Research

SOSYAL HİZMET ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN TOPLUMSAL CİNSİYET HAKKINDAKİ GÖRÜŞLERİ: BİR NİTELİKSEL ARAŞTIRMA

Opinions of Social Work Students on Gender: A Qualitative Research

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to investigate the views of the students of the Department of Social Work at Hacettepe University regarding gender, based on focus group discussions. We found that the student participants did not discuss about gender within the framework of power and oppression mechanisms in society. They explained gender roles within the socialization process and traditional role expectations, not within the context of male domination and subordination of the female.

Key Words: *Gender; gender stereotypes; masculinity; femininity; social work education*

ÖZET

Bu araştırmanın amacı, Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Hizmet Bölümü öğrencilerinin toplumsal cinsiyete ilişkin görüşlerini odak grup tartışmalarına dayanarak incelemektir. Araştırmada öğrencilerin toplumsal cinsiyeti, toplumdaki güç ve ezme mekanizmaları çerçevesinde tartışmadıkları bulunmuştur. Öğrenciler toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini, erkek baskınlığı ve kadının ikincilleştirilmesi yerine; sosyalleşme süreci ve geleneksel rol beklentileri çerçevesinde açıklamışlardır.

Anahtar Sözcükler: *Toplumsal cinsiyet, toplumsal cinsiyet kalıpyargıları, erkeklik, kadınlık, sosyal hizmet eğitimi*

INTRODUCTION

Due to the influence of the feminist theory, recognition of the differences between men and women form the basis of discussions on power relations. Feminist theory views inequality within social structure and criticizes biological determinism which frames female and male identities as fixed. Debates

about the differences between men and women still continue on sex versus gender discussion.

The aim of this study is to capture and analyze the views of a set of social work students regarding gender. Social work education seeks to equip students with the knowledge, skills and values that will enable them to work with individuals, groups and society that are suffering from inequalities and discrimination. Gender-related to stereotypes feed social inequalities and discrimination in terms of gender. It is important to reveal the views' of students about gender, to put forth their gender stereotypes and to help them gain awareness about gender inequality.

Gender and Gender Identity

Gender is based on the understanding that sexual identity is formed as a social identity which is constructed in different ways for men and women via social, cultural, economic and political structures. Patriarchal ideology defines women in relation to the private sphere and men in relation to the public sphere (Pateman, 2001). This distinction leads to the subordination of women and strengthens the powerful social position of men over women (Coltrane, 1998).

Gender identity is reinforced by the expectations created by the social institutions which govern socialization and the establishment of gender roles in society (Connell, 1987). Since the pattern of demonstrating the "correct behavior" as a man or woman is determined by social relations, gender is a product of social practices.

Traditional gender roles emphasize that men are self-confident and active in terms of sexuality; and women are passive and submissive (Baber, 2000). The importance of being powerful, brutal and courageous for men enables them to be active in public life and helps them establish their domination over women. Stereotypes have an important function in the maintenance of this domination.

Connell's (2005; 2002) concept of hegemonic masculinity has become important to analyze masculinity in modern times which includes structural and institutional forces in the formation of gender. Hegemonic masculinity is a pattern of gender practice which legitimizes elements of patriarchy by comprising new forms of masculinity. This strategy aims to create cultural ideals of masculinity which guarantees domination of men over women. She argues that hegemonic masculinity in western countries is implied with power, control, and independence, individuality based on competition, aggressiveness and use of violence.

Heiliger and Engelfried (1995, cited in Onur and Koyuncu, 2004) have eight different points that they focused on about the importance of socialization within the emergence of hegemonic masculinity. The first contention is that men's world is characterized by being powerful, non-suffering, unfeeling, and always rational. Their second point is explained by the term "utilization" which addresses the appointment of women within the reproduction sphere in terms of the social distribution of labor and the exploitation of this appointment by men. This term is understood as the definition of women's fertility and/or of domestic tasks, and as men's making use of the reproductive power of women.

Heiliger and Engelfried's third point is "silence" which describes men's inability to speak about themselves and their emotions. The next one, which depends on silence, is "loneliness" which asserts that men think they have to solve their problems alone. "Rationality" is the fifth determinant, defines representation and expression of emotions negatively. The "continuous controlling position" based on rationality, is the sixth determinant point. It addresses the domination-establishing need of masculinity in every situation. This engenders "violence" which is the other point of men's socialization. Violence is seen as a preferred behavior type for the solution of social problems. The last point is the "physiological distance," the result of disconnection between brain and body which is the outcome of the creation of masculinity.

Within this socialization process of men, more negative features are attributed to femininity compared to masculinity. Thus, stereotypes that portray women as being more sincere, sensitive, matronly, forgiving, protective and concerned with others (Dipboye and Colella, 2005) are presented as preconditions for their acceptation into the society. The learning process of women starting from childhood is legitimate as long as it is in line with the traditional values of the male world (Chodorow, 1978). Women encounter situations in which they have to develop less ambitious and more supporting roles for accessing the men's world (Meeker and Weitzel-O'Neill, 1985; Ridgeway and Diekema, 1992; cited in Carli and Bukatko, 2000).

According to the first dimension that Heiliger and Engelfried (cited in Onur and Koyuncu, 2004) mentions,

traditional women are presented as desired models but are perceived as insufficient and they are not respected. This shapes internal conflicts between the dominant men's group and the inferior women's group within the framework of sexist roles and paternalistic relations. Women who are not traditional but are respected due to their social status are subjected to aggressive sexism.

Moreover, the distinction between public and private spheres that is developed over differences between men and women and that defines women in terms of their domestic responsibilities and men in terms of their effective roles in public life contributes to exploitation of women's domestic labor by men. The necessity of serving men and economic dependence of women on men strengthens the fear of men's violence which in turn creates the image that women are under men's protection and care (Coltrane, 1998:63).

Influential Factors in Gender Structuring in Turkey

The life of women in Turkey is still shaped by traditional and religious practices that prevent women's freedom. The high impact of religious and traditional codes over women's daily lives shows that the sufficient level for women's citizenship rights has not yet been achieved (Anil et al, 2002:8) although social sensitivity about women and men increased, and many legal rights were achieved against inequalities.

The traditional structure in Turkey creates the acceptance of women's secondary role within family and causes sexual morality disputes. Thus, women

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are not perceived as subjects but as beings accounted for by families. This perception strengthens "feudal" behavior patterns like domestic violence, blood feuds, honor killings and the belief that men are responsible for the protection of their country and families (Sancar, 2004:209). Therefore the use of power is given as a right to men to subordinate women.

Traditional patriarchy which sees women as sexual objects and gives obsessive importance to the potential damage to family and community honor should she "break the limits" and restricts her to the private sphere to avoid this. Within a new social structure that gives women opportunities to participate in public life, the way to cope with the fear of accessing public life is to neutralize them by pushing them to accept the role of "mother" (Berktay, 1998:3).

Social Work Education and Gender

Main goal of social work profession is to struggle against every type of social inequality including gender inequality. Women are an important client group of social work due to their secondary positions and social and economic subordination. Thus, gender is important to social work education.

However, gender focus is not sufficient within the social work discipline (Leung, 2007; Figueira-Mcdonough, Netting and Nichols-Casebolt, 2001; Kulic, 2002; Barns, 2003; Trotter, Brogatzki, Duggan, Foster and Levie 2006; Payne, 1997). The impact of feminist theory on social work education started only after the 1990's in Europe and the United States (Leung,

2007:187). Dominelli (2002:8) found that the traditional theory of social work is still gender neutral. Following this point, a group of theorists argued that traditional social work theory, which is insensitive to the subordination and inequality relations of women, is gender-blind (Bentley, Valentine and Haskett, 1999:344; Leung, 2007:187; Grise-Owens, 2002:152-161). The priority of women's welfare in social work is reflected in the questioning of the image of women as being wives or mothers (Featherstone, 2001:3). Feminism emphasized the need for re-evaluation of social work curriculum. In Turkey, feminist social work have begun to be discussed only recently. So there is a need about to determine views of the social work students related to gender.

METHOD

The views of the student participants were gathered through six focus group meetings in July 2008. The focus groups were conducted by four researchers experienced in qualitative research. Views on gender are analyzed through prospect on femininity and masculinity, gender stereotypes, fields in which gender stereotypes are developed.

Focus group technique is preferred since it is based on voluntary participation and it provides a natural research atmosphere rather than an a formal one. Focus group technique is appropriate since it gives an opportunity to the researcher and participants to grasp and gain insight about a selected theme (Morgan and Spanish, 1984; Krueger and Casey, 2000:4-6; Rubin and Babbie, 1989; Neuman, 2000).

The focus groups lasted between one and a half and two hours and the interests and engagement of the student participants was high. During the research process male participants used more defensive language than did the female participants.

The analysis of the focus group meetings was started with the warming-up game which was about gender role-changing, and then the analysis continued with the focus group questions. Analyses were conducted by all researchers directly after the focus group sessions. According to Strauss and Corbin (1990), for the reliability of a research, a consensus between at least three of the researchers is important.Documents of focus groups which is around 300 pages had been jointly analysed. Creswell (1998) mentions about a systematic process of coding information. This systematic process includes analysis and categorization in order to transform certain expressions into meaningful clusters representing the interested phenomenon. Documents had been analyzed on the bases of pre-defined gender differences and equality between women and men by using open coding (examination, comparison, conceptualization and categorization of information), axial coding (uniting similar categories based on relations among them) and selective coding (defining and explaining the original or the main phenomenon.

As a result of open coding and axial coding, masculinity was revealed as a social construct which is powerful, non-suffering, not crying and always rational, always in need of domination, favoring "violence" rather than solution of problems. Femininity on the other hand, is constructed as more prone to motherhood and caring roles, weak, responsible for their weaknesses and production of stereotypes, which can only be successful in domestic area. As a result ideas and concepts that had been revealed were seen to be coinciding with the theoretical knowledge on socialization of hegemonic masculinity (Heiliger and Engelfried 1995: in: Onur and Koyuncu, 2004:38) and formation of gender stereotypes (Huges 2002: in: Khoromi, 2006: 37; Brownlow et al., 2000) and the discussion had been based on socialization of hegemonic masculinity and formation processes of gender stereotypes.

Participants

Focus group meetings were conducted with forty five students, including eighteen female and twenty seven male student participants. The participant's average age was twenty three with the youngest being twenty and the oldest thirty five. The average number of siblings is 2.5. Most of the students were born in less developed regions of the country. The majority, thirty nine, have lived in a city for the majority of their lives, four in a village, and two in a town. The education level of the participant's fathers is higher than mothers. Most of the parents were graduates from primary schools and there are some illiterate and some university educated parents. Female participants most frequently cited their teachers as role models while male participant's role models included fathers, grandfathers, uncles and teachers in that order.

FINDINGS
Gender Stereotypes

We found that students have some stereotypes about femininity and masculinity in terms of having different emotions, personal features, and problem-solving skills. These stereotypes are analyzed within the framework of the socialization phases of "hegemonic masculinity" which is defined by Heiliger and Engelfried (1995) and the social processes which are determinant in the emergence of gender stereotypes that are used by Khoromi (2006).

Stereotypes on Masculinity

In the research, the stereotypes about men were put forth through power, and the ones about women were expressed over powerlessness. Students expressed the power of men through the themes of vanity, taking responsibility, being protective, and refusal of being rejected. They also stated that appearing as a powerful person brings about feelings of inflexibility in a person's behaviors. This seems to be appropriate to the first phase of hegemonic masculinity which is defined by Heiliger and Engelfried (1995; cited in Onur and Koyuncu, 2004:38). The created models of men in this first phase are powerful, non-suffering, not crying and always rational.

> Man means power. It comes from power. Man's mentality is powerful, protective; because of the thoughts and views of the society there is a need for appearing as more powerful. (male)

> Men have rigid understanding of the self. They have vanity. They are brought up strictly, it is said that men never cry. (male)

The expected condition of being powerful brings about taking responsibility. While this responsibility increases the self-esteem of men in an exaggerated way it makes them choose being alone not to lose power.

> When you become a man, you start to have responsibility and unnecessary esteem and this causes men escape from many things. When I look at the relations of my mother and sisters… I resent them saying that you leave me alone. (male)

> In terms of the roles men have, men have more roles and they are burdened by these roles. In order to show themselves as powerful to others, men take on more responsibilities. In other words, they own the working burden of the business. (female)

This seems to be consistent with Heiliger and Engelfried's third and the fourth points in socialization of hegemonic masculinity (1995: cited in Onur and Koyuncu, 2004:38). According to this, in men's socialization, "silence" is described as men not speaking about themselves and their emotions, and the development of "loneliness" as a result. Thus, men think that they must solve their problems alone. Loneliness is perceived as a positive value which is freed from femininity. "Continuous controlling position" which takes place in the sixth phase that is defined by Heiliger and Engelfried (1995: cited in Onur and Koyuncu, 2004:38) for the socialization of hegemonic masculinity addresses the need for the sovereign establishment of masculinity in every determinant point in the social sphere. The "continuous controlling position"

appeared in the form of "protection" during the research. Protection is a stereotype which is transferred over generations to realize the expectation of women from men in the form of a powerful rescuing man.

> Men are psychologically more powerful than women. Women are more emotional, this is why they fray more. Because of this reason, women expect men to realize their masculinity roles such as being more protective or realizing masculinity. For instance, if someone attacks your house, the one who protects your house is the man. (male)

> I do not think that both sexes' physical inequality is related to their overall inequality. Normally, women need more courage, they have all the rights but courage is necessary to realize it. But I do not want my relatives to go out because I do not what may happen outside. (male)

The stereotype that men are powerful and rigid is fed by the stereotype that women are emotional and powerless. The judgment that men should be powerful and rational is tried to be maintained by the judgment "men do not cry".

> They told us not to cry. (male)

> According to me, men are powerful. Women cry about every little problem, this is powerlessness. (male)

This seems to be consistent with Heiliger and Engelfried's "rationality" which is the fifth determinant point of the socialization of masculinity and which is defined as the expression of emotions in the socialization of hegemonic masculinity (1995: cited in Onur

and Koyuncu, 2004:38). The silence in men's emotions and thoughts, and loneliness which is perceived as a positive value that is freed from femininity together strengthens rationality.

In this study, within the hegemonic masculinity understanding, the thought that men are active, mobile and have the leading role is considered upon men's not accepting to be rejected within relationships. The participants marked this as the indicator of how violence against women is legitimized.

> Making people do whatever men want, men cannot stand being rejected. Using violence is caused by being rejected. (male)

Stereotypes on Femininity

Stereotypes which are evaluated as features belonging to femininity are defined as powerlessness, detail-addiction and unnecessary emotionality. The stereotype which is produced by the patriarchal ideology and which proposes that men are rational defines women as irrational. In this direction students stated that these kinds of features attributed to women make daily lives of women more difficult.

> Women are different in terms of details; they are more detail-addicted. Men think in a more rude and general way. (female)

> Indeed, this is applicable to traffic, too. Women have more accidents because they are more studious. (male)

Students thought of the traditional roles and responsibilities of women as having features that are particular to femininity

like having the talent for domestic tasks and childcare. Taking up these responsibilities with the terms "aptitude" and "drive", works as a mechanism that feeds patriarchy.

> There are traditional and modern family types. In the traditional family, men work and women stay at home. In modern families, there is more sharing. Even though women work, they have to take care of their children. Women have the drive for childcare. There is a difference in childcare by men and women. Women show more aptitude in these kinds of tasks. (male)

Hughes states that one of the social processes that is determinant in the formation of gender stereotypes is the phenomenon that individuals work in a more productive way in jobs and positions which are more appropriate to their gender (2002; cited in Khoromi, 2006:37). Heiliger and Engelfried (1995: cited in Onur and Koyuncu, 2004:38) use the term "utilization" which addresses the re-assignment of women in the production sphere and men's use of this in the social distribution of labor. Women gain advantages in both the public and private spheres by making use of their sexuality and that they can only establish equality through their sexuality. The judgment that women lie more easily than men is strengthened by the thought that women cannot be trusted and that they make achievements unfairly. In this context, any achievement women realize in both the public and the private spheres is not perceived as success obtained through their talents or education.

Women are more advantaged. They can use their bodies for their interests. Women are sex objects in society. Women are upfront with their sexuality. They can use their beauty and sexuality in business life. The biggest difference between men and women is their physical difference. Women can do many things easily in their lives. (male)

> Clever women create equality; there is no problem of equality. (male)

> Women can make men do anything they want, this is something positive. For example they use their sex appeal, they can make men do whatever they want, even though women have disadvantages, this is positive. (female)

Nevertheless, due to the important role women have in childcare, students think that women are responsible for the structuring of masculinity with patriarchal codes. Brownlow et al (2000; cited in Khoromi, 2006:37) emphasized that teenagers are encouraged to accept appropriate gender roles by their parents and teachers. But it can be argued that students accuse women and ignore the social construction that portray men as powerful and women as powerless. Haug and Hausser (1991) state that while women are the victims of the sovereignty and power relations, due to their determinant role in the formation of masculinity they play the role of both "victim" and the "perpetrator" (cited in Onur and Koyuncu, 2004:38).

> Indeed those who establish men's sovereignty are women. Women put themselves in this (secondary) position and they bring up such children. Socialization process is

important and it is important to educate both men and women. This process which starts in the family is maintained outside it as well. Mothers accept this situation by saying that "fish smells from its head". They get angry with their husbands but they bring their children up in this way. (male)

Fields in Which Gender Stereotypes are Developed

This section discusses the fields in which students develop stereotypes related to patriarchal ideology. Traditional social structure is influential in students' developing these judgments and stereotypes emerge regarding sexuality and spouse choice, domestic division of labor, use of space, choice of jobs and the gender of social work.

Sexuality and Spouse Choices

Both male and female students had difficulty discussing sexuality during the focus group meetings, but male students more easily spoke about sexuality than female students. Student participants expressed the view that sexuality was a natural need for male students and was linked to love and trust for female students. In line with the views on sexuality, while women's clothing, adaptation to men's family and virginity were important criteria for male students, emotional sharing, complementing and improving each other were more important for female students.

For me sexuality is linked to love and trust. (female)

For men, it is families' idea that men should have a pre-marriage relationship. Men start to learn sexuality in their teens. We learned that sexuality is something to buy and sell. (male)

Moreover, male students pointed out that sexuality for men is an area where they should be experienced. In this context, participants stated that men go to specific places to learn sexuality. They rejected women's ability to have premarital sexual experiences and viewed it negatively while choosing their spouses. Ilkkaracan and Seral (2000) state that while virginity was perceived as an important value and responsibility for women and their families, on the other hand having a premarital sexual relationship is seen as the indicator of masculinity. When choosing spouses virginity is such an important issue that male students indicated that they would share women's state of being virgin with their families. Thus, the family functions as a system which controls women's bodies (Ilkkaracan, 2001).

…I would not marry a woman who had a premarital sexual relationship. There is a social pressure about this issue. If men do that they are called graceless, if women do the same, they are called corrupt. I would tell my family that my wife is not virgin. (male)

Virginity is important. I am against premarital sex. Flirtation may happen but sexuality should not. This is something unforgivable. Men also cannot do this. This is something that depends on everyone's own choice. I experience sexuality whenever I marry. (male)

Moreover, especially the institution of religion was addressed as a reference

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for the discussions of sexuality. Another interesting observation about spouse choice is that while religious women do not refer to religion in choosing their husbands, religious men prefer believing religious women. Behind this, it is thought that men perceive religion as a mechanism in controlling women. Similarly Ilkkaracan (2001:11) stated that religion and traditions in Turkey are used to control women's sexuality.

> There is the mention of adultery in religion; if it was not emphasized severely, that would not happen that much. (male)

> Religion is also something that limits and prevents women to become equal with men. (female)

> It is (premarital sex) something perceived as sin in terms of traditional conservative thought or religion for both men and women but the society has a more negative image for women. (female)

While sexuality is thought of being men's power area, it is at the same time discussed as the performance arena for men in which they should prove themselves.

> His boss said I would bring him to the school (brothel). There is the possibility of being unsuccessful there, there are things waiting for you outside. What a difficult situation.(male)

While men stated that they choose to marry women who are younger and less-educated, women stated that they choose to marry men who have higher status and are cleverer.

> My wife should be smaller than me; she should not be cleverer than I am. (male)

> He should be trustable and clever. I want him to be powerful, I should feel like I am on the pavement. (female)

Even though it is discussed that sexuality can be experienced only after marriage due to social pressures, indeed marriage is stated as an institution which satisfies the sexual needs of men regularly. Even, domestic rape is taken within this context.

> Marriage is an institution in which you can satisfy your sexual needs. I learned about domestic rape here at school. They call it as a sin if a woman rejects you. (male)

> There are obligations and if these do not happen, it cannot be called rape, but I am not totally sure. If it is a forced marriage, may be but if marriage is a voluntary one, it should not be, but I am not sure. At a point they do not accept, they should break up. (male)

This research has shown that sexuality appears as a field in which rules are determined by men, men have power and determine how women should behave. This is the indicator of social work students' sexist approaches.

Domestic division of labor

While male students who live separately from their families stated that they could do everything at home, those who live with their families stated that domestic works are for women. Domestic tasks are evaluated as those that should be done by men only if

their wives work or if a man lives alone, which are already the "compulsory conditions".

> The roles of working parents are different than the families where mothers do not work. In my opinion, in both home and business life, men and women should share equal roles. (female)

> If a woman prefers to stay at home instead of working outside, she should not take offense at doing domestic tasks. (female)

> Cleaning, washing dishes, cooking… we do everything. We, three boys stay at home and do everything. I dream of marrying, there is a need for a woman. (male)

> If we are both working, there should be sharing among us in terms of domestic tasks. (male)

However, in terms of family decision-making, both male and female participants who pointed out that woman have a secret power or cunningness to sway the decision. This issue can be evaluated within the framework of "patriarchal bargaining" (Connell, 1987; Kandiyoti, 2007) which is developed by women as a coping strategy against patriarchal ideology.

It was observed that the stereotypes of students about gender roles are produced mainly by traditional social structure they live in and its institutions like family and religion; and reinforced within this structure.

Gendered Space

Student participants demonstrated their gender differences regarding space usage in the warming-up game played in the beginning of the focus groups. Spaces included dangerous spaces for women while they were not mentioned by the men.

The participants distinguished between male and female spaces and women cannot use some of the male spaces at nights. In Boratav's (2002) research too, it was pointed out that use of some of the public spaces are limited during the evening hours for women.

> There are dangerous spaces for women. (male)

> Entertainment areas are different. (male)

> It is different to stay outside until late. It is different for female students to go to an urban university, they are either under permanent control or called back home. (male)

> There is social pressure for sure; the places you live are different. It is separated as female-male-family. (male)

Age was another important element governing space considerations for men. Especially after the age of 18, it was stated that there are no social pressures over the space usage of males.

> After 18, you start to become a total man, but nothing changes until you start to study at the university… You must be 18 for a driving license, for alcohol the same; the age of 18 is a turning point for a man. (male)

Job Choices

Students who participated in the research pointed out that biological

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difference are influential in choosing jobs. They defined jobs as "male" and "female" professions due to the biological differences. For example, students thought that professions which are carried out by men require physical power and defined "engineering", "driving" and "mining" as male professions.

> There are differences in terms of physical power but there is no difference in jobs which require intelligence. When I say physical power, I mean heavy jobs like mining, etc. (female)

> Society distinguishes between female jobs and male jobs. (male)

> Women cannot be drivers. (male)

> Really, it seems to be difficult for a woman to choose construction engineering as a job. Both in terms of power and of how she will be going out for the field these questions come to one's mind. (male)

In terms of employment opportunities, male students think that biological differences of women have may turn into advantages in some cases and into the disadvantages in other cases. For example, while male students think that physical features of women like "pregnancy, period, and menopause" may turn into disadvantages, they also think that sexual attractiveness, esthetic may turn into advantages for them.

> Physical attractiveness and sex appeal of women may turn into advantages in business life. (male)

> I work at a hospital. Two nurses got maternity leave. People here could not use their leave because of these two people. They are neither right nor wrong but I have prejudices about this. (male)

> If a man and a woman both apply for a job and if the man completed his compulsory military service, the man is hired because maternity leave make the conditions harder for the company. (male)

The participants expressed that gender roles that are attributed to women and men resulted in the view that there are professions which are more appropriate for women or men. The choice of these professions is influenced by some of the limitations of women like not being to travel freely or independently in all situations. At the same time, gender roles result in the exclusion of women from specific fields such as technology or engineering. This is explained by Connell (1987:141) in that technology is defined as the power arena of men and the accumulation of richness is kept within the hands of men. Kulic (2002:59) points out that defining professions as men and women professions and not questioning them contributes to the reproduction of this sexist division of labour.

Gender of the Social Work Profession

On the issue of whether social work has a gender or not, those who think that the gender of the profession is woman and those who think that it is sexless constitute two different categories. Especially, it was observed that the sexist perspectives of male students while choosing professions reflected upon their thoughts about the gender of the social work profession. Male students think that due to the "positive" features

which socially do not fit men like "being emotional, communicative, good listener, detail-addicted", women can be better social workers. On the other hand, male students think that since they do not have these "positive" features they prefer to "work as managers, advocacy workers and project workers". Men's definition of women's professional functions with "positive" features shows that they are still in an understanding that pushes women back to the private sphere and that the controlling power is seen as men's job.

> There are spaces where women can work more successfully. Women can do better in the fields of social services. A male can more easily open himself to a female expert. (male)

> Social work is a female job. Women think in a more emotional way. (male)

> A woman (social worker) is more sensitive. (female)

Besides, participants said that religious belief and personality of a social worker affect the professional work and that personality is an important factor for being a good social worker.

> A female social worker can be religious, be insensitive to domestic rape, may ask a woman why she rejected her husband. (female)

> There is no gender for the profession of social work. It is based on personality. You can do it if your personality is powerful, you cannot do it if you are powerless. Men and women can do it. (male)

Some student participants pointed out that gender is not a determinant for working in the fields of social services. In the case of developing a humanitarian sensitivity by social work education and of taking professional ethical values as the basis, they stated this kind of a distinction is eliminated. But the issue is not discussed within the framework of gender roles in any of the groups. This supports the contention that social work curriculum is gender-neutral (Dominelli, 2002) and gender-blind (Bentley, Valentine and Haskett, 1999; Leung, 2007).

> Both male and female social workers should have the same sensitivity. Together with education, both sexes can become sensitive. There are professional ethical values. Men can do the necessary things with knowledge, ethics and skills. (male)

Suggestions Regarding the Transformation of Stereotypes on Gender

Student participants emphasized the importance of four points of the socialization to achieve the transformation of gender stereotypes. Those are socialization process, education, the legal system and women's organizations which work for women's rights.

> Socialization process is important and it is important to educate both men and women. (male)

> There is a book about topics that were taught to women about pre–1945 and post–1945. Women are accepted "female" roles and men are accepted "male" roles. This has

> to change. For example, it is as if women are in the kitchen and men read newspaper. (female)

The importance of the socialization process is that it is emphasized by addressing family and business life. For example, men can be taught domestic tasks.

> They are the learned roles. Normally, girls are directed towards the home works more. Boys are protected by their mothers in this issue. It is the same from the angle of professions: For instance, if a girl wants to learn engineering and become an engineer, someone tries to prevent it. It is perceived negatively. (female)

Students think that the re-construction of domestic and external roles of women for women would empower them and realize men-women equality.

> Women should also do men's jobs. When my mother goes out the bank, she does not know what to do; she cannot proceed with the bills. My father sees this as a power for himself. My mother has the fear of what to do when my father is not around. (female)

> Unless caring and feeding roles end, equality will not be realized. The way to equality goes through changing the roles. (female)

> The moment when a woman enters into gender roles is the marriage point. This starts with taking the surname of the man. From this point on, she starts to take the burden of gender roles. The woman gives birth to the child, and marriage is the package of the traditional roles. The woman even chooses the goods for

> the house. Instead of changing the role of woman in the mind of the man, there is a need for changing the roles within "marriage". Unless these roles change, diversity will not be achieved. (female)

Student participants emphasized that to change the patriarchal structure and gender roles, university education and the legal system are important. They also said that equality between the sexes remain in the theoretical level, and as for the practice, the sexes and the gender sensitivities of the legal system reflect the implementation of the laws. They questioned the impartiality of the legal system argued that the continuity of the patriarchal social order is maintained in part by it.

> Judges are also educated but they do not have gender sensitivity. They don't appropriately prosecute honor killings. (female)

Participants said that university education is influential for the questioning of gender roles.

> Fathers are always in the back in terms of the homework, indeed they should be equal, I learned this at the university and now I started to realize this, I work. (male)

> We understand only at the university why we are oppressed. Women who study at the university do not accept men's sovereignty. They have jobs. (female)

While students found it positive that gender issues are questioned during social work education, they also emphasized its insufficiency.

I took a gender course. I am well-aware of this issue. The perception of society is important for me, there is a patriarchal society. Women are in the second plan. (male)

As for the solution of the equality problem, the participants stated that men and women should resist gender roles being imposed by society and especially women should struggle for change.

> Ataturk (the founder of the republic) made women be in the front position by destroying the traditional taboos in Turkey. He tried to create change for women. But since women are not enterprising, they are at the backstage and are not equal. In my view, women in Europe struggle more than we do for equality. (female)

> There is no sharing. Men are those who get service, women are those who provide service. The standing of women is important; women should also put pressure on men. These are the things the society provides and impose. (female)

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Being a female is a difficult position in Turkey as stated by both male and female students. Social pressure on women aims to control women and obstructs them to live their lives independently. The students stress the constraints on clothing that women should not wear attractive clothes. The restricting practice of Islam on women's clothing was also expressed as a tool to control women's life. The other mention was on the limits on women's use of public spaces. These restrictions show that the visibility and so the presence of women is controlled by society in order to subordinate women.

Stereotypes about females and males are found present in terms of having different emotional structures, personal features and problem solving skills. Men are portrayed as rational, strong in emotional sense, active in social life and free to use nearly all public spaces. Correlatively men's leading role is accepted on the base of power of men. The stereotypes about females are presented as opposites of males' in accordance with patriarchal ideology. Women are presented as powerless, excessively emotional and detail-addiction which disable them to be powerful in social life. This view serves to reproduce and maintain the power of men and subordination of women. The stereotypes regarding sexuality and spouse choice based on virginity of women, division of labour at home and choice of professions are found to be fed by family relations, religious beliefs and business life.

Student participants emphasize the role of socialization process of males and females, the university education system, legal system and women's organization which struggle against gender inequality in order to transform stereotypes about the gender.

In undertaking this research we have found that students take the traditional social structure as a reference point while learning and reinforcing gender roles and stereotypes. We hypothesize that taking the traditional social structure as the reference point is enhanced by and is in line with the rise of conservative orientation in Turkey since the 1990's. Moreover, the facts that

most of the students who participated in the research have a socio-cultural origin based on a traditional structure and that they accept this structure it is normal that there is an important emphasis place on this structure. The traditional welfare regime in Turkey imposes the solution of every social problem within families or by the families, in other words within the private sphere. Thus, social services in Turkey have become possible only in areas which are deemed necessary. Besides, women are not considered individuals but are perceived to be the actors of the families. This has caused a lack of services given to women.

Apart from the traditional structure, another reason why students cannot develop sensitivity about gender is because of social work education itself. Focusing on harmony and protection instead of change within social work education is the biggest barrier in front of students' obtaining a critical view. Indeed, students suggested that women should realize harmony to the system by using their sexuality, femininity and intelligence for the problems they experience. Attributing the responsibility for social change to women results in ignoring the need for transformation of masculinity. Students cannot analyze gender within the framework of power and oppression mechanisms that are linked to the traditional structure and thus their predictions about change are limited to education and socialization.

Orme (2003) in this issue states that women are seen as the victims of the oppression within the social work education and that there is insufficiency in their definition of how the power operates. Leung (2007) discusses the fact

that the social work curriculum should be re-produced with non-sexist point of view and mentions two important limitations to the improvement of a social work curriculum that is sensitive to gender. Those are the dominant traditional structure and the non-existence of optional courses on gender expertise. Indeed, as a result of this research, we found that two students who attended optional gender courses focused on the issue from a more critical perspective.

Researchers who touch upon the fact that social work education is gender-blind (Orme, 2002; Orme; 2003; Dominelli, 2002) find the solution of the problem to be inclusion of feminism to the social work curriculum. This is because feminist social work does not only focus on women's problems, but it also provides an important ground to analyze the value system, information basis and the roles and responsibilities of social work profession, with a critical point of view against the structural inequality in the society (Dominelli, 2002; Leung, 2007). Orme argues that in order for a feminist social work theory to be developed, students should notice that social work disproportionately intervenes in the lives of women and that this intervention constructs the roles and responsibilities expected from women in a sexist way. The internalization of the traditional gender roles and stereotypes of the students may result in the structuring of the practice in a sexist way. Because of this reason, there is a need for freeing policies that consider structural factors that do not limit women with the private sphere instead of policies which put the burden of the responsibility of change on women. The

anti-sexist emphasis in social work education should become mainstreaming.

FURTHER RESEARCH

Further research to be conducted, will use mixed methodology. The longitudinal research which focuses upon the overall education process and the discussion of the topic in groups which have different combinations for men and women will let us understand the different sides of the subject. The themes of family and religion can be taken into consideration as the subjects of different researches.

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