Gender Equality Awareness among Middle School Students[*]

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Abstract: This research was conducted to create an egalitarian change in middle school students perspectives on gender roles. The study group consists of 15 girls and 14 boys in 6th-grade aged 11-12 in a public middle school. Action research, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in the study. A questionnaire form prepared by the researchers following the sub-problems of the research were used as a data collection tool. Descriptive analysis was used in data analysis. According to the findings, it was observed that under the current circumstances, middle school students adopted traditional gender roles. After implementing the action plan, it was determined that the participant's perspectives on gender roles changed in favour of gender equality. As a result of the study, it is suggested that the awareness of gender equality, which is the basis of the socio-economic development of the countries, should be brought to the individuals through schools, and educational environments should be arranged following this acquisition.

Keywords: Gender, gender equality awareness, action research

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Introduction

Gender emerges as social identity features of women and men shaped in social and cultural relations, while sex refers to the differences in the biological nature of individuals. Gender signifies a social structure determined by social norms, beliefs, traditions, and culture (GENIA, 2019) and includes gender-specific definitions, behavioural norms, values and attitudes of societies (USAID, 2007). This means that the legitimisation of gender-based roles and behaviours expected from men and women differ according to cultures (UNICEF, 2017). However, when it comes to the position of women and men in society, it is seen that most societies glorify the activities and attitudes of masculinity. This situation causes the increase of male spaces and status (Francis, 2006). In this case, there is a gender inequality that manifests itself in basic areas of social life such as education and career opportunities, employment, and sharing economic resources, and political representation.

All gender segregation codes are acquired almost from the first years of life and can affect the individual in every period of their life. In the literature, it is seen that different theories explain the process of acquiring gender roles. In this study, based on the social learning theory, the change in the perspectives of middle school students regarding the concept of gender and gender roles is examined through various activities in the classroom. It is emphasised in social learning theory that gender stereotypes are learned through operant conditioning and modelling processes (Dokmen, 2015). According to social learning theory, gender emerges as a result of the interaction of the individual with the environment. The child learns the roles appropriate to their gender by following the models of women and men in their social environment through their mother, father, friends, and school (Arslangiray, 2013). In this context, Dokmen (2015) states that gender stereotypes are also conveyed by modelling media heroes through mass media. Individuals adapt to society by choosing a model from the existing behaviour models (Ozdemir, 2010). In summary, individuals socially learn to behave following their gender roles or categories through observation, modelling, and imitation. According to this approach, when we educate all children in gender-neutral environments, schools provide equality and contribute to the development of society's qualified manpower potential.

The problem of gender inequality is universal and historical and is the subject of various studies in which international comparisons are made. When the data of 2020 from the World Economic Forum - Global Gender Equality Reports evaluated; it is seen that Turkey ranks 130th out of 153 countries in terms of gender equality, 113th in access to education, 136th in participation in economic life, 109th in political empowerment and 64th in health and survival (WEF, 2020). While economy, health, political participation, and education are the main fields that constitute the indicators of gender equality, education stands out among others with its guiding and intermediary role.

The field of education is one of the most effective social mechanisms that will transform gender inequality. It is stated that to achieve the goal of gender equality, attitudes that legitimise unequal gender relations should be changed (Baydur et al., 2016). In the current gender culture, women receive less share of social resources and share lower-status social positions compared to men. Regarding the country's development, women need to be in the right place in terms of social role and status. This can be achieved through a conscious and qualified education (Ozaydinlik, 2014). In article 10/c of CEDAW (1979), it is stated that "the removal of stereotypes about the roles of women and men from all forms and levels of education and the promotion of co-education and other forms of education to achieve this aim, especially the revision of textbooks and school programs, and the improvement of educational methods for this purpose" (p. 8) is essential. However, educational institutions sustain gender inequality through "teacher behaviours, curricula, educational materials, classroom arrangements, hidden programs, sexist discourses, traditional role distributions and role models, gender-based expectations and professional orientation" (Acar-Erdol & Gozutok, 2017, p. 42). Family and environmental structure, upbringing and pedagogical formation training of traditional teachers cause the continuation of the sexist structure unknowingly (Polat, 2010). Unless teachers' perception of gender equality develops, they can transfer sexist codes to their students (Kilavuz, 2019). While education causes the reproduction of traditional gender roles, it also enables women to discover their hidden powers (Gogus-Tan et al., 2000). Accordingly, education and schools should be structured to promote gender equality instead of reproducing gender inequality.

Schools are regarded as the only official institution responsible for the socialisation of the individual. Schools convey stereotypes regarding gender roles to individuals via teacher expectations, communication patterns, materials used and contents of educational practices, either secretly or openly (Esen, 2015). While schools are environments where gender roles are reproduced, they also have opportunities to gain positive attitudes in this regard, as in many other subjects. This action research, of which the target audience is middle school students, was carried out to gain an egalitarian perspective on gender roles in the school environment where children spend most of their lives. In the literature review, no action research on gender equality with middle school students was found in Turkey. Action research is a method that can be used to solve an existing problem or increase the quality of work done. Action research aims not to produce theoretical knowledge but to improve practice (Aksoy, 2003). Besides, the active participation of the participants in the practice breaks the resistance that may occur, and cooperative practices can provide social changes. In line with these reasons and evaluations, it is thought that this action research with middle school students will enable them to approach the subject with a different method and contribute to raising social awareness with this and similar studies.

An environment where there is no gender discrimination can provide positive opportunities for individuals to realise themselves. In education, which is one of the most important areas of socialisation, daily practices that reproduce gender discrimination should be carefully focused on, and students should be able to question

their environment by being aware of gender inequality. In this study; within the scope of the problem "What is the perspective of middle school students on gender equality?" answers to sub-problems "What are the views of middle school students about gender equality?" and "How will the thoughts of middle school students about gender equality change as a result of the activities to be done?" are sought. This action research aims to raise awareness among the middle school students participating in the research that there should be equality between women and men on issues such as education, career choice, and domestic roles. It is thought to help the participants take steps sensitive to gender equality in their decisions and behaviours on many issues from education to career choice and employment throughout their lives.

Method

Research Design

Qualitative research was preferred as an approach, and action research was preferred as a research design since it aimed to carry out the research in the natural environment of the classroom and convey the process realistically and holistically. Gender equality is an issue directly related to social areas in society. Action research integrates change and development practices in social areas with scientific research methods (Balci, 2016). In the action research design, since all stakeholders in the institution can practice, people such as teachers, administrators, and education specialists can participate in practices in research conducted at school (Yuksel, 2010). In action research, teachers research how they can do their work better, and since they participate directly, they can produce solutions by obtaining the best information about their practices (Artvinli, 2010). Although the steps of action research may vary by discipline and researcher, it generally consists of observation, reflection and action steps, where the action step includes planning, implementation, and evaluation (Glesne, 2015). In the current research, as given in Figure 1 below, the research steps are planned as 1. Problem Definition and Action Plan, 2. Practice, 3. Observation, and 4. Reflection and Evaluation.

Action research can be used in different ways. Berg (cited by Yildirim & Simsek, 2013, p. 334); categorises action research as a research design in terms of purposes as follows.

1. Technical/scientific/collaborative action research,

2. Action research based on practice/mutual cooperation/discussion,

3. Liberating/developing/critical action research.

Figure 1.

Action Research Cycle (Bal & Doganay, 2014)

In this research, "liberating, developing, critical action research" included in Berg's classification was preferred. This type of action research has been preferred because it has a critical perspective and provides the practitioner with new knowledge, skills, and experience (Norton, 2009). In this approach, the researcher is in the practitioner's position and combines theory and practice. In the process, the researcher can look at their practices with a critical eye and question their role (Beyhan, 2013). Moreover, by becoming more competent in their profession, they can develop views on policies related to their field (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). The researcher's opinions on this situation are also given in the conclusion and recommendations section.

Research Group

The research group consists of 29 6th-grade students in the 2018 - 2019 academic year in a public middle school in the Mersin province Silifke district. It consists of 15 female and 14 male students ranging between the ages of 11-12 with similar socio-economic backgrounds. Easily accessible case sampling, one of the purposive sampling methods, was preferred. In this sampling method, the researcher prefers a situation that is close and easy to access to gain speed and practicality (Yildirim & Simsek, 2013). Since action research provides the opportunity for teachers to research in their own classrooms, it was deemed appropriate to work in the classrooms of one of the researchers.

The developmental characteristics of the middle school students were considered in the research design, the development of data collection tools, and the execution of the activities. The 6th-grade level is expressed as adolescence, known as the entrance to

puberty. When abstract thinking skills are acquired, individuals think about ideals related to themselves and the outside world in this period. Longing for adulthood, they believe that they can think like them (Durdu, 2013). Adolescence, an important stage in human development periods, is a period in which physical growth and sexual development, and psychosocial maturation occur in the transition from childhood to adulthood (Akcan-Parlaz, Tekgul, Karademirci & Ongel, 2012). For this reason, in the transitional stage to adolescence, in which physical, psychological, and behavioural changes begin to be seen in the 11-12 age group, gaining a social identity and adapting to roles is observed.

Data Collection Tools

In this study, data were collected by applying a pre and post-questionnaire to the participants. In the action research implementation stage, the study was carried out by collecting the diaries of the activities from the students and having the students make performance products.

In the due diligence stage of the research, a questionnaire was applied to determine the students' awareness of gender equality. This questionnaire form contains two parts. The first part includes students' thoughts on gender equality, metaphors for the gender of women and men, and their views on gender responsibilities. The second part includes questions to understand the determinativeness of the concept of gender on domestic roles and career choice in students' social lives. The questionnaire was re-applied in the observation stage in the action research to determine the changes after the implementation stage.

Implementation of Action Research and Collection of Data

The action research was planned and implemented following the work schedule in Table 1 below. Implementation and data collection took place over 15 weeks between March and June 2019.

Table 1.

Action Research Work Schedule for Creating Gender Equality in Middle School Students

WORK SCHEDULE	2018 / 2019 Academic Year	Action Research Cycle
SEPTEMBER	Literature Review	Definition of the Problem
OCTOBER	Literature Review	Definition of the Problem
NOVEMBER	Evaluation of the Pilot Study	Preparing an Action Plan
DECEMBER	Evaluation of the Pilot Study	Preparing an Action Plan
JANUARY	Arrangement of Data Collection Tools	Preparing an Action Plan
FEBRUARY	Arrangement of Data Collection Tools	Preparing an Action Plan
MARCH	Survey Implementation, Video Activity	Due Diligence and Enforcement
APRIL	Video Activities	Practice
MAY	Video Activities, Poster Making	Practice
JUNE	Survey Implementation	Observation
JUNE	Analysis of Data	Reflection and Evaluation

Before the research, necessary permissions were obtained from the Directorate of National Education and the school administration to be implemented. The parent permission certificate was collected by interviewing the parents of the students. Since the researcher, a teacher, made the implementation herself, she took part in the research environment as a participant-observer and actively participated in the implementations with the students. The activities carried out in the research were observed in the natural environment where the study was conducted.

Since the validity and reliability studies used in quantitative research cannot be directly applied in action research, different measures have been taken for validity and reliability studies. Firstly, a pilot implementation was carried out. Details of the pilot implementation are described below. In qualitative approaches, credibility, transferability, reliability, and confirmability are sought for validity and reliability studies (Shenton, 2004). The most effective way to ensure credibility is seen as long-term interaction (Baskale, 2016). On the other hand, confirmability means that the research reflects the research subject, not the beliefs and prejudices of the researcher, and the research includes the findings obtained from the participants (Arastaman, Ozturk-Fidan & Fidan, 2018). In this study, credibility and confirmability were met. In this research, credibility is ensured because one of the researchers is a teacher in the practice environment. The researcher has been in the environment for a long time and is familiar with the students' culture of life. Therefore, an environment based on mutual trust is formed, and the researchers control their prejudices. Confirmability is provided by findings based on the experiences and thoughts of the participants.

Researchers determined the current situation and prepared an action plan suitable for it; they collected data before, during, and after the implementation and analysed it.

Pilot Implementation

A pilot implementation was conducted to see the suitability of the data collection tool and the efficiency of the activities to be carried out in this action research, which aimed to raise awareness of gender equality among middle school students. The pilot study was carried out with 39 6th grade students, different from the main study group participating in the research, in the spring semester of the 2017-2018 academic year. The questionnaire form and student diary were rearranged according to the data obtained from the pilot study and took their final form. It was deemed appropriate to make changes during this arrangement since the participants did not fully understand some statements. According to the results obtained from the pilot study, video contents were re-examined, and the order of watching the videos was rearranged. Additionally, short-term videos were found to be suitable for the age group. In the pilot implementation, students enjoyed being engaged in active learning by doing and experiencing during the preparation of the posters with the theme "colours, music, movies, sports, clothes, professions, housework, education, toys, dance have no gender". It has been determined that visual materials and collaborative work activities are productive in terms of research.

Implementation

This research, in which the researcher and the participants actively participated in the study, includes the implementations made in the classroom, which is the natural learning environment of the students. The implementation step covers 9 weeks, including activities on 7 videos and 2 posters. Video watching activities were applied for 7 weeks as 1 lesson hour, and poster activities for 2 weeks as 2 lesson hours.

Video activities were implemented as participants watched the video and wrote daily forms in which they noted their impressions, thoughts, and personal experiences from the video. Videos were preferred in which the participants would be aware of gender discrimination in different areas such as education, home environment, business life, and political life and therefore raise awareness of gender equality. Considering the age group of the participants, short videos that do not cause distraction and that they can watch without getting bored were selected. In addition, the videos were determined from among the videos used in different projects related to gender equality. The 7 videos used to raise awareness about gender equality in education, employment, political participation, career choice, and socio-cultural life were watched in 40 minutes (a class hour) every 7 weeks. The duration of the videos varies between 2-8 minutes.

Video Content Used in Activities

No Way in Our Family (6.54 min.): This video has been prepared within the scope of the "Strengthening Families for Gender Equality among Children Project" carried out by Istanbul Bilgi University Child Studies Unit (CSU) between April 2012 and September 2013 with the support of the Consulate General of Sweden. In the video content, it is stated that families unwittingly convey gender stereotypes. In addition, it is seen that social learning and gender roles are learned in the family where the first learning takes place (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XaXuRWAt03g).

What's different between you and me? (7.51 min.): This is a video about "Gender Discrimination" prepared within the scope of Children's Rights Cartoon Project" jointly run by "Cartoon Club" and "Rights Stage Club" consisting of primary school 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th-grade students and middle school 5th graders of Terakki Foundation Schools in the academic year of 2011-2012. The video content explains that children can play the games they want without gender discrimination and that people can be together anytime, anywhere without discrimination based on their gender and without stereotyping (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9EHBmhJQWvE).

Work, Home, Everywhere Equal, Together (4.17 mins): This is a video prepared for the project called "More and Better Jobs for Women: Women's Empowerment through Decent Work in Turkey". It is a project carried out jointly by the International Labour Organisation and the Turkish Employment Agency between March 2013 and March 2018 to raise awareness of gender equality. The video gives brief information about

our country's situation regarding gender equality and what can be done (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NNO9k4EFL8s).

No Development without Gender Equality (1.42 min.**):** The UNDP (United Nations Development Program) Turkey representative office aims to transform traditional gender norms into an egalitarian understanding and reduce the factors that hinder women's economic development. It is emphasised that gender equality is a human rights issue and one of the main factors of economic development (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cl4WaOHS6S8).

Gender in Business Life (3.12 min.**):** This video is prepared by Kocaeli University students for the Gender Equality course. In the video content, it is mentioned that there are stereotypes that women cannot do some professions. It is stated that such prejudices create difficulties for women's life. It is emphasised that every profession has difficulties, and there may be physical differences between people, but there should be no gender-based discrimination in choosing a profession (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4PShei5UOvE).

I Have a Request (3.15 min): The video describes male authorities' sexist approach and prejudice against women. At the same time, it has content that states that men and women should struggle together with the awareness of gender equality as unity against patriarchal authority (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mNVfYrengqs).

Pinkblue (8.43 min): This video won the second prize in the video competition held in İzmir within the scope of ETCEP (Gender Equality in Education Project). It is stated that women and men are labelled with gender stereotypes by the social environment, and they are forced to act according to stereotypical roles. It is seen that gender stereotypes, behaviours, and roles are transmitted by peers, same-sex, opposite-sex, and parents (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JwiVXvbGX2k).

Student diaries are designed like those in which students express their thoughts and feelings after watching videos during the implementation phase. There are 3 open-ended questions in the diary forms:

1. What was covered in the video?
2. What are the situations you encounter in your daily life related to this video?
3. What do you think about the video, and what situations should be included according to you?

With these questions in the diaries, the participants were expected to interpret and analyse the video content, compare the situations in the video content with the situations they encounter in daily life, and make comments that would raise awareness of gender equality, including their own thoughts.

In the poster activity, the students prepared posters in groups of two on the question "Does colours, sports, music, movies, professions, housework, toys, education, clothes, and dance have a gender?". Since the number of participants is 29, a group consists

of 3 people. The first and second poster activities requested posters with different themes, so each student worked on two different themes. A total of 28 posters were prepared with 14 group work. The students who chose what they wanted from the themes prepared posters by researching pictures, photographs, news, and slogans that reflected their thoughts. The activity carried out with learning has been a very instructive and educational activity for the 6th-grade level.

Analysis of Data

In the literature, data analysis methods used in action research are expressed as descriptive analysis, content analysis, and inductive analysis. Descriptive analysis was used in this study. Qualitative and quantitative descriptive analyses were made on the data obtained from the questionnaire forms used as a data collection tool. With descriptive analysis, the data set is meaningful and understandable by others (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2015). Yildirim and Simsek (2013, p. 256) explain descriptive analysis in qualitative research as "data are systematically and clearly described, descriptions are explained and interpreted, and some results are reached by examining cause-effect relationships". The data obtained within the framework of the answers given by the participants to the open and closed-ended survey questions were read, classified, and interpreted within the scope of the research questions.

Results

The findings obtained from the questionnaire applied for the due diligence step of the action research and the findings obtained from the questionnaire applied at the observation phase are presented comparatively in this section.

In the questionnaire applied before and after the implementation, the participants' thoughts about gender and gender roles were first determined through metaphors. In this context, the students were asked to fill in the blanks in the statement, "For me, woman/man means ………. Because ………". The metaphors used by the participants to describe men and women and their reasons are given in Table 2 below.

Table 2.

Students' Pre- and Post-Implementation Opinions on Metaphors of Men and Women and the Reasons for Using These Metaphors*

Partici pant	For me, woman means ………. because ……….		For me, man means ………. because ……….	
	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation	Pre-implementation	Post- implementation
(W2)	*Housewife, because she is always busy with the house.*	*Strong, because they are strong.*	*He doesn't do housework because he always works.*	*Equal, because they do girls' jobs, too.*

(M3)	Housewife, because she does the housework.	Strong, because they do any job.	Work responsibility, because they provide the needs.	Equal, because they do equal work.
(M2)	Housewife, because she does all the housework.	Strong, because we develop not only with men but also with women.	Valiant, because he is the breadwinner.	He can do everything, because he is equal.
(M1)	Housewife, because she is a woman.	Strong, because everyone is strong.	Chief, because he is the breadwinner.	He can do everything, because everyone is equal.
(W1)	Doing the housework, because women mostly do housework.	Strong, because she does a lot of work.	Playing football, Because men usually play ball.	Loving, because they also have the right to be happy.
(M4)	Mother, because she cleans the house.	Strong, because she is talented.	Father, because he buys things for the house.	Loving, because men can also be loving.
(W3)	Mother, because mothers are everything.	Strong, because women can also be strong.	Father, because fathers are protective.	Emotional, because men can also be emotional.
(W4)	Lady, because she is always beautiful and delicate.	Strong, because my mother can do everything.	Father, because he fulfils his fatherly duty.	Emotional, because they behave badly to hide their own sadness.
(M5)	Life, because they give birth to us and raise us.	Strength, because women are strong, too.	Breadwinner, because he earns money for the family.	Live, because he is equal.
(W5)	Star, because she shines bright like a star.	A strong individual because women are strong like men.	Bully, because he doesn't help anything.	Human, because he has the right to live.
(W6)	Flower, because they smell nice like flowers.	Human, Because he's alive.	A cunning person, because they are very cunning and mischievous.	Same with a woman, because they are the same in society.
(W7)	Flower, because they can sometimes be fragile.	Human, because she has the right to live.	Tree, because he can sometimes be tough.	A sweet person, because he buys presents.
(M6)	Everything, because I love my mother.	Human, because she has the right to live.	Young man, because he is the breadwinner.	A cute person, because women are called cute, but men can also be cute.
(M7)	Hardworking, because she always works.	Human, because she has the right to live.	Worker, because he earns money for the family.	Doing the housework, because anyone can do anything.
(M8)	Hardworking, because she always works.	Warrior, because she fights to protect her life.	Worker, because he earns money for the family.	Good, because men are good.
(W8)	The most beautiful thing in the world, because she is worth doing anything.	Courageous, because men don't do anything.	They are the president of their own, because they always justify themselves.	Me, because me.

(W9)	Dolly, because they never go out without make-up.	Short-haired, because it is not very good.	Strong, because men have muscles.	Me, they do any job.
(W10)	The future of the society, because they make the future.	Working at a job, because everyone can do whatever they want.	Mother's helper, because they support the mother.	Me, because I am a man.
(M9)	Clean, because polite.	Full of self-confidence, because she believes she can do anything	Rude, because they are angry.	Women, because they are equal.
(W11)	Freedom, because women have the right to be free.	Good, because women are good.	Freedom, because women have the right to be free.	Cleanness, because there is equality.
(W12)	should work if she wants to, she shouldn't only do housework.	Men, because they are equal.	Should stand by their children, because they should also spend time with their children.	Good, because everyone is the same.
(M10)	Human, because she is human.	She can do anything, because they have equal characteristics with men.	Human, because he is human.	Long-haired, because he can have long hair.
(W13)	Human, because she is alive.	Having a job, because they can do anything.	Human, because he is alive.	Washing the dishes, because men can also do housework.
(W14)	Individual	Same with men, Because they are equal in society.	Individual	Worker, because they work until evening.
(M11)	-	Success, because she should work.	-	Man, because he is the man.
(W15)	-	Hardworking, because she can do everything.	-	Strong, because he can do everything.
(M12)	-	My mother, Because she's a real woman.	-	Chattering, because men always talk.
(M13)	-	Mother, because she loves us so much.	-	Father, because he is both our mother and father.
(M14)	-	Weak, because they are delicate.	-	My father, because my father is the man.

*Note: 5 students could not answer because they could not participate in pre-implementation. The codes in front of the expressions indicate the gender of the participants and the number of participants.

Although not all of the expressions used by the students were metaphors, all answers were evaluated. It can be said that there are quite significant differences between the answers used before and after the implementation. In the metaphors used before the

implementation, it is seen that the participants mostly focused on the domestic roles of men and women and traditional gender stereotypes. For example, adjectives for women such as "housewife", "mother", lady", "delicate", "dolly", and "flower" were included in the statements of 11 participants. In contrast, attributions for men such as "father", "valiant", "work responsibility", "chief", "worker", "young man", "freedom", "strong", "president of their own", and "breadwinner" reflected the answers of almost all participants who participated in the preliminary questionnaire application.

After the implementation, it is determined that most of the metaphors produced by the participants include a change in the direction of gender equality. For example, the most preferred metaphor for women in post-implementation metaphors was used by 10 students. It is seen that the view that men and women can be powerful is emphasised considering the reasons for using the strong metaphor. In addition, expressions such as "hard worker", "can do anything", "professional", and "warrior", which do not include gender discrimination and are out of stereotypes, were preferred by the participants after the implementation. Among the expressions for men preferred by the participants, the words "loving", "emotional", "sweet", and "cute" draw attention. With these expressions, it is thought that they want to emphasise the equality of men and women by expressing opinions outside of traditional stereotypes. "Equality" was an explanation made by 8 participants among the metaphors and the reasons for other metaphors used. In addition to this change, after the implementation, some students used the terms "man", "father", "strong", and "worker".

To find out their thoughts on the responsibilities of women and men, open-ended questions like "What responsibilities do you think women should have in society?" and "What responsibilities do you think men should have in society?" were asked to the students. The responses obtained are listed in the table below.

Table 3.

Pre- and Post-Implementation Thoughts of Students on the Responsibilities of Men and Women*

Participant	Views on women's responsibilities		Views on men's responsibilities	
	Pre-implementation	Post- implementation	Pre-implementation	Post-implementation
(M2)	*Housewife*	*Women have the same responsibilities in society as men.*	*He can be a father and take care of his children.*	*Both men and women can have the responsibilities they want.*
(M3)	*Cleaning the house*	*Women have the same responsibilities as men.*	*Providing the needs of the family.*	*Men and women have equal responsibilities.*
(M6)	*Things like housework*	*Men and women are the same.*	*Providing the needs of the family.*	*Equal to women*
(M4)	*Tidying the house and cooking*	*Same as men*	*Should earn money for the family.*	*Men and women are the same*

(M7)	*Housework, catering*	*Men and women are equal*	*Covering household expenses if married*	*All responsibilities*
(W1)	*Should do housework*	*She should be in her own business.*	*He should go to work, help his wife.*	*They should be able to do housework and take care of their children.*
(M9)	*Doing housework*	*Both boys and girls can have whatever responsibility they want.*	*Should go to work.*	*A man both does cleaning and his job.*
(M13)	*-*	*Same responsibilities as men*	*-*	*He can do cleaning, drive a car or take care of children.*
(W11)	*Keep the house clean if married.*	*I think they should be equal to men. I think girls can also join the army.*	*He shouldn't hinder his work.*	*He sweeps the house and repairs the lamp. There is no girls' job or men's job.*
(W4)	*She should be someone who can take care of the house, work and look after children.*	*She can have a job, do the housework and drive a car.*	*He should have a job, he shouldn't gamble, and he must take care of his children.*	*I think men can take any responsibility.*
(W8)	*They can be ambitious both at work and home.*	*She can not only fix the car but also wash the dishes. There is no girls' job or men's job.*	*He should take care of his child, go to work on time.*	*Helping women when they're not busy.*
(W10)	*Their responsibilities at home, work, and in society.*	*I think a woman can handle it all.*	*Helping women*	*Tidying their beds, eating regularly.*
(W12)	*She should be able to take care of her children.*	*Housework*	*He shouldn't be angry with his children.*	*He should do housework.*
(W6)	*She should take care of her child, go to work on time.*	*She should work.*	*Studying, tidying*	*He should do whatever he can.*
(W14)	*She can be a mother and take care of her children.*	*Women can do any job. She can clean and repair a car.*	*He should be polite, kind, tolerant and virtuous.*	*A man can also be a cleaner, apart from other professions.*
(W2)	*She should dress properly.*	*She can both fix the lamp or do the cleaning. She doesn't categorise them as girls' or men's jobs.*	*He should be polite to women.*	*She can both wash the dishes or fix the car. He doesn't categorise them as girls' or men's jobs.*
(M5)	*She owns her man and is the lady of the house.*	*to their internal rights*	*He should tidy his bed when he gets up.*	*Girls'job.*
(M1)	*She shouldn't see other men if married.*	*She should do whatever she can.*	*He should be nice to women and shouldn't think that women are weak and men are strong.*	*They can also do housework or look after children as women.*

(W13)	She should be smart, moral, understanding, and good-looking.	Apart from other aspects, She can be like a football player.	He should have everything.	Equal responsibilities for men and women
(W5)	If she has a job, she should be interested in it; but she should take care of her children if she doesn't.	She should be able to get any job and should be respected by others.	The same as women	All responsibilities
(K3)	She should go to work and be respectful.	Help	Not hurting anyone	He can take any responsibility.
(W7)	She can also have responsibilities that men do.	Everything	He can also have responsibilities that women do.	He can take any responsibility.
(M10)	She must have everything.	She can do everything.	He must have everything, too.	Everything
(M12)	-	Everything	-	He can do everything.
(M8)	She has the same responsibilities as men.	Any Responsibility	He has the same responsibilities as women.	It can be anything.
(M11)	-	It can be anything.	-	He can do everything.
(W9)	I think men and women are equal.	It can be any job.	I think he should do everything as men and women are equal.	Everything
(W15)	-	-	-	-
(M14)	-	-	-	-

*Note: 5 students could not answer because they could not participate in pre-implementation. The codes in front of the expressions indicate the gender of the participants and the number of participants.

The roles of women and men determined according to social norms can become a basic indicator of gender discrimination. In line with these norms, a woman's place is home, and housework and childcare are her priority. Before the implementation, 2 out of 29 participants did not respond, and the answers were shaped accordingly, except for 6 of them. When the views on men's responsibilities are examined, it is seen that 2 students did not respond, 5 students responded with an egalitarian perspective, saying "same responsibilities as women", and 22 students responded in line with traditional gender roles.

It was observed that the participant students, who expressed their thoughts following traditional gender definitions before the implementation, produced egalitarian expressions after the implementation. The participants, who expressed their opinions on housework and childcare responsibilities regarding women before the implementation, turned to the view that women and men have equal responsibilities. Before the implementation, the students emphasised that men should work outside the home, earn money, and provide for the house. After the implementation,

responsibilities were not separated for men and women, and the idea was that both genders could do anything.

The answers the participant students gave to the question "Can colours, sports, music, movies, jobs, housework, toys, education, clothes, and dance have gender?", directed to determine their thoughts about the situations they may encounter in their daily lives, are given in Table 4 below within the scope of yes/no options.

Table 4.

Pre- and Post-Implementation Views of the Students on the Gender of Colours, Sports, Music, Films, Jobs, Housework, Toys, Education, Clothes, and Dance

	Pre-implementation		Post-implementation	
Can…. have gender?	Yes	No	Yes	No
Colours	6	18	1	28
Sports	7	17	-	29
Music	4	20	1	28
Films	3	21	1	28
Jobs	3	21	-	29
Housework	7	17	2	27
Toys	8	16	-	29
Education	4	20	1	28
Clothes	13	11	5	24
Dance	9	15	3	26

*5 students could not answer because they could not participate in pre-implementation.

The participant's pre-implementation mostly included statements that colours, sports, music, movies, jobs, housework, toys, education, clothes, and dance have no gender. It is thought that the students who state that the clothes can have a gender reflect the existing social norms more about the choice of clothes. Although the number of opinions about gender inequality in all areas decreased after the implementation, it was observed that the most resistance to change was about the choice of clothing.

Gender roles and stereotypes constitute an important topic in this research. Various items containing experiences related to gender roles and stereotypes were created, and the students participating in the research were asked to answer using true or false options. The findings related to student opinions are given in Table 5 below.

When the opinions before the implementation were examined, the main divergence was about "being loving" among all the items. The findings show that the participant students mostly tend to frown on the idea that men are loving. When other items are examined, it shows that opinions differ based on gender with smaller numbers.

Table 5.

Pre- and Post-Practice Participant Views on Various Gender Roles and Stereotypes

	Pre-implementation		Post-implementation	
CHARACTERISTICS	**TRUE**	**FALSE**	**TRUE**	**FALSE**
Boys can be given more pocket money.	1	23	1	28
Going to school is not as necessary for girls as it is for boys.	-	24	-	29
Only boys can play with toy trucks.	-	24	-	29
Boys can wear colourful clothes, too.	20	4	27	2
Boys can have long hair, too.	21	3	28	1
It is unfair that men play ball and swim in the sea while women prepare meals and tables in places where they go to have fun, such as picnics.	19	5	27	2
Both men and women can be strong.	24	-	29	-
Men can be loving.	14	10	27	2

*5 students could not answer because they could not participate in pre-implementation.

When the students' opinions are examined after the implementation, it has been observed that the thoughts pointing to gender discrimination in situations related to daily life have decreased, and the views on gender equality have increased. Before the implementation, there were 10 opinions about the fact that men could not be affectionate, but it was seen that this decreased to 2 after the implementation.

The table below, which includes the participants' opinions on the items related to the division of labour and reflections of gender on daily life, is important in showing whether there is a separation between men and women. The participants were asked to fill in the table responding to the social division of labour and gender relations. The distribution of the answers given to the questions is shown in Tables 6.a and 6.b.

Table 6.a

Pre-implementation Participant Views on Gender and Division of Labour

Who must/can do it?	Only Women	Mostly Women	Both Women and Men	Mostly Men	Only Men
Who must be a doctor?	-	-	24	-	-
Who can play football?	-	-	17	7	-
Who must take care of younger siblings?	2	3	19	-	-
Who must be a manager?	-	-	21	2	1
Who can cook?	-	8	16	-	-
Who can do the ironing?	-	8	16	-	-
Who must be a teacher?	-	-	24	-	-

Who must/can do it?	Only Women	Mostly Women	Both Women and Men	Mostly Men	Only Men
Who can climb a tree?	-	-	18	6	-
Who must be a politician?	-	-	22	2	-
Who must be an engineer?	-	-	22	2	-

*5 students could not answer because they could not participate in pre-implementation.

According to the answers to the questionnaire before the implementation, gender-specific differences were determined in the students' opinions. It is noteworthy that women are matched with domestic roles such as childcare, cooking, and ironing. In contrast, men are matched with professional fields such as playing football, being a manager, climbing a tree, being a politician, being an engineer, and responsibilities that indicate higher status in public life. It can be said that students observe gender-based domestic role sharing in the family and in the environment during their socialisation process, which is reflected in their answers. This situation shows that gender roles are transferred to individuals through experiences that exist without being aware of them, as stated in social learning theory.

Table 6.b

Post-implementation Participant Views on Gender and Division of Labour

Who must/can do it?	Only Women	Mostly Women	Both Women and Men	Mostly Men	Only Men
Who must be a doctor?	-	-	29	-	-
Who can play football?	-	-	27	2	-
Who must take care of younger siblings?	-	2	27		
Who must be a manager?	-	-	27	2	-
Who can cook?	1	-	28	-	-
Who can do the ironing?	-	1	28	-	-
Who must be a teacher?	-	-	29	-	-
Who can climb a tree?	-	-	27	2	-
Who must be a politician?	-	-	29	-	-
Who must be an engineer?	-	-	28	1	-

*5 students could not answer because they could not participate in pre-implementation.

According to the answers obtained, it is seen that after the implementation, the previously determined opinions that men will play football, men will climb trees and that women will do the ironing and cooking have decreased. There was an increase in the participants' opinions, which made gender equality awareness that both men and women can do these situations. In this context, it can be said that the activities carried out in the implementation phase provide awareness of gender equality and the action plan is successful. As a result, it can be stated that this action research achieved its purpose, and the expected change was seen in the participants' views.

Conclusion and Discussion

Gender inequality, like other social inequalities, is formed in social life in the historical process, is reproduced together with social institutions and daily life and transferred to future generations. The educational institution is one of the institutions where gender inequality is reproduced. It is one of the social structures that can be a pioneer in the transformation of existing inequality. Based on this idea, this action research aimed to raise awareness of gender equality in a secondary school with the 11-12 age group. An action plan consisting of various activities was prepared to raise awareness of gender equality in students. This plan, consisting of watching videos, creating a diary about videos and preparing posters, was implemented in 9 weeks. The pre and post-implementation responses of the students were compared through a questionnaire. The effectiveness of the implementation step of the action research and the changes in students' views were evaluated. With a questionnaire consisting of closed and open-ended questions and a total of 5 parts, students' thoughts on gender equality were identified through topics such as metaphors for women and men; social responsibilities and gender relationship; the gender of colours, sports, music, movies, occupations, housework, toys, education, and clothes in everyday life; gender stereotypes and social and professional division of labour. In this section, the findings were discussed and interpreted in light of the literature.

In this research, in the activities carried out with secondary school students, attention was frequently drawn to gender roles and stereotypes that cause gender inequalities to be reproduced and taken for granted by individuals in the socialisation process. The students' thoughts on gender roles and stereotypes were first discussed through the metaphors they produced for the male and female gender and the stereotypes embedded in these metaphors. There was a clear differentiation in gender stereotypes in the participants' metaphors about men and women before the implementation. It was observed that the students mostly preferred expressions that were shaped by domestic and mothering roles for women and clustered around the role of power and fatherhood for men. Parallels were found between the findings of this study conducted with 6th-grade students in secondary school and studies conducted at different levels. For example, Acar-Erdol and Gozutok (2017) found that students associate the concept of masculinity with bravery, youthfulness, superiority, and power in their study with secondary school students. Gulbasar-Sire (2009) found in her study with high school students that girls are active in domestic roles and boys are active in public spaces. She established that the gender roles determined by society and the resulting sexist division of labour emerged in high school students' thoughts. Sener-Ozel (2019), in her experimental study with undergraduate students, determined that the participants became aware of their current sexist attitudes and behaviours by self-evaluating their own lives. In a study conducted with preschool children and their parents, Yagan-Guder (2018) concluded that children have stereotypical views regarding male and female gender characteristics.

When the metaphors produced by the students in the observation step in the post-implementation of the research were examined, it was seen that the opinions that women were strong, that men could be emotional and that they could do housework

increased. The findings show that the activities at the implementation stage support a change of opinion in the participants that both genders can have equal responsibilities in society.

Gender stereotypes are transferred from early to young generations in various socialisation environments, especially in the family. These stereotypes create segregated social spaces and positions of power for women and men and often a disadvantage for women. Various features found in any person, male or female, are differentiated in traditional gender roles. It is expected that feminine features will be found in women and masculine features in men (Uygun, 2011). When the gender characteristics attributed to women and men are defined based on superiority, social inequality arises in terms of genders. For this reason, gender stereotypes, gender roles, and inequality relations have been at the centre of this study aimed at raising awareness on the subject.

Secondly, students' views on associating gender with social responsibilities were focused on. According to the study's findings, it was observed that the students acted within the framework of traditional gender definitions in their pre-application views on social responsibilities. According to the majority of the participants at this stage, women's place is at home, and housework and childcare are their priority. Most of the students attributed social responsibilities such as working and earning money for the family with men. It is thought that these answers are shaped in line with the responsibilities given to men and women by the patriarchal social structure, which includes gender discrimination.

After the activities, it was observed that the views showed a change in the direction that men and women should have equal social responsibilities. It was noted that the views of the participants focused especially on housework and child care. It was emphasised that both women and men could carry out these responsibilities and have a professional life. Based on these findings, it can be said that the activities carried out within the scope of action research contribute to the formation of the idea that both men and women have common social responsibilities.

Gender-based division of labour and segregation of responsibilities, which can be perceived as an ordinary part of daily life, is widely a part of the gender culture of the society. Gender is a concept related to society's responsibilities to men and women and how individuals are viewed in terms of gender in society (Alisbah-Tuskan, 2012). These definitions of genders, which develop in social life, operate in connection with the macro processes of the society such as economic organisation, culture, and beliefs and produce segregated areas and, unfortunately, inequalities for women and men. Gender equality can be achieved if women and men share power and knowledge, equal opportunities, equal rights, equal duties and responsibilities (Dincer-Akmese, 2015). There is serious gender inequality in Turkey in every aspect of life, from education to working life, from health to participation in decision-making mechanisms (Ozaydinlik, 2014). One way to fight off this inequality is to raise awareness among the younger generations.

All codes related to gender, which express the culturally defined characteristics of men or women, are acquired almost from the first years of life and can affect the individual and their views in every period of their life. Burt and Scott (2002) investigated the relationship between adult adolescents' gender role attitudes and their parents' attitudes in their longitudinal study with 602 families. In their study, they found that gender roles as complex and socially determined norms affect the lives of both adults and adolescents. Bryant (2003) states that in his longitudinal study with 2000 university students, he obtained findings that individuals' social environment, activities, and various experiences in their student life affect their views on traditional gender roles. It was determined that the traditional attitudes of the participants towards gender roles decreased with academic participation. Family, school, friends and other social environments are effective during the transfer of the society's culture to the individuals, in short, during enculturation. With the current action research, the schools' importance and contribution are emphasised in developing awareness favouring equality.

In the third part of the questionnaire, students' views on topics selected from the fields of daily life such as colours, sports, music, movies, occupations, housework, toys, education, and clothes were examined. The pre-implementation findings showed that the answers of the participants mostly did not have gender in these areas. After the implementation, although the number of opinions differing based on gender decreased considerably, it was seen that the resistance was mostly about the choice of clothes and dance.

The fourth part of the questionnaire includes giving pocket money, going to school, types of toys, clothing colours, hair length, division of labour at a picnic, being strong, and loving. It was observed that the student's answers to the questions related to these areas with gender differed, albeit limitedly, based on gender. It was seen that students' views on the issues that point to gender discrimination decreased in favour of equality after the activities were implemented. Similarly, in an experimental study examining the effects of a gender equality-oriented curriculum that covers education, politics, working life, and occupations applied to 7th-grade secondary school students, it was seen that the training embodied students' perceptions of gender and gave them awareness (Secgin & Kurnaz, 2015). Parallel findings that curricula conducted on gender equality can have significant gains have also appeared in other studies in the literature. Sivgin (2015), in her study investigating the effects of gender role education activities on gender stereotypes using the classical experimental method model, states that gender stereotypes about male and female roles, occupations, games, and toys are broken with gender education activities applied to 40 children in the experimental group. Cinga (2004) carried out educational practices that would raise awareness among the participants in her study in which she investigated the effect of the sexist approach on students' language use. The study results state that there is a change in the way that the participants notice the sexist expressions and that the instructor's training without using sexist language causes the students to move away from the sexist language. Esen (2013) examined the effects of an undergraduate course focused on gender issues she conducted with undergraduate students of education faculty. She observed effects in

teacher candidates to start questioning traditional value judgments about gender and gain motivation for change starting from their own lives.

Patriarchal societies assign roles to men, such as being responsible for the family's living, and women to be responsible for domestic chores rather than working life (Sis-Celik et al., 2013). In patriarchal societies, women are defined according to the characteristics of their society and most commonly in domestic areas (Temel et al., 2006). Gender roles related to the traditional division of labour between men and women cause girls and boys to grow up with discriminated roles (Aktas, 2013). Both girls and boys are restricted in designing their future and turning to professions where they can express themselves. In this context, the occupational and domestic division of labour was included in the questionnaire's last part.

Although limited, gender-specific differences were detected in the students' pre-implementation opinions. It has been observed that women are more matched with childcare and domestic chores than men, and men with activities such as playing football, tree climbing, and jobs and positions that indicate higher status in social life. Occupations constitute an area where the egalitarian views of the participants were intense pre-implementation; the opinions in favour of equality increased in the answers they gave to the questionnaire after the implementation. The fields of management, engineering, and football drew attention as they were the fields in which the participants showed little resistance to change. It is thought that this situation arises from the traditional gender culture competence perception, which effectively affects career choices. In this context, Acar-Erdol and Gozutok (2017) state that gender is also a criterion in choosing a profession, that women are associated with professions in social areas while men with professions in technical areas, and this is a major obstacle for individuals to discover and develop their talents and performances. According to social learning theory, the strong consistency between models and behaviours in one gender reinforces traditional gender roles (Dokmen, 2015). In line with the social learning theory, it is thought that individuals who resist change continue the traditional perception of their parents, whom they see as role models.

One of the areas where gender culture and gender segregation can be observed most clearly is business life and occupations. Gender-based division of labour, while defining the jobs shared by women and men, refers to the power relations between men and women, reproduces these power relations and corresponds to a distinction such as who does what work both in the society and at home (Dedeoglu, 2000). Therefore, it is seen that women face many problems in their careers, although their degrees are different worldwide (Parlaktuna, 2010). Occupations, one of the most important positions of public life, have also been one of the focal points of this research.

Correll (2001), in his study investigating the effect of gender culture on individuals' career preferences, states that men and women have different career preferences. Perceptions regarding the characterisation of occupations as masculine and feminine cause women and men not to benefit from equal opportunities (Acar-Erdol & Gozutok,

2017). For this reason, the relationship between career, occupations, and gender was frequently emphasised in the activities and questionnaire applied in the current study. There have been positive developments in the students' views that support the separation of the traditional male and female fields, which they have, albeit a little, about the professions and the division of labour based on gender.

The school environment and educational institution are seen as an important tool for students to become aware of gender roles and stereotypes that lead to unequal positions and opportunities and prevent them from being adversely affected by these stereotypes in their future lives. Frieze et al., (2003) state that gender culture in school societies should be evaluated and the gender strategies used should be reviewed. Sirmabiyikli (2017) states that the school transfers social values at every level of education, and the cultural and sociological structure is reproduced. In this process, it is possible to reproduce social inequalities. Mahaffy and Ward (2002), in their study examining the effects of gender roles on the future plans of adolescents, determined that girls and boys future plans regarding education are different. Chen et al., (2020), in their study investigating the effect of gender on scientific identity, concluded that the existence of gender role models around students in the formation of scientific identity is effective at school, social level, teaching, and workforce. Formal and non-formal education can lead to an egalitarian understanding instead of a discriminative perspective that causes inequality (Gunay & Bener, 2011). Based on this strong role of education and school institutions, in this research conducted with secondary school students, it is seen that there is a decrease in views on gender discrimination and an increase in views on gender equality. As a result, it can be said that the implementation step of this action research carried out achieved its goal and raised awareness, and it can be stated that the expected change was seen in the participants.

As a result, it is seen that the school has an important effect as the main engine that will initiate social change and transformation in terms of gender equality gains (Esen, 2013). When the literature is examined, it is observed that studies are carried out on the positive effects of short-term programs on gender equality awareness, supporting the findings of the current research (Esen, 2013; Cinga, 2004; Sener-Ozel, 2019; Sivgin, 2015). However, the planning and implementation of courses and programs that have continuity for the development of gender equality awareness and the organisation of educational environments in a suitable way for changing gender-discriminatory attitudes will contribute to the permanence of the positive perspective that will develop in students. In addition, the importance of gender equality in the pre-service and in-service training of teachers, who are role models for students and the main figure in the value transfer process, is evident.

While this study's strength is that it provides active participation to the participants, it is recommended to carry out studies that are strengthened with different activities such as creative drama practices. Furthermore, longitudinal studies on the subject are recommended for future research.

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Materials

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