SUPPLEMENT

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Attitudes of University Students Towards Domestic Violence Against Women

Abstract

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to determine the attitudes of university students towards domestic violence against women.

Methods: This cross-sectional study was conducted on students attending the School of Nursing and School of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation at a university in Turkey. The study was conducted between February 2015 and May 2015. The study was conducted on 415 volunteer students without resorting to the sampling selection method. Data were collected using a Personal Information Form and The Scale of Attitude Toward Domestic Violence. The data were analysed using frequencies, means, standard deviations, independent t-tests and ANOVA.

Results: The mean of attitude scores of university students toward domestic violence were 23.13 ± 6.66 and were affected by variables such as gender, and whether the questions should be asked to women who experienced domestic violence such as: "Does your partner have justified reasons for applying domestic violence against women?" and "Should domestic violence against women be shared by others?" and "Does domestic violence against women bother you?" ($p < 0.05$).

Conclusion: In this study, the mean of attitude scores of university students toward domestic violence were found to be low and their attitudes toward domestic violence were found to be unfavorable. It was suggested that education programs (seminars and conferences) consisting of information, guidance, stimulation and prevention be organized to reach out to university students who are interested in domestic violence against women.

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Family is the smallest social unit of the social structure. This social unit teaches individuals to recognize, to try to understand each other and to establish effective and affectionate communication by forming empathy [1]. Establishing an effective and affectionate communication by individuals within a family is effective for preventing problems that could occur. Experiencing negativity between family members about communication, in some cases, makes occurrence of various problems inevitable and domestic violence takes the first place among these problems [2].

Domestic violence affects all areas of human life, including private and social areas; therefore, it is considered to be a social problem, and its prevalence around the world is increasing rapidly [3]. This rapidly increasing problem frequently emerges as violence applied by men to women within a family setting [4]; therefore, this type of violence is defined as domestic violence against women. This violence experienced within family is a violation of human rights and liberty especially for women. It emerges as a result of unequal relationships based on gender, between men and women [5]. In the emergence of domestic violence against women, both personal factors (unemployment, low educational level, etc.) and social perception are markedly affected [6]. The belief that men are socially superior to women, the defining of a family as a social organization under the control of men, the economic dependency of women on men, and the acceptance of family as a private area and so that domestic violence is not shared with others are all effect the emergence of domestic violence against women [4,7]. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported that 35% of all women were subjected to domestic violence [5]. In the Violence against Women Prevalence Data: Surveys by Country report, it has been stated that 22% of women in Denmark, 25% of women in Germany and 14% of women in Norway were subject to domestic violence by their partners [8]. In contrast, in a study conducted in Turkey; 39% of women were reported to be subject to physical violence, 43.9% were subject to emotional violence and 15.3% were subject to sexual violence [9]. In the same research, 14% of the women agreed with the statement "In some cases, partners can beat their wives" and 48.5% did not share the violence they experienced with anyone [9]. In other studies conducted on university students, 44% of female students reported to have been subjected to physical violence by their parents [6], mostly by their fathers, and they thought that domestic violence against women was considerably widespread [10]. Furthermore, domestic violence against women has been determined to markedly affect family life [11]. In order to form a healthy society, we need to make individuals and families aware that

increasing social awareness and sensitivity to domestic violence against women is necessary. In this context, this study was conducted to determine the attitudes of the university students to domestic violence against women.

Methods

Design and participants

This cross-sectional study was conducted on volunteer students attending the School of Nursing and the School of Physical Therapy and Rehabilitation at a university in Turkey between February 2015 and May 2015. Sampling selection method was not applied in this study. The population of the students studying in that university program was 448 and 436 of the students volunteered to be part of the study. Of these, 21 were excluded from the research because of voids in their data collection forms, so the study was conducted on 415 volunteer students.

Data collection tools

For data collection in the study were collected using an the Personal Information Form (34 items), and The Scale of Attitude Toward Domestic Violence. The Personal Information Form was structured by the researchers after investigation of previous studies in the literature that determined socio-demographic characteristics (e.g., age and gender) and characteristics regarding domestic violence against women (e.g., "Is domestic violence against women widespread in the society?"). The Scale of Attitude Towards Domestic Violence developed by Sahin and Dissiz (2009), was used to determine the attitudes of the university students toward domestic violence against women [12]. This scale was 5-item Likert scale. The scale comprised of 13 items and four sub-dimensions. The sub-dimensions of the scale were listed as "normalizing the violence" (items 1-5), "generalizing the violence" (items 6-8), "reasoning the violence" (items 9-11) and "hiding the violence" (items 6-8). In the study in which the scale was developed, Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was determined as 0.72. In the current study, the reliability coefficient was found as 0.78 and the scale was evaluated as reliable. The lowest score that can be received in the scale was 13, and the highest score was 65. As the score received in the scale increased, the attitude for violence was evaluated as positive, and as it decreased it was evaluated as negative [12]. The data collection lasted approximately 10-15 minutes.

Ethical Consideration

The institutional ethics committee approved this study, and written informed consents were obtained from the students who participated in this study.

Data Analysis

Data were evaluated using SPSS 21.0 (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) and frequencies, means, standard deviations, independent t-tests, ANOVA were used for the analysis.

TABLE 1. Socio-demographic characteristics of study participants

Socio-demographic characteristics	n	%
Age, years		
≤20 years	197	47.5
≥21 years	218	52.5
Mean age: 20.94 ± 2.35		
Gender		
Female	323	77.8
Male	92	22.2
Family type		
Nuclear family	352	84.8
Extended family	63	15.2
Mother's level of education		
Elementary school and below	215	51.8
High school and above	200	48.2
Father's level of education		
Elementary school and below	134	32.3
High school and above	281	67.7
Income level		
Low	27	6.5
Medium	335	80.7
Higher	53	12.8

n=415

Results

The mean age of the 415 students in this study was 20.94 ± 2.35 years. In the current study, 77.8% of the students were female, 84.8% were from a nuclear family, the mothers of more than half of the students had received education only at the level of elementary school and below (51.8%) and their fathers had received education in high school and above (67.7%), and 80.7% of the students stated their income level as "medium" (Table 1). A significant number of the students (23.9%) indicated that they were subject to domestic violence. The majority of the students thought that domestic violence was widespread in the society (94.0%), and agreed that a partner cannot have a justified reason to apply domestic violence against women (91.6%) and that domestic violence against women should be shared by others (90.4%). Furthermore, 97.8% of the students identified that they bothered by domestic violence against women (Table 2). The mean of the attitude scores of the university students towards domestic violence was determined as 23.13 ± 6.66. Considering the scale sub-dimensions score mean of the students, the score mean of

TABLE 2. Some characteristics of the students towards domestic violence against women

Characteristics	n	%
Have you ever been subjected to domestic violence?		
Yes	99	23.9
No	316	76.1
Is domestic violence against women widespread in the society?		
Yes	390	94.0
No	25	6.0
Are there justified reasons for partners to apply domestic violence against women?		
Yes	35	8.4
No	380	91.6
Domestic violence against women should be shared with others		
Yes	375	90.4
No	40	9.6
Are you bothered by domestic violence against women		
Yes	406	97.8
No	9	2.2

n=415

TABLE 3. Mean of the attitude scores of the university students towards domestic violence

scale and sub-dimension scores	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD
Normalizing the violence	5.00	19.00	8.09	2.85
Generalizing the violence	3.00	13.00	4.71	1.95
Reasoning the violence	3.00	15.00	6.83	2.29
Hiding the violence	2.00	10.00	3.50	1.72
Total the scale score	13.00	50.00	23.13	6.66

Min: minimum, Max: maximum, SD: standart deviation
n=415

TABLE 4. Comparison of the mean of the attitude scores towards domestic violence based on some of the student characteristics

Characteristics	Mean $\pm$ SD	Statistical Analysis	
Gender			
Female	22.71 $\pm$ 6.15	t: -2.448	p=0.001
Male	24.64 $\pm$ 8.08		
Are there justified reasons for partners to apply domestic violence against women?			
Yes	28.02 $\pm$ 7.99	t: 4.581	p= 0.049
No	22.69 $\pm$ 6.36		
Domestic violence against women should be shared with others			
Yes	22.77 $\pm$ 6.19	t: -3.354	p=0.001
No	26.45 $\pm$ 9.52		
Did you mind bothered with domestic violence against women			
Yes	23.06 $\pm$ 6.45	t: 1.357	p=0.001
No	26.10 $\pm$ 13.24		

normalizing the violence was 8.09 ± 2.85 ; the score mean of generalizing the violence was 4.71 ± 1.95 , the score mean of reasoning the violence was 6.83 ± 2.29 , and the mean score of hiding the violence was 3.50 ± 1.72 (Table 3).

When the data in Table 4 was considered, the domestic violence score mean of the male students (24.64 ± 8.08) were higher than those of the female students (22.71 ± 6.15). Accordingly, there was statistically significant difference between the gender of the students and attitude towards domestic violence (t: -2.448, p=0.001; Table 4). The domestic violence score mean of the students who stated that “there were justified reasons for your partner to apply domestic

violence against women” (28.02 ± 7.99) were higher than those of the students who stated that “there were no justified reasons” (22.69 ± 6.36) and this difference was found to be statistically significant (t: 4.581, p=0.049; Table 4). The domestic violence score mean of the students who said that domestic violence against women should be shared with others (22.77 ± 6.19) were lower than those of the students who said that domestic violence should not be shared (26.45 ± 9.52). According to this, there was statistically significant difference between the variable of domestic violence against women should be shared with others and the attitude towards domestic violence (t: -3.354, p=0.001; Table 4). The domestic violence score mean of the students who were bothered with domestic violence against women were (23.06 ± 6.45) lower than those of the students who were not troubled by domestic violence (26.1 ± 13.24) and this differences was found to be statistically significant. (t: 1.357, p=0.001; Table 4).

Discussion

In the present study, the mean of scores the attitudes of the students towards domestic violence were determined as 23.13 ± 6.66 . The scores of attitudes towards domestic violence against female university students was found to be low. The attitudes towards domestic violence against women of university students are found to be unfavorable. In a study conducted by Tufan Kocak *et al.*, it was found that the mean of the attitude score of the nursing students towards domestic violence against women was low and unfavorable [4]. Factors such as the majority of the students in the studies were females and of a high educational level makes one think that they should show an unfavorable attitude towards domestic violence against women.

In the present study, the scores of attitudes of male students to domestic violence were found to be higher than those of the female students. In many studies were determined that the scores of attitudes of male students towards domestic violence against women were high. [1,10,13]. This difference of people in the attitudes and behaviors towards domestic violence against women based on gender is explained by the gender roles attributed to men and women in the social structure and their traditions[14]. In this regard, masculine behaviors are expected from men (brave, aggressive) and feminine behaviors are expected from women (submissive, timid, tolerant and meek). The results of the current study are consistent with the literature.

In the present study, the attitudes scores of the students towards domestic violence against women of the university

students who stated that “your partner had justified reason to apply domestic violence against women” were found to be higher than those of the students who stated that “your partner cannot have a justified reason for domestic violence”. In the studies, 26.7-30.2% of the students thought that men had proper reasons for domestic violence against women [3,15,16]. This situation makes one think that the students have a traditional bias, with regards to their social gender roles, in their attitudes towards domestic violence against women.

In the present study, the attitude scores of the students who expressed that “domestic violence against women should not be shared by others” were markedly higher than those of the students who thought that “violence should be shared”. These findings are consistent with those of previous studies [7,17,18]. In the current study, the attitude scores towards domestic violence against women of the university students who expressed that they were bothered by domestic violence against women were lower than those of the students who expressed that they were not bothered with domestic violence. In the studies conducted by Sakalli *et al.* and Günay *et al.*, it was determined that individuals have unfavorable perspectives towards violence against women. Also, it is determined that individuals were bothered by domestic violence [1,19].

Conclusion and Suggestions

In the present study, scores of the attitude of the university students towards domestic violence against women were found to be low and their attitudes towards domestic violence were determined to be unfavorable. The attitudes of the students towards domestic violence are affected by variables including gender and “Does your partner have justified reasons to apply domestic violence against women?”, “Should the domestic violence against women be shared by others” and “Does domestic violence against women bother you?” ($p<0.05$). Based on these results, improvements in the sensitivity and awareness of university students to the issue of domestic violence against women is crucial; hence, we suggest that educational programs (e.g., seminars and conferences) be organized that integrate informing, guidance, stimulation and prevention issues in order to reach university students regarding domestic violence against women.

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