

Attitudes of three generations of women toward gender roles

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Abstract

Purpose: This study was conducted to investigate the attitudes of three generations of women regarding gender roles.

Designs and Methods: In this study, 58 female students, their mothers, and grandmothers participated. Percentages and means, χ^2 test, Kruskal Wallis test, and multiple regression analysis were used to analyze the data.

Findings: The findings obtained in this study showed that 91.5% of the students, 89.8% of the mothers, and 84.6% of the grandmothers had an egalitarian attitude regarding gender roles. The egalitarian attitudes of students were affected onefold by the attitudes of mothers, whereas grandmothers' attitudes affected the attitudes of students 1.1 times. These two variables explain 48% of the status of having egalitarian attitudes of the students.

Practical Implications: Students had more traditional attitudes regarding gender roles than their mothers and grandmothers.

KEYWORDS

gender, gender identity, women

1 | INTRODUCTION

Today, we frequently use sex and gender concepts instead of each other, but they have different meanings. "Sex" defines whether an individual is male or female concerning his/her genetic, physiological, and biological features. On the other hand, the "gender" concept expresses the social personality features, relationships, roles, and responsibilities of a woman and a man.¹⁻³

The roles of a woman and a man are shaped by the demands of society with respect to gender. Gender defines the status of women as responsible for taking care of the housework and men who should take part in business life and meet the financial costs of the house.⁴ The roles, which are attributed to women and men in most areas of social life, create a discrimination against women, causing women to be frequently subordinated in social life, and the continuation of an inequality model that values men more than women. This inequality is particularly related to work/equality of opportunity, participation in decision-making, freedom of choice, utilization of health services, the equal wage for equal work, education, and career choices.⁴⁻⁶

There are many studies that have examined the gender concept and the different dimensions of gender.⁷⁻⁹ These studies aimed to investigate the thoughts of students related to traditional and egalitarian gender roles and it has been detected that students have adopted the traditional gender roles. It was shown that female students had less traditional gender roles than male students.^{7,10} According to one of the national studies that were conducted with nursing students regarding their attitudes about gender role, students had egalitarian attitudes.¹¹ In the studies conducted, socio-demographic and cultural characteristics, such as age, gender, marital status, educational status of the mother, educational status of the father, joint decision-making in the family, and money management in the family show that it affects attitudes toward gender roles.^{7,10,12}

"Gender" is defined as the social and cultural behavior, expectations, responsibilities, and roles that are received by women or men due to their biological sex at any time and in any culture. Based on this, it has been specified that gender is sociocultural; it can be changed due to time, culture, and even family, it is created by human beings and it can be altered.^{3,13} However, there are few studies

concerning gender roles regarding concerning generational differences, which has remained under-researched.

In Turkey, where we conducted this study, the first tier of gender equality was established with the Republic revolutions, and in the years following the establishment of the Republic in 1923, revolutions were realized with the belief that there should be full equality between men and women. Although a modern state structure was created, on the one hand, a great social change was realized on the other hand. However, the emphasis on the fact that the main duty of women is their home and family, especially in the textbooks that started after 1945 and until today, has built gender roles on an unhealthy basis. In Turkey—in the 2000s and today—gender inequality manifests itself in areas, such as education, work-life, and political participation.

This study was conducted to investigate the attitudes of three generations of women regarding gender roles in Turkey.

2 | METHODS

2.1 | The type of study

This descriptive, comparative, correlational, and cross-sectional study was conducted to investigate the factors and the gender roles attitudes of three generations of women.

2.2 | The sampling of this study

GPOWER program was used to calculate the sample size. GPOWER is a free statistics program that calculates sample size, power, and effect size. To determine the sample size, the GPOWER program used was based on the Başar's¹⁴ study. Required sample size was determined as 30 people at 80% power and 0.05 significance level.

To perform this study, permission was obtained from the institution. An announcement was made at the university and a meeting was held with female students. In this meeting, information was provided about this study and their voluntary participation in this study was requested. Students who accepted to participate in this study informed their parents and invited them to this study. The mothers and grandmothers who accepted the invitation were included in this study. Written informed consent was obtained from all participants. The sampling of this study included 58 female students (31 students from the Faculty of Health Sciences, 26 were from the Faculty of Educational Sciences, and 1 of them was from the Faculty of Business and Management Sciences in one of the foundation universities), and their mothers and grandmothers.

2.3 | Data collection

In this study, the data were collected from the students. The forms were delivered to the mothers and grandmothers with the help of

students. The forms that were filled at home reached us thanks to the students in this study.

2.4 | Data collection tools

The data were obtained using the Sociodemographic Data Collection Form, Gender Roles Attitude Scale (GRAS).

2.5 | Sociodemographic data collection form

This form was developed by the researchers. These forms included the sociodemographic information of the female students (e.g., department, age, marital status, the type of marriage, place of birth and the longest place of residence, previous education information, with whom they lived together previously, the number of siblings, family structure, education level of parents and grandparents, and marriage forms), and their mothers and grandmothers.

2.6 | GRAS

The original scale was developed by Zeyneloğlu and Terzioğlu¹⁵ with 38 items to measure the gender role attitudes of university students. This scale is a 5-point Likert-type scale and it is evaluated as "Strongly Disagree (1)," "Disagree (2)," "Undecided (3)," "Agree (4)," and "Completely Agree (5)." The minimum score is "38," and the maximum score is "190." The maximum score means that the student has an egalitarian attitude regarding gender roles and the minimum score means that the student has a traditional attitude regarding gender roles. The median was used as a cut-off point because the scale did not have a cut-off. The students whose scores were below the median had traditional attitudes and the students with scores of the median or more had egalitarian attitudes regarding gender roles. As a result of the explanatory factor analysis, it was determined that the scale consisted of five subdimensions. Five subscales explained 46% of the total variance. The items factor load values were between 0.35 and 0.79. The Cronbach's α of the scale was 0.92. The Cronbach's α values of the five subdimensions were 0.78, 0.80, 0.78, 0.78, and 0.72, respectively. In this study, the Cronbach's α value of the scale for students was 0.70, 0.71 for mothers, and 0.81 for older mothers.

2.7 | Ethical considerations

The ethics committee approval was received for this study from the ethics committee of the University. After giving verbal information about this study, written consent was obtained from the students and their mothers and grandmothers, who voluntarily agreed to participate in this study. They had the right to withdraw from this study at any time. This study was in line with the principles of the Helsinki Declaration.

TABLE 1 Statistical analysis

| Comparison | Statistic method |
|---|--|
| Determining the defining characteristics of girls, mothers, and grandmothers | Percentage and mean |
| To compare the attitudes of girls, mothers, and grandmothers toward gender roles | χ^2 test |
| Comparison of the <i>Gender role attitudes</i> scale and subscale Scores of the girls, parents, and grandparents | Kruskal-Wallis test |
| For post hoc analysis when a difference was detected according to the comparison of Gender Role Attitude Scale scores of girls, mothers, and grandmothers | Bonferroni-adjusted student t test |
| The level of mothers' and grandmothers' attitudes to predict girls' attitudes toward gender roles | Multiple regression analysis |
| Test for multicollinearity | By variance inflation factor (VIF) and tolerance. Predictors added model by VIF coefficients are less than 10 and tolerance coefficients are greater than .20. |

2.8 | Data analysis

The analysis performed in this study is given in Table 1. The significance level was accepted as .05.

3 | RESULTS

5.2% of the students who participated in this study were married. All of the married students were acquainted with their spouses previously. 41.4% of the students were living in the city. 55.2% of them was living in the district and 1.7% of them was living in the village. 67.2% of the students lived in the city and 27.6% of them lived in the district until they finished primary school. 44.8% of the students graduated from high school, 12.1% of them graduated from Anatolian, Super and Science High School, 8.6% of them graduated from private high schools, 10.3% of them graduated from vocational school, and 13.8% of them graduated from religious high schools. 5.2% of the students were living in student hostels and 1% of them was living in an apartment for rent and 8% of them was living with their families. 36.2% of the students had one sibling and 31% of them had two siblings. 93.1% of the students had nuclear families and the rest of them had extended families. 5.2% of the mothers were not literate, 3.4% of them was literate, 51.7% of them graduated from primary school, 17.2% of them graduated from secondary school, 15.5% of them graduated from high school, and 6.9% of them graduated from university. 34.5% of the grandparents were not literate, 17.2% of them were literate, 37.9% of them graduated from primary school, 7% of them graduated from secondary school, and 1.72% of them graduated from university. Only 5.2% of the mothers and 1.7% of the grandparents were working. The mothers and fathers were alive and together in 91.4% of the students. All of the students lived together with their families until the age of 18. 12.1% of the parents had a prearranged marriage without meeting their spouse, 51.7% of them had a prearranged marriage by knowing their

spouse, 34.0% of them was acquainted with their spouses previously. 98.3% of the parents had both religious and civil marriage. 30% of the grandmothers and the grandfathers had a prearranged marriage without meeting their spouse and 43.1% of them had prearranged marriage by knowing their spouse. 93.1% of the grandparents had both religious and civil marriage.

The findings showed that 91.5% of the students had egalitarian attitudes and 8.5% of them had traditional attitudes concerning their gender roles. 89.8% of the mothers had egalitarian attitudes and 10.2% of them had traditional attitudes related to gender roles. 84.6% of the grandmothers had egalitarian attitudes and 15.4% of them had traditional attitudes related to gender roles. There was no significant difference among the three gender women concerning their gender role attitudes ($p = 0.654$) (Table 2).

The gender role attitudes of the three generations were compared in this study. The findings showed that the scale score average of the students, their mothers, and grandparents were 110.5 ± 9.3 , 114.3 ± 11.4 , and 116.9 ± 17.2 , respectively. There was no significant difference between the average scores of the groups ($p > 0.05$). However, when we examined the average scores of the groups, there was a difference between groups and students had more traditional gender role attitudes compared with their mothers and grandparents.

According to the study results, the average scores of students, their mothers, and grandmothers in the subdimension of the egalitarian gender role were 34.9 ± 4.9 , 36.6 ± 5.1 , and 31.1 ± 5.2 ,

TABLE 2 Attitudes of the students, parents, and grandparents toward gender roles

| Generation | Egalitarian | | Traditional | | χ^2 | p |
|--------------|-------------|------|-------------|------|----------|-------|
| | n | % | n | % | | |
| Girls | 43 | 91.5 | 4 | 8.5 | 0.848 | 0.654 |
| Mothers | 44 | 89.8 | 5 | 10.2 | | |
| Grandmothers | 22 | 84.6 | 4 | 15.4 | | |

respectively, ($p = 0.001$). There was a statistically significant difference between the average scores of the three generations. According to the post hoc analysis, it was due to the difference between the average score of the girl and the grandmother ($p = 0.000$) and the mother and the grandmother ($p = 0.013$) (Table 3).

The findings showed that the woman gender role subscale average scores of the students, their mothers, and grandmothers were 24.7 ± 3.1 , 20.9 ± 3.1 , and 25.4 ± 3.6 , respectively. There was a statistically significant difference between the average scores of three generations ($p = 0.000$). According to the post hoc analysis, this was due to the difference between the average score of the girl and the mother ($p = 0.000$) and the mother and the grandmother ($p = 0.000$).

The marriage gender role subscale average scores of the students, their mothers, and grandmothers were 11.6 ± 2.9 , 12.7 ± 3.2 , and 14.8 ± 4.7 , respectively. There was a statistically significant difference between the average scores of three generations ($p = 0.004$). According to the post hoc analysis, this was due to the difference between the average score of the girl and the grandmother ($p = 0.000$).

The traditional gender role subscale average scores of the students, their mothers, and grandmothers were 22.1 ± 5.6 , 25.5 ± 5.4 , and 26.7 ± 6.7 , respectively. There was a statistically significant difference between the average scores of three generations ($p = 0.002$). According to the post hoc analysis, this was due to the difference between the average score of the girl and the mother ($p = 0.001$) and the girl and the grandmother ($p = 0.004$).

The man gender role subscale average scores of the students, their mothers, and grandmothers were 17.1 ± 4.9 , 18.1 ± 4.8 , and 19.4 ± 6.8 , respectively. There was no statistically significant difference between the average scores of the three generations ($p = 0.245$).

Based on the results of the multiple regression analysis, the gender role attitudes of students were only affected by the gender role attitudes of the mothers and grandmothers ($p < 0.05$). The egalitarian attitude of students was affected onefold by the attitudes of mothers, whereas grandmothers' attitudes affected the attitudes of students 1.1-fold. These two parameters explain 48% of the status of having egalitarian attitudes. Other parameters did not alter the egalitarian gender role attitudes of students ($p > 0.05$) (Table 4).

4 | DISCUSSION

Human beings are born either as a female or a male, but they learn to be a girl or a boy with the roles that are determined by society while they are growing.¹⁶ It has been stated that gender is sociocultural, and may change due to time, culture, and even family, it is created by human beings, and it can be altered.^{3,13} Furthermore, the gender role attitudes of human beings can be altered due to the education level of the parents, the mother's work status, family atmosphere, siblings and friends, teachers, textbooks, and the mass media.¹⁷ Particularly, if the education level of mothers is getting higher and if the mother

TABLE 3 Comparison of the scale and subscale scores of the students, parents, and grandparents

| Generation | Total score X (SS) | Egalitarian gender role X (SS) | Woman gender role X (SS) | Marriage gender role X (SS) | Traditional gender role X (SS) | Man gender role X (SS) |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| Girls (n = 47) | 110.5 (9.3) | 34.9 (4.9) | 24.7 (3.1) | 11.6 (2.9) | 22.1 (5.6) | 17.1 (4.9) |
| Mothers (n = 49) | 114.3 (11.4) | 33.6 (5.1) | 20.9 (3.1) | 12.7 (3.2) | 25.5 (5.4) | 18.1 (4.8) |
| Grandmothers (n = 26) | 116.9 (17.2) | 31.1 (5.2) | 25.4 (3.6) | 14.8 (4.7) | 26.7 (6.7) | 19.4 (6.8) |
| X^2_{KW} | 5.917 | 13.330 | 43.031 | 10.818 | 12.191 | 2.812 |
| p | 0.052 | 0.001 | 0.000 | 0.004 | 0.002 | 0.245 |

TABLE 4 Multiple regression analysis of factors that affect the attitudes of the students towards the gender roles

| | B | Standard error | Standard Beta (β) | t | p |
|--|-------|----------------|---------------------------|-------|-------|
| Stationary | 2.067 | 0.359 | | 5.763 | 0.000 |
| The attitude of the mothers toward gender roles | 1.000 | 0.306 | 1.000 | 3.273 | 0.005 |
| The attitude of the grandmothers toward gender roles | 0.933 | 0.258 | 1.107 | 3.623 | 0.003 |

Note: $R = 0.689$, $R^2 = 0.475$, $F = 6.786$, $p = 0.008$; DW = 2.029 (1.5–2.5).

works, children tend to have more egalitarian attitudes.^{17–19} In this study, it has been shown that the education level increased in the first, second, and third generations. Besides this, participation in work-life was higher in the second generations than the first ones, but it was still very low. Increments in the education level of the third generation (students) were markedly affected by the 8 years of compulsory primary education that was accepted in 1997. Although the education levels and participation in the work-life rates increased, there was no significant difference between the three generations of women regarding gender role attitudes. This finding can be associated with the small number of working mothers and the house work that should be performed by the working mothers even they came home after work. Although the education level of society increases, the expectations and the roles of the women do not change and women eventually accommodate themselves to these conditions. In the studies that were performed to investigate the gender role attitudes of the university students, it was indicated that the students whose mothers were working adopted egalitarian gender role attitudes and they had the same roles as their mothers.^{20–22} Therefore, in Turkey, we should primarily increase the education level, and there should be initiatives that can lead the women to participate in the work-life as well as in the politics and decision-making mechanisms in order for them to have more egalitarian attitudes.

When we examine the average scores of the GRAS of students, parents and grandparents, there is a difference between generations, and students have more traditional gender attitudes than their mothers and grandparents. In the social learning theory, when the “operant conditioning” is applied, the child is rewarded or punished due to the behavior depending on the gender and it becomes an attitude by repeating the awarding/punishment. Besides this, when the children learn by “modeling and imitation,” the girls imitate their mothers and the female figures and the boys imitate their fathers and male figures. According to this theory, the traditional gender roles are transferred from one generation to others due to the acquired conditioning in societies in which the gender role expectations are well defined and applied strictly.¹⁶ It is possible to state that the political change in society affects the gender role attitudes of women with this acquired conditioning learning model. There are studies that aim to investigate the gender role attitudes of high school and university students on a global level. These studies have reported that the students do not adopt egalitarian attitudes, and the female students adopted the egalitarian attitudes more than male students.^{23–27} On the other hand, there are also studies that

have shown that female and male students have adopted traditional gender role attitudes.^{17,28}

In our study, the subscales of the gender role, egalitarian gender role, woman gender role, marriage gender role, traditional gender role, and man gender role attitudes were examined. The difference between the average scores of the three generations regarding the egalitarian and woman gender role subscales was statistically significant ($p < 0.05$). The findings showed that the grandparents had more egalitarian attitudes than students and mothers. The average scores of the mothers were the lowest. Regarding marriage, tradition and man gender role attitudes, grandparents were the most egalitarian and the students were the most traditional. The difference between the average scores of these groups was also statistically significant. Women have changing roles according to the governing norms of the country, religious beliefs and traditional culture due to their gender. In Turkey, in the first 10 years, followed by the establishment of the Republic in 1923, Atatürk provided women with equal rights and they started to become powerful and financially independent. In addition, women started to participate in education and work-life as well as make decisions independently besides their motherhood and house work.²⁹ Although there was such progress regarding women's rights in the Republican period, when the recent status of the women is examined, we can observe the presence of marked gender inequality and the desired sensitivity has not yet formed. In Turkey, participation rates of women in the work-life are low. Thus, the development of the country is still lower than the participation rate of men.³⁰ Furthermore, the labour force participation rates of women have been decreasing for years. However, getting benefits from social and economic developments is closely related to participating in the labor market for our women. It is because as women gain economic independence, their self-confidence and social respectability as well as the status in the family improves.³⁰ Women with low educational levels generally work in low value-added jobs with low wages. The majority of women prefer to be a housewife instead of working with low wages. Participation in the work-life increases as the education level increases. According to another study conducted in Turkey, although the status of women changes, the labor force gender roles are mostly reflected in the national series. In these series, women are indicated frequently as housewives by focusing on family and motherhood issues. Besides this, the house is shown as the arena of women and the streets are directed to be the arena of men. Similarly, there are also practical tips about handcrafts, housework, food recipes, and family relationships in the newspapers for women.³⁰ Media also supports the

traditional trends by representing men and women in a uniform and stereotypical manner.³¹ Furthermore, we can state that the roles of women and men in the textbooks during the education period may affect the gender role attitudes in society. The textbooks in the first years of the Republic were totally different from the textbooks that are available today. They had better paper and visual quality and their language was simple, fluent and easy to understand; the topics were beneficial for the daily requirements, they fought against superstition and religious indoctrinations, they also gave value to peasants, workers, artisans, and working individuals, they had a different way of warning the children against middlemen and usurers. In addition, they also increased the awareness of women regarding being an independent citizen. In these textbooks, there was a big difference between the image of the woman that was formed until 1945 and the image of the women after 1945. Before 1945, the mothers had crucial roles in establishing the country and the family roles of the women were not emphasized intensively. However, after 1945, the primary role of women was defined as being a housewife in the textbooks. In textbooks prepared for the 2005–2006 academic years, both the texts and the visuals depicted that men were active and women were inactive in social life.³² The results of this study can be explained by the power of the right-wing government with the conservative-democratic views for the last 12 years and the low rates of the labor force participation of women (33.2%) than men (71.3%),³³ and also the media as well as school textbooks that have an impact on the adoption of the traditional roles.

To change the traditional views of the students regarding gender roles and provide them with an egalitarian perspective, their gender role attitudes and the factors that affect their views should primarily be determined.³⁴

When the factors affecting the gender role attitudes of the students are examined, the findings suggest that only the attitudes of the mothers and grandmothers could affect the gender role attitudes of the students. Furthermore, these two variables could only explain 48% of the status of having egalitarian attitudes of the students. It was stated that the mother, father, and siblings were the basic reasons that determined the adoption of the gender roles by adolescents.^{18,24,35} The findings showed that the children who grew up with their parents adopted more egalitarian views than others.^{17,24} In our studies, 81% of the students were living with their family members, 36.2% of them had one sibling, 31% of them had two siblings, and 93.1% of the families were nuclear and the rest of them were extended families. It can be possible to state that this leads the students to reflect the gender role attitudes by adopting their mother and grandmother as role models.

5 | LIMITATIONS

The major limitation of this study is the small sample size. Further studies should be conducted with larger groups to investigate the factors and gender role attitudes more in detail.

6 | CONCLUSIONS

The majority of the students had egalitarian gender role attitudes and there was no significant difference between the gender role attitudes of the women according to generation. However, students had more traditional attitudes than their mothers and grandmothers.

7 | IMPLICATIONS FOR NURSING PRACTICE

It is striking that the majority of the students had egalitarian gender role attitudes. However, students had more traditional attitudes than their mothers (second generation) and grandmothers (first generation). The following recommendations are made:

1. Qualitative studies should be conducted to investigate egalitarian gender roles.
2. Conferences, congresses, symposia, and panels should be organized on egalitarian gender roles for female students.
3. Student unions can be set up across universities.
4. Longitudinal studies can be conducted given that social gender roles may have determinative effects on female students' vocational careers.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data used to support to findings of this study are included within the article. Study data can be used with permission from all authors.

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