

Original Article

Gender Perception and Conflict and Violence Awareness in Adolescents

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Abstract

Purpose: In this study, it was aimed to determine the social gender perception of adolescents and their conflict and violence awarenesses and the influencing factors.

Material and Methods: This research is descriptive and relational design and 976 students have been included. Data were collected face-to-face and online by using Personal Information Form, Gender Perception Adolescent Form, and Conflict and Violence Awareness Scale between 27 June and 30 December 2021. Regression analysis, Pearson correlation analysis and multiple regression analysis were used in the evaluation of the data.

Results: The mean score of the students' gender perception scale was 78.12 ± 10.56 , the mean score of the egalitarian gender perception sub-dimension was 36.73 ± 6.32 , and the mean score of the traditional gender perception sub-dimension was 41.38 ± 6.00 . The mean score of the participants' awareness of conflict and violence scale was 111.21 ± 18.97 . In the study, it was found that there was a moderately significant positive correlation between perception of gender and awareness of conflict and violence ($r: 0.490, p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: A positive perception of gender affects adolescents' awareness of conflict and violence positively. For this reason, providing training on gender equality will positively affect the mental and physical health of adolescents.

Keywords: Adolescent, Gender, Violence, Conflict, Adolescence Health

Introduction

Biologically, sex is constituted of the physical, biological and genetic features of men and women. On the other hand, gender consists of the roles, expectations and responsibilities that society assigns to women and men. The roles that the gender phenomenon imposes on the sexes are feminine for women and masculine for men (WHO, 2013). The gender discrimination created by these roles gives rise to various problems all over the world (Folami, 2017;

Uner, 2008). Especially in societies where traditional gender perception is dominant, women cannot benefit from health, education and economic rights adequately and they are subjected to violence (Guzel, 2016).

Gender norms, attitudes, and practices that are more egalitarian can influence sexual and reproductive health outcomes and offer protection from violence and discrimination based on gender. In early adolescence, gender-related experiences and associated health effects can be influenced by social

behavior patterns, emotional development, and identity formation. (Cherewick et al., 2021). Due to the quick physical changes that come with sexual maturity and the way that gender-based experiences are shaped by local social and cultural factors, sexual maturity is a genesis moment. For example, as girls hit puberty, they are frequently regarded differently in their social setting and are progressively barred from partaking in activities outside the house or mixed-gender events. The perception of gender, which consists of traditional and egalitarian perceptions, begins to form in the family. However, it is affected by environmental factors such as friends, school and work-life (Direk & Irmak, 2017). For this reason, the gender perception of adolescents between the ages of 10-19, experiencing rapid physical, psychological and social changes may also be affected by environmental factors (WHO, 2013; Bebis et al., 2015).

It is of great importance for the dynamics of society and future generations to reveal the gender perception and awareness of conflict and violence of adolescents who may be affected by the school and friend environment. Family, school administrators and teachers also have great responsibilities in this regard (Bradshaw, 2019). Determining the awareness of adolescents, who are surrounded by digital technologies, about conflict and violence is vital for the physical, psycho-social and mental health of the dynamic structure of the society, that is, for public health. Achieving gender equality in all areas in global access to sustainable development goals will only be possible with the awareness of adolescents, who constitute a significant part of the population.

Thus, by ensuring equality of opportunity in all areas where gender inequality is deeply felt, such as employment, education and health services, it will be possible to contribute greatly to the prevention of violence against women (Kul Uctu & Karahan, 2016). Therefore, in this study, it was aimed to determine the gender perception, conflict and violence awareness of adolescents, who will be the adults of the future, and the affecting factors.

Materials and Methods

Study design, setting and sample: This study is descriptive and relational. Students studying at the high school level in 12 schools located in the center of a city in western Turkey were included in the study. 907 participants with a 95% confidence interval and 3% error out of a total of 6007 students were targeted as a sample. The sample obtained was distributed according to school types and then class weights by stratified weighted sampling method. Due to the small number of students in Imam Hatip High School, a sampling plan was made with at least 20 participants in each class. Therefore, the sample number was obtained as 945 instead of 907.

1006 high school students agreed to participate in the study. However, 30 students were excluded from the study due to the incomplete filling of the questionnaire. The research was completed with 976 students. Inclusion criteria for the study were; to study as a high school student, to be in the adolescent period defined as the age range of 10-19, to study in high schools in the city center.

Data collection: Due to the covid 19 pandemic, the data were collected by using messaging platforms (WhatsApp) in the online environment through social media during the distance education process, and by face-to-face questionnaires in schools after the face-to-face education started. In the explanation part of the online survey forms, the students were informed about the details of the study. The students who participated in the study reached the questions after clicking the "I voluntarily accept to participate in the study" button under the explanation. In the face-to-face data collected, the details of the study were explained to the students by the researchers, and their verbal and written consent were obtained. All data were collected between 27 June and 30 December 2021.

Measurements: Data were collected using a personal information form, gender perception scale-adolescent form, and awareness of conflict and violence scale.

Personal Information Form: The personal information form consists of 12 questions to

determine the sociodemographic characteristics of the students. The researchers produced the form based on the literature (Bebis et al., 2015; Esen, Ozturk & Siyez, 2018; Sargin, 2010).

The Gender Perception Scale - Adolescent

Form: The Gender Perception Scale (Altinova & Duyan, 2013), developed by Altinova and Duyan (2013) to evaluate individuals' perceptions of gender, was created by examining the validity and reliability of a sample of high school students. The scale is a 5-point Likert type consisting of 20 questions. The score that can be obtained from the scale with reversed items is between 20 and 100. Reverse items predict traditional gender perception. An increase in the score indicates an increase in the perception of gender. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient was discovered to be .80 for the egalitarian gender perception dimension, .86 for the conventional gender perception dimension, and .89 for the overall scale. The test-retest reliability coefficient obtained by applying the scale to 118 high school students at two-week intervals was found to be .73 in the dimension of egalitarian gender perception and .80 in the dimension of traditional gender perception (Esen, Ozturk & Siyez, 2018). The Cronbach alpha coefficient for this study is 0.75 in the egalitarian gender perception dimension and 0.69 in the traditional gender perception sub-dimension. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the entire scale is 0.80.

Conflict and Violence Awareness Scale:

The Conflict and Violence Awareness Scale was developed as a form by the Ohio Education Commission (2002), and its validity and reliability study was conducted by Sargin (2010). Without an inverted item, the Likert-type scale is rated as follows: 1. Strongly disagree, 2. Disagree, 3. Partially agree, 4. Agree, and 5. Totally agree. CVAS, which can be applied to adolescents and adults, is a scale containing 27 categorical items. The high score obtained as a result of the collection of the items on the scale indicates that the individual's awareness is high. The min-max score range of the CVAS scale is 27-135. The scale's internal consistency coefficient was 0.87 (Sargin, 2010). In this study, the Cronbach alpha coefficient was 0.92.

Data analysis: SPSS 25 package program was used to evaluate the data. The analytical sample includes male and female students between the ages of 15-19. In the analysis, firstly, the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants were determined by frequency, mean and standard deviation measurements. The mean scores and standard deviations of the students for the gender perception scale and its sub-dimensions, and the awareness scale of conflict and violence were calculated. The relationship of sociodemographic characteristics with gender perception, awareness of conflict and violence was evaluated using multiple regression analysis. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to determine the relationship between the sub-dimensions of the gender perception scale and the awareness scale of conflict and violence. Three models were created to determine the predictive status of gender perception and sub-dimensions of conflict and violence awareness, and the predictive status was determined using multiple regression analysis. The significance level was determined as $p < .05$ in Pearson correlation and multiple regression analysis. Significant values are marked with (*) in the generated tables.

Ethical consideration: Ethical approval of the study was obtained from the Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee of a university. (Reference number: (Reference number:31906847/050.04.04.-08-110– Date: 26.05.2021). Written permission was obtained from the administrators of the high schools where the study was carried out. In addition, the students were given information about the purpose of the research and they were assured that the data obtained would be kept confidential. The study was conducted by the Declaration of Helsinki.

Results

Sample Description

The average age of the students is 15.83 ± 1.24 . Most of the students included in the study were women (60.6%). It was determined that 48.0% of the students were studying in Anatolian High School and 34.7% of them were 10th-grade students. In addition, 29.2% of their mothers had education at a literate level, 24.6% had a primary school education,

70.0% had a mother who was a housewife, 42.8% had a father who was a worker, 38.4% had a sibling, It was determined that 73.6% of them lived in a nuclear family, and 56.9% of them had an income equal to their expenses (Table 1).

Social Gender Perception of Students and Their Awarenesses Related with Conflict and Violence

The mean score of the students on the gender perception scale is 78.12 ± 10.56 . The total mean score of the egalitarian perception of gender, which is one of the sub-dimensions of the gender perception scale, is 36.73 ± 6.32 , and the total mean score of the traditional perception of gender perception is 41.38 ± 6.00 . The total mean score they got from the awareness scale about conflict and violence was 111.21 ± 18.97 (Table 2).

Correlation of Sociodemographic Features with Social Gender Perception, Conflict, and Violence Awareness

The total score obtained from the gender perception scale is affected by gender, the high school the student attends, the profession of the mother, and the number of siblings (Table 3).

The total score obtained from the scale of awareness of conflict and violence is affected by gender, the high school the student attends, the education level of the father and the place

of residence where he lives the longest (Table 3).

Correlation of Social Gender Perception and Conflict and Violence Awarenesses

There is a moderately significant positive correlation between perception of gender and awareness of conflict and violence ($r = 0.490$, $p < 0.05$) (Table 4). There is a moderately significant positive correlation between egalitarian perception of gender ($r = 0.486$, $p < 0.05$) and awareness of conflict and violence (Table 4). There is a weak and positive correlation between traditional gender perception and awareness of conflict and violence ($r = 0.350$, $p < 0.05$) (Table 4).

Prediction of Gender Perception on Awareness of Conflict and Violence

As a result of multiple regression analysis, in model 1, egalitarian perception of gender predicted 23.5% of awareness of conflict and violence ($R^2: 0.235$, $p < .05$); increased awareness of conflict and violence 0.486 times ($\beta = 0.486$, $p < .05$). In Model 2, traditional gender perceptions predicted 12.1% of awareness of conflict and violence ($R^2: 0.121$; $p < .05$); increased awareness of conflict and violence by 0.350% ($\beta = 0.350$, $p < .05$). In Model 3, two variables together predicted 25.4% of awareness of conflict and violence ($R^2: 0.254$, $p < .05$); increased awareness of conflict and violence by 0.413% ($\beta = 0.350$, $p < .05$) (Table 5).

Table 1. Sociodemographic Features of Students (n=976).

Variables	n	%
Gender		
Female	591	60.6
Male	385	39.4
High school attended		
Anatolian High School	468	48.0
Anatolian Imam Hatip highschool	102	10.5
Vocational High School	397	40.7
Class level		
9.class	242	24.8
10.class	339	34.7
11.class	217	22.2
12.class	178	18.2

Mother's education level		
Illiterate	80	8.2
literate	285	29.2
Primary school	216	22.1
Middle School	213	21.8
High school	139	14.2
Associate/Bachelor's	43	4.4
Father's education level		
Illiterate	28	2.9
literate	234	24.0
Primary school	240	24.6
Middle School	236	24.2
High school	174	17.8
Associate/Bachelor's	64	6.6
Mother's occupation		
Housewife	683	70.0
Farmer	5	0.5
Employee	166	17.0
Officer	46	4.7
Small business	43	4.4
Other	33	3.4
Father's occupation^a		
Unemployed	69	7.1
Farmer	94	9.6
Employee	418	42.8
Officer	105	10.8
Small business	175	17.9
Other	115	11.8
Number of siblings^a		
None	92	9.4
1 sibling	375	38.4
2 siblings	264	27.0
3 siblings	137	14.0
4 and more	108	11.1
Family type^a		
Nuclear family	718	73.6
Extended family	176	18.0
broken family	82	8.4
Monthly income level^a		
Income is less than expenses	235	24.1
Income equals expenses	555	56.9
Income is higher than expenses	186	19.1
Settlement place lived longest at^a		
Village	184	18.9

Town	39	4.0	
District	682	69.9	
Province	71	7.3	
	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>X±SD</i>
Age of the students ^{a, b}	976	100	15.83±1.24

^aFrequency, ^bMean±SD

Table 2.The Mean Scores of the Students from the Gender Perception Scale and Its Sub-dimensions, and the Awareness Scale of Conflict and Violence

	n	%	X ± SD
Gender perception scale mean total score ^{a, b}	976	100	78.12 ± 10.56
Egalitarian perception of gender ^{a, b}	976	100	36.73 ± 6.32
Traditional gender perception ^{a, b}	976	100	41.38 ± 6.00
Conflict and violence awareness scale total score average ^{a, b}	976	100	111.21 ± 18.97

^aFrequency, ^bMean ± SD

Table 3.Correlation of Sociodemographic Features with Gender Perception, Conflict and Violence Awareness (n = 976).

Variables	Gender perception scale			Conflict and violence awareness scale		
	β	t	p	β	t	p
Gender	-0.483	-17.751	0.00*	-0.165	-5.252	0.000*
High school attended	-0.199	-6.710	0.00*	-0.182	5.313	0.000*
Class level	-0.070	2.581	0.10*	0.008	0.249	0.803
Mother's education level	0.016	0.424	0.671	-.0041	-0.933	0.351
Father's education level	0.026	-0.736	0.462	-0.099	-2.445	0.015*
Mother's profession	0.94	3.245	0.001*	0.050	1.505	0.133
Father's profession	0.014	0.487	0.626	-0.041	-1.249	0.212
Number of siblings	-0.078	-2.582	0.010*	-0.065	-1.861	0.063
Family type	-0.027	-0.969	0.333	-0.044	-1.367	0.0172
monthly income level	-0.013	-0.468	0.640	0.017	0.527	0.599
Longest lived settlement place	0.004	0.004	0.900	0.079	2.406	0.016*

Multi-regression analysis is applied. *p<.05.

Table 4 Correlation of Social Gender Perception Scale and Its Sub-dimensions with Conflict and Violence Awarenesses Scale (n=976).

Variables	1	2	3	4
1. Gender perception	1.00			
2.Egalitarian gender perception	.865*	1.00		
3.Traditional gender perception	.849*	.469*	1.00	
4.Conflict and violence awareness	.490*	.486*	.350*	1.00

Pearson correlation analysis was applied. $p < .05^*$

Table 5. Prediction of College Students' Egalitarian and Traditional Gender Perceptions by Awareness of Conflict and Violence (n = 976).

Variables		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
		β	β	β
Egalitarian perception	gender	.486		.413
Traditional perception	gender		.350	.156
R^2		.235	.121	.254
F		301.279	135.640	166.718
p		<.05	<.05	<.05
DW		1.786	1.718	1.775

Multi-regression analysis was applied ($p < 0.05$).

Discussion

UNICEF states that approximately half of the women and girls in the world are subject to gender-based discrimination and violence (UNICEF, 2024). Discrimination and violence stem from unequal gender prejudices and perceptions that are formed at very young ages and are influenced by family, household and community norms (Landry et al., 2020). The findings of this study showed that high school students have high gender perceptions. There are studies that have findings which are similar to our research finding (Aksoy Derya et al., 2017; Direk & Irmak, 2017; Varol, Ciceklioglu & Taner, 2016). As being different from our study, in the research conducted by Landry et al., (2020), it was reported that half of the students aged 8-18 have a moderate perception of gender equality; In the study conducted by Das et al. (2014), it was reported that the perception of gender equality is lower in male students than in female students. Attitudes and perceptions towards gender equality, which begin to emerge in the family, are shaped by the adolescent's realization of his own perceptions by being noticed by the adolescent with the influence of the social environment during the secondary education process. The findings obtained from the research are important in terms of the existence of positive gender perception in

adolescence. It was determined that the students within the scope of the study had a high level of awareness of conflict and violence. Research findings in the literature also support our current findings (Pesen et al., 2016; Rodríguez-Borrego et al., 2022; Sargin, 2010).

In this study, it was concluded that gender, the high school the student attended, the profession of the mother and the number of siblings were effective on the total score obtained from the gender perception scale. In the studies conducted, it was determined that there was a difference between the students' gender perceptions according to gender, the department they studied, mother's education level, father's education level, mother's occupation, income level and the place where they lived for the longest time (Kul Uctu & Karahan, 2016; Patel, Santhya & Haberland, 2021; Pesen et al., 2016; Varol, Ciceklioglu & Taner, 2016). In some studie, it has been determined that there is a difference between students' gender perceptions only according to gender (Vefikulucay et al., 2007). The sense of gender gives birth to the meanings that gender roles attach to men and women. Traditional gender perceptions force men to bear tremendous loads and obligations, such as providing for the family, protecting the home, and acting like a "man," while rendering women dependent and docile. In

contrast to the egalitarian method, the traditional approach exacerbates gender inequality and contributes to the rise of domestic violence, among other issues (Gencoglu, Kumcagiz & EE, 2014). While boys in Turkey are raised more freely in terms of sexuality and social life than women, girls are generally under pressure and control and are raised in accordance with the expectation of a more conservative and traditional role (Aksoy Derya et al., 2017). Therefore, it is not a surprising finding that factors such as gender and mother's work have an effect on the perception of gender.

The findings of the study showed that the total score obtained from the conflict and violence awareness scale was affected by gender, the high school the student attended, the father's education level, and the place of residence where they lived the longest. Studies in the literature have shown that there is a difference between conflict and violence awareness levels in terms of the variables of students' gender, the department they study, income level, mother's exposure to violence and student's exposure to violence (Kul Uctu & Karahan, 2016, Varol, Ciceklioglu & Taner, 2016; Pesen et al., 2016).

Another finding obtained from the study is that there is a moderately significant positive relationship between gender perception and awareness of conflict and violence. In addition, the research findings also showed that there is a moderately positive relationship between egalitarian perception of gender and awareness of conflict and violence, and a weak positive relationship between traditional gender perception and awareness of conflict and violence. These findings are supported by previous studies. In the study conducted by Kul Uctu & Karahan (2016), it was determined that there is a significant negative relationship between gender perception and violence tendency, and as the gender perception score increases, the tendency to violence decreases. The values and norms that individuals determine by observing their environment create the perception of gender roles. Therefore, the perception of gender roles also affects the tendency of violence in men. It is frequently encountered in roles where men are taught to be a perpetrator of violence in order to gain power in a society

that has a patriarchal order, that is, traditional gender role attitudes (Gencoglu, Kumcagiz & Ersanli, 2014). It is thought that the learning of gender roles by students in the socialization process may affect their violence tendency levels.

In Model 1, it has been shown that positive egalitarian gender perception increases awareness of conflict and violence more than traditional gender perception. This finding is an important finding in terms of government policies to be implemented to reduce the global increase in violence against women and domestic violence cases. It is also important in terms of emphasizing the necessity of reinforcing the egalitarian perception of gender in the high school education period, that is, at an early age. It is accepted that the education and job opportunities, management opportunities, distribution of power and resources, and the shaping of health and welfare in the world are determined by gender norms. Gender norms are often measured by evaluating individuals' gender attitudes or views on gender. Individuals, families, friends, the media, educational institutions, religion, and other structural elements all reinforce and replicate gender norms throughout life (Heise et al., 2019). Therefore, it is important to determine the perception of gender in early adolescence, when violent behaviors occur. Two studies from the USA generally show that male and female gender attitudes become more equitable during adolescence, depending on factors such as country of birth, birth order, age, gender, and parental gender attitudes (Lam, Stanik & McHale, 2017; Updegraff et al., 2014).

Conclusion: This study showed that adolescents have a high level of gender perception and awareness of conflict and violence and that variables such as gender, high school the student attends, mother's occupation, father's education level, number of siblings and place of residence for the longest period of time have an impact on students' perception of gender and awareness of conflict and violence, has shown to be effective.

Adolescence is a period in which emotional and impulsive behaviors increase, violent

tendencies and reactions that make borders difficult increase, and violence is easily learned and adopted. The development of gender perceptions of adolescents, who start the social learning process in the family and continue with the interaction of the social environment, in an egalitarian or traditional way, also determines their tendency to violence. Therefore, adolescents who receive 9-12 class education may be more prone to risky behaviors that will reinforce violence due to environmental and cultural factors. Formal interventions such as health education provided by nursing professionals in schools or the wider community can have a positive impact on both the physical and mental health of the adolescent.

The findings of this research may encourage primary care nurses to support the development of health promotion programs for young adults. While preparing training programs, it should be kept in mind that integrating content that transforms gender perception with social-emotional learning content can encourage more gender-equal norms, beliefs and behaviors. In addition, it was concluded that there was a significant positive relationship between gender perception and its sub-dimensions and awareness of conflict and violence. This study presents striking data in terms of emphasizing the importance of creating a positive perception of gender in adolescents. It is very important for the countries of the world to increase their initiatives to implement programs and policies that will encourage women, who make up half of the global population, to give fair care to their children, in terms of making positive perceptions of gender roles.

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