

**Original Article****The Effect of Gender Role Stress Levels of Female Students on Career Plans****Funda Tosun Guleroglu, PhD, RN**

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E-mail: efigenden@gmail.com**Abstract****Purpose:** This study aims to determine the relationship between gender role stress levels and career plans of female university students.**Design and Methods:** The cross-sectional research was conducted with 775 female university students.**Results:** The gender role stress of the students was found to be moderate ( $69.4 \pm 16.9$ ). Those who graduated from vocational high school, who could not freely make their career choice, and those who said that family and society were more effective in career choice, were significantly higher in gender role stress than other groups ( $p < 0.05$ ).**Conclusions:** It can be suggested that the education curriculum should be arranged in a way to reduce the gender role stress.**Keywords:** Gender Role, Stress, Career, Female Student**Introduction**

'Sex', which is a biological concept, reveals the genetic, biological, physiological characteristics and differences that a person displays as a woman or a man (Hyde et al, 2019) Another important factor in defining men and women is the definition of men and women according to the culture they live in (Kaya & Uysal, 2015). This definition generates the concept of gender. Gender, on the other hand, is the social, cultural and psychological characteristics related to be a man and a woman, especially considered in the social context (Lindsey, 2015). It contains many concepts within gender and one of these is gender roles (Arslan, 2015). Gender roles can be defined as sexist stereotypes, beliefs about behavior patterns that are assumed appropriate for women and men in society. The child is raised per the behavioral patterns required by his gender, depending on whether he is a boy or a girl from birth (Acuner, 2019).

Today, gender is one of the most important variables in working life. Gender-related issues

are among the important problems affecting career life, especially for women. When a woman tries to be involved in working life; they are pushed to work in professions that society deems appropriate for them, which are extensions of maternal and female duties; in a sense, they are forced (Bulut & Kızıldag, 2017). Aiming to advance in her career, the woman also undertakes many roles and responsibilities at home with the pressure of gender roles (Acuner, 2019). It is known that the responsibilities women have to bear are a source of stress on them and cause them to wear out. Gender roles can also be an element of pressure on women and it is thought that this pressure can be a source of stress for women (Koc et al, 2017).

Students of university education are organized programs in which they undergo training that can do their job according to their career plans (Cevher, 2015). However, studies show that gender inequality affects women more (Bal, 2016). However, dealing with the gender role tension that students encounter during their schooling is an important factor in career

planning. It can be seen that no studies are analyzing the relationship between female university students' gender role stress levels and their career plans in our country. Hence this study was conducted to explore the relationship between the gender role stress rates and career plans of female university students. It is believed that the results obtained from the study will allow the stress levels of female students studying at university to be reduced in gender roles, and appropriate interventions to develop career plans.

### Method

**Design and Participants:** This cross-sectional study was conducted between September and October 2018 at a university in a province in Central Anatolia in Turkey. The research

population consist of 3916 female students enrolled at the university in the 2018-2019 academic year. The sample size was determined as 775 female students with power analysis (95% confidence interval, 95% representation power of the universe and 0.05 alpha level) to represent the population sufficiently. The number of students to be recruited from faculties is determined by proportioning these schools' weight in the universe. Afterwards, the simple random sampling method was used to recruit a determined number of students from these schools. Inclusion criteria were determined as being a female student studying at the faculties of the university and accepting to participate in the study.

**Table 1. Studying in Faculties and Sampling Number of Female Students**

Grade	Number of female students	Grade weight	Number of female students to be included in the sample
Faculty of Economics	723	0.18	139
Faculty Of Sciences and Letters	1168	0.32	248
Faculty of Divinity	579	0.14	109
Faculty of Engineering	518	0.13	100
Faculty of Health Sciences	286	0.07	54
Faculty of Education	642	0.16	125

**Data Collection:** For the data collection, an information form questioning the socio-demographic characteristics and career plans of the students and FGRSS were used. Besides, the students who stated that being a woman makes it difficult to make a career plan, were asked the reason for this situation. Students were provided to fill in data forms individually.

The socio-demographic characteristics and career plans information form consists of 11 questions that inquire about the students' age, economic status, the department they are studying, grade point average, whether they have a career goal, people who affect their career plan, whether it is difficult to make a career plan and why.

Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale developed by Koc et al. (2017) consists of 20 items. This scale is a five-point Likert type scale graded as "Not stressful at all for me = 1 and Very stressful for me = 5". The score that can be obtained from the scale varies between 20 and 100. Increased rate shows that increased levels of stress. The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of the scale was determined as .926 (Koc et al., 2017).

**Analyses:** The data were evaluated in a computer environment. Shapiro-Wilk-w test was used to determine whether the data had a normal distribution and it was determined that the data showed normal distribution. Data were analyzed by using frequency, mean, Independent T-Test and One-Way Anova tests.

**Ethical considerations:** This study was conducted per the ethical standards of the Declaration of Helsinki. Written and verbal consent of the individuals in the study group was obtained. Application permission was obtained from the institution where the study would be performed, and approval was obtained from the University Social Sciences Ethics Committee (06.06.2018). It was emphasized that students voluntarily participate in the study.

## Results

The mean age of the students participating in the study is  $21.2 \pm 1.6$ , 55% of whom stated their economic situation as medium level. 40.5% of the research group was graduated from an Anatolian high school and 87% of them stated that they are satisfied with the department they are studying.

The distribution of the students' mean scores on the Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale (FGRSS) is shown in Table 2. It was determined that the

total score average of the students from the FGRSS was  $69.4 \pm 16.9$ .

The distribution of the mean FGRSS score of the students according to some variables is given in Table 3. Accordingly, it was determined that the mean FGRSS score of the students studying at vocational high schools was statistically significantly higher than the other groups ( $p < 0.05$ ) and there was no statistically significant relationship between the other variables and the mean FGRSS score ( $p > 0.05$ ) (Table 3).

The distribution of the mean FGRSS score of the students according to the variables related to career is given in Table 4. It was found that the mean FGRSS score of the students who cannot make their career plans freely and whose career plans are affected by the family and society are significantly higher than the other groups ( $p < 0.05$ ). Expressions of students who said that being a woman makes it difficult to make a career plan is given in Table 5.

**Table 2. Students' Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale (FGRSS) Mean Scores (n=775)**

	Mean $\pm$ S. Deviation	Min- Max
Total Score	$69.4 \pm 16.9$	20-100

**Table 3. Distribution of Students' Mean Feminine Gender Role Stress Scale (FGRSS) scores by Some Variables (n=775)**

	n	%	Mean $\pm$ sd	p
<b>Age</b> (Mean: $21.2 \pm 1.6$ )				
<20	123	15.9	$69.4 \pm 17.4$	0.097*
20-29	652	84.1	$69.3 \pm 16.8$	
<b>Economic Condition</b>				0.065*
Good	286	36.9	$67.6 \pm 18.0$	
Medium	425	55.0	$70.5 \pm 16.2$	
Poor	64	8.1	$70.5 \pm 16.1$	
<b>High School Type</b>				<b>0.017**</b>
Medical Vocational High School	25	3.2	$70.5 \pm 21.3$	
Regular High School	285	36.8	$70.7 \pm 14.8$	
Anatolian High School	314	40.5	$68.8 \pm 18.4$	
Science High School	20	2.6	$59.7 \pm 11.0$	
Religious Vocational High School	85	11.0	$66.9 \pm 14.3$	
Vocational High School	46	5.9	$73.7 \pm 19.7$	
<b>Grade Point Average (GPA)</b>				0.331**
1.00-2.00	171	22.1	$71.3 \pm 12.7$	

2.01-3.00	486	62.7	68.8±17.5	
3.01-4.00	118	15.2	69.0±19.4	
<b>Satisfaction with the department</b>				
Satisfied	673	87	69.9±17.1	0.05*
Unsatisfied	102	13	66.4±14.9	
Total	775	100		

\*Independent T test    \*\* One Way Anova

**Table 4. Distribution of Students' Gender Role Stress Scale (FGRSS) Mean Scores by Career Related Variables (n=775)**

	<b>n</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>Mean±sd</b>	<b>p</b>
<b>Career Objective</b>				
Yes	616	79.5	69.2±17.7	0.48*
No	158	20.5	70.2±13.6	
<b>Sector desired to work in after graduation</b>				
Public	425	56.1	70.1±17.8	0.32**
Private	229	29.5	69.0±15.5	
Freelance/Own business	111	14.4	67.5±15.7	
<b>The reason to choose the sector</b>				
Salary Rate	352	45.4	68.44±16.5	0.34**
Career Opportunities	292	37.7	70.82±16.3	
Workload	97	12.5	68.78±19.5	
Other	34	4.4	69.82±17.6	
<b>Can a career plan be made freely?</b>				
Yes	385	49.7	69.52±15.8	0.033**
No	132	17.0	72.48±15.8	
Partially	258	33.3	67.77±17.7	
<b>The factor that affects the career plan the most</b>				
Family	626	80.8	70.15±16.8	0.002**
Friend	71	9.2	64.85±11.5	
Academicians	58	7.5	63.69±20.1	
Community	20	2.5	70.45±19.5	
<b>Does being a woman make your career plan difficult?</b>				
Yes	81	10.5	67.56±18.2	0.28*
No	694	89.5	69.66±16.7	

\*Independent T test    \*\* One-Way Anova

**Table 5. Expressions of students who said that being a woman makes it difficult to make a career plan**

The private sector hires more male staff.
Both family and society interfere with women too much.
Women getting married and having children negatively affect their career.
There is an understanding that "a woman cannot do every job, she can do certain jobs".
My father always says "civil engineering is a male profession, you can't do it, let it go".
There is a lot of social pressure and women are always thrown into the background. There is an understanding that "a man should work, but he can stay as a housewife even if the woman does not work".

## Discussion

The results of the study conducted to evaluate the relationship between the female students' gender role stress rates and their career plans are discussed in this section with the related literature.

Students' mean Gender Role Stress Scale (FGRSS) score was  $69.4 \pm 16.9$  (Table 2) and this score shows that the stress faced by the students is above the medium level. In a study examining the relationship between gender role stress, understanding of honor and gender role attitude among female university students, similar to our findings, it was determined that the mean score of the students was  $79.99 \pm 18$  and they had a stress level above the average (Bayar, 2017). Even in matters of remuneration, promotion and motivation, women may be discriminated against from a gender perspective in working life, benefiting from in-service training opportunities, appointment, quitting and retirement.

In our study, it is observed that there is no relationship between students' age, economic status, grade point average, and their level of satisfaction with the department they are studying and feminine gender role stress levels (Table 3). Similar to our findings, in the study of Saritepe and Mermer (2019) with female university students, no statistically significant difference was found between age and FGRSS scores. However, there is a significant relationship between the type of high school students graduated from and the stress levels of feminine gender roles. It is seen in the literature that there are scarcely any studies on the stress on the gender role of university students and the factors affecting it. Within this analysis, emphasis on the gender position of students is seen above the

medium level. More studies on this subject may be suggested to develop strategies to reduce gender role stress in university students.

Career, which means that a person advances step by step and consistently over the years he can work in any business sector and develops knowledge and skills, helps a person develop his or her personality, social position and status (Bulut & Kızıldağ, 2017). In this study, those who cannot make a career plan freely have higher gender role stress levels. There is no study examining the relationship between career and gender role stress in the literature. Yet again, a small number of work adaptation and gender studies was reported (Kalafat, 2014; Siyez & Yusupu, 2015). Women go through more difficult conditions than men in school life, recruitment and business life, and they have to make more effort. This situation prevents them from making their career plans freely and can cause an increase in gender role stress levels. Therefore, it is thought that career preparation and work opportunities will benefit female students.

In the study, the family factor was estimated to be the leading factor influencing the students' career plan with a ratio of about 81 percent (Table 4). Guan et al. (2016) concluded in their study that family support has a positive effect on career adaptation. On the other hand, Raque et al. (2013) found that family support as a result of their study is significantly effective in overcoming career barriers. In this study, it was found that the gender role stress of those who are the family and society who are effective in making career plans are higher than in other groups. For the families in Turkey, their children need to have a good career plan. They can build their children's whole life on this. This situation

may cause an increase in gender role stress levels of students.

In our study, when the answers of students regarding why being a woman make career planning difficult, it reveals that they are concerned about not being accepted by the private sector in working life (Table 5). Similar to our findings, Moscatelli et al. (2020), it was determined that women are evaluated according to multiple criteria in recruitment and therefore men may be asked to meet more needs to be selected and make a career.

**Implications for nursing practice:** The study concludes that female students studying at a university in central Anatolia were determined to be at a moderate level of stress in Turkey's gender role. Approximately half of the students stated that they can freely make their career plans, while the family factor is the most effective factor in career plans. It can be seen that the Gender Role Stress level and being able to make a career plan freely are situations that affect each other. According to these results, it is necessary to focus on the factors that increase Gender Role Stress levels for female students to make their career plans freely and healthily. In this direction, it is necessary to carry out the gender issue as a course in the university curriculum, while at the same time transforming gender attitudes into positive attitudes by providing education for families. Finally, qualitative studies can be suggested to determine the gender role stress situations of female students and the factors affecting them in detail.

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