

**DETERMINATION OF GENDER PERCEPTIONS OF NURSING AND MIDWIFERY
STUDENTS**

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Abstract: *The culture of the society in which the individual lives determines the characteristics revealing the expectations about how a woman or a man behave, think and act, that is, structuring woman and man socially. This study was carried out to determine gender perceptions of nursing and midwifery students. Descriptive design type was used in the study. The universe of the study consisted of 750 students studying in Nursing and Midwifery Departments in 2018-2019. The sample consisted of 471 students who were not willing to attend the study. The participation rate is 63%. "Sociodemographic Information Form" and "Perception of Gender Scale" were used to collect data. The ethics committee, institutional permission, and consent of the students were obtained for the study. In this study, percentage and frequency distributions of variables were examined. Comparisons between groups; Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis-H tests. The mean score of Gender Perception of the students was 108.18 ± 108.18 (min = 25 / max = 125). A significant relationship was found between the variables of gender, class, type of school, nationality, family styles, food preparation before the spouse of the woman, and marital status before starting work and earning money ($p < 0.05$). The gender scores of female students (109.68 ± 11.45) were higher than that of male students (93.38 ± 13.46) ($p < 0.01$). In this study, the mean gender score of the students is good. Nurses and midwives, by raising the awareness of individuals through training programs on gender roles; develop an awareness of gender roles and gain egalitarian attitudes and perspectives.*

Keywords: *student, nursing, midwifery, gender perception*

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1. Introduction

The concept of "gender" expresses socially determined personal characteristics, roles, and responsibilities of women and men. The definition of this concept includes values expectations, judgments, and roles about how society sees and perceives us as a man and a woman, what they think about us and what they expect us to behave [1, 2].

What the culture expects from a man and a woman is similar to the observations related to the physical characteristics (Gender) of woman and man [3]. The culture of the society in which the

individual lives determines the characteristics revealing the expectations about how a woman or a man behave, think and act, that is, structuring woman and man socially. Children gain roles appropriate to their genders and acquire gender identity. While household chores and childcare stand out for women, the roles of working in a job become more important than family roles for men [4].

The components like the functions, responsibilities, and rights of woman and man in society and their positions in the production process are shaped based on gender. As a result, men are directed to the public area while women are directed to the private sector [5]. Thoughts like glorifying masculine gender and leaving female gender as a secondary position are seen to be the traces of the social lives in men [6]. Traditional perspectives on the gender roles of men negatively affect the status of women in society. It is therefore seen that today women do not reach the desired status in society and they fall behind men [7].

In patriarchal societies, it is not only difficult for women to make independent decisions, but also they are not even allowed to spend money without their husbands' consent. This negatively affects women's effective use of or access to social resources in the field of health protection and promotion. It can also make it difficult for women to access healthcare services even in an emergency situation [8]. To give an example, female circumcision, which is applied mostly in African countries and causes gynecological and obstetric problems, is a cultural practice and also may be made for the sexual satisfaction of men. This situation reflects the violence against women and also reveals the gender and sexuality perception of the woman through the eyes of some men [9].

In the literature, it is stated that parents who are role models for their children are effective in the development of gender roles and children prepare their own roles by internalizing what they see from their parents. Therefore, it is very important to raise awareness of the parents about gender perception. The most basic individual of the family which is the main component of society is a woman. Midwife and nurse frequently interact with women and family because of their profession and gender [7]. For example, encouraging and supporting the father to continue kangaroo care of the infant with joint responsibility of the mother and father by midwife and nurse would definitely contribute to the development of positive attitudes in the society toward gender roles.

Firstly, developing an egalitarian attitude by midwives and nurses for themselves will provide a significant contribution to both the enhancement of health care quality and further development of professional identity. With this study, it will be possible to determine the differences between the gender perceptions of midwifery and nursing students, to shape programs and training intended for increasing awareness about this subject and motivating individuals about behavioral changes and to reach a wider audience.

This study was conducted to determine the gender perception of midwifery and nursing students.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Type of the Study

This research is a descriptive type study.

2.2. Population and Sample of the Study

The population of the study was composed of 750 students studying in the Midwifery and Nursing Departments of a University in the 2018-2019 Academic Year. Without sample selection from the

population, the study was completed with 471 students who voluntarily participated in the study and from school. The participation rate for the study was determined as 63%.

2.3. Data Collection Tools

The data of the study were collected with “Sociodemographic Information Form”, prepared upon the literature review, and “Perception of Gender Scale”.

Sociodemographic Information Form: The form prepared by the researchers includes questions about the students' age, gender, year, cause of choosing the major, family types and cultural situations, and roles of women and men about gender roles.

Perception of Gender Scale: The scale was developed by Altınova and Duyan (2013) and its validity and reliability studies were conducted [10]. It is a scale developed to be applied particularly to adults. It has the capability of measuring individuals' attitudes about how they perceive gender roles in different fields. The scale is composed of a total of 25 items. For each item, one of the options "I strongly agree", "I agree", "undecided", "I disagree", "I strongly disagree" is selected and scored between 1 and 5. Some items are reversely scored while calculating the total scale score (the items 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, and 25 were reversely scored). While the lowest score on the scale is 25, its highest score is 125. A high score indicates high gender perception while a low score refers to low gender perception. The analyses about the internal consistency of the scale were calculated over a total of 443 people and the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient is 0.872. In this study, the Cronbach's Alpha internal consistency coefficient of the scale was found as 0.899.

2.4. Application of the Study

The data collection tools were applied to the students, who were included in the study, through a face-to-face interview method for 20-25 minutes.

2.5. The Inclusion Criteria of the Study

- Studying in Nursing Department of Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University Faculty of Health Sciences
- Studying in Midwifery Department of Canakkale Onsekiz Mart University Faculty of Health Sciences
- Volunteering to participate in the study

2.6. The Exclusion Criteria of the Study

- Declining to participate in the study.

2.7. Data Assessment

The data obtained from the study were evaluated in Statistical Package for Social Sciences for Windows (SPSS 25.0) statistical package program. In the study, percentage and frequency distributions of the variables were examined. Comparisons between the groups were conducted with Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis-H tests in non-parametric variables. In case of significant differences in the Kruskal Wallis-H Test, the groups having differences were determined with post hoc Tukey B test. The value of 0.05 was used as the significance level while interpreting the results.

3. Results

It was determined that the mean age of the participants was 20.92 ± 1.75 and the majority of them were female (88.7%) and studying in the 3rd and 4th years (29.3% and 27.2%). The participants were mostly (94.5%) Turkish citizens. The majority had nuclear family type (84.3%), their family income level was middle (74.1%) and their family type was democratic family (64.8%).

It was found that male child was not wanted more than the female child in 90.7% of the participants and women's clothes have not interfered in 67.3% of the participants. Of the participants, 81.3% expected men in the family to help household chores, 71.5% believed that women should not come home earlier than men and prepare the meals, 97.7% had the idea that giving birth to a boy would not increase the woman's value, and 90% did not think about getting married before starting to work and earn money (Table 1).

In the study, it was found that the gender showed a significant difference in terms of gender perception ($p < 0.05$) and women's gender perception scores (109.68 ± 11.45) were higher than the scores of male participants (93.38 ± 13.46).

It was determined that the gender perception scores of the participants showed a significant difference in terms of class type ($p = 0.009$), gender perception scores of the 2nd-year students (109.15 ± 12.33) were higher than those of the 1st-year students

(104.37 ± 14.04), gender perception scores of the 3rd-year students (108.11 ± 12.21) were higher than those of the 1st-year students (104.37 ± 14.04) and the scores of the 4th-year students (110.40 ± 10.69) were higher than those of the 1st-year students (104.37 ± 14.04).

When the students' gender perception was examined in terms of school type, it was determined that the gender perception scores of the students who graduated from Anatolian High School (109.59 ± 11.66) were higher than the students who graduated from Regular High Schools (108.11 ± 12.21) and the students who graduated from Health Vocational High school (108.40 ± 10.91) were more positive compared to the students who graduated from Regular High Schools (101.77 ± 15.78) ($p = 0.006$). Besides, the perception scores of the students whose nationality is the Republic of Turkey (109.11 ± 11.65) were seen to be higher than the foreign students (92.19 ± 14.28) ($p = 0.000$).

When the gender perception of the participants was examined in terms of family type, it was determined that the gender perception of those who had nuclear families (108.86 ± 11.75) was more positive than those with extended families (102.57 ± 15.26) ($p = 0.002$).

A significant correlation was found between those who believed that woman should come home earlier than her husband and prepare the meals and those who did not ($p < 0.01$). Those who did not think that the woman should come home earlier than her husband and prepare the meals (111.15 ± 10.42) were more positive than those who did (95.82 ± 14.93).

Table 1. Sociodemographic, Familial, and Social Characteristics of the Participants

Characteristics	Mean±SD	Min-Max
Age	20.92±1.75	18-37
	N	%
Gender		
Female	418	88.7
Male	53	11.3
Year		
1 st Year	99	21
2 nd Year	106	22.5
3 rd Year	138	29.3
4 th Year	128	27.2
Nationality		
Republic of Turkey	445	94.5
Others	26	5.5
Income level of the Family		
Income less than expenses	83	17.6
Income equal to expenses	349	74.1
Income more than expenses	39	8.3
Family type		
Nuclear family	397	84.2
Extended family	61	13.0
Others	13	2.8
Family style		
Oppressive	38	8.1
Democratic	305	64.7
Free	128	27.2
Do you think a baby boy is wanted/expected more than a baby girl?		
Yes	44	9.3
No	427	90.7
Is there anyone interfering with the clothes of female members of the family?		
Yes, My father	103	21.6
Yes, Brother	27	5.6
Yes, Me	12	2.7
Yes, Others	12	2.5
No	317	67.6
Are the male members of your family expected to do and help with household chores (cooking, cleaning, tidying the house, etc.)?		
Yes	383	81.3
No	88	18.7
Should a woman be at home before her husband and prepare the meal?		
Yes	50	10.6
No	337	71.6
Undecided	84	17.8
Does giving birth to a boy increase the value of a woman?		
Yes	11	2.3
No	460	97.7
Do you consider getting married before starting to work?		
Yes	47	10.0
No	424	90.0

It was observed that there was a statistically significant difference between the gender perception scores of those who did not consider getting married before starting work and earning money (108.64±12.03) and the gender perception scores of those who considered getting married before starting work and earning money (104.06±14.91) (p=0.044, Table 2).

Table 2. Comparison of Gender perception with Some Variables

Characteristics	n	Mean±SD	Mean rank.	Test and p-value
Gender				
Female	418	109.68±11.45		U=4834.00
Male	53	93.38±13.46		p<0.05*
Year				
1 st Year ¹	99	104.37±14.04	197.78	
2 nd Year ²	106	109.15±12.33	247.18	H=11.651
3 rd Year ³	138	108.11±12.21	235.14	p=0.009**
4 th Year ⁴	128	110.40±10.69	257.22	1-2 1-3 1-4
Graduated High School				
Anatolian High School	270	109.59±11.66	251.12	
Health Vocational High School	112	108.40±10.91	230.29	H=12.476
Regular High School	47	101.77±15.78	179.28	p=0.006**
Other	42	105.71±14.35	217.52	1-3 2-3
Nationality				
Republic of Turkey	445	109.11±11.65		U=1998.00
Others	26	92.19±14.28		p=0.000**
Income level of Your Family				
Income less than Expenses	83	106.77±11.57	212.95	
Income equal to Expenses	349	108.69±12.32	242.62	H=3.428
Income higher than Expenses	39	106.62±14.72	225.81	p=0.180
Family Types				
Nuclear Family	397	108.86±11.75	241.63	H=12.413
Extended Family	61	102.57±15.26	185.03	p=0.002**
Family Styles				
Oppressive	38	109.00±11.93	245.87	
Democratic	305	107.96±12.33	232.95	H=0.484
Free	128	108.47±12.80	240.34	p=0.785
Do you think a baby boy is more wanted than a baby girl in your family?				
Yes	44	108.23±12.88		U=9366.00
No	427	108.18±12.38		p=0.974
Is there anyone who interferes with the clothes of female members in your house?				
Yes. My Father	103	108.39±11.64	234.60	
Yes. Brother	27	106.19±9.94	194.65	
Yes. Me	12	101.92±12.62	161.00	H=0.484
Yes. Others	12	107.75±16.29	250.58	p=0.785
No	317	108.54±12.67	242.26	
Would you expect the male individuals in the family to do household chores ?				
Yes	383	108.43±12.64		U=15149.50
No	88	107.10±11.37		p=0.139
Do you think a woman should be at home early and prepare the meals before her husband?				
Yes ¹	50	95.82±14.93	122.21	H=67.326
No ²	337	111.15±10.42	267.09	P=0.010*
Undecided ³	84	103.62±12.32	179.00	1-2 1-3 2-3
Do you think giving birth to a baby boy will increase a woman's value?				
Yes	11	89.27±16.09		U=15149.50
No	460	108.63±11.97		p=0.139
Do you consider getting married before starting to work and earning money?				
Yes	47	104.06±14.91		U=8179.00
No	424	108.64±12.03		p=0.044*
Gender perception Score				
Mean score	471	108.18±12.40 (min :68-max:125)		

* p<0.05 ; **p<0.01

4. Discussion

Inequality based on gender roles determines the relationship between the man and woman in all segments of the society based on gender roles as well as their gender roles [7]. The reflections of gender roles on social life shape the lives of men and women as traditional and egalitarian roles in different directions [2].

When equality in gender is mentioned, it refers to an individual not facing any discrimination due to his/her gender in using opportunities, allocating and using resources, and receiving services [11]. As it is understood, there is an attitude difference towards gender roles among male and female students. Nurses and midwives have professions with important responsibilities in their society for shaping attitudes toward gender roles in an egalitarian manner and adopting them to the society which they serve for.

In the 2018 Global Gender Gap Report published by the World Economic Forum, Turkey is stated to be ranked as 130 out of 149 countries in gender equality order [12]. This result is quite remarkable for Turkey.

In the study, the gender perception mean scores of the participants were at a good level. The gender perception mean scores of the female students participating in the study were found to be higher than male students ($p < 0.05$). In the literature, when the students' perceptions towards gender roles according to gender type were examined, it was stated that the female students' thoughts on egalitarian gender were highly positive [6, 7, 13-21]. Unlike the results of this study, in a study conducted by Balcı Akpınar et al., (2019) with university students ($n=2356$), a significant difference was found between the gender perception mean score and gender [22]. It was stated that the gender perception score was lower in female students than in male students. In this context, it was believed that there was a more positive gender perception in women.

In terms of gender perceptions of the participants according to their class type, gender perceptions of the 4th-year students were higher than the 1st-year students ($p < 0.05$). The results of the study are in line with the results in the literature [15, 23, 24]. In contrast to the results of this study, it was expressed in the study of Özpulat and Özvarış (2019) conducted with the students ($n=360$) from the Department of Nursing and Department of Nutrition and Dietetics that there was no statistically significant difference between the class variable and gender perception score [16]. It was emphasized that the “Instructional Training for Gender Equality and Fighting with Violence Against Women” given ($n=28$) in the study with pretest and posttest design conducted by Uzun et al. (2017) positively affected the participants' gender perceptions and attitudes towards gender roles [25]. It was determined that those who had gender courses in their curricula had higher gender perceptions than those who did not [6]. This result may be related to the fact that 4th-year students took gender courses and increased their awareness of this subject further.

Concerning the participants' opinions about the type of high school they graduate from it was found that the gender perception scores of the students who graduated from Anatolian High School were more positive than the students who graduated from Regular High School and those of the students who graduated from Health Vocational High School were more positive than the students who graduated from Regular High School ($p < 0.05$). It was determined in the study by Çelik et al. (2013) that equality gender attitudes of those who graduated from Anatolian High Schools were higher than those who graduated from other high school types and those of the students studying in Health Sciences were

higher than the students studying in the other fields [26]. The study results are similar to the results of the present study. It may be due to the fact that the parents of the students studying in Anatolian High Schools have higher education levels and have egalitarian attitudes towards gender equality. In similar studies by Kavuran (2011) and Atış (2010), it was determined that the students studying in the health department had a more egalitarian attitude towards gender roles [27, 28]. This striking result will give priority to women's health care needs with a positive discrimination perspective in the field of reproductive health where gender discrimination is quite a lot in women.

It was determined that the perception scores of the Turkish students were higher than the foreign students (92.19 ± 14.28) ($p < 0.05$). No relevant data have been found in the literature. The culture in which the individual lives determines the characteristics expected from the woman and man. This important result is thought to be caused by the that the culture of this country does not coincide with the culture of foreign students.

When the gender perception mean scores of the participants were evaluated by family styles, the nuclear family had a higher score than the extended family. When the literature was examined, it is consistent with the study results [15, 29, 30]. Unlike the results of this study, it was observed in the studies of Balcı Akpınar et al. (2019), Köken Durgun and Cambaz Ulaş (2019) and Uçtu and Karahan (2016) that the variable of the extended family increased the gender perception score [19, 22, 23]. It was believed to be caused by that the students have grown up with their parents. In addition, this result may be caused by the fact that the parents have egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles.

As a result of rapid social changes, the traditional family structure has tried to renew itself in terms of changing gender roles. In the study, a significant correlation was found between those who thought that woman should come home earlier than her husband and prepare the meals and those who did not ($p < 0.05$). Those who did not believe that woman should come home earlier than her husband and prepare the meal had more positive gender perception scores than those who did. In the study conducted by Kahraman et al., (2014) with the teaching staff ($n=209$) working in Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, 20.6% of the participants agreed that woman must prepare the meal after coming home before her husband following the work while 77.5% did not agree [31]. It is seen that gender roles are accepted in line with the culture of society.

The gender perception scores of those who did not consider getting married before starting to work and earn money were higher than those who considered getting married before starting to work and earning money. When the literature was examined, no study was found giving similar results. As stated by Kodan (2013), this may be explained by the openness of an individual to new ideas and not remaining under the influence of culture-society [32].

5. Conclusion

It is important to determine first the attitudes of university students towards gender roles in order to ensure them acquiring an egalitarian perspective by changing their traditional perspectives on gender roles. In the study, the gender means a score of the students was at a good level. It was determined to be negatively affected by variables such as gender, class, school type, nationality, family styles, woman's status of coming home before her husband and preparing the meal, and the status of getting married before starting to work and earn money.

As a result of the study, it was determined that the mean scores of the perception of gender scale were higher in the students who took gender courses than those who did not. Therefore, it can be recommended to add gender and related concepts into the curricula of midwifery and nursing departments and organize in-service training programs on gender roles. Since men have a more traditionalist attitude, the participation of men should be ensured as much as possible in the training programs to be carried out in this process. More comprehensive studies should be planned to determine students' gender perspectives and find out regional differences.

Limitations of the Study: The limitations of the study are the inability to reach all the students in the study, incomplete filling of the data collection forms, and those who were not willing to participate in the study. The results of the study can be generalized to the population where the study was carried out.

Conflict of interest: The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Ethical Approval: The institutional permission from the school administration and the ethics committee approval from the Clinical Trials Ethics Committee of the University (04.01.2019 / No:18920478-050.01.04-E.1900001718) were obtained. Before starting the data collection process in the study, the students were informed about the purpose and scope of the study and then their verbal and written consents on agreeing to participate in the study were obtained.

The compliance to the Research and Publication Ethics: This study was carried out in accordance with the rules of research and publication ethics.

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