ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Gender perception as the driving force for violence against women in Türkiye

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Abstract

Objective: The purpose of this study is to determine relationship the gender perception with attitudes toward violence against women in Türkiye.

Methods: This descriptive study was conducted online with 795 individuals from Türkiye between 08.02.2022 – 14.04.2022. The data was collected with the "Sociodemographic Descriptive Information Form," "Perception of Gender Scale," and "ISKEBE Violence Against Women Attitude Scale," created using Google Forms. For the data analysis, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences(SPSS) version 22 was used. In addition to descriptive statistics such as frequency, mean and standard deviation, t-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and post hoc (Tukey, LSD) tests, and linear regression were used for analysing the data.

Results: The average age of the respondents was 30.0±11.4. It was detected that 70.4% (n=560) of the respondents are female, 62.4% (n=496) are single, 75.7% (n=602) have a middle income. The participants' average point on the Perception of Gender Scale was 104.7±17.1; and the average point on the Violence Against Women Attitude Scale was 49.3±22.2. The total change in the level of the total score of the attitude toward violence against women is explained by the sum of gender perception at a rate of 37.8% (R2=0.378).

Conclusion: Many social and cultural characteristics of participants are associated with both the perception of gender and violence against women, despite there not being a reasonable correlation between the perception of gender and violence against women.

Keywords: Gender, Perception of Gender, Violence Against Women

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INTRODUCTION

Gender is a concept that explains the values and judgments about how women and men are perceived by the society, how they are evaluated, and the behaviours expected from them.[1] The concept of gender expresses socially determined personal characteristics, roles, and responsibilities of women and men[2]. Gender inequality is an underlying determinant of violence against women[3] and a global problem.[4]

Gender inequality, causing by the unequal power dynamics between men and women within the social structure, stands as the primary root of violence against women.[3] Turkish society, like most societies in the world, has a patriarchal structure that is a cultural system giving more power, authority, and socioeconomic privileges to the men. This situation causes men to be regarded as more powerful and respected compared to women [5].

World Health Organization (WHO) defines violence against women as a public health problem. Regarding the WHO data, one in three women in the world experiences physical and/ or sexual violence in their lifetime, mostly by an intimate partner [6]. Violence against women is defined as any attitude and behaviour that causes or is likely to cause physical, sexual, psychological, or economic harm or suffering to women[7].

Violence against women, which aims to oppress women, should be considered a social problem based on gender issue and should be addressed first and foremost. According to the data of the Ministry of Family and Social Services, 336 women in 2019, 267 women in 2020, and 95 women in the first four months of 2021 were killed due to gender-based violence. Moreover, the national survey on domestic violence in Turkiye presents the high prevalence of violence that the rate of physical violence was reported as 35.5% in lifetime and 8.2% in the last 12 months.[8] A study which was conducted in 28 members of European Union shows that approximately 80% of women state that violence against women is common in their country [9]. A study conducted in Italy states that 27% of women have been exposed to physical and/or sexual violence [3].

Turkiye has raised awareness of the issue and both policymakers and non-governmental organizations have proposed various action plans to prevent violence against women. Creating and implementing programs and policies to change gender norms, promote gender equality, and empower women is a critical step toward preventing violence against women[10].

In light of this information, it is anticipated that this study, which was conducted to determine gender perceptions and attitudes toward violence against women in Turkish society, as well as the relationship between them and the factors influencing them, will serve as a guide in raising awareness and encouraging the prevention of violence against women.

METHODS

Participants and Data Collection Method

This descriptive study was conducted online in Turkiye between 08.02.2022 – 14.04.2022. The population of study formed the individuals who are the residents of Turkiye. Power analysis was performed to determine the number of people to be included in the study. Sample size was calculated with the

G*Power 3.1 program. According to the multiple regression analysis determined by Cohen (1988), the effect size was taken as 0.15 as medium. To exceed the 95% value in determining the power of the study; At the 5% significance level and 0.15 effect size, 107 people need to be reached (df=2; F=3.086)[11]. The snowball method was used to collect data in the study conducted with individuals aged 18 and over (those who could read and understand Turkish and agreed to fill out the form were included. The data was collected with the "Sociodemographic Descriptive Information Form," "ISKEBE Violence Against Women Attitude Scale," and "Perception of Gender Scale," created by using Google Forms. The link for the questionnaire was sent to participants via e-mail and social media. The questionnaire was also encouraged to share in networks of the participants. Upon receiving and clicking the link for the research, the participants were automatically directed to a page containing information about the research and informed consent. After approving to participate in the questionnaire, sociodemographic data were filled in, followed by the scales that the participants were required to answer.

Data Collection Tools

Sociodemographic Descriptive Information Form: It is an information form consisting of 10 questions prepared by the researcher in accordance with the literature and containing the sociodemographic characteristics of individuals (age, gender, marital status, number of children, family type, income status) and their witnessing and exposure to violence [3,4,5].

Perception of Gender Scale: Altınova and Duyan (2013) developed and tested the validity and reliability of this scale, and they designed it specifically for adults. The scale assesses individuals' attitudes toward how they perceive the gender roles in various fields. The scale has 25 items in total and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated as 0.872. The scale's items were prepared in the format of five-point Likert scale, with 10 positive items and 15 negative items. In the scale, participants are asked to rate each item as "strongly agree (5), agree (4), undecided (3), disagree (2), strongly disagree (1)". The total score is calculated by reversing the 2nd, 4th, 6th, 9th, 10th, 12th, 15th, 16th, 17th, 18th, 19th, 20th, 21st and 25thitems. The scale yields scores ranging from 25 to 125, with high scores indicating a positive perception of gender [12]. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this study was calculated as 0.912.

ISKEBE Violence Against Women Attitude Scale: The scale, developed by Kanbay in 2016, is in the format of a five-point Likert scale and consists of two factors and 30 items[13]. The scale has two subscales as "Attitude towards the body" and "Attitude towards the identity". They are categorized as Attitude towards the body (Sexual and physical violence): 16 items (3, 4, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 20, 22, 25, 26, 28, and 30) and Attitude towards the identity (psychological and economic violence): 14 items (1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 18, 19, 21, 23, 24, 27, and 29). The 5th and 24th items are scored in reverse. The scale's total score is calculated by adding the scores from the two factors. The scale has five answer options as follows: 1-strongly agree, 2-agree, 3-undecided, 4-disagree, 5-strongly disagree. Each question is scored between 1 and 5. High scores indicate that the participant opposes violence against women, while low scores indicate that the participant does not oppose violence. The

first factor can be scored with a minimum of 16 points and a maximum of 80 points. The second factor can be scored with a minimum of 14 points and a maximum of 70 points. The minimum score that can be obtained from the overall scale is 30 and the maximum score is 150. As the scale score increases, so does the positive attitude toward women. Kanbay determined the Cronbach Alpha value of the scale as 0.86. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of this study was calculated as 0.956.

Statistical Analysis

The research data was evaluated with Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 22.0 software. In the evaluation of numerical data, arithmetic mean, standard deviation values; frequency distributions and percentages were used to summarize categorical data. Kurtosis and Skewness values were examined to determine the normality of the variables, and all variables were normally distributed. Correlation and linear regression analyses were used to investigate the relationship between the dimensions determining the scale levels of the participants. Correlation coefficients (r) for absolute values of r, 0-0.19 is regarded as very weak, 0.2-0.39 as weak, 0.40-0.59 as moderate, 0.6-0.79 as strong and 0.8-1 as very strong correlation[14].

T-test, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and post-hoc (Tukey, LSD) analyses were used to examine the differences in scale levels based on descriptive features. For the analyses, p-value cut-off of 0.05 was used to determine significance.

RESULTS

The average age of the participants is 30.04 ± 11.38 years. Of the participants, 70.4% (n=560) are female, 37.6% (n=299) are married, 81.8% (n=650) lives in a nuclear family, 75.7% (n=602) have a middle income, 37.0% (n=294) are students, 13.6% (n=108) are housewives, 16.6% (n=132) are workers/civil servants/self-employed, 49.7% (n=395) lives in the city (Table 1). The participants' point average on the perception of gender scale is 104.7 ± 17.1 the point average on the violence against women attitude scale is 49.3 ± 22.1 "Attitude towards the body" has a point average of 20.5 ± 10.9 and "Attitude towards the identity" has a point average of 28.8 ± 13.8.

The total score of the perception of gender scale differs significantly by age ($p<0.05$) and the violence against women attitude scale ($p=0.018$). The participants' scores for attitudes toward identity differ significantly by age ($p<0.05$). Gender perception total score ($p=0.017$) and attitude towards identity scores ($p=0.014$) differ significantly according to income status (Table 1). Participants' gender perception scale total scores ($p<0.05$), violence against women attitude scale total scores ($p<0.05$) and attitude towards identity scores differ significantly according to educational status ($p<0.05$) (Table 2).

Table 1. Differences in scale scores based on descriptive demographic characteristics

Characteristics	n	%	Perception of Gender Total	Violence Against Women Attitude Total	Attitude Toward the Body	Attitude Toward the Identity
	n	*%*	*Mean±SD*	*Mean±SD*	*Mean±SD*	*Mean±SD*
Gender						
Female	560	70.4	108.2±14.7	45.5±20.4	19.1±9.6	26.3±12.9
Male	235	29.6	96.4±19.3	58.5±23.6	23.6±13.0	34.9±13.9
t test			9.3	-7.8	-5.3	-8.3
p value			**<0.01**	**<0.01**	**<0.01**	**<0.01**
Marital Status						
Married	299	37.6	99.1±18.3	53.6±21.7	21.1±10.1	32.4±14.3
Single	496	62.4	108.1±15.3	46.7±22.1	20.1±11.4	26.7±12.9
t test			-7.4	4.3	1.3	5.9
p value			**<0.01**	**<<0.01**	0.181	**<<0.01**
Number of Children						
No Child	516	64.9	108.1±15.3	46.6±21.8	19.9±11.1	26.8±13.1
1 Child	73	9.2	104.4±16.1	49.9±22.9	20.4±11.2	29.5±14.2
2 Children	131	16.5	97.9±18.5	53.4±18.6	20.8±8.7	32.7±12.8
3 and More Children	75	9.4	93.9±18.8	59.9±25.1	24.1±12.1	35.8±15.7
F test			25.9	10.0	3.3	14.4
p value			**<0.01**	**<0.01**	**0.02**	**<0.01**
PostHoc			1>3. 2>3. 1>4. 2>4 (p<0.05)	3>1. 4>1. 4>2. 4>3 (p<0.05)	4>1. 4>2. 4>3 (p<0.05)	3>1. 4>1. 4>2 (p<0.05)
Family Type						
Nuclear Family	650	81.8	105.0±16.9	49.1±22.5	20.4±11.3	28.7±13.8
Extended Family	121	15.2	102.9±18.0	51.1±20.8	21.2±9.7	29.9±13.3
Broken Family	24	3.0	104.7±17.6	46.7±20.0	19.0±6.6	27.7±14.6
F test			0.73	0.56	0.47	0.46
p value			0.48	0.56	0.62	0.62

Table 2. Differences in scale scores based on descriptive socio-economic and place characteristics

Demographics	n	%	Perception of Gender Total	Violence Against Women Attitude Total	Attitude Toward the Body	Attitude Toward the Identity
	n	*%*	*Mean±SD*	*Mean±SD*	*Mean±SD*	*Mean±SD*
Income Status	n	%				
High	103	13.0	107.2±15.3	45.5±20.4	19.7±10.6	25.8±12.3
Middle	602	75.7	104.9±16.7	49.4±22.1	20.4±10.8	28.9±13.7
Low	90	11.3	100.4±20.0	52.9±23.9	21.4±11.7	31.5±14.9
F test			4.1	2.7	0.6	4.2
p value			**0.01**	0.06	0.54	**0.01**
PostHoc			1>3. 2>3 (p<0.05)			2>1. 3>1 (p<0.05)
Education						
Primary School	74	9.3	97.5±17.6	57.9±23.9	22.8±11.9	35.1±14.5
Middle School	39	4.9	91.8±19.8	58.4±21.9	23.1±12.3	35.3±12.8
Highschool	124	15.6	99.8±19.4	53.9±21.7	21.1±9.1	32.8±15.0
Under Graduate	506	63.6	107.3±15.4	47.1±21.9	19.9±11.2	27.1±13.1
Graduate	52	6.5	110.9±13.5	40.6±15.6	18.4±8.6	22.2±9.5
F test			17.3	9.5	2.3	14.5
p value			**<0.01**	**<0.01**	0.05	**<0.01**
PostHoc			4>1. 5>1. 3>2. 4>2. 5>2. 4>3. 5>3 (p<0.05)	1>4. 2>4. 3>4. 1>5. 2>5. 3>5. 4>5 (p<0.05)		1>4. 2>4. 3>4. 1>5. 2>5. 3>5. 4>5 (p<0.05)
Occupation	n	%				
Student	294	37.0	109.5±14.6	46.03±22.12	20.0±11.6	26.0±12.7
Housewife	108	13.6	97.7±17.2	56.56±22.58	21.5±11.1	35.0±14.2
Worker/Officer/ Freelancer	132	16.6	97.8±19.9	55.85±23.34	22.4±11.6	33.5±14.6
Health Worker	100	12.6	106.5±16.1	44.75±18.35	18.7±8.3	26.0±12.4
Educator (academician/teacher)	48	6.0	109.9±13.1	42.22±19.32	19.2±10.5	23.0±10.3
Retired	22	2.8	102.4±17.5	51.63±17.01	20.9±8.6	30.7±12.0
Other	91	11.4	103.6±16.7	50.0±22.2	20.4±10.4	29.6±14.2
F test			12.5	6.8	1.4	11.3
p value			**<0.01**	**<0.01**	0.19	**<0.01**
PostHoc			1>2. 4>2. 5>2. 7>2. 1>3. 4>3.5>3. 7>3. 1>7. 5>7 (p<0.05)	2>1. 3>1. 2>4. 3>4.2>5. 3>5. 7>5. 2>7. 3>7 (p<0.05)		2>1. 3>1. 7>1. 2>4.3>4. 2>5. 3>5. 6>5. 7>5. 2>7. 3>7 (p<0.05)

Table 2. (contuniued) Differences in scale scores based on descriptive socio-economic and place characteristics

Longest Lived Place	n	%				
Province	395	49.7	105.7±16.3	47.3±20.7	19.8±10.1	27.6±12.9
District	249	31.3	105.5±15.7	49.8±22.9	20.8±11.8	29.1±13.8
Village/town/rural	151	19.0	100.7±20.4	53.6±23.8	21.8±11.5	31.8±15.5
F test			5.2	4.6	2.0	5.4
p value			**<0.**01	**0.01**	0.12	**<0.01**
PostHoc			1>3. 2>3 (p<0.05)	3>1 (p<0.05)		3>1 (p<0.05)
Longest Lived Region	n	%				
Aegean	225	28.3	103.6±17.8	49.4±21.4	20.1±10.0	29.3±13.8
Marmara	210	26.4	107.4±14.8	44.7±15.9	18.2±6.4	26.5±11.7
Black Sea	36	4.5	106.7±17.8	55.1±31.9	25.5±19.4	29.5±14.9
Mediterranean	127	16.0	105.4±16.1	47.4±20.5	20.6±10.2	26.8±12.3
Central Anatolia	100	12.6	103.0±17.0	49.8±20.9	19.6±8.5	30.3±14.9
South Eastern Anatolia	70	8.8	100.4±20.2	61.2±31.1	25.8±17.4	35.4±16.7
Eastern Anatolia	27	3.4	104.5±19.3	52.3±26.5	22.6±13.9	29.7±14.9
F test			2.1	5.7	6.1	4.5
p value			0.05	**<0.01**	**<0.01**	**<0.01**
PostHoc			6>1 1>2. 3>2 6>2. 6>4 6>5 (p<0.05)	3>1 6>1 3>2 4>2. 6>2 7>2 3>4 6>4. 3>5 6>5 (p<0.05)	6>1 1>2 5>2 6>2 6>3. 6>4 6>5 (p<0.05)

Correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between the dimensions that determine participants' perception of gender and their level of violence against women attitude. Negative r=-0.615 (p<0.001) correlation was found between violence against women total and gender perception total. The findings of the analysis are shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Correlation analysis of perception of gender and violence against women attitude scores

		Perception of Gender Total	Violence Against Women Attitude Total	Attitude Toward the Body	Attitude Toward the Identity
Perception of Gender Total	r	1.000			
	p	<0.001			
Violence Against Women Attitude Total	r	-0.615**	1.000		
	p	<0.001	<0.001		
Attitude Toward the Body	r	-0.346**	0.869**	1.000	
	p	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	
Attitude Toward the Identity	r	-0.715**	0.920**	0.605**	1.000
	p	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001	<0.001

*<0.05; **<0.01; Pearson Correlation Analysis

The regression analysis performed to determine the relationship between the total perception of gender scale and the violence against women attitude scale was found to be significant (F=482.770; p<0.05). The total change in the level of the total score of the attitude toward violence against women is explained by the sum of gender perception at a rate of 37.8% (R^2=0.378). Perception of gender total score decreases the level of violence against women total score (ß=-0.799) (Table 4).

The regression analysis performed to determine the relationship between the total of perception of gender scale and attitude toward the body was found to be significant (F=108.059; p<0.05). The total change in the level of the total score of the attitude toward the body is explained by the sum of gender perception at a rate of 11.9% (R^2=0.119). Perception of gender total score decreases the level of the attitude toward the body (ß=-0.222) (Table 4).

Table 4. The Effect of Perception of Gender on Violence Against Women Attitude

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	ß	t	p	Model (p)	R^2
Violence Against Women Attitude Total	Invariant	132.981	34.468	<0.001	<0.001	0.378
	Perception of Gender Total	-0.799	-21.972	<0.001		
Attitude Toward the Body	Invariant	43.702	19.296	<0.001	<0.001	0.119
	Perception of Gender Total	-0.222	-10.395	<0.001		
Attitude Toward the Identity	Invariant	89.279	42.045	<0.001	<0.001	0.511
	Perception of Gender Total	-0.577	-28.834	<0.001		

DISCUSSION

Gender perception emerges as a driving force behind violence against women. Due to the patriarchal social structure, one of the most important reasons for violence against women is the existence of women in society outside of the roles expected of them. This study, which was conducted to determine gender perception and attitudes toward violence against women in Turkish society, as well as the relationship between them and the factors affecting them, shows that the participants' gender perception is positive. In a similarly conducted study, participants' perceptions of gender were found to be positive [15]. In a study conducted with university students, approximately three-quarters of the students

stated that there is an inequality between genders in Turkish society and that this inequality results from the structure of Turkish society [16].

In this study, educational and income status were found to influence people's perceptions of gender. The reason for the difference is that the total gender perception scores of those with good income status are higher than the total gender perception scores of those with low income status. In addition, the gender perception total scores of those with a university education level are higher than the scores of those with a primary school education level. According to a study, education level and income status are closely related to perceptions of gender roles [17].

Individuals' perception of gender equality improves as their educational and income levels rise, and this is especially true in low-income societies where gender perception is negative. Increasing the education level brings a contemporary perspective to individuals regarding the gender roles and becomes a determinant of gender equality. The educational consequences of gender inequalities are among the ongoing problems in all societies, to varying degrees and forms[18]. Education conveys gender-themed messages due to its functions, such as transferring culture and information to individuals, providing them with the necessary presuppositions to join the workforce, and so on. For this reason, schools, regardless of level, carry stereotypes and limitations about girls and boys, women and men. In a study conducted with individuals living in Turkiye, it is stated that factors such as gender, region of residence, education level, and employment status are among the determinants of perspectives on gender roles [17]. In a study on gender discrimination and violence against women in Lebanon, it was discovered that the participants' education level predicted their attitudes toward gender inequality [19].

In this study, while the gender perception score was lower in men than in women, the score against violence against women was found to be higher. In a study conducted with university students, it was stated that women's gender perception average scores were higher than men[20]. It is an expected finding that men's gender perception score is low in this study, and their opposition to violence against women was expected to be low. However, it seems that men are against violence against women. It is thought that public awareness and increased legal sanctions on this issue are effective due to the awareness studies carried out for the society about violence.

The cultural characteristics of societies are the most fundamental factors in gender perception. Generational cultural transmission is what keeps violence going down the generations. Violence is practiced differently in different cultures. It is important to understand the causes of violence and cultural differences when dealing with violence against women. The fact that cultural values are difficult to change means that the approach to violence against women and practices aimed at its prevention are critical, and violence must be addressed by all segments of society. Educating society about gender-based violence will be an important step toward a positive perception of gender in developing societies where patriarchal systems shape women's' experiences and choices in family relationships [21].

When the total score averages of the participants' violence against women attitude scale are examined, it is seen that the positive attitude towards women has increased. In addition, when their ISKEBE subscale scores are compared, it is observed that the average of attitudes toward identity, which includes psychological and economic violence, is higher than the average of attitudes toward the body, which includes physical and sexual violence. This situation demonstrates that while participants view psychological and economic violence (attitudes toward identity) as more unacceptable, they view physical and sexual violence (attitudes toward the body) as more acceptable. In the report prepared by the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (2014), it is stated that 36% of the women in Turkiye have been subjected to physical violence, and

12% have been subjected to sexual violence[8]. It has been detected that 44% of married women in Turkiye have experienced at least one form of emotional violence and abuse at some point in their lives [22]. According to the data from the 2011 Brazilian Women's Yearbook, 43.1% of women have been subjected to violence in their own homes, and among all women who have been attacked inside or outside the home, 25.9% of the perpetrators are their husbands or ex-husbands [23]. In a study conducted by Montgomery et al. in the United States, the prevalence of psychological, physical and sexual violence against women was found to be 31%, 19% and 7%. respectively [24]. In a study conducted with Libyan immigrants, it is stated that gender and education influence violence against women, and men typically do not see violence against women as a serious social problem, instead viewing it as a personal and family matter [25]. Violence against women harms women physically and psychologically; it prevents women from improving their social status; and it causes a significant number of women to be disadvantaged in terms of economic, social, educational, health and other rights. It is impossible to cultivate a sense of equality in a society, where women are subjected to violence.

There was a strong negative relationship between the total attitude towards violence against women and the total perception of gender. Affecting men's practice of physical violence against women in a study examining the factors, it is stated that gender attitude has an effect on physical violence against women[26]. In a study, it was stated that there was a strong negative relationship between the attitude of violence against women and the perception of gender[1]. It can be said that the perception of gender should change in

a positive way in order to decrease violence against women.

The regression analysis performed to determine the relationship between the total of perception of gender scale and violence against women attitude scale was found to be significant The total change in the level of total score of violence against women attitude is explained by the sum of gender perception at a rate of 37,8% Perception of gender total score decreases the level of violence against women total score. In this study, gender perception is the predictor of both the body and the identity of the violence against women attitude.

Limitations of the Study

The current findings are based on a cross-sectional data. This would imply that the extent to which the causal and temporal relationship between the dependent variable and predictors can be determined is severely limited. Secondly, the survey does not represent the entire of population in Turkiye. From this standpoint, the generalizability of the findings reported in this study is limited. Finally, it should be noted that this study evaluates Turkish society's attitudes rather than their behavioural intentions and actual behaviours.

CONCLUSION

The study revealed that the social and cultural characteristics of participants are associated with both the perception of gender and violence against women, despite there not being a reasonable correlation between the perception of gender and violence against women. There are substantial projects in various platforms around the world to reduce and prevent violence against women. Violence against women is a globally problem.

However, there is a need for more than one program that targets all segments of society to reduce and prevent violence against women. Governments must do their part to ensure that people live in a society that values gender equality. It is important to conduct ongoing awareness-raising activities as an important approach to addressing domestic violence issues affecting women. Planning and implementing comprehensive and continuous education that includes all people from all segments of society with the goal of positively influencing attitudes toward women will be an important step toward achieving a change in perception.

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