University Students’ Perception on Woman’s Place in a Family

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ABSTRACT

The place of woman in society has always been a topic of discussion since the existence of humankind. Both in our country and also in other countries women take a step out of home and enter the work life. However in Turkish society male dominance still exists. Especially the ideas of university students, who will take important roles in society, establish family and raise children in the future, have great importance in terms of family and gender equality. Taking it as a starting point, our aim in this study is to find out the perception of university students about woman.

Keywords: University students, woman, perception, woman perception

1. Introduction

The responsibilities women share with men in the family and the increasing function of women in social life have been an important topic to examine. As a result, in the last century especially in the Republican period, the role of Turkish women in social changes has been questioned many times and answers have been searched for this important question (Şahinkaya, 1967; Kurnaz, 1991; Bilen, 1993). Turkish women's position in society has varied throughout history. Since the dawn of the Ottoman Empire, women have always been with their husbands in political meetings, war and social relations. Despite the fact that women and men have equal rights in family, together with the Turks’ acceptance of Islam there was slowly raising change in the position of women. The reason for this was that Islam was born in Arab countries and they were under the influence of traditions and customs. The rights given to women by Islam have vanished throughout the time because of the conservative circles. Thus, the Turkish community life left its place to eastern civilization; as a result of religious rules and increasing conservatism, women have been home-closed, got limited

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education and their social, cultural and legal status has been removed. Thus, women have lost their ancestral rights. These restrictions were further increased by the Ottomans and reached prohibitive size against women (Öztoprak, 1999). Rights and freedoms given to women in the Republican period allowed women to take place both in legal and public spheres (Aliefeñoğlu & Özbilgin, 2006). Although there have been improvements in the status of women in society, it is possible to state that the current status of women is not satisfactory.

While analyzing traditional Turkish family structure, women in the family were not given enough voice. So the words of men are perceived as orders, when he is rejected, the punishment is accepted as usual. Due to the social structure, when Turkish women do not obey men and fulfill the requirements (do the dishes, do not neglect the work of the house, leaving the house without permission), violence against women is considered legitimate (Yaman Efe & Ayaz, 2010).

When the literature is examined, it is seen that there is a sharing atmosphere in housework, participation in decision-making and developments in patriarchal and traditional relations couples establish with each other but gender-based work sharing still continues and housework are generally performed by women (Kocaci & Gökkaya, 2005; ASGM, 2010; ASGM, 2011) decisions related to the house are generally given by women but other decisions (regarding house choice, vacation or entertainment) are generally taken by men (ASGM, 2010; ASGM, 2011). To sum up, in our society male dominant structure still continues and women who experience domestic violence hide it from their families and even accept it as a legitimate action and in the decision-making process they, women, do not participate and leave the last word to men. Also it is possible to state that men accept women as someone who do the housework, raise children or meet the sexual needs of men and this way of thinking pass through generations. However, it is possible to think that the decrease in the number of such cases where women stand back in society is a result of increase in the education level. Based on this idea, the point of view of university students as people who will take important roles in society by establishing families and raising children in the future is very important in terms of gender equality.

So that in this very study, besides determination on the woman perception of university students, concept of woman, family owned distribution subsidiaries in spending and domestic violence topics are targeted to be found out.

2. Method

A qualitative research method was used. Qualitative research includes observation, interviews, document analysis, data gathering techniques as well as the pursuit of a process where the detection and elaboration of influence domains are aimed in a realistic and holistic way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005).

Ankara Gazi University, Industrial Arts Education Faculty, Family and Consumer Sciences Education section senior students in 2012-2013 spring semester among the ones agreed to participate in study, a total of 15 university students are included to the study. As the data collection tool, in order to reach detailed data on perception of women, a question form is prepared with the help of Şentürk’s (2010) study.

In order not to cause limitations on students’ thoughts and unexpected situations which are not perceived before (Glesne, 2013): open-ended, semi-structured questions are used in the study with an effort to make the study more reliable. While asking the questions to students, instructions are limited only to remind the context of the talk. In order to make interviewers feel comfortable, interviews are not recorded. There are discussions on many different themes and as a result of those discussions; plenty of materials are obtained waiting to be evaluated. This method helps interviews to express their feelings and thoughts within the interaction of each other and this method leads a richer content. In the interview form, there are questions and those questions are read by researchers one by one and common expressions are gathered in groups. Every single answer is expressed in a numerical way and those numbers’ frequency values are calculated with SPSS program. Expressions of university students’ are directly shared as quotes. The reason for letting such direct quotations from university students is to share ideas of university students in an obvious way (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2005). Instead of giving the full names of students who are quoted, there are numbers for every student to state the student. In order to express the sex of the student, just before the numbers there are letters as M or F letter, M represents the male sex and F represents female sex.

3. Findings

Among the participants, 6 of the students are at the age of 22,6 of them are at the age of 23 and 3 are at the age of 24. Five students have one sibling, three students have two siblings, three students have three siblings, and also three students have four or more siblings. One student’s mother does not know how to read and write, mothers of nine students have primary school graduation, mothers of four students have secondary school graduation and one
student’s mother has high school or equivalent graduation. There are eight students whose fathers graduated from primary school, 3 students’ father have graduation from secondary school and 4 students’ father have graduation from high school or equivalents. 11 of mothers are housewives and on the other hand 3 of mothers have temporary works and 1 of the mothers has full time job. 7 of the students’ fathers have full time jobs, 6 of the fathers are retired and 2 of the fathers do not have a job.

**Expressions of university students on the role of women in family**

- **M9** who stated that the concept of women in the family should only be mother said “Woman is a mother for me because mother is a concept that includes all the roles in the family just like an umbrella term”. **M10** stated that “I do not know any better job in this world than being a mother” **F5** said that “a woman could be a mother, a wife and an individual who has a career” by expressing that women is a mother, wife and holder of a career.

- **F3** who stated women need to have every feature in the family by saying “Mother is the one who unified the family and hold them together. In times, when everyone is in a desperate situation, mother always stands strong and is powerful”. Also **F25** states that “man makes houses woman makes homes, woman means everything in a family”.

- **F2** states that woman should be mother and wife in the family by saying “woman should be mother and wife”. **M1** who states woman as only wife in a family by saying “they should be perceived as wives”. **M11** stated that woman and man are equal by saying that “To me, there cannot be any difference between woman and man. They are the same as woman and man”.

When we examine the expressions of women on the concept of women in family, the situation is: woman should be mother (4 students), woman needs to have all features (4 students), women should be mother, wife and has career (2 students), woman should be wife (1 student), woman and man are equal without any difference (1 student).

As it is understood from the expressions, there is an important role of woman in society. In our culture, women are sacred. With the feature of being fertile, woman is mother in the family and her place cannot be replaced with anything else. Humankind who opens its eyes to world, sees mother as the first thing in the world and learns everything from her. In the early childhood period, mother is the one who knows everything. Behind the expression of mother knows everything by university students could be the perception in the early childhood period but it is not enough as for only explanation. Another important factor is that no matter how traditional is that father is the one who does not interfere with the issues at home, serious, respected and even be afraid, the one who accepts the interaction with his children as to be too familiar and the one who does not take a step forward for the decisions on children and women are accepted as mediator in such situations, however with the women’s entrance to work life there is a more moderate role for fathers now. In this change, especially working women experience a great dilemma because they perform their second shifts in a day at home. In this dilemma, women experience mobbing in their working places, try to meet the expectations of their husbands and children while trying to find out the best for their children, also experience emotional changes and the attrition from other people. Although gender equality in society increases day by day, it is not in the desired level right now.

**Expressions of University Students on Distribution of Properties and Equality in Payments**

Among the students who have the idea of property distributions and payments should be equal, **F6** state that “There should be a common shared account of mother and father and all the payments should be performed in this account”.

- **M7** who thinks father is the dominant one in the family states that “Father is the cash box and there is no participation”. **M10** states that “The properties must belong to father and two voices could lead a problem”. **M9** who thinks mother is dominant in the family states that “Mother is the cash box, everything belongs to her and there is no partnership”. Also, the student who thinks the authority should belong to the one who brings money to home; **M11** states that “The one who earns money should have the authority of property and spending”.

When the expressions of students on property distribution and payments are examined, majority of students (11 students) stated that there should be equality, 2 of them stated the father should have the dominance and 1 student stated that mother should have the dominance also one other student stated that dominance should belong to the one who earn money. In today’s world when the structure of family turns into modernity from traditional structure, it could be stated that majority of students are affected from this change. Together with the entrance of women to work life the idea that men have the full authority on properties of family does not totally change but there are some signs of change in the direction of decrease and it leaves its place to the idea of property and spending money authority should be equal.

**Expressions of University Students on Domestic Violence**

About this expression, **F2** stated that “In my opinion when the domestic violence is considered, the first thing
comes to people’s mind is women. In Turkey, women are exposed to violence more than anyone. I think the reason for this situation is the man who does not have any words to say, could not express themselves and are in a situation that other people pity on and those men cannot satisfy themselves in another way and choose to give discomfort people with pressure.” F3 stated that “Strong one’s putting pressure on weak one is derived from people who have no conscious in society. Anyone who is sane does not use violence on weaker people”. M7 “The responsible of domestic violence is the father because generally fathers use violence on women and violence should not be a way of punishment”. M8 “The responsible one is father. Fathers use violence on women as a result of their own alcohol, gambling and borrowing problems and it is very wrong”. M10 “I think the ones who will get marry each other should be open to each other and solve their problems together, another reason for violence is the interventions of parents in law”.

All of the university students who participate in the research (15 students) stated that domestic violence is not legitimate. University students expressed the main reason of domestic violence as insensibleness, men’s habits like alcohol or gambling, lack of trust, lack of love, lack of education level, financial problems derived from men and also the interventions of parents to relations. In the case of domestic violence, women and children are the victims of domestic violence and men are the applicators of violence. In our country, even it is seen that domestic violence statistics are increasing day by day, it could be said that in the past years women were afraid to talk about such issues and report violence cases so the statistics in the past are thought not to reflect the truth and it is still a bleeding wound in our society.

4. Conclusion and Suggestions

Among participants, 6 of the students are at the age of 22, 6 of them are at the age of 23 and 3 are at the age of 24. Five students have one sibling, three students have two siblings, three students have three siblings, and also three students have four or more siblings. One student’s mother does not know how to read and write, mothers of nine students have primary school graduation, mothers of four students have secondary school graduation and one student’s mother has high school or equivalents graduation. There are eight students whose fathers graduated from primary school, 3 students’ father have graduation from secondary school and 4 students’ father have graduation from high school or equivalents. 11 of mothers are housewives and on the other hand 3 of mothers have temporary works and 1 of the mothers has full time job. 7 of the students’ fathers have full time jobs, 6 of the fathers are retired and 2 of the fathers do not have a job.

University students describe the concept of women in family as: woman should be mother (4 students), woman needs to have all features (4 students), women should be mother, wife and has career (2 students), woman should be wife (1 student); woman and man are equal without any difference (1 student).

When the expressions of students on property distribution and payments are examined, majority of students (11 students) stated that there should be equality, 2 of them stated the father should have the dominance and 1 student stated that mother should have the dominance also one other student stated that dominance should belong to the one who earn the money. Also, all of the students express their opinions on domestic violence as it is illegal.

As a result of this study, it could be recommended that

- This study should be repeated in groups which are larger and from different education levels with quantitatively and qualitatively,
- In order to increase the awareness of university students on the role of women in society, various seminars, workshops and similar activities should be promoted,
- It goes without saying that men have a great role in the perception of women in a society, so it could be better to increase the awareness of men and their ability to empathize in this topic.

References


