

Lifespan Development of Gender Roles

Yaşam Boyu Toplumsal Cinsiyet Rollerinin Gelişimi

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Abstract

Today, almost every child is born into a society where gender roles are socially built and grows in such a gender-segregated world. With the influence of factors such as family, friends, and media, which play a role in the socialization process during infancy and childhood, children learn about gender roles determined by the society. In this context, from the perspective of gender differences, girls face more oppressive approaches and are expected to behave submissively, be more easy going, complier, relational, and show their emotions more deeply compared to their male peers. On the other hand, boys are reared as strong, independent, less emotional, and they are expected to behave in this way under all circumstances. Children who are socialized with these teachings from infancy to adolescence are also strongly influenced by the gender roles displayed by their parents and ultimately internalize those gender roles which has a lifetime effect on them. It is known that gender stereotypes cause pressure and stress on both women and men both concurrently and in the long-run, and the need to adapt to the gender-based expectations of the society adversely affects their psychological health. Although social consciousness about gender equality has increased in recent years, it is known that gender inequality still continues in many countries. As a result, psychology of gender affects each individual at every stage of their lives, as stated consistently in the related literature, which clearly demonstrates the importance of policies for gender equality.

Keywords: Gender development, gender roles, gender stereotypes, gender equality, lifespan development

Öz

Günümüzde hemen hemen her çocuk, cinsiyet rollerinin sosyal olarak inşa edildiği bir topluma doğmakta ve bu roller bazında ayrıştırılmış bir dünyada büyümektedir. Bebeklik ve çocukluk dönemi boyunca sosyalleştirme sürecinde rol oynayan aile, arkadaş, medya gibi faktörlerin etkisiyle çocuklar, toplum tarafından belirlenen ve uyum göstermeleri beklenen cinsiyet rollerini öğrenmektedir. Bu doğrultuda cinsiyet farklılıklarına bakıldığında, kız çocukları daha baskıcı yaklaşımlarla karşılaşmakta ve onların, oğlan çocuklarına göre daha uysal, boyun eğen, uyumlu, duygularını gösteren, ilişkilere önem veren bir biçimde davranmaları istenmektedir. Öte yandan oğlan çocukları ise baskın, güçlü, bağımsız ve duygu kontrolüne sahip olarak yetiştirilmekte ve her koşulda bu doğrultuda davranmaları beklenmektedir. Bebeklikten ergenliğe bu öğretilerle sosyalleştirilen çocuklar, kendi ebeveynlerinin sergilediği cinsiyet rollerinden de güçlü bir şekilde etkilenerek, toplumsal cinsiyet rollerini içselleştirmektedir. İçselleştirilmiş bu cinsiyet rollerinin etkisi yaşam boyu sürmektedir. Cinsiyet kalıpyargılarının hem kadınlar hem de erkekler üzerinde kısa ve uzun vadede baskı ve strese neden olduğu bilinmekte, toplumun cinsiyet bazlı beklentilerine uyum gösterme ihtiyacı bireylerin psikolojik sağlığını olumsuz yönde etkilemektedir. Son yıllarda cinsiyet eşitliği konusunda toplumsal farkındalık artsa da halen birçok ülkede pek çok alanda cinsiyet eşitsizliğinin sürdüğü bilinmektedir. Sonuç olarak, ilgili alan yazında tutarlı bir şekilde belirtildiği gibi, toplumsal cinsiyet psikolojisi her iki cinsiyeti de yaşamlarının her döneminde etkilemekte ve bu da cinsiyet eşitliğine yönelik politikaların önemini açıkça ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar sözcükler: Cinsiyet gelişimi, cinsiyet rolleri, cinsiyet kalıpyargıları, cinsiyet eşitliği, yaşam boyu gelişim

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Received: 02.09.2020 | Accepted: 21.09.2020 | Published online: 20.12.2020

FROM the first years of their lives, children are exposed to many culture-based stereotypes about gender roles, and they begin to adopt and act on them. The fact that perceived duality about toys (e.g., “baby doll - car”) and/or games (e.g., “house game - tinker game”) brings “girl-boy” gender differentiation to mind (Blakemore and Centers 2005) reveals the effect of gender roles from childhood onwards. These effects play an important role in the well-being of an individual not only in the first years of life but also in later developmental periods, even including late adulthood (Pinquart and Sörensen 2001). In this context, in the scope of this review article on the development of gender roles, the lifelong effects of the psychology of gender roles from the prenatal period to late adulthood on an individual and his/her social relations will be discussed in the light of the literature.

The effects of gender roles on child development -and thereby lifelong psychology of individuals- began to be widely studied, especially since the 1970s (Money 1973, Thompson 1975). Firstly, it would be beneficial to begin with brief definitions of the relevant concepts in order to understand the concept of gender better. Gender stereotypes are widely accepted beliefs about characteristics that are seen as suitable specifically for girls and boys (Ruble and Martin 1998). Gender roles are how these stereotypes are reflected in daily life behaviors (Basow 2006). Gender identity refers to the self-perception related to what gender he/she feels and identifies him/herself; and it can be compatible or incompatible with the biological/assigned sex (Basow 2006). Gender typing is defined as associating an activity, behavior, role, or personal characteristics of individuals with certain biological sex (Martin and Dinella 2001). Finally, sexual orientation refers to which gender a person is sexually and romantically attracted to (Sell 1997).

Taking various elements of gender typologies together, such as gender stereotypes and gender roles attainment, the emergence of gender expressions that are described as “masculine” or “feminine” and their strong adoption by children over time is mostly explained by gender schemes (Martin and Halverson 1981). In this context, from the first years of their lives, children observe the gender-related behaviors of the individuals around them, obtain gender schemes/classifications by organizing these experiences in their minds, and evaluate the world within the framework of these schemes in their minds. After the formation of gender schemes such as “Only men can be doctors” or “Cooking is women’s job”, children tend to categorize themselves and their newly acquired information in line with these schemes and determine their behavior in this direction (Liben and Bigler 2002). Gender schemes are rooted in children’s minds very powerfully; such that, inability to remember behaviors that are not suitable for gender roles or remembering them by making cognitive distortions (e.g., when children are shown a photograph of a male nurse and are asked them to describe the person they were shown after a while, they remember the male individual as a doctor rather than a nurse) might be observed (Liben and Signorella 1993, Martin and Ruble 2004). On the other hand, it is possible to change the gender schemes that occur at an early age, primarily via the education that can be given at school age. As Bigler and Liben (1992) stated, by

means of the role of cognitive abilities that rapidly develop at school age, social messages which are rejecting traditional gender roles can make stereotypical gender schemes flexible in children's minds. Also, when children are taught that not people's gender, but their abilities and interests determine how well they can do an activity, children move away from the idea of the "constancy" of traditional gender roles, and they can think much more egalitarian.

In this context, socialization of individuals on the basis of gender equality by increasing their awareness of gender stereotypes from an early age is very important for a healthier self-perception and interpersonal relationships (Turner and Gervai 1995, King et al. 2020). Although some studies aimed to raise awareness on this issue in our country, Turkey, these studies generally focused on gender equality in terms of women only (e.g., Davas-Aksan et al. 2011, Demirdirek and Şener 2014, Evrenol-Öçal 2019). Intervention studies on gender equality especially in early childhood are very limited (Temiz and Cin 2017, Tuncer and Gezer-Şen 2018). In Turkey, there is no study, to the best of our knowledge, that evaluates the effects of gender roles in terms of both genders from early years to old age. Through this review article, the lifelong effects of gender roles on not only early years but also all the later developmental periods in a holistic approach (i.e., how gender roles shape the life of an individual from the prenatal period to the late adulthood) will be discussed sequentially in all developmental periods.

Prenatal, infancy, and early childhood

Research on gender roles generally focuses on behavior (behavioral similarities or differences between the sexes) in all developmental processes from prenatal and infancy to late adulthood in order to focus on the causes of gender typing. When it gets to the bottom of it, hormone studies are seen, and the studies conducted in this context emphasize the genetic disorder known as Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia. It is known that this disorder causes the androgen level in the adrenal system to be produced at extraordinarily high levels starting from the prenatal period. Studies conducted with patients with this genetic disorder show that androgen is associated with behaviors that are described as "masculine", although it is a hormone found in both sexes; and women with this disorder reported they remember from their childhood that they were not satisfied with their "feminine" identity (Hines et al. 2004), and accordingly game impositions congruent with that identity (Servin et al. 2003, Hall et al. 2004). In line with this finding, Auyeung and colleagues (2009) also observed that girls who were exposed to high levels of androgen prenatally due to Congenital Adrenal Hyperplasia exhibit a high level of "masculine" behavior and make their game preferences in this direction. On the other hand, animal experiments have similarly shown that prenatal androgen administration increases active play and aggressive behavior in both female and male mammals and decreases caregiving behavior (Lephart et al. 2001, Sato et al. 2004).

Maccoby (1998) suggested that the effects of hormones found in animal research can

be partially generalized to humans. There are studies supporting this information which indicate that as from toddlerhood, children prefer to play with their same-sex peers just as the offspring of many other mammalian species (Beatty 1992, Munroe and Romney 2006). This preference becomes more apparent as children age since they begin to explore their gender identity and grasp the constancy of sex. By the age of four, children spend three times more time with their same-sex peers compared to opposite-sex ones, and this rate rises to 1/11 by six years of age (Martin and Fabes 2001, Mehta and Strough 2010). Thus, children feel more comfortable within the framework of these norms and behavioral styles by socializing mostly with their same-sex peers over the norms and behavioral styles attributed to their gender, and as a result of this vicious circle, they prefer more and more to spend time with their same-sex peers (Martin et al. 2011). As an inevitable consequence of this vicious circle, it is observed that preschool and school-age children who are asked to play games in a mixed group (or work together on a project) cooperate much less with their opposite-sex peers and exhibit more negative verbal and behavioral attitudes (Holmes-Lonergan 2003, Leaper and Smith 2004, Leman et al. 2005). Although it is known that gender differences have some biological basis, it is also known that environmental experiences have an effect on biological-based gender differences (Ruble et al. 2006). Current research also proves the effect of social pressure on gender differences. By acting in accordance with gender roles; evaluating their same-sex peers more positively, and having more negative expectations towards those of the opposite-sex ones affect children's gender stereotypes and play a determinant role in their play and social relationship preferences (Ruble et al. 2006).

Between the ages of 18 and 30 months, children become able to define the sex of both themselves and the people around them. However, at these ages, they do not know the biological basis and constancy of sex (Sravanti and Sagar 2019). For example, when girls are asked "Can you become a father when you grow up?" or "Could you be a boy if you wanted to?", they often answer as "yes" (Slaby and Frey 1975). Similarly, there are studies stating that, at this age, when their doll-looking toys' or male friends' hairstyles and clothes are changed, they believe that their sex changes (Chauhan et al. 2005, Fagot 1985). By the age of 5-7 years, parallel to their cognitive development, children are able to understand that gender has biological bases; so, even if they see the characteristics they associate with the opposite sex (e.g., having short/long hair, wearing trousers/skirts, etc.), the gender remains constant (Emmerich 1981, Ruble et al. 2007).

In addition to these, children can distinguish men and women according to their gender roles when they reach approximately two years of age. Many researchers found that especially preschool-age (i.e., 3-6 years old) children associate toys, clothing, materials, household objects, games, jobs, colors (e.g., pink and blue), and behaviors (e.g., relational or physical anger) with one of the sexes (Poulin-Dubois et al. 2002, Giles and Heyman 2005, Ruble et al. 2006). Similarly, it was found that they made matches in their minds revealing gender stereotypes such as "Bears are for boys" and "Butterflies are for girls" (Leinbach et

al. 1997). It is observed that these gender stereotypes in early childhood are quite strong and inflexible. According to the study of Blakemore (2003), when asked whether gender stereotypes could be violated, more than half of the children -especially in the items related to clothes, hairstyles, and toys- said “no” with a confident expression.

Similarly, it has been reported that the majority of children aged 3-6 years do not want to be friends with their peers who act outside of gender stereotypes such as “boys wearing nail polish” or “girls playing with trucks” (Ruble et al. 2007). One reason for such a rigid attitude of preschool-age children towards breaking gender stereotypes is that they are exposed continuously to sexist attitudes and behaviors in their environment, thus modeling these behaviors and thinking that traditional gender stereotypes are the only “right” behaviors. Another reason is that they have not yet developed their ability to understand that others may have different thinking systems, as they have not completed their cognitive development yet (Berk 2017). Because of these reasons, preschool-age children may have difficulty in understanding that activities, toys, professions, hairstyles, or clothes (which were characterized as “feminine” or “masculine” by people around them, especially family members) cannot determine the sex of a person, and it is normal that women and men may look alike and do similar activities in many different areas. Therefore, preschool-age children tend to behave in line with gender stereotypes and evaluate the behaviors they observe within this framework, due to their lower level of knowledge about the concept of gender and their cognitive limitations (Sravanti and Sagar 2019).

Middle childhood

As children reach school age, though their thoughts and beliefs about gender stereotypes may become more flexible, their parents and the culture they live in continue to reinforce children’s gender stereotypes. For example, girls are seen as more competent in verbal and artistic fields, whereas boys are seen as more competent in numerical -especially mathematics- and sports activities (Eccles et al. 1990, Jacobs and Weisz 1994). These gender stereotypes children are exposed to affect their self-efficacy strongly, although there is no real gender difference when their actual competencies are measured and compared (Freedman-Doan et al. 2000, Hong et al. 2003, Bhanot and Jovanovic 2005). In a study conducted with more than 2000 children (between 8-12 years of age) living in various countries of Europe, Japan, Russia, and America, it was found that girls have higher GPA scores consistently compared to boys; however, despite this, girls evaluated boys as “smarter” compared to themselves and underestimated their own achievements (Stetsenko et al. 2000). This finding is congruent with the knowledge that both parents and teachers attribute girls’ inadequacies to their own failures while they attribute boys’ inadequacies to external factors (Pomerantz and Dong 2006). Although this situation may differ between cultures, the perceived disadvantageous position of girls is common in many cultures. In addition to cultural effects, it is known that the education and socioeconomic levels of families also have an effect on the gender roles adopted by their children. That is, children of parents with higher education and

socioeconomic levels are found as more flexible about traditional gender stereotypes (Lackey 1989, Serbin et al. 1993).

It is observed that the expectations of the parents for the academic competence and success of their school-age children are generally within the framework of traditional gender stereotypes. According to the findings of the study conducted by Eccles and colleagues (2000), when mothers were asked to evaluate the competence of their sixth-grade children in mathematics, mothers reported that boys are more competent than girls, regardless of their children's real competence in mathematics. This perception of mothers is reflected in children through verbal and/or non-verbal messages; and these messages affect children's perceptions of themselves and accordingly their performance. When looking at the cross-cultural study of Nosek and colleagues (2009) comparing 34 countries, the difference in mathematics achievement between girls and boys was found to be higher -to the detriment of girls- in cultures where gender stereotypes are more dominant. As expected, this situation negatively affects girls' interest in mathematics, desire to work on it, motivation, and self-confidence, so that low mathematics performance inevitably follows this situation (Steffens et al. 2010). Similarly, within the scope of the study of Tenenbaum and Leaper (2003), the conversations of girls and boys aged 11-13 who visited the science museum with their parents were examined. As a result of this examination, it was seen that although there was no gender difference between the children's interests in science, their grades in science-related courses, and their self-efficacy on these topics, parents believed that girls found science more difficult and seemed less interested in it. Thus, in this context, it was found that parents talked less (and by using a simpler language) about scientific matters with their daughters compared to their sons. From this point of view, it can be concluded that gender discrimination can emerge with the effect of stereotypes exposed from the beginning of life, become more and more strongly adopted over time, and continue by getting used to it, especially depending on the attitudes and behaviors of children's parents and the society that they live in.

On the other hand, it is observed that boys may be at a more disadvantaged position compared to girls in terms of violation of gender stereotypes (in other words, exhibiting cross-gender behavior). According to Blakemore's (2003) study, boys' playing with dolls is evaluated more negatively than girls' playing with trucks by both girls and boys. Similarly, boys are more likely to adopt the "expected" gender roles for themselves (Bussey and Bandura 1992, Ruble et al. 2006). Similarly, Turner and Gervai (1995), examining the perspective of parents in addition to that of children, showed that parents' attitudes towards cross-gender behaviors are much more negative when it is a matter of boys compared to girls. Therefore, the social pressure on boys to behave in accordance with gender stereotypes may be higher than girls (Levy et al. 1995, Egan and Perry 2001, Leaper 2013).

It is known that one of the factors determining the behavior of conforming to gender roles in childhood is the desire to model parents' behaviors related to gender roles and to

meet their expectations (Berk 2017). Therefore, it is seen that children choose games and friends according to these expectations, environmental demands for physical appearance, behavioral styles, and even setting goals/dreams (Stern and Karraker 1989, Vogel et al. 1991). Expected gender roles can be conveyed to children directly by verbal expressions (e.g., “Girls are well-behaved”, “Boys do not cry”, etc.) as well as implicit messages (Mesman and Groeneveld 2018). These implicit messages usually take forms of gender-based behaviors towards children or children’s exposure to gender discrimination against other people and gender-attributed evaluations of certain behaviors. In this context, gender stereotypes conveyed to the child by the parents through explicit or implicit messages reinforce the gender inequality in the child’s mind, and the consequences deepen in this direction. For example, girls who are exposed to gender stereotypes and have a high level of conforming behavior to these stereotypes have higher levels of anxiety about their physical appearance compared to girls not exposing to those stereotypes often or not conforming them (Halim et al. 2018). The power of parental and environmental influence over gender roles is often beginning to signal when the child is still in the womb. The life that starts with “pink or blue rooms/clothes” prepared for as soon as learning the gender of the baby continues with toy selection for the baby according to his/her gender. Leaper and Friedman (2007) found in their study examining the types of toys that are bought as gifts for children that common themes are determined as power, activity, and competition (e.g., toy guns/pistols, cars, repairing tools, toys associated with sports such as football) for boys, whereas the common themes of gifts received for girls are caregiving, physical attractiveness and cooperation (e.g., dolls, food/tea sets, toy jewelry, etc.). Uniform object exposure based on gender in infancy is found to be positively associated with game preferences in accordance with gender stereotypes in middle childhood (Lauer et al. 2018).

In addition, according to the findings of studies conducted in different cultures (Fabes et al. 2003, Leaper and Smith 2004), girls are expected to show more intimate behaviors and be more relational, while boys are expected to be more confident and autonomous. In line with that, Leaper et al. (1998) reported that mothers display more intimate behavior with their daughters compared to their sons, as expected. Following these findings, it is found that girls in their middle childhood also have closer relationships with both their parents and friends, use more relational language and emotion words, and are more connected, while boys express themselves more assertively and confidently (Leaper and Smith 2004, Tenenbaum et al. 2011). Therefore, parents’ expectations affect their own behaviors towards their children, and these behaviors are maintained by modeling, adopting, and reinforcing by the children (Berk 2017).

Siblings undoubtedly have an essential role in the development of gender roles in childhood, as well. This role may vary depending on the number and birth order of siblings, the age difference between siblings, and various variations of their gender (McHale et al. 2003). For example, it is observed that older siblings have a stronger role-model

effect on younger siblings (Farkas and Leaper 2014); on the other hand, children with same-sex older siblings compared to those without siblings, and those without siblings compared to those with opposite-sex older siblings (e.g., a boy with an older sister) have more difficulty in breaking out of traditional gender roles (Rust et al. 2000). When the relevant literature is examined, it is seen that the factor that has the strongest and most consistently significant effect on gender development is having an older sibling. This finding is explained by the fact that older siblings are in the position of “instructive/who is taken as a model” while younger siblings are in the position of “learner/who takes someone as a model” in sibling relationships (Stoneman et al. 1986). It is known that older siblings, regardless of their gender, are highly influential on the behavior of adopting the traditional gender roles of their younger siblings (Rust et al. 2000), but this effect can also be seen in the opposite way. That is, it has been stated that in case of having an older sibling who does not feel the need to act in accordance with gender stereotypes (i.e., who can break out of those stereotypes), and who reject to conform gender roles, the younger siblings also exhibit less conforming behavior to those traditional gender roles (McHale et al. 2001). In addition to siblings, friends/peers can also play an important role in the gender development of children, especially as from preschool age (Bigler and Liben 2007). It is observed that children in a peer environment in which gender-based discrimination, choices, expressions, and behaviors are more salient, those children’s gender stereotypes increase significantly as they spend more and more time in this environment, they make less positive evaluations towards their opposite-sex peers and prefer less to play with them; whereas such tendencies were not observed in children in environments where the concept of gender is not salient (Hilliard and Liben 2010).

While children’s development of gender roles may be through direct exposure -especially via their parents-, even where parents have egalitarian attitudes and behave accordingly towards their children, the dominant role of society in this issue and the impact of this role on children can be seen clearly. The most common example of this is in publications that children are frequently exposed to, such as children’s books, cartoons, television advertisements, or computer games. In these publications, it appears that representations of gender roles support traditional stereotypes -which glorify men and weaken women- to a great extent (Turner-Bowker 1996, Tepper and Cassidy 1999). It has been stated that the figures children know through the media are of great importance in the formation of their gender schemes. Children can take examples of how they cope with strong emotions -such as anger- through those figures; and so, these exemplary figures have a strengthening or weakening effect on existing gender schemes (Bandura and Bussey 2004, Dill and Thill 2007). From this point of view, it can be said that written and visual media materials intended for children are among the essential ways of reaching children in terms of being an important tool for the healthy gender development. It is clear that this tool, which is known to significantly affect whether traditional gender roles are adopted by the child or not, can enable existing gender schemes to be extinguished in the child’s mind, rather than

being activated more if used appropriately (e.g., emphasizing gender equality).

In addition, it is known that one of the many factors that determine psychological well-being is the individual's opportunity to freely express his/her gender identity and sexual orientation, and to be accepted in this regard (Egan and Perry 2001). In fact, it is stated that children who feel that their gender identity and sexual orientation are accepted by their parents and friends have higher self-esteem, self-values, life satisfaction and happiness levels compared to those who are not accepted (Rosenberg and Jellinek 2002). On the other hand, it is reported that children who exhibit "atypical" behaviors regarding their gender and who are subjected to social pressure for this reason face serious problems such as introversion, chronic sadness, disappointment, and anxiety (Yunger et al. 2004). As studies consistently indicate, in case of children having "incompatibility" (according to the expectations of society) between their gender identity and biological/assigned sex; accepting them as they are, supporting their rights, and giving them the opportunity to live freely in line with their gender identity and sexual orientation will positively affect their self-concept and will have great importance for their long-term psychological health.

Therefore, if we consider that many societies in the world still have a structure that reinforces traditional gender stereotypes, we can realize the importance of a change starting from the individual/family. It is known that children take their parents as role models from the first years of their lives (Bussey and Bandura 1999, Berk 2017); so, as expected, parents' beliefs and attitudes towards gender roles are positively associated with those of their children (Tenenbaum and May 2014). In this context, growing up in an egalitarian family environment outside of traditional gender roles (i.e., in which there are no "feminine" or "masculine" concepts, and divisions of labor and competencies in various subjects are not defined through gender discrimination, etc.); children can freely determine their career goals (choose their future profession not according to their gender, but in line with their interests and desires), develop a positive self-concept, have high levels of self-esteem, satisfaction in their social relationships, and so on. Overall, it has a significant positive effect on the healthy psychological development and well-being of individuals (Turner and Gervai 1995, Hoffman 2000, King et al. 2020).

Although raising children utterly independent of gender stereotypes seems quite challenging today, it is clearly seen in the light of the relevant literature that children need to be freed from the pressure of parents, friends, and society to adopt traditional gender roles in order to act freely in line with their will, needs, interests, and desires.

Adolescence

Adolescents who continue to explore the world want to develop their own identity by gaining new roles and experiences and want to be more autonomous than their younger ages. However, adolescents' efforts to be autonomous are not always supported by their parents, which may cause conflicts between them (Laursen and Collins 2004). Parents encourage

boys to be independent and assertive, while they prefer to socialize girls to behave more adaptive by placing more restrictions on them (Öngen 2004, Leaper 2005). To what extent parents give autonomy to their adolescent children depends on their own gender roles. Mothers who have more traditional gender roles give less autonomy to their adolescent daughters (Bumpus et al. 2001).

Although boys are given more autonomy in their development process, boys face more pressure than girls to behave according to their sex from an early age (Bussey and Bandura 1999). The consequences of exhibiting cross-gender behaviors are not the same for girls and boys, in which “feminine” boys are evaluated as more incompatible and negative compared to “masculine” girls (Martin 1990). As an expected consequence of this pressure, although both girls and boys have an increase in their gender-specific behaviors when they reach adolescence (Priess et al. 2009), female adolescents become more flexible about gender roles, while male adolescents’ gender roles show a more traditional orientation over time (Crouter et al. 2007). Parents also have a significant role in this regard. Parents’ egalitarian or traditional gender roles are positively associated with their children’s (Taylor 2005, Ashraf 2015). However, mothers’ influence on children regarding gender roles is stronger than fathers’ influence (Taylor and Segrin 2010).

Examining cross-cultural studies on gender roles in the literature, it was found in a study conducted with adolescents from 36 different countries that female adolescents had more egalitarian attitudes than male adolescents in all countries (Dotti-Sani and Quaranta 2017). Socioeconomic conditions and culture may also be determinants of attitudes towards gender roles. In a study investigating the attitudes of adolescents from 46 different cultures regarding gender roles, Gibbons et al. (1991) found that adolescents raised in low-income collectivist cultures have more traditional attitudes compared to adolescents raised in high-income individualistic cultures. Regarding gender difference, on the other hand, it has been observed that male adolescents have more traditional attitudes than female adolescents, which is consistent with other research findings.

In another cross-cultural study, it was reported that gender difference in self-esteem reached its peak level during adolescence among all developmental stages (Kling et al. 1999). It is reported that female adolescents’ perceptions of their own physical appearance and self-evaluation of their mathematical skills and intelligence levels are more negative than male adolescents (Watkins et al. 1991). While female adolescents generally believe that they are good in reading and interpersonal relations, male adolescents have high self-esteem in terms of their physical abilities and appearance as well as mathematics (Kling et al. 1999).

It is seen that the media has an important effect on the negative body image of female adolescents. For many female adolescents, media images cause a negative perception of themselves by presenting biased content in terms of comparing their own and other people’s bodies (Wiseman et al. 2005). For example, in an experimental study, television advertisements including actors/actresses with an idealized appearance (i.e., female characters are very thin

and male characters are muscular) were watched to girls and boys, and then their satisfaction levels regarding their own bodies were evaluated. The results showed that female adolescents' exposure to idealized media content negatively affected their body satisfaction by causing them to make more comparisons regarding their appearance compared to male adolescents (Hargreaves and Tiggemann 2004). Findings that female adolescents spend more time on social media than male adolescents indicate that girls may be at a higher risk in this regard (Yüksel-Şahin and Öztoprak 2019). Indeed, Tiggemann and Slater (2013) reported that female adolescents who spend more time on the internet make more effort to be thin. In fact, male adolescents do not seem to be anxiety-free on physical appearance; that is, there is an increase in their efforts to have a muscular appearance, especially towards the end of adolescence (McCabe and Ricciardelli 2001).

In addition to physical appearance, the difference between female and male adolescents' self-evaluations regarding their abilities may stem from different environmental effects in their socialization processes. In other words, parents influence their children's gender development by communicating in a way that focuses on different themes on the same subject in their conversations with their children, depending on the gender of them. In a study in which the effects of attitudes and behaviors towards gender roles observed in the family on career planning of adolescents were examined, the conversations of mothers with their daughters and sons about career planning were examined. While it was observed that mothers had conversations with their daughters on being open to different options and acting effectively in a relational context at a workplace, it was found that conversations with their sons focus on academic achievement and getting a promotion in a job (Domene et al. 2007). Therefore, attitudes towards egalitarian or traditional gender roles perceived by adolescents from their families may affect their goals, career choices, and career planning towards adulthood (Ruble et al. 2006). Adolescents are exposed to gender stereotypes about their abilities through their teachers as well as their parents (Shapiro and Williams 2012). For example, it is reported that the students of teachers who have gender stereotypes that female students are more inadequate in mathematics skills than male students also have similar stereotypes; and these female students actually have worse math performance over time compared to male students (Beilock et al. 2010).

Another difference in parents' attitudes and behaviors towards female and male adolescents is the degree of intimacy. Female adolescents are expected to be more intimate with their parents than male adolescents (Leaper 2005), and female adolescents think that they receive more affection from their mothers than male adolescents (Öngen 2004). As a result of this, a study conducted in our country, Turkey, found that female adolescents had higher attachment scores to their both mothers and fathers than male adolescents (Dođan 2016). It is observed that girls who are socialized to express their feelings more and show intimacy from an early age have closer relations not only with their families but also with their friends when they reach adolescence. Compared to their male counterparts, female adolescents have

closer and deeper peer relationships, tend to be more attached to and make more self-disclosure with their friends (Swenson and Rose 2009, Gorrese and Ruggieri 2012).

Adolescents who try to cope with new issues, such as establishing more intimacy with their friends (Kroger 2006), also maintain their gender development as a part of their identity development. There seems an increase in the behaviors and attitudes of individuals that specific to their gender during adolescence. The reasons for this increase are, firstly, adolescents feel more pressure to behave in accordance with their gender roles both through social environment and various media sources in this period; secondly, they tend to conform more with the fear of not being accepted or judged among their friends (Ridgeway and Bourg 2004, Priess et al. 2009). It is seen that even girls who have more “masculine” characteristics during their childhood have an increase in their aspects defined as “feminine” in this period (Clarke-Stewart and Parke 2014). Although girls with characteristics defined as masculine increase in their feminine characteristics during their adolescence, they continue to have more masculine characteristics in adulthood compared to other women (Volkom 2003).

Adolescence is a developmental process in which romantic relationships become prominent as well as friendship relationships, and adolescents are in the process of exploring their gender identity and sexual orientation as part of their gender development (Bouchey and Furman 2006). While some adolescents define their sexual orientation as heterosexual, others define themselves as LGBTQ+ (i.e., lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer, etc.) (Levitt 2019). While LGBTQ+ individuals’ awareness of their gender identity and sexual orientation increases before adolescence, they generally are more confident and assertive on defining their gender identity and sexual orientation towards the middle of adolescence (D’Augelli et al. 1998). LGBTQ+ adolescents try to cope with both individual and environmental stressors throughout their development process. On the one hand, they may feel a conflict between their biological/assigned sex and their sexual orientation in terms of the heteronormative expectations of the society and get stressed out with being “different” from their same-sex peer group; on the other hand, they may face family and social environment pressure and social exclusion (Morrow 2018, Rafferty 2018). As a result of this social pressure and exclusion, these adolescents experience more depression, and their life satisfaction becomes lower. Having familial support plays a protective role in their psychological health (Simons et al. 2013); however, it appears that they do not generally have this support (Morrow 2018). LGBTQ+ adolescents’ being at risk in terms of psychological health may generally be due to the low level of knowledge on this subject in society. In this context, the informative role and guidance of healthcare professionals and experts who work in this field would be essential for both adolescents and families. The “gender affirmative care” approach has been emphasized in recent years by being aware of this. This approach involves providing services to inform and support LGBTQ+ individuals and their families, based on the idea that sexual identity development, which is not in line with traditional gender norms, is not a psychological

disorder and that the difference between individuals is perfectly normal. In this process, it is especially aimed to help adolescents develop and discover their gender identity and sexual orientation without harming their self-development and on reaching all the services they need (Rafferty 2018).

Adulthood

Early adulthood is a developmental period when the need for intimacy with individuals around them increases for both men and women (Burlison 2003). The way of establishing social relationships, which has been shaped by the environment from infancy, determines how individuals establish their relationships when they become adults. In this context, girls and boys who are exposed to different socialization practices, such as expressing their feelings and showing intimacy, differ in their way of establishing relationships in their adulthood. While women prefer socializing methods such as sharing their problems with other people and self-disclosing with them, it seems that these methods are less preferred by men (Consedine et al. 2007, Sultan and Chaudry 2008). Similar gender differences are observed in social media friendships in expressing their own private feelings and thoughts (Sheldon 2013).

Although men have more friends than women, the degree of emotional intimacy among men is not as close as in women's friendships (Marshall 2010). Therefore, men prefer their female friends more to get support in adverse situations (Buhrke and Fuqua 1987). Since women are closer in social relationships than men, they are more preferred in negative situations where support is sought. For example, women are more supportive in their relationships and show more helping behavior (Weger and Emmett 2009). Similarly, while women prefer to have conversations about their feelings and problems when they get together with their friends, men tend to participate in various activities such as sports instead of having conversations (Caldwell and Peplau 1982).

Occupational life in adulthood is another area that needs to be examined in which the effects of gender roles are felt. The social positions of women in many countries have started to change radically since the 1960s. With the effect of social and cultural factors changing over time, women have increasingly involved in occupational life as well as their increasing educational levels and started to adopt the role of a businessperson in addition to her motherhood roles by means of gradually exceeding expectations such as cooking, taking care of children, and serving her husband (Peake and Harris 2002, Hofnung 2004, Amuedo-Dorantes and Kimmel 2005). This change has enabled today's women and men to have less traditional gender roles than previous generations (Chesley 2011). Women have become stronger in business life and hold top positions in many different business sectors (Arnett 2016).

Although significant gains have been made in gender equality from past years to the present (Carlson and Knoester 2011), there is still gender inequality in many countries. In

39% of 189 countries in the world, women have low-to-moderate levels of gender equality (UNDP 2019). Traditional values are still very powerful in defining women's social positions. The rate of women who work outside the home has increased, but there is no significant change in their family responsibilities such as housework and childcare (Paçacıoğlu, 2018). The expectation for women to maintain their responsibilities on the basis of traditional gender roles continues (Koivunen et al. 2009). In Turkish culture, the identity dimension that women evaluate as most important in defining themselves is still family, rather than education and occupation (Gezici 2002); and it is accepted that being a mother gives status and power to women in the society (Yılmaz 2004).

Since the main duty of women is seen as motherhood, their participation in occupational life is not supported (Cinamon and Rich 2002, Fortin 2005). As women's participation in the labor force is behind men in many countries worldwide, these rates in Turkey are far behind the developed countries (UNDP 2019). According to data from the Turkish Statistical Institute (2018), 71.5% of men, whereas only 33.3% of women, participate in the labor force in Turkey. Women who are expected to continue their traditional roles at the societal level, but want to have a career, face important difficulties. Although women participate in the labor force for equal periods with men, they often experience family-work conflict due to their unchanging household responsibilities (Milkie and Peltola 1999), and this issue negatively affects women's physical and psychological health (Poms et al. 2016). While parenting causes little change in men's responsibilities for housework, it significantly increases women's burden (Cowan et al. 1985, Sanchez and Thomson 1997). Especially women who work full-time, are married and have young children, have more problems with balancing their home and work responsibilities than men (Milkie and Peltola 1999). For example, if the child is unable to attend school due to illness, women take more time off from their workplace than men to take care of their children (Lindsey 2015). In addition to the family-work conflict, both marriage and parenting responsibilities significantly limit women's leisure time. On the other hand, while the increasing number of children decreases men's leisure time, it has been reported that marriage has no negative effect on their leisure time (Mattingly and Bianchi 2003).

Socialization processes on the basis of traditional gender roles, as mentioned above, play a major role in the continuation of this unbalanced workload of family and housework between women and men. Men who encounter working women in their childhood more do more housework at later ages than other men (Koivunen et al. 2009), and spend more time caring for their family members (McGinn et al. 2015). Although there is an increase in traditional gender roles for both women and men after becoming parents, this increase is more common among women (Katz-Wise et al. 2010). In this context, women who go beyond traditional roles, defend having equal responsibilities, and have an egalitarian viewpoint toward gender roles experience less imbalance in their household responsibilities (Weisner et al. 1994).

Beyond these individual and family factors, it is possible to suggest that media and policies of the country that surround life have a strong influence on the content and adoption of gender roles. Media tools support the perception of traditional gender roles; for instance, women are shown as more engaged in housework in advertisements (Lindsey 2015). When it is examined at the level of country policies, the view of governments in many countries around the world is that family duties should be fulfilled by women. In many countries around the world, except for Scandinavian countries, men have more limited rights than women in matters such as parental leave and elderly care leave (Datta-Gupta et al. 2008, Maume 2016).

While women face pressure to pursue traditional roles, in fact, there are also social pressures in men's lives. The primary role of men in many societies is to be the primary breadwinner. This situation causes high levels of stress on the man, and the psychological health of a man who is unemployed for any reason is affected more negatively than an unemployed woman (Artazcoz et al. 2004). However, no matter how emotionally difficult it is, men are expected to appear tough, dominant, independent, strong, and not reveal their emotions in line with the gender roles defined as masculine by society (Clarke-Stewart and Parke 2014, Arnett 2016). Perhaps as a result of this, studies have reported that men who have feminine characteristics, as well as masculine characteristics, have better psychological health (Lefkowitz and Zeldow 2006), while men who are stricter about gender stereotypes have a higher rate of depression (Gupta et al. 2013). Education level seems to be an important variable in the relationship between gender roles and psychological health. A study found that men with feminine characteristics are more likely to have better psychological health if they are university graduates. On the other hand, it is reported that having masculine characteristics is associated with better psychological health in men with lower educational levels (Gibson et al. 2016).

In fact, the definitions of "masculine role" have also begun to change, although not as distinct as the change in women's social lives. The prominent fatherhood roles such as "providing discipline at home, breadwinner, gender-role model" have started to change into "more interested in and caring more for the child" (Lamb 2000, Bianchi and Milkie 2010). Today's fathers have started to care more about their own roles in their children's lives, which has increased their time to care for their children (Chesley 2011).

As an extension of this change, many countries have begun to meet the "nontraditional" father model. Since the changing social and economic conditions, a growing number of fathers take care of their children by staying at home rather than going to work. This situation usually arises when there is no available person for taking care of the baby, and the mother works in a higher-income job due to a higher education level than the father (Grey 2015, Kramer et al. 2015). Fathers who are at home full-time have high life satisfaction and low levels of stress (Rochlen et al. 2008), and they tend to be satisfied with both their own and their spouse's position and believe that this division of labor is better for the well-being of their families (Masterson and Hoobler 2015). However,

these fathers face significant pressure in society, and other parents have more negative attitudes towards them (Brescoll and Uhlmann 2005, Grey 2015). In some families where the person staying at home full-time is a father, roles are changed again (i.e., they follow traditional role sharing) after the mother returns from work. These mothers continue their family responsibilities in the evenings and weekends. While fathers state that this stems from their spouses' not liking what they do because of high standards of care and housework, mothers may take on these tasks in order to cope with the feeling of guilt since they cannot spend time with their children as much as they want (Latshaw and Hale 2015). While the reason for fathers staying at home is to take care of their children, a significant number of fathers stay at home due to unemployment. It is reported that the number of fathers who prefer to stay at home full-time to take care of their children is gradually increasing (Kramer et al. 2015, Kramer and Kramer 2016).

This social change mentioned above actually confirms that today's men are less traditional than their parents (Chesley 2011). Although social resistance to this change is still strong in many countries, an egalitarian lifestyle provides significant advantages to men in terms of their marriage. Men with egalitarian gender attitudes are less likely to get divorced (Kaufman 2000). Also, these men evaluate their marriage more positively in their middle and late adulthood periods (Kaufman and Taniguchi 2006). On the other hand, some researchers found that men with egalitarian gender attitudes do not always have high marital satisfaction; instead, men's marital satisfaction is high if the spouses' gender ideologies are similar (Lye and Biblarz 1993, Minnotte et al. 2010). As egalitarian men think that raising children is the duty of both parents, they take collective responsibility with their spouses in childcare (Kaufman 2000). The fact that men go beyond traditional roles and participate in the care of their children supports their wives' both having a higher marital satisfaction (Kalmijn 1999) and exhibiting more effective parenting (Allen and Daly 2007). Women with egalitarian gender roles, on the other hand, do not seem as advantageous as men, because these attitudes are not always supported by the environment. In such a case, having an egalitarian attitude might be associated with low marital satisfaction among women (Minnotte et al. 2010), and the unbalanced distribution of tasks in housework affects marital satisfaction negatively (Oshio et al. 2005).

Late adulthood

Although boys who have been socialized from an early age in order not to reveal their feelings experience difficulties of this in each developmental period, the relevant research findings indicate that these trends in old age have more negative consequences on health. Sharing emotions is an important mechanism for coping with stress. However, sharing emotions has been labeled as weakness and inadequacy from as early as childhood, which prevents men from using this method even in late adulthood. Studies have shown that while women prefer to receive support and share their feelings when faced with an adverse situation, it is very limited for men (Melendez et al. 2012). Older women

can receive support from many different sources due to their wider social network. The source of social support for men is usually their wives (Antonucci and Akiyama 1987). As mentioned above, this difference in social relations is related to the fact that women have a more relationship-oriented style and broader social environment as from younger ages -rather than being specific to old age-, and this situation continues in late adulthood (Vandervoort 2000). Older women have more social support than older men. Expanding the social network seems to be beneficial, especially for men in old age. It was found that men's health became better as their social support level increased (Okamoto and Tanaka 2004).

However, in addition to preferring to get less social support, many men use alcohol at a higher rate than women to cope with stress (WHO 2002), and this situation negatively affects both psychological and physical health. When the population statistics in many countries around the world, including Turkey, are examined, it is reported that women live longer than men (He et al. 2016, TÜİK 2020). In addition to the fact that women have various physical advantages in terms of longevity (e.g., having an extra X chromosome, higher estrogen hormone, etc.), many researchers think that sharing emotions plays a vital role in women's longer life (WHO 2002, Austad 2006, Ostan et al. 2016).

Women not only get support from others but also give more support when other people experience an adverse situation. For example, when married men are diagnosed with schizophrenia, their spouses provide both care and economic support, while women are more likely to be abandoned or divorced by their spouses if the same diagnosis is made (WHO 2002). In fact, although elderly individuals are generally thought that they need support, providing support is also good for their health (Brown et al. 2003). For instance, it is found that providing support to their spouses and social networks is associated with fewer depression levels not only in women but also in men (Tsuboi et al. 2016). However, it is not always possible to state that providing care for older women is beneficial. Older women take the responsibility of caring for both their grandchildren and older parents. In many societies, the duty of providing care is expected from older women, which situation can adversely affect their health (Zahidi 2012).

Both women's and men's gender characteristics change with old age. There is a decrease in women's characteristics defined as feminine and men's characteristics defined as masculine, and both genders become more androgynous by starting to show the characteristics that are thought to belong to the other gender (Livson 1983). When older adults are compared in terms of feminine, masculine, and androgynous characteristics, it has been reported that androgynous characteristics are seen more in both men and women. It is also reported that while high levels of androgynous traits are associated with less depression and better physical health (Vafaei et al. 2014, 2016), feminine characteristics are associated with poorer physical health in late adulthood (Willerth et al. 2020). Similarly, in another study conducted with middle and late adult women, it is found that masculine characteristics are related to higher self-esteem and a sense of mastery, while feminine characteristics are associated with higher

levels of stress (Frank et al. 1985).

The fact that men, like women, experience a decrease in their characteristics defined as masculine by undergoing a transformation in their gender roles in old ages stems from the fact that maintaining these dominant characteristics in late adulthood is not a very adaptive method anymore. It is observed that since the strong, dominant positions of men in society have become more flexible, and their physical strengths decrease, they cannot maintain these characteristics as before (Livson 1983, Arnett 2016). It is also thought that this difference in gender roles occurs with age stems from decreasing hormone values. Like women, men undergo hormonal changes with age in which their testosterone levels decrease as from middle adulthood period, as well (Feldman et al. 2002).

While having traditional, feminine characteristics provides various advantages such as social acceptance of women at a young age (Brescoll and Uhlmann 2005), it has been reported that having a high level of characteristics defined as feminine at a later age can be disadvantageous for women, and therefore they may face various adjustment problems. Women with more feminine characteristics have more difficulty in coping with loss of a spouse than women with more independent and autonomous characteristics, and they need the support and closeness of other family members more (Livson 1983). In some cases, on the other hand, women who have more independent and autonomous characteristics in middle age may have more characteristics defined as feminine, such as being more dependent, as they get older. Since an individual with a strong, independent, and autonomous personality will be less likely to get support from others, they are more likely to show more characteristics defined as feminine because they need more support from others in older ages (Clarke-Stewart and Parke 2014). It is possible that this situation may arise from economic conditions, as well. Due to the fact that women do not have the same opportunities in education and working conditions as men throughout their life, they have lower economic conditions and living standards in their older ages (Beard et al. 2012).

The transformation of women's gender roles in older ages provides an advantage, especially for women in traditional societies. In these societies, women have a secondary position from an early age. Young women are expected to follow some strict practices, such as serving all older people (regardless of men or women) in their husband's family, obeying their demands, and not being able to start eating before they finish their meals. In late adulthood, on the other hand, their social position becomes very strong (Özonur-Çöloğlu 2009, Arnett 2016). This situation actually stems from a patriarchal system, as well, which also weakens women implicitly and feeds traditional gender stereotypes. Although the status of the woman seems to get stronger as her age increases, it is actually still mostly determined by the male, such as having a son (in other words, being a boy's mother) or the death of her husband. In terms of family relations, for instance, it is observed that a woman's mother-in-law has a strong authority over her (Arnett 2016, Kuru 2016). In this context, mothers of boys have more social power in older ages than mothers of girls. The older mother is seen as the sacred

person who should be listened carefully in the family; and when the father dies, she gets the status of a person who manages the family (Yılmaz 2004). According to this tradition, at the beginning of adulthood, the social status of the woman is very low and defined as “fresh bride”; and then when other male children in the family marry, she becomes a “senior bride” status. Then, when his own children marry, they can reach the top position of “mother-in-law” at the end of adulthood (Özonur-Çölođlu 2009). This tradition, in which women are inferior to men of all ages and older women, is a more common practice in Asian societies and reflects a strong patriarchal system of family structure (Lindsey 2015).

Although the aging of women enables them to get a better social position in the traditional and collectivist cultures, the old age of women is still presented as a negative situation in the media tools. Older women are shown less in television, compared to young women and men of all ages, especially during prime time, they are given more victim roles as movie and TV series characters (Cohen 2002, Lindsey 2015), and are depicted more in family/social activities rather than as working in the workplace (Bradley and Longino 2001). Also, although the presentation of being old as unfavorable in terms of physical attractiveness and beauty is valid for both men and women, the pressure about this issue is on women much more powerfully compared to men. The characteristics of older men, such as especially their maturity, are brought to the forefront, and they continue to be preferred by young women. However, women of the same age are perceived as “ugly” due to their physical characteristics that indicate they are getting older (Cohen 2002). This situation is most probably related to the differences in the preferred traits in partner selection between men and women. While men focus more on physical appearance and youth, women tend to evaluate economic power and intelligence as more important traits in partner selection (Sprecher et al. 1994, Furnham 2009). It is seen that these trends in preference differences between men and women continue in later ages (Schwarz and Hassebrauck 2012). However, the above-mentioned negative presentations of older women in the media pose a threat to their self-esteem, and it also supports the continuation of negative attitudes and stereotypes towards older women in the society (Cohen 2002).

Discussion

In research on humans in many different disciplines, gender emerges as one of the most fundamental variables. Beyond biological sex, the concept of gender, which we socially construct, essentially shapes our interactions with other people from infancy to late adulthood. From the early years, children comprehend what gender classification in the world means through their social environment and create their own gender schemes (Martin et al. 2002). In this process, they also adopt stereotypes about men and women that are common in many societies. Thus, gender schemes guide children in the way of societal expectations (Liben and Bigler 2002). In addition, failing to comply with these expectations results in substantial social pressure at home, school, and other social environments (Ruble et al. 2006). Although

this pressure exists for both female and male children, it is possible to indicate that the social pressures faced by girls have decreased compared to the past centuries. However, in fact, there is no significant change for boys in this regard. A good example of this is a cross-cultural study, as mentioned above, showing that in dozens of countries, female adolescents have more egalitarian attitudes than male adolescents consistently (Dotti-Sani and Quaranta 2017).

Struggling against gender stereotypes has an important role in the healthier social and emotional development of children (Stetsenko et al. 2000, Bhanot and Jovanovic 2005). In addition to the parents and teachers who play a fundamental role in the education of the child, the lack of protection of children against media contents also causes to continue stereotypical socialization (Clarke-Stewart and Parke 2014, Coyne et al. 2016). Struggling against gender stereotypes has critical consequences for not only childhood but also adulthood. It is possible to state that today's adults are less sexist than in past generations (Chesley 2011). The change in gender roles that started for girls has continued for several decades for women. That is, the egalitarian approach to gender roles has increased (Carlson and Knoester 2011). On the other hand, although women are more involved in the business world than in the past, they are still expected to be mainly responsible for family roles (Koivunen et al. 2009). Therefore, many women have to deal with high levels of stress due to work-family conflict (Poms et al. 2016). In fact, the traditional approach to gender roles negatively affects the lives of men, as well, in which it imposes unnecessarily more -particularly economical-responsibilities on them (Artazcoz et al. 2004, Minnotte et al. 2010). It is clearly seen that these negative effects continue until old ages (Okamoto and Tanaka 2004).

Many institutions and organizations around the world carry out international studies to ensure gender equality by struggling against gender stereotypes (UNDP 2018b, UNICEF 2019, United Nations 2019). The gender inequality index for countries in the world published annually by UNDP (2018a, 2019) indicates developments in this regard. According to the index data, it was reported in the 2018 report that women in 43% of all countries have a low-to-moderate level of gender equality; and this rate declined to 39% in the 2019 report. However, in terms of gender equality, only 33% of countries including Turkey has a very high humanitarian development. Despite this, it is the third country after Saudi Arabia and Oman, with the lowest female labor force participation rate.

Conclusion

In our country, the 11th Progress Plan is published by the Presidency of the Republic of Turkey (2019), and a separate title for women was opened in this plan's targets of "qualified people, strong society". In this title, the objectives of struggling with discrimination against women, strengthening women's positions in economic and social life, improving women's representation in the media, equality of opportunity in education for girls, and supporting

their education in male-dominated professions such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics were stated. It is very promising that one of the most important documents of our country's bureaucracy has policy decisions about gender equality and struggling against gender stereotypes. We suggest that it is very important to monitor how these significant decisions are implemented by the responsible institutions and organizations. In addition, gender inequality causes sexist pressures on men as well as on women. Further social policies should be developed to effectively struggle with these pressures (e.g., social policies that support fathers, as well as mothers, to take more responsibility for issues such as family roles and childcare) and to ensure that both women and men can internalize gender equality. It is thought that taking such initiatives will carry our country further in gender equality. It is important to have a sufficient research base to reveal current needs in this regard and to shed light on intervention studies and practices for both adults and children samples. In this context, conducting more empirical studies on gender stereotypes among parents and spouses as well as sexist attitudes in the school and work environment will make crucial contributions. It is especially necessary, and strongly suggested by the authors of this article, to investigate the developmental outcomes of having families with either egalitarian or traditional gender roles on children through long-term longitudinal studies.

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Authors Contributions: The authors attest that they made an important scientific contribution to the study and have assisted with the drafting or revising of the manuscript.

Peer-review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Conflict of Interest: No conflict of interest was declared by the authors.

Financial Disclosure: The authors declared that this study has received no financial support.