Gender Perception of Academicians Using Social Media and the Influencing Factors

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ABSTRACT

Objective: In this study; the gender perception of academicians and the influencing variables related to the individuals and their families are examined.

Methods: The study was conducted online on the Facebook groups, which academicians from various universities in Turkey are members of. The questionnaire prepared by the researcher and the "Perception of Gender Scale" were used. Percentages and frequencies were used for the evaluation of the data related to individuals and their families; multi-linear regression analysis was performed for the evaluation of the variables influencing the perception. A total of 589 academicians were contacted for the study.

Results: It has been determined that academics using social media had high gender perception scores. It has been determined that being female, specializing in educational sciences and social sciences, and having working mother increased the gender perception; having a mother with secondary school education or less decreased the gender perception.

Conclusion: In conclusion, while being an academic positively affects the perception of gender, patriarchal social structure still has an effect on the difference between men and women. That only woman and variables related to woman have an effect on the perception of gender shows the importance of woman in the formation of the gender perception.

Keywords: Higher education, Gender, Academician, Social media, Gender equality

1. INTRODUCTION

A "gender identity", which overlaps the social expectations, arises for a certain sex; and the perception that results from the integration into society is called the gender perception (1, 2). The gender perception refers to the behaviour of individuals in the manner that the social structure offers to men and women, and to the roles and attitudes of individuals related to gender (3).

According to Althusser (4), the gender perception forms in line with some ideological elements. It gains legitimacy with the Bourdieu's "masculine domination" (5). The continuity of this perception is provided by Connell's "hegemonic masculinity" (6). There is no doubt that there are transitions between these theories and the parts of this construct tried to be established here cannot be clearly distinguished from each other. According to Althusser (4) gender perception is learned in family and school. Thus, inequalities related to gender roles become natural and gain legitimacy (7).

The family factors such as parents' level of education (8), the gender perception of the parent with same sex as the individual (9) and the sex of siblings (10) were found to

have important role in shaping the gender perception of an individual.

The gender perception that is framed within Althusser's (4) approach continues with the women's internalization and legitimization of the ideas related to acceptance of everything as it is and that there is no other way. The factors that are effective in this matter are the relationship with spouse or significant other (structure of traditional division of labor, status of woman) and business life (competition and discrimination) (5). In addition, perception becomes mostly established in everyday lives. The definitions and codes required by the image of femininity surface even in the smallest activity in everyday life and these become strict and unchanging rules (6).

In a study by O'Laughlin and Bischoff (7), it has been determined that women experience more academic stress and family stress than men to keep balance in their lives and have less perception of institutional support for keeping balance between work and family. Studies show that women are subject to discrimination in their academic careers as a result of their own perceptions and the gender perceptions of other individuals (2, 11).

In studies conducted in Turkey regarding the views of women academicians on gender roles, participants stated that housekeeping was their own responsibility (12, 13), family-related responsibilities (i.e. child care, cooking, cleaning, ironing) were their most important tasks, and they thought that it is men's duty to provide for the family (13). Regardless of women's marital status, education level, academic title, and cultural status, their housekeeping activities remain the same and the traditional sexist division of labor is maintained. Whether woman participates in work life or is an academic does not make any difference in the distribution of roles within the family; the division of labor in the family continues as a societal role sharing (14). However, universities carry the mission to be the institutions where ideas are liberated, traditional norms are questioned, erroneous information are exposed, and minds are enlightened. The academicians provide a suitable environment for their students on issues such as diversity, tolerance, respect for others, respect for life, cooperation, helping each other, independence, freedom, autonomy, self-confidence, respect for human dignity, equality, justice, and standing against discrimination (15). For this reason, in a country, such as Turkey, where the patriarchal system dominates, gender perceptions of academicians, who have important roles and responsibilities within the society, need to be determined. This requirement has been the starting point for planning the current study.

The purpose of this study was to determine the gender perception of academicians, who lead and shape the development and transformation of the society, and the factors affecting it. The research questions were as follows:

1. What is the level of gender perception of academicians?

2. What is the effect of socio-demographic characteristics of the individuals (age, sex, marital status, type of family where the individual grew up, where he/she spent most of his/her life, presence of sister or brother, parents' education level, and parents' marital status) on gender perceptions?

2. METHODS

2.1. Design

This study was conducted as a descriptive study in order to determine gender perception of academicians using social media and the influencing factors. Ethics committee approval was received for this study from the ethics committee of the Akdeniz University Faculty of Medicine Ethics Committee for Clinical Investigations in the Turkey under report number 70904504/159. The necessary permissions were also received from the academic staff union (OGE-SEN) and the managers of their academic career sites via e-mail. The objective of the study was explained to the academicians using social media that partook in the research, and the written consents of those that accepted to take part in the research were obtained with online inform consent via Google Server.

2.2. Participants

The universe of the research consisted of academicians who use social media and are members of faculty members' union (OGE-SEN) and "academic career Facebook" groups. The power analysis was done by using G Power software based on the difference between the two means. The type 1 error rate (α) was 0.05 and the power of the work (1 − β) was 0.95.

The analysis was conducted on the basis of the mean and standard deviation of the scores of men and women in a previous study that used the "Perception of Gender Scale" (http://www.khas.edu.tr/cms/kadın). In that study, the mean scale scores of man and women were 76.09 ± 7.54 and 78.72 ± 7.80, respectively. As a result of the power analysis, it was determined that the sample size should be at least 446 in order to obtain 95% power in 95% confidence interval. To compensate for the possibility of missing and extreme values 589 people have been contacted for this study. Criteria for inclusion in the study was (1) to continue or to have completed postgraduate education, (2) to be a member of the described social media group, and (3) to volunteer for this study.

2.3. Data collection

The data collection tools created through Google Survey was uploaded to determined social media groups and the data were collected online. The data were collected between March and June 2017. All data obtained were transferred to MS Excel.

2.4. Measures

2.4.1. Socio-demographic form

The socio-demographic questionnaire was prepared by determining the socio-demographic variables affecting the gender perceptions of the individuals based on the literature search by the researcher (2, 13, and 16). The questionnaire included 14 items including age, sex, marital status, type of family where the individual grew up, where he/she spent most of his/her life, presence of sister or brother, parents' education level, and parents' marital status.

2.4.2. Perception of Gender Scale

There are 25 items on the scale developed by Altınova and Duyan (16) to measure the gender perceptions of individuals. Ten items had positive and 15 negative meaning. Participants were expected to express their views in a five-point Likert scale in five different degrees as "I totally agree (5), I agree (4), undecided (3), I disagree (2), I totally disagree (1). Items 2, 4, 6, 9, 10, 12, 15-21, 24, and 25 were negative and were scored in reverse. The scale score may range from 25 to 125; higher scores indicate more positive gender perception. The scale is one-dimensional and has an alpha reliability coefficient of 0.872 (16). The Cronbach alpha value was found 0.753 in this study.

2.5. Data Analysis

Statistical analyses were performed using the SPSS software version 24.0. Socio-demographic data obtained from individuals were analyzed as descriptive statistics using percentage and frequency. A multiple linear regression model was used to identify independent predictors of perception of gender. The model fit was assessed using appropriate residual and goodness-of-fit statistics. A 5% type-1 error level was used in infer statistical significance.

Multiple linear regression models

Since gender perception, the dependent variable of the study, is a continuous data and since there are multiple independent variables, a multiple linear regression model was used.

In order to test the model's assumptions, the issues of linearity, normal distribution, missed and extreme values and multicollinearity have been investigated. The Augmented Component Plus Residual (ACPR) graph for each independent variable in the model was checked to test for linearity. The variables were investigated using visual (histograms and probability plots) and analytical methods (Kolmogorov-Simirnov/Shapiro-Wilk's test, Skewness and Kurtosis).

The variance inflation factor (VIF) values of all variables have been investigated for the issue of multicollinearity. Among the variables, only "continuing or having completed postgraduate studies" has been removed from the analysis because the VIF value was greater than five. To look at extreme values, z scores were calculated and data from individuals outside the range of ± 3 standard deviations (extreme values: individuals numbered 32, 127, 128, 151, 258, and 337) were removed from the data set.

3. RESULTS

More than half of the participants in the survey (51.1%) were between the ages of 26-30 and the majority (63.3%) was women. About 40% of the participants were in post-graduate and 45.3% were in doctorate studies. While 81.6% stated that they grew up in a nuclear family and the majority (91.9%) spent their lives in a large city. More than half of the participants (58.8%) were single. Almost half (49.7%) of the participants' mothers had elementary school education; their fathers were mainly (35.5%) college graduates or had post-graduate degrees. More than half of the participants had a brother (65.2%) and a sister (63.5%), most of their parents were together (91.9%), and majority of their mothers were not working (76.4%) (Table 1). It was found that the average total score for those with postgraduate degree from the Perception of Gender Scale was 105.77 ± 14.61.

Table 1. *Characteristics of academicians (n=583)*

Demographic Variables	N	%
Age		
20-25	139	23.8
26-30	298	51.2
31 years and older	146	25.0
Sex		
Female	369	63.3
Male	214	36.7
Educational Background		
Postgraduate	235	40.3
Master	46	7.9
Study for doctorate	264	45.3
Doctor	38	6.5
Professional Field		
Education	109	18.7
Health	117	20.1
Social	229	39.3
Sciences	125	21.4
Missing Data	3	0.05
Family Type		
Nuclear Family	476	81.6
Extended Family	101	17.3
Missing Data	6	1.1
Place where a great part of your life is spent		
Province	487	83.5
District/Town	96	16.5
Marital Status		
Single	343	58.8
Married	240	41.2
Mother Education		
Primary School	290	49.7
Secondary School	71	12.2
High School	127	21.8
Undergraduate and Postgraduate	95	16.3
Father Education		
Primary School	160	27.4
Secondary School	79	13.6
High School	137	23.5
Undergraduate and Graduate	207	35.5
Mother Employment (n=581)		
Yes	136	23.3
No	445	76.4
Having a Brother		
Available	380	65.2
None Available	203	34.8
Having a Sister (n=579)		
Available	370	63.5
None Available	209	35.8

A model was constructed with the gender perception as the dependent variable and individual-related (sex, age, educational status, marital status, etc.) and family-related (family type, parental marriage and education status, etc.) as the independent variables (Table 2). Based on the results, the multiple correlation coefficient (R) between the dependent variable and the independent variables was 0.46, which showed a relationship with low level of significance ($p \leq 0.05$). The adjusted R^2 value was found as 0.18 (Table 2). 18% of the change in gender perception could be explained by some of the independent variables pertaining to individuals and their family.

Table 2. *The results of model relating to the effect of the socio-demographic variables of academicians on gender perception.*

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
	0.46	0.21	0.18	13.23

The F value of 7.184, which is the ratio of explained change (regression) to the unexplained (residual-error) change, appears to be statistically significant ($p \leq 0.001$). Based on this analysis, it was determined that there is a linear relationship between the independent variables in the model and the dependent variable (gender perception) (Table 3).

Table 3. *Variance analysis of the model of variables affecting gender perception.*

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Regression	26274.143	21	1251.150	7.184	0.000*
Residual	95610.277	546	174.154		
Total	121884.420	570			

*$p \leq 0.001$

Regression coefficients (β) were given in Table 4. The strongest predictor of gender perception was that the mother has secondary school education (β = 1.10), followed by being female (β = 0.36), being specialized in social sciences (β = 0.12) and mother employment (β = 0.11). Sex, education level and working status of mother, and area of specialization of academicians were found to be significant predictors of gender perception ($p \leq 0.05$). Age, educational background, family type, place where a great part of your life is spent, marital status, marital status of parent, having a brother and having a sister were found to be not significant predictors of gender perception ($p > 0.05$).

Table 4. *The results of multiple linear regression analysis on concerning the prediction of the gender perception scale.*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
	β	Std. Error	β	t	p
Sex					
Female	10.940	1.179	0.360	9.277	0.000
Male	Reference				
Professional Field					
Educational Sciences	3.537	1.780	0.094	1.988	0.047
Health Sciences	1.179	1.760	0.032	0.670	0.503
Social Sciences	3.701	1.526	0.124	2.426	0.016
Sciences	Reference				
Mother Education					
Primary School	-4.527	2.209	-0.155	-2.049	0.041
Secondary School	-4.866	2.505	-1.106	-1.943	0.053
High School	1.302	2.046	0.037	0.637	0.525
Undergraduate and Postgraduate	Reference				
Father Education					
Primary School	1.280	1.723	0.039	0.743	0.458
Secondary School	-0.041	1.948	-0.001	-0.021	0.983
High School	0.975	1.570	0.028	0.621	0.535
Undergraduate and Graduate	Reference				
Mother Employment					
Yes	3.813	1.557	0.110	2.449	0.015
No	Reference				

4. DISCUSSION

Gender perceptions and practices that emerge through different cultures may vary (17). Due to the dominance of patriarchal structure, problems with basic human rights of women still persist (18). Because of this, academic studies on this subject have increased over time due to fact that the realization of law as not being effective in academic area (19).

It was determined in this study that gender perceptions of individuals with post-graduate education were high. It has been determined that being female, specializing in educational sciences and social sciences, and having working mother increased the gender perception while having a mother with secondary school education or less decreased the gender perception. In a study, the majority of male and female academicians had mostly similar views, but

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313

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it was found that, unlike men, the most important factor for women in career planning was their views about being a parent (20). In a study related to gender perception in Turkey, single academicians did not consider getting married until the doctoral dissertation was completed in order not to disrupt the domestic roles assigned to them because they internalize the traditional roles of the women at home (12). Higher education, which is associated with the generation of new knowledge, may be ineffective in changing the common female figure in the mind of the society. This is due to the stereotyped female figure with caregiving and nurturing services developed due to social traditions and requirements (21). In our study, female academicians were found to have higher gender perceptions, i.e. a more egalitarian approach to gender. The dependence of gender perception on the sex of subjects in this study might be due to the persistence of the traditional point of view in terms of patriarchal structure among male academicians and the fact that women have a more egalitarian point of view as a result of more participation in work life.

In this study, it was determined that the family type had no effect on the gender perception of the individuals. Gender perception is preserved both within the family and within other social institutions and deeply affects the social opinions of individuals (22). Culture, social structure, and family type affect the gender perception of the individual significantly (23). It has been pointed out, that the evaluation of the gender perception as a core or extended family is inadequate due to the transformations of the family structure over time (24).

The lack of effect of the family type on the gender perceptions might be related to the patriarchal family structure of Turkish society. In a study conducted in Namibia, it was determined that individuals living in urban areas had higher gender perception than those living in rural areas (25). In this study, it was determined that the place where the subjects have spent most of their lives (rural/urban) had no effect on their gender perception. Despite the fact that the core family type is widespread in urban areas in Turkey, the strong kinship ties and the interactive structure of the extended family persists (17). The reason for the similarity of gender perceptions of subjects with urban and rural upbringing in this study might be due to the transfer of principles among urban and rural families as a result of increasing migration.

The behavior and level of education of the parents are important in determining gender perceptions and roles (26). In a study by White and White (8), it was found that individuals with parents with high levels of education had high gender perceptions. In this study, it was found that the gender perception increased in parallel to the increase in the level of education of the subject's mother. However, it was found that the gender perception of individuals whose mothers had secondary education or less was lower. The higher influence of education of the mother in particular on the gender perception of the individual might be due to the fact that the mother is considered to have the responsibility

in the mental and emotional development of the child in patriarchal cultures (17). Similarly, gender perception was higher in individuals with working mothers. This might be due to the fact that about half of the subjects with working mothers had an undergraduate and post-graduate degree.

The gender roles, which are constructed to determine which works should be done by men and women, are directing male and female workforce towards different occupations, which causes occupational gender discrimination. In this context, women are exposed to "horizontal occupational discrimination" as they focus more on "feminine" jobs as well as "vertical occupational discrimination" as they remain in lower status than men in the same profession (27). In this study, individuals specialized in educational and social sciences had high gender perception. The high gender perception in these areas may be related to the high number of female academicians in the fields of education and social sciences. At the same time, this finding is supported by the result that gender perception was higher in women.

In the model obtained as a result of multiple linear regression analysis, it was determined that the independent variables explained 18% of gender perception. This is low in terms of the explanation of model. However, gender perception is a multidimensional concept and is greatly influenced by the cultural and social structure that constitutes the individual's values and beliefs (28). At the same time, it may not be possible to measure the factors that affect the gender perception of an individual with quantitative data only. While structural inequalities in higher education institutions are addressed, power relations and gender experiences in institutions should be examined in detail. The fact that the sample only includes social media users is a limitation of this study.

5. CONCLUSION

The sample, which consisted mainly of academicians, revealed high gender perception. Being female, specializing in educational and social sciences, mother's education level, and mother's employment status were found to be important factors influencing the gender perceptions of individuals. In order for academicians to contribute to the elimination of inequalities and prejudices in society, it is extremely important that they gain knowledge and awareness about the matter. Therefore, educational institutions should undertake the task of creating new just roles regarding the gender equality. In addition, conferences on gender awareness and equality should be held at universities in order to raise awareness of the subject, and lectures on gender equality should be included in educational curricula.

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