic chores, including child-rearing, cooking, etc.	n	41	47	2	90
	%	45.6	52.2	2.2	100.0
Women need men's protection.	n	36	51	3	90
	%	40.0	56.7	3.3	100.0
Girls do not need education.	n	7	82	1	90
	%	7.8	91.1	1.1	100.0
Girls should be monitored more than boys.	n	40	47	3	90
	%	44.4	52.2	3.3	100.0
Honor killings are necessary.	n	6	81	3	90
	%	6.7	90.9	3.3	100.0
The only way out of the family home for a woman is in a bridal gown, and the only way back in for her is in a burial robe.	n	6	83	1	90
	%	6.7	92.2	1.1	100.0
Men should receive a larger share of inheritance than women.	n	21	66	3	90
	%	23.3	73.3	3.3	100.0
Sometimes women deserve a beating.	n	9	81	-	90
	%	10.0	90.0	-	100.0
Boys' education should be prioritized over girls' if sources are limited.	n	6	83	1	90
	%	6.7	92.2	1.1	100.0

with the statement, “Sometimes women deserve a beating.” Most participants (71.1%) were comfortable with the idea of being examined by a healthcare professional of the opposite sex, while nineteen participants (22.2%) were uncomfortable with the idea of receiving family planning counseling from a healthcare professional of the opposite sex (Table 3). Forty-two participants (46.7%) believed that contraception was the responsibility of women. More than half of the participants (58.9%) found tubal ligation/vasectomy suitable for them (58.9%) and were comfortable with the idea of being examined for urological problems by a healthcare professional of the opposite sex (61.1%) (Table 3). Participants' perceptions of gender roles in healthcare services did not differ by their place of residence, family type, and employment status ($p>0.05$)

DISCUSSION

Inequality between men and women is based on gender roles embedded in a complex web of all human experience (emotions, interaction, economic organization, culture, and the state system).¹³ Despite laws on gender equality, gender discrimination is still prevalent in work life, decision-making processes, and politics in Turkey. We need to challenge all forms of discrimination against women to redress gender inequalities in Turkey. We must raise young people's awareness of gender inequalities because they are the ones who will assume critical roles in politics and society in the future. University students taking formation training are the teachers of the future. Therefore, this study focused on how they perceived gender roles and stereotypes and the factors affecting their perceptions.

TABLE 3: Gender discriminatory attitudes in the use of health services.

Items	n	%
Avoiding being examined by a healthcare professional of the opposite sex		
Yes	26	28.9
No	64	71.1
Feeling uncomfortable receiving family planning counseling from a healthcare professional of the opposite sex		
Yes	20	22.2
No	70	77.8
Is contraception the responsibility of women or men?		
Yes	42	46.7
No	48	53.3
Finding tubal ligation/vasectomy suitable		
Yes	37	41.1
No	53	58.9
Avoiding being examined for urological problems by a healthcare professional of the opposite sex		
Yes	35	38.9
No	55	61.1
Total	90	100.0

Thirty-three participants (36.7%) believed that women needed their husbands' permission to work. Yılmaz et al. found that the vast majority of female students (87.6%) opposed that statement, while nearly half of the male students (45.3%) agreed with it. Çiftçi, Bayram, and Bayram conducted a study in Mardin and posed the same statement to students. They reported that more than half of the male students (71.0%) and less than half of the female students (45.2%) believed that women needed their husbands' permission to work.^{14,15} The difference in the results may be due to cultural differences. Forty-four participants (48.9%) believed that the man was the breadwinner. Yılmaz et al. posed students a similar statement, "Women with rich husbands do not need to work," and found that the vast majority of female students (94.3%) opposed it, while 18.7% of male students agreed with it.¹⁴ Çiftçi et al. reported that 42.8% of male and 27.4% of female students believed that women with rich husbands did not need to work.¹⁵ Vefikuluçay, Demirel, Taşkın, and Eroğlu looked into senior students' views of gender roles and found that male students held more traditional views than the females.¹⁶ The employment rate for men and women in Turkey is 65.1% and 28%, respectively.¹⁷ Our results indicate that the traditional perception of men as breadwinners is prevalent among university students.

Most participants (81.1%) thought that women should pursue job careers that fit their physiological makeup and feminine character, and almost half of the participants (45.6%) believed that women were responsible for domestic chores (child-rearing, cooking, etc.). Seçgin and Tural found that less than half of the students (40%) agreed with the statement, "Men and women should have different jobs."¹⁸ Yılmaz et al. reported that most students (male: 63.2%; female 88.9%) were against the notion that politics was for men.¹⁴ Research in general shows that male students hold more traditional views of gender roles than female students.^{14,16} Our results are consistent with the literature.

Less than half of the participants (44.4%) agreed that girls should be monitored more than boys. Yılmaz et al. noted that male students disapproved of divorced or widowed women living alone (14.5%) and of women going out alone at night (30.4%).¹⁴ Seçgin and Tural also reported that 37% of male students and 6% of female students disapproved of single women living alone.¹⁸ Most of our participants agreed that girls should be educated, but some believed that girls should be monitored more than boys. This is because they favored authoritarian and oppressive parenting styles where girls are disciplined and put under strict restrictions.

The majority of the male participants (74.5%) and more than half of the female participants (58.9%) believed that women needed men's protection. This result suggests that the traditional notion of women incapable of protecting themselves is prevalent among students.¹⁵ Although only twenty students (23.3%) believed that men should receive a larger share of inheritance than women, inheritance remained a point of discrimination. Yılmaz et al. found that only a few students (female: 2.5%; male: 10%) approved the statement "Family inheritance should be split up only among boys." Çiftçi et al. reported that most students disagreed with that statement (female: 93.4%; male: 79.3%).^{14,15} The results suggested that most participants were against gender inequality and gender discrimination. However, they held more discriminatory views than their counterparts in other studies.

Only eight participants supported the notion that girls needed no education. However, it is troubling that university students taking formation training are subscribing to that kind of thinking. Six participants (6.7%) agreed that boys' education should be prioritized over girls' if sources are limited. Yılmaz et al. reported that few students (female: 1.6%; male: 9.1%) favored the notion that if parents cannot afford to send both their sons and daughters to school, they should let their sons attend school, not their daughters.¹⁴ Vefikuluçay et al. also reported that some students (female: 5%; male: 25%) subscribed to that notion.¹⁶ Most participants believed that girls and boys had equal rights to education. In recent years, numerous projects have been held, and numerous laws have been passed to increase the schooling rates among girls in Turkey. However, figures tell a different story. According to the data of 2016, 1.6% of men but 8.5% of women are illiterate.¹⁷ Seven participants (7.8%) found domestic violence against women acceptable, while nine participants (10%) believed that women deserved a beating from time to time. Seçgin and Tural posed the statement, "A man can beat his wife if he feels like he has to," to which most students opposed (female: 94%; male: 84%).¹⁸ Çiftçi et al. reported that most students were against domestic violence against women (female: 94.8%; male: 80%) and against the notion that women sub-

jected to domestic violence should keep it to themselves (female: 88.8%; male: 64.2%).¹⁵ Kahraman et al. found that the majority of students (87.5%) were against the notion that a guy can beat his girlfriend if she deserves it."¹⁹ Most of our participants opposed violence against women, which is consistent with the literature.

Six participants (6.7%) approved honor killings. Although the number is low, it shows that there are violent people with discriminatory attitudes towards the opposite sex. However, the results indicate that most participants opposed violence against women. We believe that this is a direct result of the projects, campaigns, ads, and activities undertaken to stop violence against women in Turkey. However, it is worth noting that some participants justified violence against women. Participants' attitudes towards family life reflect the cultural values of Turkish society. Turkish men regard themselves as the heads of the household, while women acquiesce to that power imbalance and remain silent in the face of domestic violence. Such misconceptions and misjudgments in Turkish society prevent women's empowerment.

Most participants (71.1%) were comfortable with the idea of being examined by a healthcare professional of the opposite sex, whereas nineteen participants (10%) were uncomfortable with the idea of receiving family planning counseling from a healthcare professional of the opposite sex. Çiftçi et al. reported that students (female: 86%; male 64.8%) were against the notion that male healthcare professionals should not examine women.¹⁵ Seçgin and Tural found that almost half of the students (40%) agreed that women should be examined only by female healthcare professionals.¹⁸ Yılmaz et al. determined that the vast majority of students (female: 93.9%; male 81.1%) were against the notion that women should be examined only by female healthcare professionals.¹⁴ It is promising that most of our participants agreed that there was nothing wrong with women being examined by male healthcare professionals. Our results are consistent with the literature.^{16,19}

Forty-two participants (46.7%) believed that contraception was the responsibility of women. Seç-

gin and Tural found that most students (female: 98%; male: 91.2%) disagreed with the notion that contraception was the responsibility of women.¹⁸ However, Çiftçi et al. reported that only 27.6% of the male students agreed with that statement. Seçgin and Tural also reported that half of the students thought that contraception was the responsibility of women. The difference in this result may be due to sociodemographic and cultural differences. Our results suggest that students need to raise their awareness of the shared responsibility of men and women in contraception.

Participants' perceptions of gender roles in healthcare service did not differ by their place of residence, family type, and employment status ($p>0.05$). However, research shows that perceptions of gender roles in healthcare service vary between male and female students and that the more educated the mothers are, the fewer gender stereotypes their children are likely to hold.^{5,14,18} Uçar et al. found that university students' perceptions of gender roles were affected by parents' education and income, and family type.²⁰ Our results are different from what has been reported by earlier studies. This is probably due to the small sample size and cultural differences.

According to our results, most students believe in traditional roles for men and women. They consider men responsible for taking care of the household, keeping the family name alive, and protecting women. On the other hand, they believe that women should receive permission from their husbands before they start working, pursue careers that fit their physiological makeup and feminine character, and do domestic chores (child-rearing, cooking, etc.). They are also of the opinion that girls should be monitored more often than boys. These results suggest that gender stereotypes and discrimination are prevalent among university students receiving formal training.

CONCLUSION

University students receiving formal training have traditional gender stereotypes. They assign sex-based roles to men and women, and have some gender-

based discriminatory views regarding which healthcare professional should provide care to which patient. Teachers play a critical role in gender equality in society because they are the ones who turn students into people who respect others' rights and freedom and transform society.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Clubs and societies should be formed to make students more aware of gender equality. They should be encouraged to attend symposiums, seminars, and panels and exchange ideas with their peers. Students and academics of education faculties should be provided with pre-service or in-service training to raise their awareness of gender equality. Compulsory and elective courses should address gender equality.

Source of Finance

During this study, no financial or spiritual support was received neither from any pharmaceutical company that has a direct connection with the research subject, nor from a company that provides or produces medical instruments and materials which may negatively affect the evaluation process of this study.

Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest between the authors and / or family members of the scientific and medical committee members or members of the potential conflicts of interest, counseling, expertise, working conditions, share holding and similar situations in any firm.

Authorship Contributions

Idea/Concept: Filiz Aslantekin Özçoban, Nuriye Karadağ, Mukadder Gün; **Design:** Mukadder Gün, Filiz Aslantekin Özçoban; **Control/Supervision:** Nuriye Karadağ, Filiz Aslantekin Özdağ, Mukadder Gün, Serap Şahinoğlu Kuş; **Data Collection and/or Processing:** Filiz Aslantekin Özçoban, Nuriye Karadağ; **Analysis and/or Interpretation:** Mukadder Gün, Filiz Aslantekin Özçoban, Nuriye Karadağ; **Literature Review:** Mukadder Gün, Serap Şahinoğlu Kuş, Filiz Aslantekin Özçoban, Nuriye Karadağ; **Writing the Article:** Filiz Aslantekin Özçoban, Mukadder Gün, Serap Şahinoğlu Kuş, Nuriye Karadağ; **Critical Review:** Mukadder Gün, Serap Şahinoğlu Kuş, Filiz Aslantekin Özçoban, Nuriye Karadağ; **References and Findings:** Nuriye Karadağ, Filiz Aslantekin Özçoban, Mukadder Gün, Serap Şahinoğlu.

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