

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' GENDER PERSPECTIVE AND ATTITUDES TOWARD WORKING MOTHERS

Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Toplumsal Cinsiyet Bakış Açısı Ve Anne Çalışmasına Yönelik Tutumları

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine students' perspectives on gender roles and their attitudes towards working mothers. This study was carried out between October and November 2020 at the Health Services Vocational School of a university. The sample of the study consisted of 153 students who accepted to participate in the study. An Information Form and the Attitudes Towards Working Mothers Scale, which consisted of 13 questions and 29 statements, were used as data collection tools. Permissions were obtained before the questionnaires were conducted. The data were evaluated using the Mann-Whitney U test, the Kruskal-Wallis H test, and the Chi-Square analysis. In terms of gender distribution, 70.6% (n = 108) of the students participating in the study were female and 29.4% (n = 45) were male. The mean score of university students' Attitudes towards Working Mothers Scale was 62.65 ± 7.51 . There was no significant difference between genders in terms of total scores ($p > 0.05$). Bias/stigma values and maternal skills values were found to be higher in men than in women. As a result, it was determined that the students had views that were sensitive to the gender perspective, but still they had biases.

Key Words: Gender, working mother, attitude, perspective, adolescent

ÖZET

Bu çalışmanın amacı öğrencilerin toplumsal cinsiyet rollerine bakış açılarını ve anne çalışmasına yönelik tutumlarını incelemektir.

Bir üniversitenin Sağlık Hizmetleri Meslek Yüksekokulunda 2019 yılında gerçekleştirilen bu araştırmanın örneklemini çalışmaya katılmayı kabul eden 153 öğrenci oluşturdu. Veri toplamada 13 soru ve 29 önermenin olduğu iki bölümden oluşan "Bilgi Formu" ve "Çalışan Annelere Yönelik Tutum Ölçeği" kullanıldı. Anketler uygulanmadan önce gerekli izinler alındı. Veriler Mann-Whitney U testi, Kruskal-Wallis H testi ve ki-kare analizi kullanılarak değerlendirildi.

Araştırmaya katılan öğrencilerin %70.6'sı (n=108) kadın, %29.4'ü (n=45) erkektir. Üniversite öğrencilerinin çalışan annelere yönelik tutum ölçek puan ortalaması $62,65 \pm 7,51$ 'dir. Toplam puanlar açısından cinsiyetler arasında anlamlı bir farklılık saptanmadı ($p > 0,05$). Önyargı / stigma değerleri ve annelik becerileri değerleri erkeklerde kadınlara göre daha yüksek olarak bulundu.

Sonuç olarak, öğrencilerin toplumsal cinsiyet bakış açısına duyarlı görüşlere sahip oldukları ancak önyargılarını içeren görüşlerinin de devam ettiği belirlendi

Anahtar Kelimeler: Toplumsal cinsiyet, çalışan anne, tutum, bakış açısı, ergen

1. INTRODUCTION

Although the concepts of sex and gender have different meanings, they can be confused with each other in social life. While sex classifies men and women according to their sexual organs, gender refers to the behaviors, roles, and values expected from men and women in society (Akkaş,2019). Traditional gender roles, which have been shaped over time by several factors such as the culture and belief structure of societies, impose the responsibility of those who need home care, especially children, to the woman, and prevent equal opportunities between women and men (Öngen and Aytaç,2013; Sis Çelik, Pasinlioğlu et al.,2013; Günay and Bener,2011). The facts that women do not have the same opportunity as men in professional life, in participating in the public sphere, in accessing health services, and in the decision-making process within the family are evidence that it adversely affects the equal opportunity climate (Dinç Kahraman,2010; Yüksel,2013; Sis Çelik, Pasinlioğlu et al.,2013). It has been reported that the region of residence (urban vs. country), the level of education, the means of communication methods exposed, education levels of the parents, and their working status may be effective on gender roles that cause women to experience particular inequalities (Günay and Bener,2011; Öngen and Aytaç,2013; Sis Çelik, Pasinlioğlu, Tan et al, 2013; Varol, Çiçeklioğlu and Taner 2016; Tekbaş and Pola, 2020). In the "District-Based Gender Equality Index" report published in Turkey in November 2020, it was shown that gender roles affect political decision-making, access to health, education, economic life, and access to resources (Şeker, Akduran et al., 2020). Milcah Paul and Radha Rani (2018) reported that women have less access and control over resources, and that gender plays a role in this outcome. According to the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), gender is effective in women's access to education in most countries (UNICEF,2020). Gender equality is among the "2030 Sustainable Development Goals" created as part of the United Nations Development Program. In order to achieve this goal, it is basically proposed that women of any age should be empowered and developed economically (www.tr.undp.org). In order to prevent increasing gender inequality, to direct relevant policies, and to achieve success in sustainable development goals, it is necessary to identify the perspectives of students regarding gender roles and their attitudes towards working women in the context of traditional roles (Karasu, Göllüce et al., 2017). The reason for this is that, as the education level increases, it is thought that the attitudes towards gender become more positive (Dinç and Çalışkan, 2016). The attitudes and perspectives of students receiving health education in many higher education institutions towards women, who are subjected to violence due to gender inequality, usually work part-time and temporary jobs, and even face unemployment due to their fertility, will also affect the health services they will provide (Başar, 2017; Bahar Özvarış, 2015). The Covid-19 pandemic, which had global devastating effects in 2020, also yielded that healthcare professionals should think more equitably on this issue. Schools and day care centers have been closed due to Covid-19, and the employment of working women has been restricted due to their maternal role. In Eurostat's data for the first quarter of 2020, it is seen that in all EU member states, except Cyprus, women were more absent than men (Eurostat, 2020). Due to all these factors, women's health has also been negatively affected. Impoverishment restricts women's access to health services (Yakit and Coşkun, 2014). In order to prevent such outcomes, it is necessary to identify the perspectives of health education students regarding gender roles, and to improve the education quality to be provided according to the results obtained. Studies have shown that women have a more egalitarian view of gender than men, and that women display a more positive perspective towards working after they become mothers (Esen, Siyez, Soylu and ark, 2017; Aylaz, Güneş, Uzun et al, 2014). The aim of this study was to examine university students' gender perspectives and their attitudes towards working mothers.

2. METHODS

2.1. Research Type

This descriptive study was performed in order to determine gender perspective and attitudes towards working mothers in students at the Vocational School of Health Services of a university in Turkey



2.2. Setting and Sample

The research was performed using the total count method. The entire population (N = 659) was therefore included, with no sampling being conducted; however, only 153 students agreeing to participate in the study and fully completing the data tool constituted the study sample.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

In collecting the research data, an Individual Information Form and the Attitudes Towards Working Mothers Scale were used.

2.3.1. Personal Identification Form: The form was prepared by the researchers with the support of the literature and it consists of two parts. The first part of the form consisted of 13 questions about the students' socio-demographic characteristics (age, gender, family type, income, number of siblings, place of longest residence, etc.). A study by Yaman Efe and Ayaz (2013) was taken as reference in developing the statements in the second part of the form. In addition, similar literature was also followed in the creation of these statements (Vefikuluçay et al.2007; Pınar et al.2008; Karasu et al.2017; Çiçek and Çopur 2018; Aylaz et al.2014) In this form, 29 statements in a 3-point Likert-type scale (agree, undecided, disagree) were prepared to identify students' views on gender roles. These statements were analyzed in 4 groups: working life (9 statements), social life (7 statements), marital life (4 statements), and family life (9 statements).

2.3.2. Attitudes Towards Working Mothers Scale: The Attitudes Towards Working Mothers Scale developed by Aydın et al. (2017) is a 5-point Likert type scale (5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = undecided, 2 = disagree, 1 = strongly disagree) and consists of 21 items. The scale has four factors under the headings of "bias/stigma", "autonomy/independence", "family and social adaptation", and "motherhood skills". Items 1, 3, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 13, 17, 18, and 20 are scored by reversing. The score that can be obtained from the scale varies between 21 and 105. The increase in the scores obtained from the scales indicates that the positive attitudes of the individuals towards working mothers have increased. The Cronbach's Alpha test was used to evaluate the reliability of the scale. The Cronbach's alpha value of the scale is 0.844 (Aydın et al. 2017).

2.4. Data Collection

A semi-structured questionnaire form was used to collect data from students by sending the questionnaires to their e-mail addresses. Each student was given a deadline by which to return the questionnaire. If the questionnaire was not returned by the deadline, or an incomplete questionnaire was returned, the questionnaire was sent again. The study data were collected between October and November in 2020.

2.5. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences 22 (SPSS, Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) statistical analysis program. The Kruskal-Wallis H test was used for 3-group comparisons and the Mann-Whitney U test was used for two-group comparisons. The dependence between categorical variables was evaluated using the Chi-Square analysis. The level of significance was set at 0.05.

2.6. Ethical Consideration

A written permission was obtained from the institution where the research was conducted. The students provided their informed consent and participated in the study on a voluntary basis. They were informed about the objectives of the study and that their confidentiality would be respected and their responses would not be judged. In addition, the research was conducted in accordance with the rules set forth in the Declaration of Helsinki.

3. RESULTS

It was observed that 70.6% (n = 108) of the students were female and 29.4% (n = 45) were male. Of the participants, 73.9% were year 2 students and 26.1% were year 1 students, and 79.7% were from nuclear families. The mothers of 80.4% of the students were housewives, and 19.6% had working

mothers. More than half of the students' mothers (68%) and nearly half of their fathers (45.1%) were primary school graduates or less.

The students' mean score of the Attitudes Towards Working Mothers Scale was 62.65 ± 7.51 . There was no significant difference between genders in terms of the mean total scores ($p = 0.079$, $p > 0.05$)

Table 1. Mann Whitney U Test Results Regarding Gender Variable

		Gender						Mann-Whitney U test		
		n	Mean	Median	Min	Max	SD	Mean Rank	U	p
Prejudice/ Stigma	Female	108	7,78	7,00	5,00	39,00	3,87	70,05	1679	0,002
	Male	45	9,18	9,00	5,00	19,00	3,24	93,69		
	Total	153	8,19	8,00	5,00	39,00	3,74			
Motherhood Skills	Female	108	9,81	10,00	5,00	17,00	3,14	69,94	1668	0,002
	Male	45	11,91	12,00	5,00	22,00	4,30	93,93		
	Total	153	10,43	10,00	5,00	22,00	3,63			
Autonomy/ Independence	Female	108	22,32	23,00	5,00	25,00	3,10	80,84	2015	0,093
	Male	45	21,40	22,00	6,00	25,00	3,61	67,79		
	Total	153	22,05	23,00	5,00	25,00	3,28			
Family and Social Adaptation	Female	108	22,23	22,00	12,00	52,00	4,51	79,81	2127	0,223
	Male	45	21,38	21,00	15,00	30,00	3,39	70,27		
	Total	153	21,98	22,00	12,00	52,00	4,22			

Table 1 shows that there is no significant difference between genders in terms of autonomy/independence and family and social cohesion; however, there was a statistically significant difference between sexes in terms of bias/stigma ($p = 0.002$) and maternal skills values ($p = 0.002$). It was found that bias/stigma values and maternal skills values were higher in men than in women.

A statistically significant difference was found between monthly incomes in terms of autonomy/independence value ($p = 0.001$). It was determined as the income level increased, the values significantly decreased.

There was no statistically significant difference between the attitudes towards working mothers and the place resided longest, mother's occupation, mother's education status, and father's education status.

The rate of disagreement with the statement "A woman should not work without getting permission from her husband" was significantly higher in women (86.1%) than in men (62.2%) ($p=0.0001$). The rate of agreeing with the same statement was significantly lower in those from extended family types (54.5%) compared to those from other family types ($p=0.035$). Again, the rate of disagreeing participants living in districts (73.8%) was significantly lower than those living in the city (86.4%) and those living in towns + villages (75.8%) ($p=0.044$).

Disagreeing with the statement that "It is normal to give priority to men in promotions among women and men working with the same status in professional life" was high for both genders; however, women (99.1%) disagreed at a significantly higher rate than men (84.4%) ($p=0.001$).

Although the rate of disagreeing with the statement "Children of working women are victimized" was high in both genders; however, it was significantly lower in men (80%) compared to women (95.4) ($p = 0.001$).

The rate of disagreeing with the statement "Working at a job wears out women" was significantly higher among women (79.6%) than men (53.3%) ($p=0.004$). Those who disagreed with this statement were found to have significantly lower bias/stigma values ($p=0.0001$) and maternal skills values ($p=0.0001$). In addition, indecisive participants had significantly lower autonomy/independence values ($p=0.027$).

All the women and 95.6% of the men disagreed with the statement "It is not right for widowed/divorced women to live alone" ($p=0.027$).

The rate of women disagreeing with the statement "It is not right for women to go out alone in the evenings" was significantly higher (98.1%) than that of men (88.9%) ($p=0.008$).

The rate of disagreeing with the statement "The height of a man should not be shorter than that of a woman in marriage" was significantly lower in women (74.1%) than in men (86.7%) ($p=0.024$).

The rate of disagreeing with the statement "The woman a man will marry must be a virgin" was significantly lower in men (60%) than in women (89.8%) ($p=0.0001$). In those who agreed with this proposition, the bias/stigma values were significantly higher ($p=0.018$), and the autonomy/independence values were significantly lower. In addition, those who disagreed with this statement ($p=0.005$) had significantly lower maternal skills values.

Although the rate of disagreeing with the statement "Woman must come home before her husband" was high in both genders, it was significantly higher in women (99.1%) compared to men (91.1%) ($p=0.04$).

The rate of women disagreeing with the statement "Woman should get up in the morning before her husband" was significantly higher (96.3%) compared to men (86.7%) ($p=0.033$).

The rate of disagreeing with the statement "Female patients should not be examined by a male doctor" was significantly higher in those living in the city (100%) than those living in districts (86.9%) and those living in towns + villages (97%) ($p=0.004$).

The rate of participants living in the city and disagreeing with the statement "A woman cannot go out with her friends without getting permission from her husband" was significantly higher (94.9%) than those living in districts (73.8%) and those living in towns + villages (78.8%) ($p=0.005$). The rate of those whose mothers were housewives and disagreeing with same statement (79.7%) was significantly lower than those with working mothers (96.7%) ($p=0.041$). In addition, while the bias/stigma values were significantly lower in those who disagreed with this proposition ($p = 0.005$), maternity skills values were significantly higher in those who agreed with it ($p = 0.003$).

The rate of disagreeing with the statement "When a woman does not provide care for her child, she neglects her duty" in those whose fathers had high school/higher education diploma (44.4%) was significantly lower than those whose fathers had a secondary school level education (79.5%) and those whose education level was primary school or below (62.3%) ($p=0.022$). Autonomy/independence values ($p=0.021$) and family and social cohesion values ($p = 0.046$) were significantly lower in those who responded to this statement as indecisive. In addition, maternal skills values were significantly lower in those who disagreed with this statement ($p=0.036$).

4. DISCUSSION

In the present study, which was conducted to examine the perspectives of university students towards gender roles and their attitudes towards working mothers, their mean score of the Attitudes Towards Working Mothers Scale was 62.65 ± 7.51 , and it was concluded that there was no significant difference between genders in terms of total scores. In addition, according to the statements determining the students' views on gender roles, bias/stigma values, and maternal skills values were found to be higher in men than in women. It can be considered that these outcomes stem from the fact that men have a more traditional perspective. Similarly, previous studies have shown that men display a more traditional attitude (Öngen and Aytaç 2013; Sis Çelik, Pasinlioğlu, Tan et al.,2013; Alptekin,2014; Dozo,2015; Dinç and Çalışkan 2016; Kul Uçtu and Karahan,2016; Aksoy Derya, Timur Taşhan et al.,2017).

Furthermore, the rate of women (86.1%) who disagreed with the statement "Women should not work without getting permission from their husbands" was higher than men (62.2%). The reason for this can be explained by the perspective on gender roles. According to these roles, the woman is expected to get permission from her husband to work in addition to working at lower wages and status (Pekel, 2019). Therefore, it can be said that men are more dependent on gender roles. Similarly, in the study of Vefikuluçay, Zeyneloğlu et al. (2007), the rate of women who disagreed with the same statement was 61.8% and it was 29.2% in men. Karasu, Göllüce et al. (2017) reported that 51.2% of the women and 25.3% of the men disagreed with a similar statement: "The husband should make decisions about the life of a woman". In our study, it was determined that 99.1% of the women and 84.4% of the men

disagreed with the statement "Men should be given priority in promotions among women and men working in the same status in professional life". Vefikuluçay, Zeyneloğlu et al. (2007) reported that 91.9% of the women and 60.2% of the men disagreed with this statement. Karasu, Göllüce et al. (2017) reported that 24.8% of the women were indecisive about and 25.8% of the men agreed with a similar statement: "Men should work in professions at a higher status". Bilodeu, Marchand et al. (2020) reported that women experienced more psychological problems in working life.

Childcare and housework, which are among the gender roles assigned to the woman, affect the majority of women's life. Statements on this issue were also included in the present study, and students' views on the role of motherhood from a gender perspective were assessed. The statement that "Children of working women suffer" is one of the statements about the women's motherhood role. While the rate of indecisive women for the statement was 1.9%, the rate of indecisive men was 11.1%. There are studies reporting results parallel with this one (Kahraman, Kahraman, Ozansoy et al.,2014; Karasu, Göllüce et al.,2017). Esen, Siyez, Soylu et al. (2017) reported that 2.9% of the women and 30.7% of the men "definitely agreed" with the statement "Women should not work after they become mothers". Berniell, Berniell, Mata et al. (2021) reported that motherhood creates obstacles in women's employment. In the "Women in Statistics, 2020" report published by the Turkish Statistical Institute, employment rate was reported to be 28.7% for the women aged 15 and over and 63.1% for the men of the same age group, and working life for women was reported to be shorter than men, both of which support that there are many barriers that make women's participation in working life difficult. Biladeau, Marchand et al. (2020) reported that working women mostly have problems with their motherhood. Kelley, Galbraith, and Strong (2020) reported that employers are more prejudiced against women who are mothers than men and women without children. Richter, Bethge, Spanier et al (2021) reported stated that women experience more difficulties than men due to housework in addition to their day job. Social roles imposed the motherhood duty on women and created the notion that the women's main duty is motherhood and housework. These roles affect not only the family and working life of women but also their social life. In our study, it was found that all of the women and 95.6% of the men disagreed with the statement that "It is not right for women to live alone". Vefikuluçay, Zeyneloğlu et al. (2007) reported that more than half of the women disagreed with this statement and approximately half of the men agreed. Many studies in the literature have indicated that women have a more egalitarian mindset than men (Öngen and Aytaç,2013; Esen, Siyez, Soylu et al.,2017; Sis Çelik, Pasinlioğlu, Tan et al.,2013). In support of this outcome, in this study, the rate of the women disagreeing with the statements "The woman should get up before her husband in the morning" and "The woman should come home before her husband" was higher than that of the men, and Flèche, Lepinteur and Powdthavee (2020) stated that if men do not have an egalitarian mindset, the time spent by women for housework will not decrease.

With the increase in women's participation in work life and their education levels, traditional social roles are replaced by a more egalitarian mindset. According to the Turkish Statistics Institute's "Women in Statistics, 2020" report, 85.7% of the women and 96.4% of the men have completed at least one level of education (TÜİK,2020). According to the Turkey Demographic and Health Survey 2018 data, the rate of those who had never attended school or not graduated from primary school for both genders is much lower in the city than that in the rural. In line with this information, it can be expected that an egalitarian perspective should prevail in the city. In the present study, the higher rate of participants living in the city and agreeing with the statements "Women should not work without permission from their husbands", "Female patients should not be examined by a male doctor", and "A woman cannot go out with her friends without asking her spouse" may be considered as evidence of this outcome. Not only the education level of the person, but also the education level and working status of the parents affect the individuals' gender perspectives and their attitudes towards working mothers. This outcome is also supported by the data obtained in this study. Participants with a working mother mostly disagreed with the statement "A woman cannot go out without getting permission from her husband", and also the participants whose fathers had a high level of education mostly disagreed with the statement "If a woman does not provide care for her child, she neglects her duty". Varol, Çiçeklioğlu, and Taner (2016) reported that students whose parents' education level was below

primary school and whose mothers were housewives or unemployed had lower scores on the gender equality scale. Aylaz, Güneş, Uzun et al. (2014) reported that as education level of the mother increases, children's gender discrimination decreases. Gender equality, which is one of the basic human rights, is among the "2030 Sustainable Development Goals" created within the scope of the United Nations Development Program. Gender equality aims to eliminate all kinds of discrimination against women and girls (www.tr.undp.org). Many factors prevent the achievement of gender equality and greatly affect women's lives.

Limitations: The study was conducted with students from a single educational institution. For this reason, the data obtained should be supported further in order to be generalized to the society.

5. CONCLUSION

In this study, it was found that university students' attitudes towards working mothers were moderate, and there was no significant difference between genders in terms of total scores. In addition, as part of the statements determining the views of male students on gender roles, it was determined that they had a more traditional point of view. Considering that gender roles begin to emerge in childhood, it is important to revise the curriculum by including subjects sensitive to gender roles in all educational stages of children starting from pre-school education (Pekel, 2019; Kantoğlu et al., 2018; Aydın et al., 2016). In order to increase the awareness level of the parents, it is important to organize awareness trainings in both public and private sector institutions. It is also important to adopt policies aimed at raising social awareness.

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