

# EFFECT OF GENDER ATTITUDES OF NURSING STUDENTS ON DATING AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ATTITUDES

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose:** Violence and gender inequality duo stand out as a global-scale public health problem, not only because of their frequent prevalences but because of their important effects on youth health. Health workers and especially nurses play an important role in preventing violence. This study aimed to examine the effect of gender attitudes of nursing students on their attitudes towards dating and domestic violence.

**Material and Methods:** This study used a descriptive and cross-sectional design. The sample consisted of a total 638 nursing students. Data were collected with Questionnaire Form, Gender Role Attitude Scale, Dating Violence Attitudes Scale and Domestic Violence Attitude Scale. Mann Whitney U, Kruskal Wallis, spearman correlation analysis, corrected Bonferroni was used.

**Results:** The domestic and dating violence of the students were affected by the knowledge of gender, region of residence, gender, maternal education and presence of violence between the parents. Students attitudes of gender roles was found to be high, whereas dating violence attitudes were found at a medium level.

**Conclusion:** Gender roles attitudes nursing students have an effect on their domestic and dating violence attitudes.

**Keywords:** Gender roles; domestic violence; dating violence; nursing

## INTRODUCTION

Sex is referred to as what reflects our genetic, physiological and biological features that we exhibit as female or male. Gender, on the other hand, expresses our roles and responsibilities arising from whether we are male or woman. Different from biological gender, social gender defines and differentiates men and women psychologically, sociologically and culturally by identifying the roles and statuses called femininity and masculinity (1, 2). Violence, today, emerges as a growing social problem both in Turkey and around the world (3). Violence occurs in different ways in the society and affects both the individual and the society as a whole

(4). Attitudes towards gender roles are the best determinant of domestic and dating violence in general. One of the types of violence, dating violence is generally encountered among adolescents and young people (5,6). During the university years, the youth meeting sense of independence, taking responsibility while making personal decisions on many issues and starting romantic relationships more clearly have all led to the discussion of dating violence, which is a new dimension in attitudes of domestic violence (7,8,9). Dating violence is one of the most common types of violence faced by adolescents and young people, which shows that university students are a risky group in terms of dating

violence (10,11). Dating violence affects many young people around the world and approximately 36% of men and 44-88% of women suffer from dating violence in their adolescence/ young adulthood years (12,13).

When the literature on dating violence is examined, it is seen that gender stereotypes are one of the most important reasons that lead the individual towards dating violence (14,15). In a study by Dikmen et al., (2018) it was found that female university students were exposed to dating violence mostly in the form of psychological and economical one (16). In the study conducted by Selçuk et al. (2018) with university students, it was determined that the majority of students were exposed to dating violence (8). Determining the extent of violence experienced by individuals in dating relationships and gender perceptions as well as attitudes towards violence as a risk factor of violence would shed light on initiatives to be planned both to prevent violence and to provide positive point of views for students who will in the future take part in community mental health services and also to develop positive attitudes in the struggle against violence. Domestic violence, which can be defined as any offensive behavior a person displays against his/her spouse, children, parents, siblings and / or close relatives, is a phenomenon encountered in one out of four families in every race and country in the world beyond various cultural, class, education, income level, ethnicity and age limits (17,18,19,20,21). In a study by Yaya et al. (2019), it was reported that nearly one third of women of childbearing age experienced some form of domestic violence (physical violence, emotional violence, and sexual violence) in Egypt (11). On the other hand, in the study by Kurt et al. (2018), it was determined that three quarters of women were exposed to violence by their husbands at least once (22). In a study by Elmali et al. (2011), it was also determined that one fourth of midwives and nurses were exposed to domestic violence at least once in their lives (21). Health workers and especially nurses have important responsibilities in preventing violence. While still an undergraduate, determining the social gender attitudes, domestic violence and dating violence attitudes of the prospective nurses who play a key role in the prevention and detection of violence will shed light on future studies. In addition, it is of big importance to reveal the necessary information and to raise the awareness needed to protect students from dating violence at universities whose the main

aim is to raise intellectual individuals. Based on these thoughts, in this study, it was aimed to examine the relationship between of gender attitudes of nursing students on their attitudes towards dating violence and domestic violence.

#### Research Questions

1. What are the factors affecting nursing students' attitudes towards dating and domestic violence?
2. Is there a relationship between nursing students' attitudes towards domestic and dating violence and their gender roles?

## MATERIAL AND METHODS

### Study Design and Participants

This research is descriptive-cross-sectional one. The study was conducted with students who are studying in a university nursing faculty Aegean Region in Turkey between April and June 2019. The universe of this study is made up of 1450 nursing students. Also, 638 students who consented to participate in the study without going through the sample selection method and who also met the sampling inclusion criteria were included in the study as part of sample. The students who voluntarily to participate in the study and filling in the consent form and data collection forms were included in the sample.

### Variables of the Study

*Independent variables:* The mean gender attitudes scale scores and socio-demographic characteristics.

*Dependent variables:* Dating violence scale (DVAS) scores and Domestic violence attitude scale scores are dependent variables.

### Data Collection Tools

Before starting the study, a pilot application was conducted on 20 nursing students. After the pilot application, necessary revisions were made in the questionnaire and the final version was obtained. Data were collected using the Questionnaire Form, Dating Violence Attitudes Scale, Gender Role Attitude Scale, Domestic Violence Attitude Scale.

### Questionnaire form

The descriptive Information Form was created by the researchers by because of literature review (23,2, 15,7). It consists of 14 questions regarding the socio-demographic characteristics of the students to be enrolled in the study, such as age, gender, education level of parents and where they live.

Dating violence attitude scale (DVAS)

DVAS developed by Terzioğlu et al. (2016), consists of a total of 5 sub-dimensions and 28 items regarding sexual violence (7 items), emotional violence (6 items), general violence (5 items), economic violence (5 items) and physical violence (5 items) (23). In a study by Terzioğlu et al., the cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was determined to be 0.91, while in our study this was determined to be 0.67. The responses given to The Severity of Dating Violence Attitude Scale are evaluated based on the total scores given to each item. The items in the scale are 5-point Likert type which is in the form of 1) "I absolutely disagree", 2) "I disagree", 3) "I am indecisive", 4) "I agree", 5) "I totally agree". According to this scoring system, the highest score that can be obtained for each item in the scale is 5, while the lowest is 1. The mean scale point approaching 5 indicates that the attitudes held by individuals towards dating violence do not support dating violence.

#### **Gender roles attitude scale (GRAS)**

GRAS developed by Zeyneloğlu and Terzioğlu (2011) was used to evaluate students' attitudes towards gender roles (24). In a study by Zeyneloğlu and Terzioğlu, the cronbach alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was found to be 0.92, on the other hand, it was found to be 0.85 in this study. The responses given to the Gender Roles Attitude Scale are evaluated based on the total scores given to each item. The items in the scale are evaluated with a 5-point Likert-type scale with the choices ranging from "absolutely disagree", "disagree", "indecisive", "agree" to "totally agree". The maximum score students can get from the scale is calculated as "190", while the minimum score is "38". A higher score obtained from the scale indicates that the person has an egalitarian attitude towards gender roles, whereas a lower score indicates that the person has a traditional attitude towards gender roles. Scale consists of 38 dimensions as including egalitarian gender role (e.g., "Decision to have a child should be made by both spouses in a marriage.", "Widowed woman should be able to live by herself." "Domestic work should be shared equally between spouses in the family."), female gender role (e.g., "A woman should be able to go out by herself at night.", "Families should allow girls to flirt."), gender role in marriage (e.g., "Man should marry again if the woman is not able to deliver a child", "Husbands should make the decisions regarding woman's life."), traditional gender role (e.g., "The head of the household is man." "A

woman is considered more precious if she delivers a boy."), and the male gender role (e.g., "A man should beat up his wife if necessary." "Man should be older than woman in marriages.").

#### **Domestic Violence Attitude Scale**

Domestic Violence Attitude Scale developed by Şahin and Dişsiz (2009), consists of 13 items (25). The scale aimed at determining the attitudes towards domestic violence. In the scale, positive and negative expressions are mixed in order to decrease the possibility of making the respondent have a positive or negative response. The ratings of the scale were presented as 1 "absolutely disagree", 2 "disagree", 3 "undecided", 4 "disagree", 5 "strongly agree" in the positive question items in the scale, whereas in the negative question items, the same was in the form of 1 "strongly agree", 2 "agree", 3 "indecisive", 4 "disagree", 5 "absolutely disagree".

The scale consists of 4 sub-dimensions. These are; maturation of violence (question 1,2,3,4,5), generalization of violence (question 6,7,8), causation of violence (question 9,10,11), and hiding violence (question 12,13). The lowest score to be obtained from the scale is measured as 13, while the highest score is 65. The decrease in the total score average results in a negative attitude towards domestic violence, while the increase results in a positive attitude. Cronbach-alpha reliability coefficient of the scale was specified as 0.72. In this study, the cronbach-alpha reliability coefficient was found to be 0.77.

#### **Ethical Consideration**

At the outset, a written permission was obtained from the Scientific Ethics Committee (with date 17.07.2019 and issue 2019/18-31) and from the written permission was obtained from the nursing faculty dean's office. The permission of the authors for using the scales used in the study was obtained via email. The participants signed an informed consent form after they were informed about the purpose and method of the study.

#### **Data Collection**

After completing the ethics committee and institutional approval process and explaining the purpose of the study, the data collection tools were distributed to the students during their break times by the researchers.

**Table 1.** Domestic and dating violence attitude analysis results

Variables	DOMESTIC VIOLENCE ATTITUDE				DATING VIOLENCE ATTITUDE			
	N	Median	U/ KW	p	Median	U/ KW	p	
Age	18-20	213	20	KW= 12.716	0.020*	62	KW= 0.902	0.637
	21-23	368	18			62		
	24 and over	57	21			64		
Sex	Female	519	18	U= 19601.00	0.000*	61	U= 18910.50	0.000*
	Male	119	23			68		
Year of Program	1st	103	22	KW= 24.399	0.000*	63	KW= 7.253	0.064
	2nd	174	19.5			62		
	3rd	136	18			61		
	4th	225	18			62		
Region of Residence	Marmara	116	18	KW= 25.022	0.000*	61	KW= 20.059	0.003*
	Mediterranean	10	19			61.5		
	South East	81	22			64		
	Aegean	218	18			61.5		
	Black Sea	33	20			65		
	Central Anatolia	30	18.5			63		
Knowledge of Gender Roles	Yes	523	18	U=0.000	0.000*	62	U=0.000	0.000*
	No	115	21			66		
Maternal Educational Status	Litarate	177	21	KW= 21.065	0.000*	64	KW= 14.234	0.000*
	Primary.	356	18			62		
	High School	81	18			60		
	University	24	20.5			62		
Paternal Educational Status	Litarate	323	19	KW= 4.637	0.098	64	KW= 9.972	0.007*
	Primary	260	18			61		
	High School	55	19			60		
Domestic Violence Status	No	427	18	KW= 9.482	0.009*	62	KW= 10.193	0.006*
	Yes	175	20			63		
	Occured, but I did not witness	36	20.5			66		
Dating Violence Status	Never	213	19	KW= 2.538	0.468	62	KW= 0.292	0.962
	This is the first one	75	19			64		
	Had one before	171	19			62		
	More than one	179	18			62		

**KW=** Kruskal Wallis Testi  
**U=** Mann Whitney U, \*p<0.05

**Table 1.** The effect of gender on dating and domestic violence attitudes

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable	β	t	p	Beta	F	Model (p)	R2
Domestic Violence Attitude	Constant	49.560	24.393	0.000*		212.179	0.000*	0.249
	Gender Roles	-0.198	-14.566	0.000*	-0.500			
Dating Violence Attitude	Constant	106.931	35.851	0.000*		212.667	0.000*	0.249
	Gender Roles	-0.291	-14.583	0.000*	-0.501			

SPSS 22.0 program was used to evaluate the data. Descriptive data were analyzed using numbers, percentages, and mean and standard deviation values. It was tested whether the data used were normally distributed. Normality distribution of the data used depends on Skewness and Kurtosis values' being between the data were not suitable for normal distribution, Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis analysis from nonparametric tests were performed. Corrected Bonferroni was used to find the group that made the difference. The relationship between the scales was made with the Spearman correlation test. Cronbach alpha internal consistency coefficient was calculated for validity of the scales and  $p < 0.05$  was considered statistically significant.

**RESULTS**

The mean age of the students participating in the study was 21.38 (min: 18.00 ± max: 33.00), 57.7% belonging to the age range of 21-23, 81.3% were females, 35.3% were 4th year students, 34.2% declared to live in the Aegean Region in Turkey, and that 82% knew about the gender roles, %27.4 were domestic violence status, maternal educational status were %55.8 primary, paternal educational status were %50.7, %28.1 were more than one dating violence status (Table 1).

Although a statistically significant difference was found between the participants' age, gender, year of program, region of residence, knowledge of gender roles, maternal educational status, domestic violence status and their domestic violence attitudes ( $p < 0.05$ ), family type, paternal educational status and dating violence status was not statistically significant difference between their domestic violence ( $p > 0.05$ ). Male's domestic violence attitude the mean of scores were seen to be higher than females. Those who were knowledge of gender roles had lower domestic violence attitude scores (Table 1). As a result of bonferroni analysis; The mean of scores of the domestic violence attitude 1st grades is higher than

the 3rd and 4th grades. Moreover; The mean of the 2nd graders is higher than the 4th graders. The domestic violence attitude mean of scores of the Southeast region were found to be higher than the Marmara and Aegean regions. The mean scores of dating violence attitudes of the Eastern Anatolia region are higher than the Marmara and Aegean regions. The domestic violence attitude scores of those who have illiterate mothers were found to be higher than primary. The domestic violence attitude scores of witnesses to domestic violence was higher than those who haven't (Table 1).

While a statistically significant difference was found between the participants' gender, region of residence, knowledge of gender roles, maternal educational status, paternal educational status, domestic violence status and and their dating violence attitudes ( $p < 0.05$ ), age, family type, year of program and dating violence status status was not statistically significant difference between their dating violence attitudes ( $p > 0.05$ ). Male's dating violence attitudes the mean of scores were seen to be higher than females. Those who were knowledge of gender roles had lower dating violence attitude scores. As a result of bonferroni analysis; the scores of dating violence attitudes of the Eastern Anatolia region are higher than the Marmara and Aegean regions. The dating violence scores of those who have illiterate mothers were found to be higher than the other groups. The dating violence attitude scores of those who have illiterate mothers were found to be higher than primary. The dating violence attitude scores father's education level's is expressed as literate are higher than high school. The domestic violence attitude scores of witnesses to domestic violence was higher than those who haven't. The domestic violence attitude scores of witnesses who have was higher than those who haven't (Table 1).

The gender roles attitude scale was found to be  $148.87 \pm 14.85$ , while the domestic violence attitude

scale was  $20.11 \pm 5.87$  and dating violence attitude scale score was found to be  $2.27 \pm 0.30$ . According to the results of the correlation analysis, there is a significant and positive relationship between the gender role attitude scale score and the dating violence attitude scale score ( $r=0.444$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). There is a significant and negative relationship between the gender role attitude and the domestic violence attitude ( $r=-0.445$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). As the social gender attitudes of the student's increases, their domestic violence attitudes decrease. Finally, there is a significant and negative relationship between the domestic violence attitude and the dating violence attitude ( $r= -0.398$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) (Table 2).

## DISCUSSION

It was found as a result of this study that gender roles by nursing students have an effect on their domestic violence and dating violence attitudes. While there was a significant relationship between the age of nursing students and their domestic violence attitudes, no significant relationship was found between their dating violence attitudes. Accordingly, as the age increases, the attitude of domestic violence is seen to increase, and the students tend to display a traditional attitude. In a study conducted in Tanzania, unlike our findings, it was found in the study that dating violence increased positively (supporting dating violence) as age increased (13). In their study with midwifery and nursing students, Dağlar, Bilgiç & Demirel (2017) did not find a relationship between age and violence attitudes (26). As students started to get older, it was seen that they could make more sense of domestic violence.

As a result of the study, both domestic violence attitudes and dating violence total scores of male students are found to be higher than female students. This finding is consistent with the results of other studies in the literature (26,27,28,29,30,31). These differences observed in attitudes towards violence can be explained by gender socialization. Gender socialization is generally expressed as the process in which males learning about masculinity and females learning about feminine behavioral patterns peculiar to them (32). The fact that men have higher scores than women might be resulting from different ways of child raising patterns for girls and boys in our country.

In the study, no statistically significant relationship was seen to have been found between family type and dating violence and domestic violence attitudes. This result of the study complies with those of

Sabancıoğulları et al. (2016) (33) and Derya, Nacar & Taşhan (2018) (34), but Dağcı and Önen (2019) (35) and Aktaş et al. (2019) (27), on the other hand, found that those who have a large and fragmented family hold more traditional attitudes towards violence. It is thought that these differences in findings may be due to the differences in the demographic characteristics of the students.

The domestic violence attitudes score of 1st year program students were found to be higher than the other grades and they tend to adopt the traditional approach. In study Bulut (2015) stated that domestic violence attitude scores are the highest among 1st year program students (28). On the other hand, in a study by Dağlar (2017) study, it was stated that 1st and 2nd year program students tend to hide violence, while it was found that 4th grade students tend to normalize violence (26). However, they did not find a significant difference between grade levels. For Sabancıoğulları et al. (2016), the mean score of students studying in 2nd year program was highest. It was determined that the maternal education level affects students' dating and domestic violence attitudes (33). Domestic violence attitudes of those who are illiterate tend to be higher than those of primary school, middle school and high school graduates.

It was determined that the participants living in the east of the country viewed the domestic violence more positively and tended to support the dating violence. Eastern culture recognizes violence against women as a more acceptable phenomenon than does the Western culture. In the east of our country, traditional family structure, economic problems, and inadequate access to educational activities are all predominant factors. Sabancıoğulları (2016) stated that students living in Eastern and South Eastern Anatolian regions tend to have a more traditional attitude towards violence against women (33). In the study Bulut (2015), no significant relationship was found between the region of residence and domestic violence (28). This finding is likely to have emerged due to the low socio-economic indicators of the eastern region compared to the western part of the country.

As a result of the study, those who do not have knowledge about gender roles were found to have higher family and dating violence attitude scores. In line with the findings of our study, students indicated their perceived knowledge of community resources was poor (33,36). In addition, Bulut (2015) stated that

57.2% of midwifery and nursing students address the subjects on violence in their lessons (28). It is stated that providing education on violence stands out as an important element in defining violence as a health problem (37). This finding reveals the importance of developing the attitudes towards violence with the professional activities to be held by this group, the prospective health professionals.

While there was a significant relationship between paternal education level and dating violence, there was no significant relationship between domestic violence. In the literature, it was seen that instead of separating the concept into maternal or paternal educational level, a unity was made as parental education level. In line with the findings of our study, it was determined in the literature that as the level of maternal education level decreases, domestic violence and dating violence attitudes approach the traditional approach (13,26,27,34). In the study of Gharaibeh, Abu-Baker & Aji (2012), it was stated that parental education level is the most important factor determining the violence against women (30). It is thought that domestic violence is not welcomed with the increase in the education level of women and leads mothers to raise their children with this perspective accordingly.

It was found that the total scores of domestic violence attitude scale of the participants were low, while their total scores on the social gender roles attitude scale were high. Participants' dating violence mean scores are moderate. As a result of this finding, it has been determined that students have an egalitarian attitude towards gender roles. Also, Students view domestic violence as a negative situation. In recent years, the frequency of dating violence among university students has been reported to be approximately 76% in Brazil, 53% in America, 59% in China, 16% in India, 42% in Kyrgyzstan and 18% in Niger (38-40). Also, a statistically significant relationship was found between the attitudes of the participants and their gender and domestic violence attitudes. University students do not support dating violence when their roles are egalitarian, and they also regard domestic violence as a negative phenomenon. In the study conducted with the students at the school of health, it was found that as the gender roles attitudes score increased (positive attitudes), while the tendency towards violence decreased (15). In accordance with the literature, it has been determined that having traditional gender roles attitude is a risk factor for physical violence (8,41). In a study in which Kodan

Çetinkaya (2013) examined the violent tendencies and gender attitudes of students studying at the university, it was also determined that there was a negative relationship between the tendency towards violence and gender roles attitudes (42).

### Limitations

The violence situation between the parents of the students consists of data based on the participants' self-reports.

### CONCLUSION

In this study, it was observed that the domestic violence and dating violence of the nursing students were affected by the knowledge of gender, region of residence, gender, maternal education level and the presence of violence between the parents. It was determined that the mean scores of the students on the dating violence were moderate, their total scores on the gender roles attitude scale were found to be high and their total scores on the dating violence scale were found to be low. While there was a positive direction between gender attitudes and dating violence, there was a negative relationship between domestic violence attitudes. Also there was a negative relationship between domestic violence attitudes and dating violence. Healthcare professionals have important responsibilities in preventing and reporting violence. Nurses have an important role in the protection and development of health and prevention of domestic and dating violence in the multidisciplinary team. In this respect, nurses are expected to know the legal regulations and developments regarding violence and to fight against violence. Education on domestic violence gender roles and should be increased in nursing curricula. It is thought that it is important that departments that give education to nursing include related courses in curriculum programs, and that students be informed about pre-graduate education on factors affecting social gender roles attitudes and violence tendency. In addition, it is recommended to focus on communication skills, crisis management and conflict resolution in reducing violence in psychiatric nursing courses.

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**Ethical approval:** At the outset, a written permission was obtained from the Scientific Ethics Committee (with date 17.07.2019 and issue 2019/18-31) and from the written permission was obtained from the nursing faculty dean's office. The permission of the authors for using the scales used in the study was obtained via email. The participants signed an informed consent form after they were informed about the purpose and method of the study.

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