

Gender Equality Online Training Information Booklet

Module 4
Code of Ethics and Preventing
Discrimination



Module 4: Gender-Sensitive Communication

What can we do for gender equality?

Certain good-natured statements, attitudes, or actions we innocently display daily may perpetuate gender inequality. Therefore, it can be an essential step towards achieving equality to evaluate every action and behavior through a series of questions focusing on gender equality before engaging in them. In this context, there are two fundamental topics we would like to address: Gender-Sensitive Communication and Incorporating a Gender Equality Perspective into Scientific Research.

1. Gender-Sensitive Communication

The language we use begins to take shape within the framework of the thought system of the society we live in from the moment we are born. Therefore, language is a tool that facilitates the internalization of gender norms, shaping how we perceive life and guiding our behavior in various situations. In this context, the words we consciously or unconsciously choose during communication with a person reflect our thoughts about the outside world and reproduce gender stereotypes. This can be observed in workplace interactions, such as interrupting female employees, addressing a female academic as "lady" instead of "professor," or using terms like "my dear" when referring to female colleagues.

We can illustrate what has been described with a poster as follows.

Is the poster below prepared with a gender-equal approach, in your opinion?



We can answer this question as follows.

Before evaluating the design language, let's look at the panel line-up. Assuming the poster shows the actual speakers of the panel. A panel that is so far away from equal representation is problematic about gender equality. This poster exemplifies what is referred to in the literature as "All Male Panels." When planning events, we should approach them with this perspective and strive for a gender balance of at least 40-60%. We can facilitate more accessible access to female experts through LinkedIn, Academia, and Google Scholar profile searches. If you find it challenging to locate female experts in the field, platforms like "Sensiz Olmaz Sessiz Olmaz" that keep a pool of experts can be utilized. This poster, even if it shows a group of researchers symbolically rather than the actual speakers at the panel, would still be problematic due to the overrepresentation of men. We see that out of the seven characters, six are male. In the poster, men are more prominent quantitatively and in terms of their appearance because they are larger and in the foreground. Also, using design elements like bold and large fonts would indirectly create a hierarchy among the components. We should ensure that such hierarchies do not map onto and reflect existing gender inequalities. We see that the representation of a female character in a seminar related to science and technology does not resemble a scientist but rather someone more involved in administrative tasks. This situation reflects stereotypes, prejudices, and discrimination based on gender. Even if unintentionally, a final look at our work with this perspective will be an essential step in not reproducing these judgments and discrimination in our design

In light of these evaluations, the checklist to be created for the poster project is as follows:

- 1- Is the language used gender-sensitive? For example, are the terms employed more like scientist, human, and businessperson rather than man of science, mankind, and businessman?
- 2- Do the representations feature an equal number of women and men?
- 3- Are all genders represented equally?
- 4- Have all genders been represented in connection with the subject matter?

Indeed, a gender-sensitive poster project created in light of all this information would look as follows.



With the example of a poster, we saw how print material can become more gender inclusive with the support of a checklist. We have shared the checklists we created on two different themes during the training, and we will also share them below. You can download them to your computer and use them in future work. These examples can inspire you to create checklists tailored to your specific focus. A repository of such checklists, including similar ones, will be developed and updated on the Özü Gender Office website and social media accounts in the future. If you have checklists you'd like to suggest, you can reach us via email.

Checklist for Gender-Sensitive Communication in Workplace Relationships

- I strive to use a professional tone when addressing my colleagues, avoiding expressions that assert superiority.
- I do not use expressions like "dear," "girl," "sister," "honey," "brother," or "uncle" while addressing my colleagues.
- I address the person I am speaking to in a way that they prefer to be addressed.
- During English communication, I address individuals with the pronouns they prefer.
- I do not refer to male academics as "professors" and female academics as "madam."
- Regardless of hierarchy, I establish physical boundaries when communicating face-to-face with colleagues.
- Even in jest, I do not touch my colleagues without their permission.
- Regardless of hierarchy, I do not stare in a way that would make any colleague uncomfortable or uneasy.
- I do not interrupt my female colleagues when they speak.
- I refrain from making observations or judgments based on traditional gender roles.

Checklist for Gender Equality in Communication Tools

- I balance the number of women and men in visual communication tools (posters, flyers, banners).
- In visual materials, I pay attention to the position and depictions of different genders with gender equality in mind.
- I strive to be as inclusive as possible in all communication materials.
- I avoid communication models based on socially accepted generalizations.
- I take care not to use expressions containing prejudice and stereotypes.
- I avoid expressions that glorify masculinity.
- I use expressions such as "properly" instead of "man-like," "humanity" instead of "mankind," "businessperson" instead of "businessman," and "scientist" instead of "man of science."

2. Incorporating a Gender Equality Perspective into Scientific Research

At our university, through the work we conduct, we shed light on the future. Therefore, gender equality and the gender perspective play a significant role in interpersonal relationships and the academic activities we pursue. Unfortunately, research, too, is not independent of gender-based prejudice and stereotypes. Gender is often overlooked in research designs, leading to a departure from scientific rigor due to neglecting an essential factor in the studied subjects. This narrow focus limits the impact of research and may restrict the functionality of derived applications for certain groups, and in some cases, it may even pose significant risks. For example, political science studies incorporating the gender factor into their agendas can achieve different outcomes than those that ignore it².

Additionally, using a gender-sensitive perspective when discussing the implications of fields like artificial intelligence on domains such as healthcare can enhance our research vision. Studies on chronic pain are often influenced by societal gender norms, which makes it difficult for women to receive a correct and timely diagnosis³. In this context, various studies reveal that chronic pain experienced by women is more often attributed to psychological rather than physical causes compared to men. It is argued that the fundamental reason for women not being taken seriously and facing difficulties in accessing treatment for chronic pain, which turns into discrimination, lies in the societal gender norms that impose prejudices and stereotypes on women⁴. These stereotypes include unsupported beliefs such as women being fragile, easily affected, prone to exaggeration, or hysterical. It is possible to diversify the examples of discrimination arising from research deficiencies that adversely affect daily life. Design based on research plays a crucial role in this regard. For example, a widespread discussion today highlights how crash test dummies and seat belts that are designed based on the male body norm increase the likelihood of injury and death for women in accidents⁵. The gender perspective, although often unseen, is a significant factor in the quality of research and the impact of research outcomes on daily life. Therefore, integrating a gender equality perspective into our research, starting from our everyday relationships, continues to be transformative for humanity.

2. Forman-Rabinovici, A., & Mandel, H. (2023). The Prevalence and Implications of Gender Blindness in Quantitative Political Science Research. *Politics & Gender*, 19(2), 482-506. doi:10.1017/S1743923X22000174

3. Frennert, S. (2021), Gender blindness: On health and welfare technology, AI and gender equality in community care. *Nurs Inq*, 28: e12419. <https://doi.org/10.1111/nin.12419>

4. Samulowitz, A., Gremyr, I., Eriksson, E., & Hensing, G. (2018). "Brave Men" and "Emotional Women": A Theory-Guided Literature Review on Gender Bias in Health Care and Gendered Norms towards Patients with Chronic Pain. *Pain research & management*, 2018, 6358624. <https://doi.org/10.1155/2018/6358624>

5. Perez, C. C. (2019). *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men*. Abrams Press.







genderoffice.ozyegin.edu.tr
gender.office@ozyegin.edu.tr

— ÖZYEGİN —
— ÜNİVERSİTESİ —

Nişantepe Mah. Orman Sok. No: 34-36,
34794 Alemdağ - Çekmeköy/İstanbul
T. 0216 564 95 64
E-posta: tanitim@ozyegin.edu.tr
www.ozyegin.edu.tr