

MOVING BEYOND TRADITIONS: ANALYSING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE VIA ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE PROGRAMS

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ABSTRACT

This article explores university students' perceptions of gender-based violence (GBV) using artificial intelligence (AI) for qualitative data analysis. GBV, a pervasive yet under-reported global issue, manifests in various physical, psychological, social, and economic forms, disproportionately affecting women and girls. Through in-depth interviews with 525 students from Iğdır University, words and themes associated with violence, women, and men were analyzed using AI tools like GPT-4 and Voyant Tools. The AI-assisted analysis revealed recurring themes such as gender roles, physical and psychological violence, and societal stereotypes. By combining traditional qualitative methods with AI-driven text mining and theme identification, this study uncovered nuanced insights into the perceptions of violence and gender roles among university students. The findings demonstrate the multifaceted nature of violence, highlighting the importance of addressing both physical and psychological aspects of GBV. Furthermore, AI's ability to identify missing themes, such as economic factors and media influence, contributed to a deeper understanding of how gender-based violence is perceived. This study emphasizes the value of integrating AI into social research to enhance the accuracy and depth of qualitative analysis.

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Introduction

Reaching each and every corner of the globe, gender-based violence (hereinafter GBV) is one of the most common, yet the least apparent human rights violation, and global health and development issue. It takes numerous physical, sexual, mental, economic, social forms and/or causes, including intimate partner violence, child marriage, female genital mutilation, trafficking for sexual exploitation, female infanticide, and ‘honour’ crimes, or being deprived of nutrition and education. (UNICEF, 2021; WHO, 2005; Morrison, et al, 2007; Heise, 1994; Berns, 2001; Cook and Bewley, 2008; Anderson and Bushman, 2002).

GBV is rooted in gender inequality, and is directed against both women and men; but the majority of victims are women and girls (EIGE, 2015). As there are unequal power relations between sexes, GBV arises and reinforced by the entrenched patriarchal system (Ragnarsson, 2010). UN WOMEN (2024) states that almost one in three women have been subjected to violence, particularly physical and/or sexual intimate partner violence, non-partner sexual violence, or both, at least once in their life. A retrospective study also highlights that episodes of violence were most often repeated against women than men; injuring, in most cases mild, were more frequently found in men than women; and a psychological impact was more frequently found in women than in men (Thureau, et al., 2015).

Within the framework of Türkiye, many studies have been conducted in this field (Kanbay et al. 2017). For instance, in a study conducted by Tetik (2017) on 510 married women, it was found that 38.8% of the participants were exposed to various forms of domestic violence at least once, and 12.7% were exposed to sexual violence throughout their marriage. The Family Research Institute of the Prime Ministry reported that 34% of women are subjected to physical violence and 53% to verbal violence within the family (Avcı, 2020: 69). Uçar (2007) also found that many women do not perceive the sexual violence they are subjected to by their husbands as violence. Since most women perceive violence only physically, they are not aware of other types of violence (Kanbay et al. 2017).

Looking at the current literature, according to the results of Sargın's (2018) metaphor analysis research on women, female participants used positive metaphors about themselves (e.g. bird of paradise, pearl, unique being), whereas male participants generally produced metaphors with negative meanings (e.g. devil, time bomb, monster, volcano and rain). The study conducted by Topuz and Erkanlı (2016) reveals striking findings on gender roles. In this study, characteristics reflecting traditional gender roles were identified for men and women. Women were described as fragile, in need of attention and care, dependent, hardworking, responsible and sustaining individuals. Men, on the other hand, were described as managing, directing, protective, possessive, combative, taking responsibility for their family, logical, not expressing their emotions, able to use physical force, independent and glorified. Sözer and Özkan (2014) examined men's attitudes towards women and gender stereotypes in depth. The findings of the study revealed that men view femininity as a natural and unchanging category, regardless of the level of education or social status gained. This approach shows that men do not care about the benefits and gains that women's education or active participation in social life can bring to them. These definitions show how ingrained and stereotyped gender roles are. The fact that women are seen more as beings in need of protection and care, while men are associated with qualities such as strength, logic and protectiveness has a significant impact on social expectations and relationships between individuals. Such characterizations can play a limiting role on the opportunities, career paths and personal development that both women and men may encounter in their lives (Yaşın-Dökmen, 2016; Bhasin, 2003).

In this context, gender-based violence is one of the most serious social problems of today's societies. This study aims to reveal the missing points in the context of this phenomenon in human perception. The aim of this research is to reveal the perceptions of university students about gender-based violence by using artificial intelligence as data analysis technique. The research questions to be sought are as follows:

- How do the words that the university students generated regarding the association of the word “violence” reflect their gender perceptions?
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- What implications can be made about the university students’ perceptions in terms of gender?

Methodology

As this study aims at revealing the perceptions of university students about gender-based violence, it was thought that qualitative research paradigm is more suitable.

Participants

Convenience sampling method was used for the purpose of saving time and cost. A total of 527 students from Iğdır University in Türkiye participated to the study. Two of the students were excluded due to duplicate data. So, the number of the participants of the study was 525, with a number of 395 female and 130 male students.

As to choosing the participants from university students, it was thought that university students are considered as the pioneers of social change and therefore their attitudes and perceptions on this issue play an important role in shaping future generations.

Moreover, Iğdır University, which is located in Iğdır, on the TRA2 Region of Türkiye, and which is one of the developing regions of the country (SERVA, 2014), attracts attention with its demographic structure and cultural characteristics, so that the importance of studies on this issue increases even more. Examining the perceptions of university students in Iğdır on gender bias is of great importance in terms of raising awareness and developing preventive strategies in this field.

Ethical Issues

The Ethical approval is taken from Iğdır University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee, on 05.12.2022 with the number 2022/20.

Moreover, each student was asked to give consent. Their names were not used; instead, they were identified with numbers such as FS1, MS2, etc. (female student 1, male student 2).

Data Collection, Procedure and Analysis

An in-depth interview technique was used as a data collection technique and a semi-structured interview form was used (Patton, 1987) to gain similar replies to similar questions by different participants. The open-ended questions were compiled after a literature review and were evaluated by three field experts.

The demographic questions are about their gender and age. The other open-ended questions are:

- *What is the first word that comes to mind when you think of violence?*
- *What is the first word that comes to your mind when you think of the word woman?*
- *What is the first word that comes to your mind when you think of the word man?*

The interviews were made between the dates 01.01.2023-01.04.2023. Each interview lasted between 10-12 minutes and recorded and transcribed verbatim by the researcher.

While analyzing the data set, these steps were followed: Firstly, the words that the participants generated were analyzed and visualized as frequencies using voyanttools. In the second stage, codes, categories and themes were created from these frequency words using GPT-4 artificial intelligence program and missing themes that were not in these themes were removed in this context.

In particular, it covers the following qualitative research methods:

- **Word/theme analysis (content analysis):** It involves examining the presence of certain words and themes in the text, their meanings and contexts. In the example, the words "violence", "woman" and "man" were frequency analyzed.
- **Coding:** It refers to creating meaningful categories/codes from qualitative data. In the example, codes and categories were created from frequency words.
- **Theme analysis:** It refers to combining codes under broader themes. In the example, themes were created from the codes and missing themes were identified.
- **Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis:** It is the use of computer programs (such as voyanttools, GPT4) in qualitative data analysis.

The application of AI in qualitative data analysis: This study highlights the substantial contribution of artificial intelligence, namely GPT-4, in facilitating qualitative data analysis. Artificial intelligence was employed to assess the frequency of specific words and to discern overarching patterns and themes within the dataset. Specifically, GPT-4 was utilized to execute various tasks:

1. *Automated Theme Identification:* Following the extraction of word frequencies for terms like "violence," "women," and "man," artificial intelligence was employed to create codes and categories derived from the repeating vocabulary. This facilitated the automated categorization of qualitative data into significant themes.

2. *Addressing Deficiencies in Theme Identification:* Although conventional qualitative approaches may neglect certain themes, artificial intelligence can identify absent or nuanced topics that human analysis may ignore. For instance, subsequent to the generation of first themes from the data, GPT-4 was assigned the duty of discerning supplementary aspects, including socioeconomic characteristics and media influence, which were not initially evident.

3. The AI solution facilitated the synthesis of extensive interview data by summarizing essential points, hence enhancing data processing efficiency and

diminishing the manual workload for researchers. This process facilitated the expedited selection of the most crucial themes concerning gender views and violence.

4. *Improved Precision and Impartiality*: The study utilized AI to reduce human bias in data interpretation. The machine-driven analysis's objectivity guaranteed that patterns emerged from the data independently of prior ideas.

In conclusion, AI tools like GPT-4 have markedly improved the accuracy, efficiency, and depth of theme identification in qualitative data analysis, thereby facilitating a more thorough understanding of university students' perceptions of gender-based violence.

As a result, both traditional qualitative data analysis techniques and current technologies such as text mining and artificial intelligence were used together, which constitutes the very originality of the research.

Findings

1. Analyzes on the question “What is the first word that comes to mind when you think of violence?”

When the related analyses were analyzed for the question given as “What is the first word that comes to your mind when you think of violence?”, the highest frequencies were found as follows: woman (61); violence (59); beating (58); physical (51); psychological (29); woman (28); fight (20); pressure (20); fear (19); battering (15); damage (13); bullying (11); verbal (10); male (10); slap (8); contact (8); psychology (8); death (8); helplessness (8); pain (8); directed (7); violence (7); bad (7); beat (7); violence (6); spiritual (6); psychological (6); swearing (6); insult (6); child (6); hit (5); anger (5); evil (5); power (5); physical (5); behavior (5); wounding (4); hitting (4); giving (4); brutality (4); kind (4); sadness (4); blow (4); ignorance (4); punch (3); injury (3); giving (3); brutality (3); manner (3); attack (3); psychology (3); intent (3); blood (3); women (3); animal (3); torment (3); making (3); beating (3); life (3).

Based on the keywords mentioned above, the themes related to violence can be given by GPT-4 as follows:

- **Gender and Violence:** The different faces of violence against women and men, the prevalence of violence against women and how gender roles play a role in the perception of violence.
- **The Interplay of Physical and Psychological Violence:** The relationship between the visible effects of physical violence and the less visible but deeper effects of psychological violence.
- **The Impact of Violence on Children:** The long-term effects of violence on children and how violence in childhood can affect behavior in adulthood.
- **Verbal Violence and its Social Impact:** The prevalence of verbal violence (swearing, insults, etc.) in society and the effects of such violence on individuals' emotional and psychological health.
- **Cultural and Social Dimensions of Violence:** How violence is perceived in society and how it is shaped by cultural norms and social structures.
- **Violence, Aggression and Emotional Reactions:** The origins of violent tendencies, individual and societal anger management, psychological and social factors that lead to violent behavior.

Although the themes given above cover some important aspects of the issue of violence, some other themes are left out because the topic is so broad and complex, and the missing themes could be the following:

- **The Role of Economic and Socioeconomic Factors:** The effects of economic stress and poverty on violent behavior, the relationship of socioeconomic status to violent tendencies.
- **The Impact of Media and Technology:** The impact of media and technology on perceptions and behaviors of violence, especially the role of social media and video games.
- **Historical and Political Dimensions of Violence:** The impact of historical events and political conflicts on social violence, the contribution of war and terrorism to perceptions of violence.

- **Violence Prevention and Intervention Strategies:** Strategies to prevent violence, early intervention programs, methods of providing assistance to victims of violence.
- **Legal and Legislative Frameworks:** Legal definitions and penalties of violence, impact of legal processes on violence, rights of victims and perpetrators.
- **Global and International Dimensions of Violence:** Perceptions of violence in different cultures and countries, international human rights and global efforts to combat violence.
- **Relationship with Health and Psychiatry:** Psychological and psychiatric origins of violent behavior, the relationship between mental health problems and propensity to violence.

2. Analyzes on the question “What is the first word that comes to your mind when you think of the word woman?”

The keywords related to the question "What is the first word that comes to your mind when the word woman is mentioned?" are as: mother (77); violence (23); woman (22); strong (21); flower (20); power (16); being (13); human (13); life (12); life (11); compassion (10); precious (9); delicate (8); sacred (8); individual (8); naive (7); sacrifice (7); altruistic (7); angel (6); beauty (6); oppressed (6); world (6); everything (5); beautiful (5); lady (5); responsibility (4); violence (4); love (4); freedom (4); naivety (4); victim (4); holiness (4); slave (4); person (4); everything (4); rose (4); flower (4); helplessness (4); murder (4); my mother (4); motherhood (4); difficulty (3); elegance (3); giving (3); above (3); society (3); vulnerable (3); freedom (3); brother (3); remainder (3); contempt (3); inequality (3); labor (3); world (3); emotional (3); giving birth (3); feet (3); elegant (2); time (2).

The themes created in this context by GPT-4 are as follows:

- ***Social Roles and Values:***

Mother: "mother", "motherhood", "giving birth"

Strength and Resilience: "strong", "power", "sacrifice", "sacrificing"

Emotional and Social Traits: "compassion", "delicate", "naive", "love"

- ***Perceptions and Stereotypes of Women:***

Physical and Aesthetic Qualities: "flower", "beauty", "elegant", "rose"

Sensitivity and Grace: "naivety", "sensuality", "elegance"

- ***Challenges and Problems Faced by Women:***

Violence and Victimization: "violence", "oppressed", "victim", "helplessness"

Social Problems: "inequality", "slave", "despised", "vulnerable"

- ***The Value and Contributions of Women in Society:***

Life and Being: "life", "life", "being", "world"

Value and Holiness: "precious", "holy", "holiness", "angel"

- ***Women's Social and Family Responsibilities:***

Responsibility and Labor: "responsibility", "labor", "everything", "everything"

Family and Social Ties: "brother", "community", "on your feet"

While the keywords and themes above address many important aspects of women, some themes may have been left out. Here are some examples of these missing themes by GPT-4:

- Career and Education: Women's roles in business, career development, educational achievements and leadership positions.
- Political and Social Activism: Advocacy for women's rights, political participation, struggles for social change.
- Cultural and Ethnic Diversity: Experiences of women from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, diversity and multiculturalism.
- Contributions to Science and Technology: The roles and achievements of women in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.

- **Health and Bodily Autonomy:** Women's health, sexual health, reproductive rights and bodily autonomy.
- **Sports and Physical Activities:** Women's achievements in the world of sport, their role and participation in physical activities.
- **Art and Literature:** Women artists and writers and their cultural and artistic contributions.
- **Personal Development and Self-Discovery:** Personal development, self-consciousness, spiritual journeys and processes of self-discovery.

3. Analyzes on the question: “What is the first word that comes to your mind when you think of the word man?”

When the keywords related to the question are analyzed the following words are found: father (45); power (30); human (21); violence (20); male (16); strong (13); rude (12); individual (9); oppressive (9); owner (8); wood (8); nerve (7); person (7); selfish (7); responsibility (6); free (6); against (6); unnecessary (6); gender (6); man (6); tyrant (5); being (5); superior (5); compassion (5); woman (5); callous (5); patriarchal (5); tyranny (4); devil (4); harsh (4); authority (4); power (4); force (4); protector (4); brother (4); good (4); everything (4); genus (4); wild (3); savagery (3); brutality (3); dishonorable (3); delusional (3); owner (3); chief (3); anger (3); authoritarian (3); hate (3); bad (3); fight (3); life (3); right (3); trust (3); seeing (3); physical (3); house (3); home (3); house (3); inequality (3); knowing (3); oppression (3).

Here are some themes that can be derived from these words:

• *Social and Family Roles:*

Role in the Family: "father", "protector", "head of the house", "brother"

Individuality and Personal Identity: "individual", "person", "man", "human"

• *Physical and Character Traits:*

Strength and Endurance: "power", "strong", "strength", "force", "tough"

Stereotypical Characteristics: "rude", "wooden", "callous"

• ***Social Attitudes and Behaviors:***

Oppression and Control: "oppressive", "owner", "authority", "patriarchal", "authoritarian"

Emotional Expressions and Attitudes: "anger", "rage", "selfish", "violent", "bully"

• ***Social Issues and Challenges:***

Violence and Aggression: "violence", "bullying", "brutality"

Inequality and Injustice: "inequality", "superior", "dishonorable", "bad"

• ***Positive Attributes and Values:***

Responsibility and Trust: "responsibility", "free", "trust"

Human Values: "compassion", "good", "all-giving"

While the keyword list and the themes generated cover many important aspects related to men, some themes may have been left out. Here are some examples of these missing themes:

- Career and Education: Men's roles in business, career development, educational achievements and leadership positions.
- Political and Social Activism: Political participation, struggles for social change, advocacy for men's rights.
- Cultural and Ethnic Diversity: Experiences of men from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, diversity and multiculturalism.
- Contributions to Science and Technology: The roles and achievements of men in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) fields.
- Health and Bodily Autonomy: Men's health, sexual health, reproductive rights and bodily autonomy.
- Sports and Physical Activities: Men's achievements in the world of sport, their role and participation in physical activities.

- Arts and Literature: Male artists and writers and their cultural and artistic contributions.
- Personal Development and Self-Discovery: Personal development, self-consciousness, spiritual journeys and processes of self-discovery.

Discussion

The word frequency analysis shows various concepts related to the topic of violence and their frequencies. According to the analysis, the words woman (61); violence (59); beating (58) and physical (51) have the highest frequencies. This tendency demonstrates that violence and physical forms of violence are often associated with women.

In addition, terms such as "psychological", "fear", "harm" also have significant frequencies, indicating that students are aware of different forms of violence such as psychological and emotional dimensions. In addition, other victim groups such as "men", "children", "animals" are also mentioned, emphasizing that violence can affect anyone and can occur in a wide variety of forms. In this categorization, physical violence is often associated with women and children, while psychological violence has a wider impact. Furthermore, it should be noted that violence does not only cause immediate physical harm, but also has long-term psychological and emotional effects. Topuz and Erkanlı (2016) and Sözer and Özkan (2014) reported the similar results with all these findings given above.

Secondly, the word frequency analysis shows various concepts related to the topic of woman and their frequencies. According to the analysis, the words mother (77); violence (23); woman (22); strong (21) have the highest frequencies. These themes and the missing themes reflect a broader and more diverse spectrum of women's roles and experiences in society. They show that women are not only limited to their social and familial roles, but are also active and influential in many fields. Nevertheless, as the “motherhood” of the women has a pioneer rate, this finding is in parallel to the previous studies, demonstrating that women are attributed to domestic sphere whereas men are of public sphere (Roald, 2002; Connell, 1998; Özyeğin, 2016; Akduran, 2011).

Lastly, the word frequency analysis shows various concepts related to the topic of man and their frequencies. According to the analysis, the words father (45); power (30); human (21); violence (20) have the highest frequencies. These themes show that men are also affected from gender inequalities, such as the stereotypical characteristics and social and domestic financial problems attributed to men. The exploration of words associated with "woman" and "man" further delves into societal roles, expectations, and stereotypes, revealing a deep-seated interplay between gender perceptions and societal values. The prominence of "mother" in association with women and "father" with men underscores traditional familial roles, while the presence of terms related to strength, power, and vulnerability reflects ongoing dialogues about gender dynamics, challenges, and contributions in society. These results are consistent with those of Burn (1996), Yaşın-Dökmen, (2016); Sargın (2018); and Bhasin (2003).

Another result showing the frequent missing themes in the keywords of the sample population of the university students found by GPT-4:

- Economic and Socioeconomic Factors
- Impact of Media and Technology
- Historical and Political Dimensions
- Violence Prevention and Intervention Strategies
- Legal and Legislative Frameworks
- Global and International Dimensions
- Relationship with Health and Psychiatry

The identified themes, while comprehensive, also point to gaps in the exploration of economic, socio-political, and cultural factors influencing violence and gender perceptions. Future research and societal discourse could benefit from addressing these gaps, focusing on economic and socio-political factors, the role of media and technology, and global perspectives on gender and violence, to foster a more inclusive understanding and effective strategies for addressing these pervasive issues.

This analysis not only sheds light on the current state of societal perceptions but also calls for continued exploration and dialogue aimed at addressing stereotypes, understanding the multifaceted nature of violence and gender roles, and developing more equitable and compassionate societal norms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the analysis of student perceptions through word association with "violence," "woman," and "man" reveals a complex web of societal views, stereotypes, and concerns. The analysis related to violence highlights a multifaceted understanding that encompasses both physical and psychological dimensions, with a significant focus on gender-specific violence, especially against women. It also underscores the broader societal recognition of violence's impact on various groups, including men, children, and animals, suggesting a pervasive concern across different forms of violence and its victims.

This research, having a purpose to reveal the perceptions of university students about gender-based violence by using artificial intelligence as data analysis technique, clearly puts forth that AI assisted computer analysis have a gender-based nature.

What's more, this gender-based nature of AI not only limits women with gender inequality, but it also focuses on men's gender-based problems.

More specifically, this analysis shows that the society's perception of violence is multifaceted. These analyses reveal areas of significant concern, such as violence, oppression, and stereotyping, alongside recognition of positive traits and contributions. This underscores the need for a nuanced understanding of gender roles and the impact of societal perceptions on individual experiences and behaviors.

Limitations

As to the methodological limitations, the convenience sampling method might not provide a representative sample of broader student populations, potentially limiting the generalizability of the findings.

Moreover, about data analysis, while the use of AI (GPT-4) for identifying missing themes is innovative, the methodology's transparency regarding how AI interpreted data and determined missing themes could be better detailed. Lastly, there are some limitations about the practical implications. While the study suggests the need for more targeted research and inclusion, it could further elaborate on practical steps for academia, policy-makers, and technology developers to address identified gaps.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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