# **International Journal of Sport Culture and Science**

March 2021 : 9(1)

ISSN : 2148-1148

Doi : 10.14486/IntJSCS.2021.627



# **Examination of Gender Perceptions of Students Studying at the Faculty of Sports Sciences**

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Type: Research Article (Received: 27.11.2021– Accepted: 24.03.2021)

#### **Abstract**

The aim of this study is to reveal whether education and learning gender perceptions in the faculty of sports sciences show a significant difference according to gender and education departments. The sample group of the study was 144 students (58 women and 86 men) from the departments of physical education, coaching, recreation and sports management studying faculty of sports sciences. "Gender Perception Scale" developed by Altınova and Duyan was used as the data collection tool. According to the findings, it is seen that women's gender perceptions are significantly higher than men's. In addition, it is seen that the gender perceptions of others in sports management departments are at a lower level compared to the other three departments. As a result male students and sports management department students have a more traditional perspective on gender perceptions than women and other departments. In order to transform the real perspective on gender perception and roles of male university students, it can be suggested to create educational programs and to spread the egalitarian perspective.

**Keywords**: Sport science students, gender, gender roles, gender perceptions



## Introduction

Although the concept of femininity and masculinity is not biologically changeable, they are concepts based on gender and vary according to social factors (Bora, 2014). On the other hand, the concept of "gender" is defined as the roles and responsibilities of women and men drawn by the social environment (Akın, 2008). The concept of gender is closely related to how societies perspective male and female roles and what kind of behaviors they expect from them (Akın, 2008). While factors such as parents, teachers, schools, peers, media, games, language, art, music and religion determine gender (Basow, 1992), this concept is institutionalized through policies (Akın, 2008). Gender basically refers to the meaning attributed to the gender by society and traditions according to the male and female gender and the expected behavior towards these genders (Dökmen, 2014). Oakley (1985) states that the concept of gender emerged not by biological change between men and women, but by transmitting gender stereotypes from generation to generation. Similarly, Bee and Boyd (2009) state that people do not have psychological qualities specific to different genders when they are born and that gender discrimination occurs in socialization and behavior. According to Steinberg (2007), gender is the result of women and men being influenced by the society in order to behave according to their gender. In summary, while biological characteristics determine sex, culture affects gender.

With the emerge of gender gain, taboo judgments about male and female roles also begin to increase (Bee and Boyd, 2009). Gender-appropriate roles increase especially in women as a result of the pressure exerted by the social environment. While men are regarded as independent, logical, ambitious, strong, aggressive and are expected to display appropriate behaviors, women are seen as lacking authority, low status and inadequate, and they are expected to be social, soft, polite, empathetic (Hyde and Delamater, 1997).

According to studies on gender in sports environments, there is an opinion that sports increases gender inequality (Connell, 1987). In the context of gender, women's participation in sports begins with the biological difference between men and women and the taboo of male supremacy created by this difference. According to Koca and Bulgu (2005), the current position of women in the sports environment is closely related to the perception and evaluation of sports activities that support biological differences. As long as sports are defined by superior physical characteristics, high performance, success, skills and records, biological differences are normalized and transformed into social subordination of women(Koca and Bulgu, 2005). For example, according Young (1979), some discourses stemming from the biological difference of women and their normalization, the view that the female body is sensitive and women should live as a weak entity, prevent them from participating in physical activities that require strength.

The perception of sports by the society as a biological field that belongs only to men can be determinant especially for boys to define themselves. In a study, when they asked boys to define themselves, regardless of social class, all men identified themselves with the sport they were interested in, whereas girls, only licensed athletes identified themselves with the roles of athletes (Bourdieu, 1978). It can be argued that this difference stems from gender perceptions (Bourdieu, 1978).

According to the studies in Turkey, women's experiences that exist in athletes' sports environment and female students physical education setting is ignored (Koca, 2006). However, physical education as a social field should be considered independent of gender



(Koca and Demirhan, 2006). However, especially in patriarchal societies, the woman who is depicted as a good wife and mother is mostly seen in relation to a poor area that gives birth to a child and is consequently surrounded by a house, while the male is rather perceived to be directly related to external public spaces outside the home. It is known that this distinction has an important effect on determining the roles of women and men. Considering that gender taboos and sexist behaviors based on these taboos are generally carried out on the female body (biological weakness, bodily appearance), it is said that women positioning themselves in the society and realizing their physical abilities will positively affect their self-perception and self-confidence (Koca and Bulgu, 2005).

While Turkey's population is roughly 50 % female, but women only account for 2 out of the 7 million licensed athletes(Sports General Directorate [SGD], 2018). These data, on the one hand, show how large the difference between male and female athletes is, on the other hand, the cultural position of women in society.

There are studies in the literature on gender perception of university students. Studies show that the main effect of gender on gender perceptions of university students is more egalitarian of female students than male students (Altınöz et al., 2018; Aydın et al., 2016; Aylazet al., 2014; Cetinkaya, 2013; Güzel, 2016; Seçgin and Tural, 2011; Varolet al., 2016; Uçar et al., 2017; Yılmazet al., 2009). Moreover, there are studies in which both male and female students have moderate positive gender equality attitudes (Yılmaz et al., 2009). According to the results of this studies, the gender perception of university students is related to cultural factors, educational status of the family, especially the mother, media and traditional gender roles (Altınöz et al., 2018; Çetinkaya, 2013; Direk and Irmak, 2017). However, when the studies on gender are conducted in sports settings, there is an opinion that sports increases gender inequality (Connell, 1987; Koca and Bulgu, 2005). The experiences of female athletes in the sports environment, sports activities in which they can show themselves and even the skills of female students are ignored in physical education lessons (Koca, 2006). However, the field of sports and physical education should be considered independent of gender (Koca and Demirhan, 2006). Sports, as it is a tool for socialization in society, is cultivated in the development of individual and social relations. In addition, it has an important role in the physical, mental and social development of the individual. Therefore, gender perception is also important in sports sciences (Ramazanoğlu et al., 2005). However, it is seen that studies on gender related sports sciences are limited. In particular, it is important to explain where women studying in sports sciences see themselves in society and where men see women in society. In this context, the main purpose of this study is to investigate whether the gender perceptions of students studying at sports sciences faculties differ significantly among gender and the departments they study.

#### **Material and Method**

## **Participants**

The research group is located in the west of Turkey who is studying in the faculty of sport sciences in Pamukkale University. Participants are studying physical education, coaching, recreation and sports management. The sample of the study consists of 144 out of a total of 480 students studying in the departments of physical education (N = 39), coaching (N = 47), recreation (N = 29) and sports management (N = 32) (Table 1).



# Measures

Gender Perception Scale: Gender Perception Scale developed by Altınova and Duyan (2013). Scale used to measure the gender perception of the participants. The original scale consists of 5-point Likert type questions and initially include 30 items. Following a validity study of the scale, the factor analysewas determined by principal component analysis method and according to the findings obtained, the scale consisting of 30 items was reduced to 25 items (Altınova and Duyan, 2013). It is seen that the validity coefficients of the remaining 25 items are at the desired level. The eventually applied scale consists of 10 positive and 15 negative statements. The items containing a negative statement are scored in reverse The scale consists of a single factor. In order to determine the reliability of the scale, it is seen that the reliability coefficient (Cronbach Alpha: 0,872) calculated as the internal consistency measure for the whole scale is at the desired level (Altınova and Duyan, 2013).

Personal Information Form: A personal information form consisting of open- and closedended questions was prepared by the researchers to determine the socio-demographic characteristics of the students and transferred to the participants along with the scales. In the personal information form, questions about socio-demographic data such as gender, education status of their parents, family income levels and place of birth are administered to students.

#### **Data Collection**

Data were collected from a total of 144 students studying in the physical education, coaching, recreation and sports management departments of the sports sciences faculty at a state university in the 2018-2019 academic year. After the necessary permissions for the research were obtained from the participants and the institution, the scale was explained by the researchers during the lesson. Participants required an average of 20 minutes to complete the scale.

## **Data Analysis**

The data obtained using the Gender Perception Scale was transferred to the computer and statistical analyzes were performed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 21 package program. While İndependent Sample T-Test was used to look for the difference between the genders, One-Way ANOVA test was used to look for the difference between departments.

## Results

In this section, the results of the Independent Sample T-Test and One-Way ANOVA analyzeswere used. Descriptive information is given in Table 1. According to this, 144 students participating in the study received a maximum of 125 and a minimum of 56 points from the scale, and on average 97,868 points. The ages of the participants vary between 18-33 and their average is 22,146. (Table 1).



	N	Min	Max	Mean	SD	
Score	144	56	125	97,868	16,880	
Age	144	18	33	22,146	2,602	

In order to understand whether there is a significant difference in gender perceptions of students studying at sports sciences faculty, independent sample t-test statistical analysis was conducted in independent groups (Table 2). Accordingly, it is seen that there is a highly significant difference between men and women in favor of women (p <0.01). While the average score obtained by women from the scale is 107,572, the average score obtained by men is 91,325.

**Table 2.** The Result Of Statistical Analysis Of Gender Perceptions Of Sports Sciences Students According To Gender

Cinsiyet	N	Mean	SD	F	p
Women	58	107,572	1,448	15,990	,000**
Men	86	91,325	1,837		

p < 0.01\*\*

One-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was applied to understand whether there is a significant difference in the gender perceptions of the students studying at the faculty of sports sciences according to the departments of physical education, coaching, recreation and sports management. According to this table, there is a significant difference in terms of gender perception according to the departments studied (Table 3). The parts of this difference originate from Table 4 in detail.

**Table 3.** The Result Of Statistical Analysis Of Gender Perceptions Of Students Studying At The Faculty Of Sports Sciences According To The Departments

Section	N	Mean	SS.	Min.	Max.	F	p
Physical Education	39	105,794	2,235	56,00	125,00		
Coaching	48	96,437	2,596	59,00	123,00		
Recreation	24	101,166	3,022	73,00	122,00	7,910	,000**
Sports Management	33	88,181	2,235	65,00	119,00		
Total	14 4	97,868	2,596	56,00	125,00		

*p*<0,01\*\*



As a result of the Post-Hocanalysis (Bonferroni), it is seen that the variables were homogeneous and therefore One-Way Variance (ANOVA) analysis was used. According to this, the gender perceptions of the students studying in the physical education department are significantly higher than the students studying of coaching and sports management. The gender perception of the students studying in the coaching department is significantly higher than the students studying in the sports management department, but it is significantly lower than the students studying in the physical education department. The gender perceptions of the students studying in the recreation department are significantly higher than the students studying in the sports management department. The gender perception of the students studying in the department of sports management is significantly lower than all other departments (Table 4).

**Table 4.** The Result Of The Post Hoc Analysis Of Gender Perception According To The Departments Of Education

Department	Department	<b>Mean Differences</b>	SS	p
Physical Education	Coaching	9,357*	3,400	,007*
	Recreation	4,628	4,092	,260
	Sports Management	17,613*	3,731	,000*
Coaching	Physical education	-9,357*	3,400	,007*
	Recreation	-4,729	3,943	,233
	Sports Management	8,255*	3,567	,022*
Recreation	Physical education	-4,628	4,092	,260
	Coaching	4,729	3,943	,233
	Sports Management	12,984*	4,232	,003*
Sports Management	Physical education	-17,613*	3,731	,000*
	Coaching	-8,255 <sup>*</sup>	3,567	,022*
	Recreation	-12,984*	4,232	,003*

p < 0.05 \*

## **Discussion**

The aim of this study physical education, coaching, recreation, sports management students, who study at Pamukkale University, to examine social gender perceptions. According to the results of the study, when the gender perceptions of the students studying in different departments of the faculty of sports sciences are examined, high scores from the Gender Perception Scale indicate that university students' perceptions of gender are positive. Several other research support this finding (Kodan Çetinkaya, 2013; Yılmaz et al., 2009). This situation can be occured becuse of (1) openminded, contemporary and egalitarian perspectives depending on the level of education; (2) students studying in sports sciences are aware that the next generation will take them as an example and become potential role models for young people (Yıldız and Keçeci, 2016).



According to Kara and Güngörmüş (2018), students studying in the field of sports sciences have a gender-sensitive perspective, albeit partially; (3) supporting the literature, according to the results obtained from this study, it is seen that the gender perception of the students studying in sports sciences is generally positive. It can be said that this positive view stems from the high level of personal awareness of the students studying at thefaculty of sports sciences. According to Kara and Güngörmüş (2018), it is thought that the activities of units such as the departments of women's studies, women's studies research and application centers within the university support this perspective. However, there are also studies in the literature regarding the negative perception of gender in studies on university students (Öngen and Aytaç, 2013). For example, in their study, Esen, Siyez, Soylu, and Demiryüz (2017) concluded that both female and male participants had the idea that women's entry into the workplace would lead to disruption of housework and that housework was seen as the duty of women. In addition, although women take an active role in business life, they feel the housework as their own responsibility. This situation stems from the role of cultural learning and factors (Özçatal, 2011). In addition, while men define themselves in a masculine role, women define themselves in a feminine role and this bringing along the tendency of not equal for women in bilateral relations (Kuiper, 1990).

According to the findings obtained from this study, it shows that gender perception scores of women are higher than men's. This result is similar to previous studies and indicates that male students have a more traditional perspective on gender perception than female students. However, both national and international studies on university students show that female students' attitudes towards gender are more equitable than male students (Aşılı, 2001; Aylaz et al., 2014; Çelik, 2013; Daşlı, 2019; Kimberly and Mahaffy, 2002; Kodan Cetinkaya, 2013; Kulik, 1999; Öngen and Aytaç, 2013; Yılmaz et al., 2009). As a result of this study, it was found that female university students displayed a more positive attitude towards reducing the possible stereotypes in society and transforming the traditional perspective together with the traditional roles assigned to women and men, supporting the literature. On the other hand, male students having a more traditional perspective on gender perceptions can be associated with the fact that this situation is for the benefit of men and is also supported by the society (Vefikuluçay et al., 2007). However, it can be imagined that men reinforce this attitude because they are satisfied with the power they have and receive social support (Aylaz et al., 2014). The fact that women have a more egalitarian attitude in terms of gender perceptions can be explained by their strong desire to have an equal position with men (Kodan Cetinkaya, 2013; Kulik, 1999).

According to Kılıç and Şener (2013), low socio-cultural, socio-economic levels and limitations of opportunities play an important role in the development of individuals on the basis of participation in recreational activities. Therefore, students' gender perceptions are the result of adopting a traditional perspective depending on the level of education and the opportunities offered. Moreover, considering that the gender of the students, the region they live in before starting school and their economic situation have significant effects on the gender perception of students (Özpulat, 2016), the location of recreational activities should be evaluated separately.

According to the findings obtained from this study, the gender perceptions of students studying at the faculty of sports sciences differ significantly according to departments. Accordingly, the gender perception scores of the students studying in the department of physical education are significantly higher than the students studying in other departments.



Research findings are similar to other studies conducted in Turkey (Çuhadaroğlu and Akfırat, 2017; Yıldız and Keçeci, 2016). There are also studies showing that pre-service teachers' perception of gender is low. Erdol, Özen and Toraman, (2019) have examined students view in different parts of the education faculty on gender. Accordingly, it was observed that pre-service teachers had negative views on gender equality and these views were negatively affected during their time at the education faculty. This situation suggests that it is possible to transfer gender inequality to the society through teachers (Acar et al., 2019). However, in this study, the fact that the gender perception scores of the students of the physical education department is significantly higher than the other departments (coaching, recreation and sports management) is thought to be due to the fact that the students have to be a role models and the determining qualities of the teaching profession.

According to the results of this study, the gender perceptions of the students studying in the physical education, coaching and recreation departments are significantly higher than the students studying in the sports management department. When the literature is examined, although the gender perceptions of the students studying in sports sciences are generally high (Kodan and Çetinkaya; 2013; Yılmaz et al., 2009), the findings of this study are against the students of sports managers. This may be due to the fact that the students who are accepted to other departments are admitted to the school with their athlete resume and exam score (Basic Proficiency Test [TYT]), while the students studying in the sports management department are accepted only with the university entrance exam score (TYT) regardless of the athlete's background (yokatlas.yok.gov.tr). When the literature is examined, it is seen that individuals who actively participate in sports have more positive perceptions of gender and their perspective towards women in society (Koca, 2006). In addition, it is thought that the reason for the low gender perception of the students of the sports management department may be due to the fact that women's management status is not accepted, because women have entered into working life much later than men and under more difficult conditions in the historical process, and their participation in management positions in business life is going through a difficult process (Onay and Heptazeler, 2014).

# **Conclusion**

As a result, the gender perceptions of the students studying at the faculty of sports sciences differ according to the departments they study and according to the gender variable.

Accordingly, women have a more positive perception of gender than men. Gender perceptions of students studying in physical education departments are significantly higher than students studying in other departments. On the other hand, gender perceptions of the students studying in the sports management department are significantly lower than the students studying in other departments.

Within the scope of the findings of the research, it can be suggested to spread the egalitarian perspective by raising the awareness of university students through intervention and education programs in order to transform the traditional perspective on gender perception and roles. The gender role issue can also be included in the content of these intervention programs. In particular, given that male students have a more traditional perspective, it can be said that planning intervention programs for men is important. In addition, it can be suggested that the factors affecting these attitudes of university students



who are determined to have traditional values on gender equality should be examined in depth by using qualitative research methods.

It is recommended that the students studying in the department of sports management should be included in universities with their athlete's background and exam score (TYT) as in other departments. Because it is the opinion that individuals who actively participate in physical activity have more positive gender perceptions (Koca, 2006).

Finally, the awareness level of university students can be increased with seminars or conferences to transform the gender perception. In symposiums and panels to be organized on the subject, it is considered important to ensure that gender and roles are discussed together by male and female students by supporting the participation of male students. In these symposiums and panels, the importance of recreational activities should also be discussed. In this way, future sports managers, trainers, physical education and recreation leaders can be trained more equitably.



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