



Examining The Relationship Between University Students' Attitudes Towards Gender Relations and Their Communication Skills

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ABSTRACT

This research aimed to examine the relationship between attitudes towards gender relations and university students' communication skills in the sports sciences department regarding some socio-demographic questions. The research method is quantitative research; it is designed as a relational survey and causal comparison model. The questionnaire technique was preferred as the data collection method, and the data were collected voluntarily. The population of the study consisted of students studying at the Schools of Physical Education and Sports (Sports Sciences) at Istanbul Gelisim University, Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa, and Istanbul Rumeli University in the 2022-2023 academic year, and the sample group consisted of (449) volunteer participants determined by convenience sampling method. Gender Roles Attitude Scale and Communication Skills Assessment Scale were applied to the participants. The data were transferred to IBS SPSS 25.0 package programme and Independent Samples t-Test, correlation and regression analyses were applied as statistical analysis. As a result, it was determined that there was a statistically significant positive correlation between the gender role attitude of students studying in the field of Sport Sciences and the evaluation of communication skills. Moreover, a significant difference was found in favour of girls in their perception of communication skills according to gender variables. Another result of the study was that the perceptions of communication skills did not create a significant difference according to the variable of doing sports regularly. The results of the study were important in terms of revealing the views of sports sciences students on gender and also in terms of understanding the effect of students' attitudes towards gender on their communication skills.

Keywords: *Gender Relations, Communication Skills*

INTRODUCTION

As social beings, human beings need to communicate with other people from the moment they are born. Based on this need, a process occurs in which interpersonal messages are sent and received and various conclusions are drawn by interpreting and giving meaning to these

messages. This process called "communication" creates some behavioural patterns in people's lives and affects both their personal and social lives cognitively and emotionally. (Ersanlı and Balci, 2006).

While effective and healthy communication positively affects both private and working life, ineffective communication creates many problems in interpersonal and social life (Johnson, 1996). In other words, the importance of having a healthy and efficient communication level in human life is considered important. In order for healthy and efficient communication to be realised, it is important for the individual must direct person to be open in communication as well as the respect, empathy, speaking and listening skills he/she shows towards the interlocutor or interlocutors. It is also known that effective listening and effective responding (sensitivity to verbal and non-verbal messages) skills are necessary for healthy and efficient communication (Baker & Shaw, 1987; Egan, 2002; Gibson & Mitchell, 1995, Karaca and Ilkim 2021).

Although there is an understanding of communication skills as an inherent and intuitive phenomenon, many studies show that these skills can be learnt and developed later (Aspegren, 1999; Buckman, 2001; Verdener, 1999, Duyan et al. 2022). From a macro perspective, the fact that communication skills can be learnt and developed necessitates the existence of a social ground where these skills are acquired. The social basis of each society is unique and different from each other. Cultural patterns, which are determinants in every phenomenon related to social life, also contain features that differentiate societies from each other. The historical conditions, physical and environmental factors experienced by society, as well as the traditions and customs that regulate social life, lead individuals in that society to adopt certain rituals and develop behavioural patterns. Similarly, Benedict (2011) emphasises that the shaping of the functions of individuals in their lives based on social differences is related to the cultural structure to which they belong. In this context, it would not be wrong to say that communication, which serves as a vital function and is one of the most important parts of culture, is shaped according to the cultural structure and communication skills may differ from society to society. Besides, considering the physical and psychological conditions, personality traits and

experiences in daily life that differentiate people from each other, communication can be different even among people who share a common social life in terms of skills (Korkut, 2005). In this context, gender is considered as one of the factors affecting the communication skills of individuals involved in the process of communicating and is accepted as an important variable in communication (Gümüßsuyu et al., 2008:242; Gürgen, 1997:132). According to Dökmen (2004), gender is a social phenomenon that shapes the whole life of the individual beyond being a biological phenomenon in social life. From the moment of their birth, individuals are expected to adopt and display behaviours and roles following the value judgements, traditions and rituals of the society they live in. In other words, the individual is expected to behave and live according to certain roles, responsibilities and stereotypes legitimised for men and women in all areas surrounding social life such as family, school, professional and social environment. The concept of gender, which is used to express this situation, refers to a set of cultural expectations, values and behavioural patterns that shape the lives of females and males. Gender-specific norms are culturally constructed and learned and internalised within the socialisation process. (Dökmen, 2004; Kandiyotti, 1978). Gender refers to how women and men are perceived in social organisation and cover the status, roles and responsibilities of both in society. It also emphasises how differences between men and women are constructed at the social level in relation to social class, modes of production and patriarchy (Marshall, 1999). For example, in traditional assumptions legitimised by gender, women are positioned as weak and needing to be protected due to their productive role and the maternal nature arising from this role and are associated with the private sphere of the family. On the other hand, the man is associated with the public sphere in the masculine role and is defined by the concepts of status and power (Arat, 2010: 34). This situation causes women to be positioned in a secondary position in the hierarchical order of the social system. This is because men are defined by the concepts of status and power and the masculine role is associated with the public sphere (Arat, 2010: 34).

Considering that gender is socially constructive for men and women, it is possible to say that communication, which is a process of mutual meaning construction, cannot be shaped independently of these roles. Although there are also contrary opinions (Nikbakhsh et al., 2013; Sullivan, P. 2004), most of the studies on communication skills show that women and men have different communication skills and that there is a significant difference in favour of women in terms of skills (Black, 2000). In addition, the findings of many studies show that women and men use different languages and attach importance to different communication elements in the communication process (Gümüşsuyu et al., 2008: 242). It is seen that women are more inclined to use body language in communication by clearly reflecting their feelings, experiences and opinions and to empathise more than men (Croskey et al., 1971; Wood, 2011: 128-129), and that they initiate communication more to create connection and sincerity, while men initiate communication more to reflect their status and power and are not as prone to use body language as women (Göktaş & Çarıkçı, 2015). Therefore, it is understood that the ways women and men's purposes communicate differed from each other. Hasbrook and Harris (1999) stated in their study that gender identities have the functions of directing communication and affecting the communication skill level of individuals. In another study, it is stated that stereotypes related to gender identity are associated with gender roles and this situation is one of the factors that prevent the interpersonal communication process (Ünlü, 2019). In many studies, the reasons why individuals differ in communication skills are explained by gender roles (Tannen 1995). From this point of view, it would not be wrong to say that perceptions and assumptions about gender affect the body language of individuals in the process of communicating and that the ways and purposes of communicating are related to gender identities.

METHOD

In this section, the research model, population and sample, data collection tools and data analysis sections were given.

Research Model

In the study, the relational survey model, which is a research model that aims to determine the presence and degree of change of more than one variable together (Karasar, 2017), and the causal comparison method, which is a survey model that aims to determine the causes of an event or an event that occurs naturally/spontaneously and the variables affecting these causes (Büyüköztürk et al. 2008), are used. The questionnaire technique was preferred as the data collection method, and the data were collected from the participants online as voluntary. A descriptive information form, gender roles attitude scale and communication skills assessment scale were applied to the participants.

Universe and Sample

Following the aim of the study; the population of the study consisted of the students of the School of Physical Education and Sports (Sports Sciences) at Istanbul Gelisim University, Istanbul University-Cerrahpaşa, and Istanbul Rumeli Universities. The sampling method used is the convenience sampling method which allows the results to be obtained easily and quickly (Yazıcıoğlu & Erdoğan, 2004). The sample of the research consisted of (n=449) volunteer participants.

Data Collection Tools

The descriptive information form was prepared to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants, as well as the gender roles attitude and communication skills assessment (CSAS) scale described in this section.

Descriptive Information Form

Participants were asked to answer 5 questions including the variables of gender, age, class, marital status and their daily sports activities.

Gender Roles Attitude Scale

The Gender Roles Attitude Scale was developed by Zeyneloğlu in 2008 to determine the attitudes of university students towards gender roles. The Gender Roles Attitude Scale, which consisted of 38 items in total, was scored between 0-5. The

scale was scored in such a way that students receive "5" points if they strongly agree, "4" points if they agree, "3" points if they were undecided, "2" points if they disagree, and "1" point if they strongly disagree with the egalitarian attitude statements about gender roles. The traditional attitude statements regarding gender roles were scored in the opposite way to the above-mentioned scoring; students received "1" point if they strongly agreed, "2" points if they agreed, "3" points if they were undecided, "4" points if they disagreed, and "5" points if they strongly disagreed. With this scoring method, the highest score that could be obtained from the scale was calculated as 190 and the lowest score was calculated as 38. The highest value obtained from the scale showed that the student had an egalitarian attitude towards gender roles, while the lowest value showed that the student had a traditional attitude towards gender roles. Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Coefficient of the Gender Roles Attitude Scale was found as "0.92" for 38 items. This result shows that the scale items had high internal consistency and high reliability (Zeyneloğlu & Terzioğlu, 2011).

Communication Skills Assessment Scale

The Communication Skills Assessment Scale was a 5-point Likert-type scale developed by

Korkut (1996) to understand how individuals evaluate their communication skills and rated from "always" to "never". The scale consisted of a total of 25 items, the highest score that can be obtained was 125 and the lowest score was 25. A high score reflects that individuals evaluate their communication skills positively. The validity and reliability studies of the scale were conducted by the same person and the alpha internal consistency coefficient was found to be 0.80.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the descriptive information form, gender roles attitude scale and communication skills assessment scale were analysed using the IBM SPSS 25.0 package programme. The normal distribution of the scores was examined by examining normal distribution curves, Skewness-Kurtosis (skewness-skewness) values, normal distribution curves through histograms and Kolmogorov-Smirnov test values used in cases where the group size was greater than 50. It was determined that the data in general and sub-dimensions of the scales showed normal distribution. Correlation and Regression analyses were used as statistical procedures.

TABLE 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

		Frequency	%
Gender	Male	179	39,9
	Female	270	60,1
	Total	449	100,0
Age	18-20	327	72,8
	21-23	62	13,8
	24 and older	60	13,4
	Total	449	100,0
Grade	1.grade	62	13,8
	2.grade	213	47,4
	3.grade	144	32,1
	4.grade	30	6,7
	Total	449	100,0
Marital Status	Single	435	96,9
	Married	14	3,1
	Total	449	100,0
	1-2 days	130	29,0

How many days a week do you exercise?	3-4 days	175	67,9
	5 days and more	144	32,1
	Total	449	100,0

Table 1 showed that 60.1% of the participants were female, 39.9% were male, 72.8% were 18-20 years old, 13.8% were 21-23 years old, and 13.4% were 24 years old. Moreover, 13.8% of the participants were in the first grade, 47.4% were in the second grade, 32.1% were in the third

grade and 6.7% were in the fourth grade. It was seen that 96,9% were single, 3,1% were married, 29,0% exercised 1-2 days a week, 39,0% exercised 3-4 days a week, and 32,1% exercised 5 or more days a week.

TABLE 2: Skewness, Kurtosis and Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test Significance Level Results of Scale Scores

	Subscales	N	Skewness	Kurtosis	P
. Gender Roles Attitude Scale	Egalitarian gender roles	449	-,968	,811	,000
	Female gender roles	449	,382	,450	,000
	Marriage gender roles	449	1,026	1,314	,000
	Traditional gender roles	449	,895	,793	,000
	Male gender roles	449	1,389	2,149	,000
	Gender roles scale total	449	-,762	,862	,000
Communication Skills Scale	Communication Scale total	449	-,517	,234	,000

p<,050*; p<,001**

When the results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test in Table 2 were analysed, it was determined that there were no deviations from normality in the scores obtained from the scales. The application of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov analysis was only one of the analyses performed to determine whether the data were normally distributed. When the normal distribution curves were analysed, it was determined that there were no deviations from normality. Büyüköztürk (2018) explains that if the skewness kurtosis values of the variables are within the range of ± 1 ,

the data will show normal distribution, while Tabachnick and Fidell (2013) state that if the skewness kurtosis coefficients of the variables are between ± 1.5 , the data will show normal distribution. According to Jondeau and Rockinger (2003), when the skewness and kurtosis coefficients of the sub-dimensions vary between +3 and -3, it is stated that these sub-dimensions have conditions suitable for normal distribution parameters. As a result, the data show normal distribution.

RESULTS

TABLE 3: Descriptive Analysis of Participants' Answers to the Scales

	Subscales	N	Min	Max	X±Sd
Gender roles scale	Egalitarian gender roles	449	1,00	5,00	4,2993±,77556
	Female gender roles	449	1,50	4,00	2,7617±,41691
	Marriage gender roles	449	1,00	4,00	1,6768±,35268
	Traditional gender roles	449	1,00	4,75	2,1036±,73258

	Male gender roles	449	1,00	4,00	1,5857±,64546
	Gender roles scale total	449	1,00	4,00	3,974±,8568
Communication Skills Scale	Communication Scale Total	449	2,64	4,84	4,008±,4254

When table 3 was examined, the participants' gender roles attitude scale, the egalitarian gender role sub-dimension score was 4,2993±,77556, the female gender role sub-dimension score was 2,7617±,41691, the gender role in marriage sub-dimension score was 1,6768±,35268, the

traditional gender role sub-dimension score was 2,1036±,73258, the male gender role sub-dimension score was 1,5857±,64546, the total gender roles attitude scale score was 3,974±,8568 and the total communication skills scale score was 4,008±,4254.

TABLE 4: Comparison of the participants' scores from the scales according to their gender

		N	X	Sd	t	p
Egalitarian gender roles	Male	179	4,363	,708	,824	,652
	Female	270	4,303	,773		
Female Gender Roles	Male	179	2,633	,380	-5,002	,258
	Female	270	2,822	,398		
Marriage Gender roles	Male	179	1,573	,181	-5,013	,000
	Female	270	1,675	,229		
Traditional Gender roles	Male	179	1,692	,434	-10,365	,000
	Female	270	2,316	,723		
Male gender roles	Male	179	1,319	,414	-6,964	,000
	Female	270	1,692	,631		
Gender roles attitudes scale total	Male	179	3,994	,768	,022	,345
	Female	270	3,992	,900		
Communication Skills Scale total	Male	179	4,029	,400	,311	,789
	Female	270	4,016	,429		

When the results of the Independent Sample t-Test were conducted to determine the gender roles attitude, egalitarian gender role, female gender role, marriage gender role, traditional gender role, male gender role, gender roles attitude total score and communication skills evaluation levels of the participants according to

gender variable were examined in Table 4, a statistically significant difference was found at the level of female marriage gender role, traditional gender role and male gender role. When the rank means were analysed, these differences were significant in the favour of women ($p < 0.05$).

TABLE 5: The Relationship between Gender Roles Attitude and Communication Skills

	Egalitarian Gender Role	Female gender role	Marriage gender role	Traditional gender role	Male gender role	Gender Roles Attitude Scale
r	,529**	-,026	-,147**	-,086**	-,165**	,477**

Communication Skills Scale	p	,000	,586	,002	,070	,000	,000
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p<,050*; p<,001**

In Table 5, a moderate positive relationship was determined between gender roles attitude, egalitarian gender role sub-dimension and communication skills (r=,529; p=,000), female gender role sub-dimension and communication skills (r=,026; p=,586), marital gender role sub-dimension and communication skills (r=,147; p=,002). Moreover, there was a moderate

positive relationship between the traditional gender role sub-dimension and communication skills (r=,086; p=,070), between the male gender role sub-dimension and communication skills (r=,165; p=,000), and between the total score of the gender roles attitude scale and the total score of the communication skills scale (r=,477; p=,000).

TABLE 6: Regression Analysis on the Prediction of Gender Roles Attitude and Communication Skill Level

	B	Standard Error B	β	T	p	
Egalitarian Gender Role	,287	,099	,515	12,687	,000**	R= ,515 R2=, 0,26 F (1,448) =160,950
Communication Skills Scale	2,779	,023		27,956	,000	
	B	Standard Error B	β	T	p	
Female Gender Role	0,23	,49	,023	,478	,633	R= ,023 R2=, 001 F (1,448) =,228
Communication Skills Scale	3,957	,136		29,019	,002	
	B	Standard Error B	β	T	p	
Marriage gender role	-,305	,090	-,158	-3,391	,001**	R= ,158 R2=, 025 F (1,448) =11,498
Communication Skills Scale	45,20	,148		30,495	,000	
	B	Standard Error B	β	T	p	
Traditional gender role	4,127	,118	-,084	-1,793	,074	R= ,084 R2= ,007 F (1,448) =3,214
Communication Skills Scale	,362	,039		9,170	,000	
	B	Standard Error B	β	T	p	
Male gender role	-,126	,033	-,176	-3,774	,000**	R= ,176 R2= ,031 F (1,448) =14,246
Communication Skills Scale	4,216	,055		76,703	,000	
	B	Standard Error B	β	T	p	
Gender Roles attitude	,232	,021	,471	11,280	,000**	R= ,471 R2= ,22 F (1,448) =127,240
Communication Skills Scale	3,097	,084		36,958	,000	

p<,050*; p<,001**

When Table 6 was analysed, a significant relationship was detected between gender roles attitude, egalitarian gender roles and communication skills ($R=,515$; $R^2=,265$; $p<,000$). With a standardised regression coefficient value of ($\beta=,515$; $t=12,687$, $p=,000$, egalitarian gender role positively affected communication skills. The $R^2=,026$ value determined as a result of the statistical analysis reveals that egalitarian gender roles explain approximately 26% of communication skills. There was no significant relationship between female gender roles and communication skills ($R=,023$; $R^2=,001$; $p<,633$). With a standardised regression coefficient ($\beta=,023$; $t=,478$, $p=,002^*$, it was determined that female gender roles positively affected communication skills. The $R^2=,001$ value determined as a result of the statistical analysis reveals that the female gender role explains approximately 1% of communication skills. A significant relationship was detected between marriage gender roles and communication skills ($R=,158$; $R^2=,025$; $p<,001^{**}$). With the values of the standardised regression coefficient ($\beta=-,158$; $t=-3,391$ $p=,001^*$, it was determined that marriage gender role positively affects communication skills. The $R^2=,025$ value determined as a result of the statistical analysis reveals that gender roles in marriage explain approximately 2% of communication skills. No significant relationship was detected between traditional gender roles and communication skills ($R=,084$; $R^2=,007$; $p<,074^{**}$). With the values of the standardised regression coefficient ($\beta=-,084$; $t=23,823$ $p=,000^*$, it was determined that traditional gender roles positively affect communication skills. The $R^2=,007$ value determined as a result of the statistical analysis reveals that traditional gender roles explain approximately 7% of communication skills. A significant relationship between male gender roles and communication skills ($R=,176$; $R^2=,031$; $p<,000^{**}$). With the standardised regression coefficient ($\beta=-,176$; $t=3,774$ $p=,000^*$, it was determined that male gender role positively affects communication skills. The $R^2=,031$ value determined as a result of the statistical analysis reveals that it explains approximately 3% of male gender role communication skills. A significant relationship

between was detected the total score of gender roles attitude and the total score of communication skills ($R=,471$; $R^2=,022$; $p<,000^{**}$). With the values of the standardised regression coefficient ($\beta=,471$; $t=11,280$ $p=,000^*$, it was determined that the total score of gender roles attitude positively affected the total score of communication skills. The $R^2=,022$ value determined as a result of the statistical analysis reveals that it explains approximately 2% of male gender role communication skills.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

When the gender roles attitudes of the participants were analysed according to gender variable, a statistically significant difference was determined at the level of female gender roles, gender roles in marriage, traditional gender roles and male gender roles. When the rank means were analysed, these differences were significant in the favour of women ($p<0.05$). As a reason for this situation, it can be said that women can express their emotions such as happiness, sadness and joy to the other party through communication compared to men in the culture we live in. In a study conducted by Tepeköylü et al. (2009), the communication skill perceptions of the students of the School of Physical Education and Sports were examined in terms of some variables and while a significant difference was found in favour of girls according to gender variable, it was determined that there was no significant difference according to the variables of parental education level, total monthly income level of the family, whether they were regularly interested in any sports branch and the residential centre where they lived. In a similar study, the communication skills of athletes and sedentary individuals were examined according to different variables and it was found that the mental and behavioural communication skills of athletes were significantly higher than sedentary individuals, while the emotional communication skills of sedentary individuals were higher than athletes (Arıcan, 2021). According to another study, Gökçe (2022), in a master's thesis study on teachers, found that the total score and sub-dimensions of gender roles were statistically significant and when considering the rank means,

it was determined that the significance was in the favour of women. The results of the study were similar to the results of our study. In another study, Sönmez (2022) conducted a study on unmarried young individuals and found that the gender role attitudes of young individuals differed statistically significantly according to gender. This significance was in the direction of women. The results of the study were in parallel with the results of our study. There were similar results in other studies (Aşılı, 2001).

When the evaluation of the communication skills of the participants according to gender variable was analysed, it was determined that no statistically significant difference was found in the level of the Communication skills assessment scale (CSAS). When the rank means were analysed, it was seen that women's scores were higher than male participants. As a result of this situation, it was thought that there was no difference between the communication levels of males and females, only that females were able to communicate slightly better than males. When the literature was examined, Kaya (2021) found that there was no statistically significant difference in communication skills according to gender variables in a doctoral thesis on referees. It was also emphasised that female scores were higher than male scores. The result of the study was parallel with the result of our study. When another study was examined, Tüfekçi et al. (2016) found that there was no statistically significant difference in their study on leaders in youth camps. The result of the study was similar to the result of our study. As a similar result, in the studies of Kıssal et al. (2016), Ceyhun and Malkoç (2015), Yanık (2015), Saracaloğlu et al. (2009), Bingöl and Demir (2011), communication skills scores did not differ between girls and boys. These results are compatible with our research results.

A moderate positive relationship was detected between gender roles attitude, egalitarian gender role subscale and communication skills ($r=,529$; $p=,000$), female gender role sub-dimension and communication skills ($r=-,026$; $p=,586$), marriage gender role sub-dimension and communication skills ($r=-,147$; $p=,002$). Moreover, there was a moderate positive

relationship between the traditional gender role sub-dimension and communication skills ($r=-,086$; $p=,070$), between the male gender role sub-dimension and communication skills ($r=-,165$; $p=,000$), and between the total score of the gender roles attitude scale and the total score of the communication skills scale ($r=,477$; $p=,000$). As a result of this situation, it is an indication that communication skills are at a good level in society and this situation has a positive effect on the role concept in the lives of individuals. It is thought that as the egalitarian gender attitudes of young individuals increase, their communication skills increase and improve in parallel. When the literature is examined, Sönmez (2022) found a statistically significant difference in egalitarian gender role attitudes in a master's thesis on unmarried young individuals. Our results were similar to the findings of the study. In another study, Zhou and Kan (2021) conducted a study on young individuals in 24 countries and found that the egalitarian gender role was statistically significant. Our results are similar to the results of the study.

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