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The Relationship of Gender Role Attitudes Towards Men with Depression, Anxiety, Stress

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This research was designed to examine the relationship between gender role attitudes toward men and depression, anxiety, and stress. **Materials and Methods:** This research was conducted between October 2023 and March 2024 using the snowball method with 450 participants among males aged 18 and over living in Istanbul. Before conducting the research, permission was obtained from the authors of the scales used, ethical permission from the ethics committee of Istanbul Gedik University, and consent to participate from the participants. The research data were collected using the Introductory Information Form, Men Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale, and Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21) developed by the researchers. **Results:** The average age of the participants participating in the study was 23.36, 83.1% were single, 60.9% had equal income and expenses, 68.4% were high school graduates, 62.4% were employed, and 51.8% had been working for 0-1 years. The participants' mean DASS-21 depression sub-dimension score was 8.22 ± 4.81 , the mean stress sub-dimension score was 8.25 ± 4.73 , and the mean anxiety sub-dimension score was 6.39 ± 4.99 . The participants' total mean score for Gender Role Attitudes Towards Men was 82.82 ± 15.49 . A positive and weakly significant relationship was found between the DAS-21 Anxiety Dimension score and the Gender Role Attitude Towards Men Sexist Social Violence Dimension score ($p < 0.05$). No relationship was found between the other sub-dimensions of DASS-21 and Gender Role Attitude Towards Men ($p > 0.05$). **Conclusion:** As a result of the research, a positive weak relationship was found between sexist social violence and individuals' anxiety. Future research can be conducted using probability sampling method, not only with people in one province but also with a larger universe.

Keywords: Gender Role, Men's Health, Mental Health.

Erkeğe Yönelik Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerini Tutumunun Depresyon, Anksiyete, Stres İle İlişkisi

ÖZ

Amaç: Bu çalışma, erkeklere yönelik toplumsal cinsiyet rolü tutumları ile depresyon, anksiyete ve stres arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemek amacıyla tasarlandı. **Gereç ve Yöntem:** Bu araştırma İstanbul'da yaşayan 18 yaş ve üzeri erkeklerde 450 katılımcı ile kartopu yöntemi kullanılarak Ekim 2023-Mart 2024 tarihleri arasında yürütülmüştür. Araştırma yürütülmeden önce kullanılan ölçeklerin yazarlarından izin, İstanbul Gedik Üniversitesi'nin etik kurulundan etik izin ve katılımcılardan katılım onam izni alındı. Araştırma verileri araştırmacılar tarafından geliştirilen Tanıtıcı Bilgi Formu, Erkeğe Yönelik Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerini Tutumu Ölçeği ve Depresyon, Anksiyete ve Stres Ölçeği-21 (DASÖ-21) kullanılarak toplandı. **Bulgular:** Araştırmaya katılan katılımcıların yaş ortalaması 23.36, %83.10'unun bekar olduğu, %60.90'ının gelir gidere denk olduğu, %68.40'ının lise mezunu olduğu, %62.40'ının çalışıyor olduğu, %51.80'inin 0-1 yıldır çalıştığı saptanmıştır. Katılımcıların DASÖ-21 depresyon alt boyu puan ortalaması 8.22 ± 4.81 , stres alt boyut puan ortalaması 8.25 ± 4.73 , anksiyete alt boyut puan ortalaması 6.39 ± 4.99 olarak bulundu. Kişilerin Erkeğe Yönelik Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerini Tutumu toplam puan ortalamaları ise 82.82 ± 15.49 olarak saptanmıştır. DASÖ-21 Anksiyete Boyut puanı ile Erkeğe Yönelik Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerini Tutumu Cinsiyetçi Sosyal Şiddet Boyut puanı arasında pozitif yönde ve zayıf düzeyde anlamlı ilişki bulundu ($p < 0.05$). DASÖ-21 ve Erkeğe Yönelik Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerini Tutumu diğer alt boyutları arasında ilişki bulunmadı ($p > 0.05$). **Sonuç:** Araştırma sonucunda cinsiyetçi sosyal şiddet ile bireylerin anksiyetesi arasında pozitif zayıf ilişki bulundu. İlerideki araştırmalar sadece bir ildeki kişilerle değil, daha geniş bir evreni kapsayacak boyutta, olasılıklı örnekleme yöntemi kullanılarak yürütülebilir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Erkeklerin Sağlığı, Cinsiyet Rolü, Ruh Sağlığı.

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INTRODUCTION

The term "gender" is used to describe the genetic, physiological, and biological characteristics of a living being that indicate whether it is male or female (Reale et al., 2023). From a global perspective, biological diversity encompasses all living beings. However, the concept of gender is informed by the ethnic views and values of the population in which individuals live. Both genders are assigned responsibilities by the population in which they live, and individuals conduct their lives in accordance with these responsibilities (Yıldırım et al., 2017). The term "gender" encompasses the roles and responsibilities that are socially ascribed to men and women. This concept is related to the way the population views and perceives the individual, rather than to biological differences (Philbin et al., 2024). A review of the literature reveals that gender is understood as the roles that society socially assigns to men and women. These roles are shaped by the gender factor (Akkaş, 2020; Philbin et al., 2024). This differentiation is shaped by the culture of the society in question and serves to distinguish between the two genders. From birth to death, culture determines the differentiation of genders (Giuliano, 2020). From the moment of their inception, individuals begin to assume the roles and responsibilities that are ascribed to them by society. Furthermore, the gender roles instilled by parents also manifest themselves in other processes of the individual's life (Thorne, 2021). The gender roles that are expected of both genders continue throughout their lives, with the roles specified by society bestowing different roles according to gender. In the context of the family unit, the male figure is often perceived as the primary economic provider, while the female is typically regarded as the primary caregiver, responsible for nurturing and protecting her child. One of the attitudes towards men is the idea that the needs of the wife and child must be met and that only men can provide these basic needs (Jones, 2023). The roles and expectations assigned by society on the basis of gender have a detrimental impact on numerous aspects of life. Many role attitudes towards men foster a negative outlook on men's lives (Caraballo, 2023; Suresh et al., 2023).

The male identity is characterised by a tendency to assume caretaking and protective roles within the family unit, as well as a proclivity to assert control within the family hierarchy. These qualities gradually assume the form of a test, the successful completion of which is believed to be a prerequisite for the individual's social integration (Zielińska-Król, 2014). Failure to pass this test often results in significant social and personal difficulties. Such individuals may also be subject to discourses about their gender in response to negative attitudes (Açer, 2022). As a consequence of these discourses, men begin to experience a sense of responsibility, which can subsequently give rise to mental health issues (Özel and Karabulut, 2018). Furthermore, the obligation to

contribute to the family economy and have the final decision-making authority can potentially lead to adverse health outcomes, including cardiovascular problems, chronic stress, and a tendency towards these issues (Siddiqui et al., 2024). It is important to note that stress, which is a significant issue among these threats, is a dynamic phenomenon that fluctuates according to the individual's life circumstances. As a result of the inability of the individual who is exposed to stress to cope both mentally and physically, difficulties are encountered in adapting to those around him or her (Özel & Karabulut, 2018). The negative effects of anxiety and depression, which are often associated with stress, can significantly impair the quality of life of an individual and have a detrimental impact on their overall well-being. The objective of this research is to learn the relevance between gender role attitudes and the prevalence of depression, anxiety and stress among men who bear significant societal responsibilities. In line with the aforementioned objective, the following research question was posed and sought to be answered in the study: Are gender role attitudes related to depression, anxiety and stress in men?

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Type and purpose of the research

This study employed a descriptive and correlational research design to ascertain the relationship between gender role attitudes towards men and depression, anxiety, and stress.

Sample, place and time of the research

The research was carried out in Istanbul from October 2023 to March 2024. The universe of the research consists of men aged 18 and over in Istanbul. According to the TÜİK (2022) data, the number of men living in Istanbul is 7,952,131, which constitutes 18.63% of the male population in Turkey. 7,952,131 men were accepted as the universe of the research, the confidence level was accepted as 95% and the margin of error was accepted as 5%, and the sample size was determined as at least 384.

Variables of the research

Dependent variables of the study

The mean scores obtained from the Men Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale and the mean scores of the subscales of the DASS-21 were the study's dependent variables.

Independent variables of the study

Participants' descriptive characteristics (age, income level, education level, employment status, etc.) constitute the independent variables of the study.

Data collection

The data for the research were gathered using the snowball sampling method. The information was gathered through the Information Form, the Men Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale and the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale-21 (DASS-21), which were prepared by the researcher. The necessary

permissions for the use of the scales were obtained from the authors for the scales planned to be used in the study.

Identifying information form

The form, which was devised by the researcher, comprises a series of questions pertaining to the demographic characteristics of the respondents, including their age, income level, educational attainment, and employment status.

Men oriented gender roles attitudes scale

The scale was developed by Yelegen et al. (2022). The scale comprises 26 items and is organised into seven sub-dimensions. Sub-dimensions; Emotional Bond (30, 31, 32, 33,34, 42), Financial Responsibility (16, 17, 22, 23), Social Pressure (9, 15, 24), Gendered Social Violence (13, 19, 35, 36), Physical Responsibility (1, 2, 3, 7), Public Area (27, 28, 43), Physical Appearance is (20, 21). The scale exhibits an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.86, indicating a high level of internal consistency. In the study, the scale demonstrated a reliability level of Cronbach $\alpha = 0.87$.

Depression anxiety stress scale-21 (DASS-21)

The scale developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) was adapted into Turkish by Yıldırım et al. The 21-item scale is comprised of three factors. The sub-dimensions are anxiety, stress and depression, and each is evaluated in isolation. The scale is a 4-point Likert type; 0 is coded as “not at all suitable for me”, 1 is “suits me to some extent or some of the time”, 2 is “suits me to a serious extent or a significant part of the time”, and 3 is “suits me a lot or most of the time”. A total score cannot be obtained from the scale, total scores are calculated separately for each sub-dimension. The scores that can be obtained from each sub-dimension vary between 0-21. An increase in the score means that the individual experiences the emotional state assessed by the relevant sub-dimension more. The test-retest reliability coefficients for each sub-dimension were found to be as follows: depression (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.93$), anxiety (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.83$) and stress (Cronbach $\alpha = 0.82$). In the present study, the reliability coefficients were found to be $\alpha = 0.83$ for depression, $\alpha = 0.85$ for anxiety and $\alpha = 0.82$ for stress.

Research inclusion criteria

The study population consisted of male individuals aged 18 years or older who volunteered to participate and who did not have any hearing or vision problems.

Exclusion criteria from the research

Individuals who failed to provide complete data in the designated collection instruments were excluded from the study.

Ethical responsibilities

Prior to the commencement of the study, ethical approval was sought and obtained from the Istanbul Gedik University Ethics Committee (date: 24/04/2023; number: E-56365223-050.02.04-2023.137548.85). Prior to the commencement of the research, the participants were duly informed about the nature and objectives of the study, and their consent was obtained. The necessary permission for the utilisation of the two scales included in the study was obtained from the respective owners. This study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles set forth in the Declaration of Helsinki. The data was not conducted in any institution. Since the data was collected using the snowball method, it was not necessary to obtain institutional permission.

Analysis of data

The data were analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). In order to ascertain the reliability of the scales employed, a Cronbach's alpha analysis was conducted. Descriptive statistics were employed for the purpose of evaluating the individual characteristics and scale scores of the participants. Pearson correlation statistics were employed to examine the relationship between the scales utilized. In the study, a p-value below 0.05 was deemed to indicate statistical significance.

RESULTS

The average age of individuals included in the research was 23.36 ± 5.20 years. Of these individuals, 83.10% were single, 60.9% had equivalent income and expenses, 68.40% were high school graduates, 62.40% were employed, and 51.80% of the employed individuals had experience in the range of 0-1 year (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for individual participants (n:450).

Variables		Mean±Sd	Min-max
Age		23.36±5.20	18-60
Variables		Number	%
Marital status	Married	76	16.90
	Single	374	83.10
Monthly Earnings	Income is less than expenses	107	23.80
	Income is equivalent to expenses.	274	60.90
	Income is more than expenses.	69	15.30

Table 1. (Continue). Descriptive statistics for individual participants (n:450).

Variables		Mean±Sd	Min-max
Education Level	Literate/Primary School	3	0.70
	Secondary School	17	3.80
	High School Graduate	308	68.40
	University Graduate	122	27.10
Working status	Working	281	62.40
	Not Working	169	37.60
Working time	0-1 year	233	51.80
	1-5 years	130	28.90
	5-10 years	59	13.10
	10-20 years	23	5.10
	20 years and more	5	1.10

The mean score for the DASS-21 Depression subscale was 8.22 ± 4.81 , the mean score for the Anxiety subscale was 6.39 ± 4.99 , the mean score for the Stress Scale subscale was 8.25 ± 4.73 , and the mean total score for the Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale was 82.82 ± 15.49 (Table 2). Upon examination of the sub-dimensional correlation between the two scales utilized in the study, a positive

and weakly significant relationship was identified between the DASS-21 Anxiety Dimension score and the Men Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Sexist Social Violence Dimension score ($p < 0.05$). No correlation was identified between the DASS-21 and the other sub-dimensions of the Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale ($p > 0.05$) (Table 3).

Table 2. Total scale scores of participants.

Variables	Mean±Sd	Min- max
DASS-21 Depression Total Score	8.22±4.81	0-21
DASS-21 Anxiety Total Score	6.39±4.99	0-21
DASS-21 Stress Total Score	8.25±4.73	0-21
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Total Score	82.82±15.49	36-130
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Emotional Bond Dimension	25.15±3.36	6-30
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Financial Responsibility Dimension	11.56±4.04	4-20
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Social Pressure Dimension	8.19±3.37	3-15
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Gendered Social Violence Dimension	9.32±3.86	4-20
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Physical Responsibility Dimension	12.77±3.72	4-20
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Public Area Dimension	8.63±3.01	3-15
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Physical Appearance Dimension	7.16±2.27	2-10

Table 3. DASS-21 and Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale dimensions correlation.

		DASS-21 Depression Dimension	DASS-21 Anxiety Dimension	DASS-21 Stress Dimension
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Emotional Bond Dimension	Pearson Correlation	0.02	0.02	0.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	p=0.64	p=0.59	p=0.91
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Financial Responsibility Dimension	Pearson Correlation	0.030	0.089	0.02
	Sig. (2-tailed)	p=0.52	p=0.06	p=0.55
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Social Pressure Dimension	Pearson Correlation	-0.06	-0.03	-0.02
	Sig. (2-tailed)	p=0.17	p=0.43	p=0.55

Table 3. (Continue) DASS-21 and Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale dimensions correlation.

		DASS-21 Depression Dimension	DASS-21 Anxiety Dimension	DASS-21 Stress Dimension
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Physical Responsibility Dimension	Pearson Correlation	0.01	0.05	0.02
	Sig. (2-tailed)	p=0.75	p=0.21	p=0.53
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Public Area Dimension	Pearson Correlation	-0.08	-0.02	-0.08
	Sig. (2-tailed)	p=0.08	p=0.62	p=0.08
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Physical Appearance Dimension	Pearson Correlation	-0.01	0.05	0.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	p=0.75	p=0.27	p=0.95
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Total Score	Pearson Correlation	-0.01	0.07	-0.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	p=0.77	p=0.13	p=0.89
Men-Oriented Gender Roles Attitudes Scale Gendered Social Violence Dimension	Pearson Correlation	0.00	0.13*	-0.00
	Sig. (2-tailed)	p=0.84	p=0.00	p=0.97

Pearson Correlation t test. *P<0.01

DISCUSSION

The available evidence indicates that inflexible gender norms may be a contributing factor in the development of psychological problems. An individual's gender attitudes serve to determine the extent to which they conform to the behaviours and roles that are expected of them by society. These norms, which define men as tough, emotionally repressive, and strong, may impede men's ability to express their emotional and psychological problems (Bhugra et al., 2022).

In their everyday lives, men are not content with the numerous events that examine their position in society and confront them with health, psychological and career-related issues stemming from anxiety and stress. Indeed, prescriptive stereotypes and prohibitive gender norms have the potential to yield unfavourable outcomes for men (Baranov et al., 2018). This study sought to elucidate the relationship between the gender role of men within certain gender stereotypes and negative mental health problems. The objective of this research is to elucidate the relationship between gender role attitudes in men and stress, anxiety and depression.

It is stated in the literature that anxiety, stress and depression in men are ignored, but male norms negatively affect mental health and cause psychological problems (Fisher et al., 2022). Additionally, men who conform to traditional masculine norms are less likely to express their psychological problems, which can trigger mental health issues (Wagner & Reifegerste, 2024). In this study, where men were included as a sample, it was found that men's anxiety, stress and depression scores were low, and their male gender role attitude levels were slightly above average.

It can be posited that the shift in the economic position of women is accompanied by the

perpetuation of their domestic responsibilities. Consequently, the increased involvement of women in the service sector does not signify a radical transformation but rather a reorganisation of the existing male dominance. This reshaping is perceived by men as a loss of status in the realms of labour and business (Farsia, 2024).

The woman, who is a partner in economic support, causes the man who assumes financial responsibility in society to experience sexist problems. A review of the literature reveals that men who experience conflict in their gender role attitudes may experience adverse consequences, including diminished self-esteem, excessive anxiety, and depression (Kaya et. Al., 2019; Korkmaz, 2022). The findings of this study indicate that there is no statistically significant correlation between gender role attitudes and depression in men.

The existing literature indicates that unreasonable social fears, anger, and anxiety are prevalent in men despite gender pressure (Stanaland & Gaither, 2021). Indeed, the findings of this research indicate a positive, albeit weakly remarkable, relationship between gender role attitude, sexist social violence sub-dimension, and anxiety in men. It can be posited that the evidences of this research corroborate the information presented in the literature, indicating that the level of anxiety increased in tandem with the attitude towards sexist social violence, albeit to a limited extent.

A review of existing literature shows that the pressure to conform to traditional masculinity norms may contribute to an increase in stress levels. It has been observed that men tend to refrain from expressing their emotional distress due to social expectations, which has been shown to negatively impact their capacity to cope with stress. Furthermore, research has demonstrated that men are more susceptible to

stress due to circumstances such as job loss and economic instability. A significant source of this stress is the traditional perception of men as the primary providers for their families (Herreen et al., 2022; Whitley, 2021). Furthermore, it has been documented that men who adhere to high levels of traditional masculinity norms experience greater challenges in coping with these stressors (Adiningsih et al., 2020). The current research did not identify a correlation between gender role attitudes and stress levels. A growing body of evidence indicates that the relationship between gender attitudes and stress in men becomes more pronounced and intricate with advancing age. It has been demonstrated that as men age, they experience heightened pressure to align with traditional gender roles, which in turn elevates their stress levels (Wagner & Reifegerste, 2024). The study underscores the notion that adherence to traditional norms of masculinity with advancing age can precipitate an increase in stress and its deleterious effects on health (Jakubowski & Sitko-Dominik, 2021). The discrepancy between the findings of this study and those of the existing literature may be attributed to the fact that the majority of the men in the study were relatively young.

Research limitations

It is significant to note that the study was conducted exclusively with male participants residing in Istanbul, which represents a significant limitation in the applicability of the findings.

CONCLUSION

The research fielded a weak positive correlation between gender role attitudes, attitudes towards sexist social violence and anxiety in men. No correlation was identified between gender role attitudes and stress and anxiety in men. Future research should include a larger sample size and not be limited to individuals from only one province. Furthermore, it would be beneficial to employ a probability sampling method in future studies to obtain more accurate data.

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None.

Conflict of Interest

The authors confirm that there are no potential conflicts of interest in relation to the research, authorship and/or publication of this article.

Author Contributions

Plan, design: SD; **Material, methods and data collection:** SD, EZP, DA; **Data analysis and comments:** SD; **Writing and corrections:** SD, EZP, DA.

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Ethical considerations

Istanbul Gedik University Ethics Committee

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