

Being a Male Preschool Teacher in Türkiye: From the Perspective of Teachers, Mothers, and Children

Okul Öncesi Eğitimde Erkek Öğretmenlere Bakış: Öğretmen, Anne ve Çocuk Gözünden

Nevra Atış Akyol* Arzu Okur# Selda Ata Doğan^Ω Cansu Yıldız Taşdemir^Θ

Highlights:

- Male preschool teachers prefer to become preschool teachers because they think they will find a job easily.
- According to the opinions of both male and female preschool teachers, it is thought that male teachers can provide more discipline on children.
- Mothers were prejudiced against male preschool teachers when schools first opened.
- Children's feelings and thoughts towards male preschool teachers are positive.
- Teachers and mothers think that preschool is generalized as a female profession.

Abstract: This study aims at investigate the views of teachers, mothers, and children about male preschool teachers. The phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs, is used. Study group consists of six preschool teachers (three females and three males) and 12 children and their mothers selected from the classes of these teachers by using the purposeful sampling method. Data are collected through interviews with these groups and analyzed with content analysis. Children are also requested to make a drawing that reflects their thoughts about their teachers. During research, it is determined that male teachers prefer this profession with the idea of finding a job easily. Being a male preschool teacher is evaluated by both gender of teachers as an advantage in providing discipline to children. According to the male preschool teachers, the disadvantages working in this position are that parents do not consider preschools as educational institutions, difficulty in communicating with mothers, and the risk of abuse. In the study, it is determined that some mothers are prejudiced against male teachers at the beginning of the term, this prejudice decreases during the term, and all of the children have positive thoughts and feelings about their teachers. As a result of the research, it is concluded that all of the teachers and most of the mothers believe that preschool teaching is generalized as a female profession, but they believe that it should not be generalized in this way.

Keywords: Male Preschool Teacher, Female Preschool Teacher, Mothers, Preschool Children, Preschool Education.

* Assoc. Prof., Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Türkiye, nevrarven@gmail.com,

ORCID: 0000-0003-4697-847X.

Preschool Teacher, Ministry of National Education, Türkiye, arzuokur02@gmail.com,

ORCID: 0000-0003-1553-2686.

^Ω Corresponding Author, Res. Assist., Hacettepe University, Faculty of Education, Türkiye, slda.ata@gmail.com,

ORCID: 0000-0002-3438-5792.

^Θ Assist., Prof., University of Health Sciences, Gülhane Faculty of Health Sciences, Türkiye, cytasdemir@gmail.com,

ORCID: 0000-0003-0638-3826.

Öne Çıkanlar:

- Erkek okul öncesi öğretmenleri kolay iş bulacaklarını düşündüklerinden dolayı okul öncesi öğretmeni olmayı tercih etmektedir.
 - Hem erkek hem de kadın okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin görüşlerine göre erkek öğretmenlerin çocuklar üzerinde daha çok disiplin sağlayabildiği düşünülmektedir.
 - Anneler, okulların açıldığı ilk zamanlarda erkek okul öncesi öğretmenlerine karşı önyargılıdır.
 - Erkek okul öncesi öğretmenlerine yönelik çocukların duyu ve düşünceleri olumludur.
 - Öğretmenler ve anneler okul öncesi öğretmenliğinkadın olarak genellendiğini düşünmektedir.
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Öz: Araştırmanın amacı, okul öncesi eğitimde erkek öğretmenlere ilişkin öğretmenlerin, annelerin ve çocukların görüşlerinin incelenmesidir. Araştırma nitel araştırma desenlerinden olgubilim deseninde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma grubunu 3 kadın, 3 erkek toplam altı okul öncesi öğretmeni ve bu öğretmenlerin sınıflarından amaçlı örneklem yoluyla seçilmiş toplam 12 çocuk ve çocukların anneleri oluşturmaktadır. Veriler; öğretmenler, anneler ve çocuklarla gerçekleştirilen görüşmelerle toplanmış ve içerik analizine tabi tutulmuştur. Ayrıca çocuklardan, görüşlerini daha iyi ortaya çıkarmak adına öğretmenleriyle olan ilişkilerini anlatan bir resim çizmeleri istenmiştir. Araştırmada, erkek öğretmenlerin tamamının kolay iş bulma düşüncesiyle bu mesleği tercih ettikleri tespit edilmiştir. Hem erkek hem kadın öğretmenler tarafından erkek okul öncesi öğretmeni olmak, çocuklar üzerinde disiplin sağlama konusunda bir avantaj olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Erkek öğretmenlere göre ebeveynlerin anaokulunu bir eğitim kurumu olarak görmemesi, annelerle iletişime geçme zorluğu ve istismar riski gibi durumlar bu meslekte erkek olmanın dezavantajları olarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırmada bazı annelerin dönem başında erkek öğretmenlere karşı ön yargılı olduğu, dönem içerisinde bu ön yargının azaldığı, çocukların ise tamamının öğretmenleriyle ilgili olumlu düşünce ve duygulara sahip oldukları tespit edilmiştir. Araştırma sonucunda, öğretmenlerin tamamının ve annelerin çoğunun okul öncesi öğretmenliğinin bir kadın mesleği olarak genellendiğini düşündükleri, ancak genellenmemesi gerektiğine inandıkları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Erkek Okul Öncesi Öğretmeni, Kadın Okul Öncesi Öğretmeni, Anneler, Okul Öncesi Dönemdeki Çocuklar, Okul Öncesi Eğitim.

Genişletilmiş Özet

Günümüz çalışma hayatında, pek çok meslekte hem kadınlar hem de erkekler görev almaktadır. Ancak hâlâ kadın veya erkeklerin yoğunluklu olarak tercih ettiği bazı meslek grupları bulunmaktadır. Örneğin, Türkiye’de 30 yıldan fazla bir geçmişe sahip olan okul öncesi öğretmenliği mesleği kadınların ağırlıklı olarak yer aldığı bir meslektir (Demirkasımoğlu ve Taşkın 2019). 2006-2007 öğretim yıllarının verilerine bakıldığında, Türkiye’deki resmî kurumlarda okul öncesi öğretmeni olarak çalışan toplam 24775 kişinin 23594’ünün kadın, 1181’inin ise erkek olduğu görülmektedir (MEB, 2007). Başka bir ifadeyle, erkek okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin toplam okul öncesi öğretmeni sayısına oranı yalnızca %4,76’dır. 2021-2022 öğretim yılında ise okul öncesi öğretmeni olarak çalışan toplam 79952 kişinin 74335’inin kadın, 5617’sinin erkek olduğu dikkat çekmektedir. Erkeklerin toplam öğretmen sayısına oranı ise %7,03’dir (MEB, 2022). Bu veriler, yıllar içerisinde erkek okul öncesi öğretmeni sayısında

artış olduğunu, ancak okul öncesi öğretmenliğinin hala çoğunlukla kadınların görev yaptığı bir meslek olduğunu göstermektedir.

Yaşamın kritik yılları olarak bilinen okul öncesi eğitim döneminde çocukların ilk öğretmenleri olan okul öncesi öğretmenleri, öğretmenlik mesleğindeki diğer branşlarda olduğu gibi hem kadınların hem de erkeklerin başarı ile yapabilecekleri bir meslektir. Bu konuda kadın öğretmenler de söz konusu mesleğin cinsiyet rollerinden arındırılması gerektiğini düşünmekte ve çocukların sosyal duygusal gelişimi için erkek öğretmenlerin de okul öncesi eğitime dahil olması gerektiğini, iyi bir öğretmen olmanın erkek öğretmen olmaktan daha önemli olduğunu ve toplumdaki öğretmen cinsiyetine yönelik ön yargıların azalması gerektiğini belirtmektedir (Sak vd., 2012). Erkek öğretmenlerle yapılan ulusal ve uluslararası çalışmaların sonuçları da kadın öğretmenlerin görüşleriyle paralellik göstermektedir (Anlıak, 2004; Bullough Jr, 2015; Demirtaş vd., 2014; Tsigra, 2010).

Çocuğun okul öncesi eğitime başlaması genellikle ailelerin çocuğun sorumluluğunu ilk kez yabancı birine bırakacakları anlamına gelmektedir (Gullo ve Hughes, 2011). Annelerin bu konuda daha az zorlanmasında ve endişe duymamasında en büyük rol, okul öncesi öğretmenlerine düşmektedir. Ancak önceki çalışmalar incelendiğinde öğretmenin tavrı ve tutumu dışında bazı anneler için öğretmenin cinsiyetinin de bu endişenin daha az ya da daha çok olmasında etkili olabileceği anlaşılmıştır (Cameron, 2001; Er ve Ergen; 2020; Gülçiçek, 2017). Bu bağlamda, okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin cinsiyetlerinin annelerin algılarını nasıl şekillendirdiğinin araştırılması önem taşımaktadır. Bununla birlikte, alan yazınındaki konu ile ilgili yapılan araştırmalar incelendiğinde çalışma gruplarının ebeveynler (Gülçiçek, 2017; Sak, 2005; Yağbasan ve Aksoy, 2016), öğretmen adayları (Amosun vd., 2021; Haskan Avcı vd., 2019; Sak vd., 2012), öğretmenler (Amosun vd., 2021; Bullough Jr, 2015; Demirtaş vd., 2014; Er ve Ergen, 2020; Yalçın vd., 2017) ve çocuklardan (Sak vd., 2015; Sumsion, 2005) oluştuğu; okul öncesi öğretmenleri, ebeveynler ve çocukların görüşlerini bir arada ele alan çalışmalara rastlanmadığı görülmüştür. Bu çalışma erkek okul öncesi öğretmenlerine yönelik görüşleri hem öğretmen hem anne hem de çocuk gözünden inceleyeceği için farklılaşmaktadır. Önceki çalışmaların ışığında, bu çalışma nelerin değişip değişmediğini, özellikle erkek okul öncesi öğretmenleriyle ilgili en çok hangi fikirlerin, hangi yargıların dile getirildiğini tespit etme konusunda önem taşımaktadır. Bu araştırma, eğer erkek okul öncesi öğretmenleri ile ilgili olumsuz kalıp yargılar varsa bu yargılar nasıl değiştirilebilir ve erkekler genel olarak çocuk eğitimine nasıl daha fazla dâhil edilebilir gibi soruların cevaplanmasına yönelik çalışmalara katkı sağlayacaktır. Bu bağlamda araştırmanın amacı, geleneksel erkeklik normları çerçevesinden okul öncesi eğitimde erkek öğretmenlere ilişkin öğretmenlerin, annelerin ve çocukların görüşlerinin incelenmesidir. Araştırmanın problemini

“Okul öncesi öğretmenlerinin, annelerin ve çocukların erkek okul öncesi öğretmenlerine yönelik görüşleri nelerdir?” sorusu oluşturmaktadır.

Araştırma, nitel araştırma desenlerinden olgubilim deseninde gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubu amaçlı örnekleme yoluyla seçilmiştir. Çalışmada öğretmenlerin, annelerin ve çocukların erkek okul öncesi öğretmenlerine yönelik görüşleri ele alınmış, ayrıca çocukların görüşlerini daha iyi ortaya çıkarmak adına çocuklardan öğretmenleriyle olan ilişkilerini anlatan bir resim çizmeleri istenmiştir. Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu hepsi devlet okullarında çalışan üç kadın, üç erkek okul öncesi öğretmeni ve bu öğretmenlerin sınıflarından amaçlı örnekleme yoluyla seçilmiş ikişer çocuk ve seçilen bu çocukların anneleri oluşturmaktadır. Toplamda altı okul öncesi öğretmeni, 12 anne ve 12 çocukla görüşmeler gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırma verileri, uzman görüşüne başvurulmuş sorulardan oluşan yarı yapılandırılmış görüşme formu ile toplanmış, içerik analizi yöntemi ile analiz edilmiştir.

Araştırmada, erkek öğretmenlerinin tamamının kolay iş bulma düşüncesiyle bu mesleği tercih ettikleri tespit edilmiştir. Hem erkek hem kadın öğretmenler tarafından erkek okul öncesi öğretmeni olmak, çocuklar üzerinde disiplin sağlama konusunda bir avantaj olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Erkek öğretmenlere göre ebeveynlerin anaokulunu bir eğitim kurumu olarak görmemesi, kadın ebeveynlerle iletişime geçme zorluğu ve istismar riski gibi durumlar bu meslekte erkek olmanın dezavantajları olarak belirlenmiştir. Araştırmada bazı ebeveynlerin dönem başında erkek öğretmenlere karşı ön yargılı olduğu, dönem içerisinde bu ön yargının azaldığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Bazı annelerin özellikle istismar riskinden çekindikleri için kadın öğretmen istedikleri, öğretmenin cinsiyeti konusunda ayırım yapmayan annelerin ise cinsiyetten ziyade öğretmenin kişilik ve mesleki özelliklerinin daha önemli olduğunu düşündükleri bulunmuştur. Öğretmenlerin tamamı ve annelerin çoğu, okul öncesi öğretmenliğinin bir kadın mesleği olarak genellendiğini düşünmekte, ancak genellenmemesi gerektiğine inanmaktadırlar. Araştırmada çocukların ise tamamının öğretmenleriyle ilgili olumlu düşünce ve duygulara sahip oldukları sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Erkek öğretmenin sınıfındaki çocuklar öğretmenini sevme sebeplerini öğretmenle etkinlik yapmak, oyun oynamak ve öğretmeni baba gibi görmek nedenleriyle açıklamışlardır. Kadın öğretmenlerin sınıflarındaki çocukların çoğunun, öğretmenlerinin erkek olması durumunda da bir sorun olmayacağını ifade ettiği, iki çocuğun ise durumdan hoşnut olmayacakları belirlenmiştir. Bu çalışmada da iki çocuk haricinde, çocuklar için öğretmenin cinsiyetinden ziyade sınıftaki rolünün daha önemli olduğu sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Çocuklar küçük yaşlardan itibaren çocuk eğitiminde yalnızca kadınları görürlerse, çocuk eğitiminin kadınlara özgü bir meslek olduğunu düşüneceklerdir. Okul öncesi eğitim kurumlarında erkek öğretmenlerin bulunması, çocukların, çocuk eğitimini kadınlara özgü bir iş olarak algılamalarını engelleyecektir

(Sak vd., 2015). Çocukların belirli meslekleri bir cinsiyet ile özdeşleştirmemeleri ve kadın-erkek rollerini eşitlikçi bir temelde özümsemeleri gerekmektedir. Bu sebeple erkeklerin ve kadınların bütün meslekleri yapabileceğine dair örnekler ihtiyacı vardır.

Introduction

In today's working life, women and men work together in many professions. However, there are still some professional groups that are predominantly preferred by women or men. For instance, the preschool teaching profession, which has a history of more than 30 years in Turkey, is a profession in which women are predominantly involved (Demirkasımoğlu & Taşkın, 2019). Based on the data for the 2006-2007 academic year, it was seen that 23594 of the 24775 preschool teachers in official institutions in Turkey were female and only 1181 were male (MEB, 2007). In other words, the ratio of male preschool teachers to the total number of preschool teachers was 4.76%. Based on the data for the 2021-2022 academic year, it was striking that 79952 of the 74335 preschool teachers in official institutions in Turkey were female and only 1181 were male. The ratio of male preschool teachers to the total number of preschool teachers was 7.03% (MEB, 2022). These data demonstrate that the number of male preschool teachers has increased over the years, but preschool teaching is still a profession mostly preferred by female preschool teachers.

The quantity of men in early childhood services contributes to or challenges prevailing ideologies about gender roles and relationships in society. For example, societies in which male-female teachers are quantitatively balanced can be seen as a reflection of gender equality discourse, which includes equal sharing of childcare between men and women (Sumsion, 2005). Not only in Turkey but also in many countries in general, women constitute most of the education and training field (Drudy, 2008; Peeters et al., 2015). The fact that the person who takes care of the education of children in the home is mostly the mother brings the mother to mind when it comes to education responsibility in public spaces and the duty of education and teaching is left to women. The search for maternal love and maternal attention, especially in younger age groups, explains the structuring of this field as a feminine field (Eagly & Crowley, 1986; Kılıç, 2019). The reason why the mother comes to mind when it comes to education responsibility in public spaces is related to the roles attributed to women in society, and therefore to the gender roles attributed to men. Men are socialized with the expectation of conforming to masculine norms that are called traditional masculinity: tough, aggressive, competitive, dominant, independent, emotionally neutral, self-confident, and control-oriented (Feder et al. 2010; Kantar & Yalçın, 2023). Although masculinity differs from group to group and culture to culture, some studies reveal that norms such as status, sense of responsibility, and power are adopted by men from all groups at different levels (Kantar

& Yalçın, 2023; Sancar, 2016). Therefore, traditional gender roles attributed to men cause them to encounter stereotypes that correspond to gender roles while performing their professional lives. In a study conducted to investigate the opinions of teachers, the participants reported that teaching is a profession appealing more to women because teaching should have features such as motherhood and domesticity, and the expectations of parents from the teachers are also in this direction (Gamble & Wilkins, 1997). Similar results are revealed in a study investigating the views of preschool teachers about teacher gender in preschool education. One of two female teachers and two of three male teachers report that the preschool teachers should be female teachers as young children need compassion and protection and women will provide these better due to their nature (Yalçın et al., 2017). As can be seen, the findings of the studies on this subject emphasize that gender stereotypes are effective on the perceptions of teachers whether they are suitable for the profession rather than their professional competencies. The fact that women are seen as innate teachers and the fact that men are traditionally less directed to the fields dominated by women are among the possible reasons for the current situation. This can be called a vicious cycle. Preschool teaching, which is considered to be a profession suitable for women, will continue as a profession dominated by women unless it is preferred by men. The fact that men undertook a very limited number of duties in preschool education and most of the preschool teachers are female teachers generalizes this profession as a female profession more dominant (Anliak, 2004).

The preschool education period is known as the critical years of life. Preschool teachers are the first teachers of children in this period and preschool teaching is a profession that both women and men can successfully do, as in other branches of the teaching profession. Female teachers believe that the profession in question should be purified from gender roles. Female teachers also report that male teachers should be included in preschool education for the social and emotional development of children, being a good teacher is more important than being a male teacher, and prejudices about the gender of teachers in society should be eliminated (Sak et al., 2012). In the literature review, it is determined that the opinions of male teachers are parallel with these findings. In a study, a male teacher working in the Head Start class reports that his primary responsibility is to be an effective educator and he does not aim to be a father figure in the eyes of children, but some of the children need it to develop socially and emotionally as there is no male role model in their life (Bullough Jr, 2015). Similarly, in a study conducted by Tsigra (2010), it is reported that male teachers could compensate for the emotional gap of children observed due to reasons such as long working hours of fathers or divorce cases by serving as male teacher role models. Therefore, it can be interpreted that children need not only the mother model but also the father model even when it comes to emotional development such as maternal affection and being a role model rather

than teaching professional competencies. In summary, preschool education is a field that needs both male and female teachers.

Starting preschool education usually means that families will leave the responsibility of the child to a stranger for the first time (Gullo & Hughes, 2011). Preschool teachers have the biggest role in helping mothers to have less difficulty and not to worry in this regard (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). However, it is understood in previous studies that the gender of the teacher may also be effective in this anxiety being less or more for some mothers as well as the teacher's attitudes and behaviors (Cameron, 2001; Er & Ergen, 2020; Gülçiçek, 2017). In this regard, it is important to investigate how the gender of preschool teachers shapes the perceptions of mothers. In the studies on this subject in the literature, the study groups include parents (Gülçiçek, 2017; Sak, 2005; Yağbasan & Aksoy, 2016), pre-service teachers (Amosun et al., 2021; Haskan Avcı et al., 2019; Sak et al., 2012;), teachers (Amosun et al., 2021; Bullough Jr, 2015; Demirtaş et al., 2014; Er & Ergen, 2020; Yalçın et al., 2017), and children (Sak et al., 2015; Sumsion, 2005). There have been no studies addressing the views of preschool teachers, parents, and children together. This study differs from the other studies in the literature as it investigates the views of teachers, mothers, and children on male preschool teachers in the context of traditional masculinity roles. In light of previous studies, this study is important in determining what has changed and what has not changed by especially revealing which ideas and judgments about male preschool teachers are expressed the most. This study will contribute to the studies by answering questions such as how judgments can be changed if there are negative judgments about male preschool teachers and how male teachers be included more in child education in general.

In this regard, this study aims to investigate the views of teachers, mothers, and children about male preschool teachers within the framework of traditional masculinity norms. The research problem of this study is as follows: What are the views of preschool teachers, mothers, and children on male preschool teachers? The following questions have been adopted in line with the sub-problems of this study:

- What are the reasons for male preschool teachers to choose this profession?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of the profession according to male preschool teachers?
- According to male preschool teachers, what are the views of school administrators, female teachers, mothers, and children on male preschool teachers?
- What are the views of male preschool teachers about the generalization in the preschool teaching profession (predominantly consisting of female teachers)?

- What are the views of female preschool teachers about the advantages and disadvantages of male teachers in the profession?
- What are the views of female preschool teachers about the generalization in the preschool teaching profession (predominantly consisting of female teachers)?
- What are the expectations and the reasons for the expectations of the mothers regarding the gender of their children's preschool teachers?
- What are the views of mothers about their children's preschool teachers?
- What are the views of mothers about the generalization in the preschool teaching profession (predominantly consisting of female teachers)?
- What are the expectations and the reasons for the expectations of the children regarding the gender of their preschool teacher?
- What are the views of children about their teachers?

Method

Research Model

This study investigates the views of teachers, mothers, and children about male preschool teachers and is designed as a qualitative study. Phenomenology, one of the qualitative research designs, is used in this study. In phenomenological studies, data sources are individuals or groups that experience the focused phenomena and can demonstrate these phenomena. Interviews are held to reveal the experiences related to these phenomena and the meanings of these phenomena (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018, p.22). In this study, data are collected through semi-structured interviews with teachers, mothers, and children. Semi-structured interviews are data collection tools that allow both fixed-choice and in-depth questions (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018, p.159). Content analysis technique is used in the analysis of qualitative data collected with a semi-structured interview form. In content analysis, it is necessary to gather similar data within the framework of certain concepts and themes and to interpret them logically and systematically (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2013, p.259).

Study Group

The study group is selected by using the purposeful sampling method. Purposeful sampling is used when one or more special cases that meet certain criteria or have certain characteristics are desired to be studied (Büyüköztürk et al., 2018, p.92). In this study, the views of teachers, mothers, and children about male preschool teachers are addressed. A purposive sampling method is preferred as there should be teachers of both genders. The study group consists of three female and three male preschool teachers working in public preschools, two children each selected through purposive sampling from the classrooms of these teachers, and the mothers of these

children. A total of six preschool teachers, 12 mothers, and 12 children were interviewed. The demographic characteristics of the preschool teachers included in the study are presented in Table 1.

Table 1.
Demographic Characteristics of the Preschool Teachers Include in the Study Group

| Participant code | Gender | Age | Educational background | Professional experience (years) | Institution |
|------------------|--------|-----|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------|
| MT1 | Male | 30 | Bachelor's degree | 7 | City center -Nursery class affiliated with primary school |
| MT2 | Male | 34 | Bachelor's degree | 11 | City center - Independent preschool |
| MT3 | Male | 28 | Bachelor's degree | 2 | Village - Nursery class affiliated with primary school |
| FT1 | Female | 34 | Bachelor's degree | 10 | City center - Independent preschool |
| FT2 | Female | 32 | Bachelor's degree | 10 | City center - Independent preschool |
| FT3 | Female | 34 | Bachelor's degree | 11 | City center - Independent preschool |

MT: male teacher, FT: female teacher

As seen in the table, there are three female and three male preschool teachers (a total of six preschool teachers). All the preschool teachers work in public schools. Teachers are between the ages of 28-34. One teacher has two years, one teacher has seven years, two teachers have 10 years, and two teachers have 11 years of professional experience. Four of the teachers work in independent preschools in the city center, one in a nursery class affiliated with a primary school in the city center, and one in a nursery class affiliated with a primary school in the village.

The demographic characteristics of the mothers included in the study group are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.
Demographic Characteristics of the Mothers Include in the Study Group

| Participant code | Age | Educational background | Profession |
|------------------|-----|------------------------|--------------|
| MTM1 | 36 | Bachelor's degree | Housewife |
| MTM2 | 36 | Elementary school | Housewife |
| MTM3 | 33 | High school | Housewife |
| MTM4 | 43 | Primary school | Artisan |
| MTM5 | 32 | bachelor's degree | Teacher |
| MTM6 | 25 | High school | Housewife |
| FTM1 | 33 | High school | Housewife |
| FTM2 | 33 | Master's degree | Postgraduate |
| FTM3 | 41 | Bachelor's degree | Teacher |
| FTM4 | 32 | Master's degree | Nurse |
| FTM5 | 36 | High school | Housewife |
| FTM6 | 37 | High school | Housewife |

MTM: mother in male teacher's class, FTM: mother in female teacher's class

The ages of the 12 mothers participating in this study range from 25 to 43. Five of the mothers are high school graduates, three of the mothers are undergraduates, two of the mothers have bachelor's degrees, one of the mothers is a middle school graduate, and one of the mothers is a primary school graduate. More than half of the mothers are housewives, and the others are engaged in various professions. The children of six of the mothers receive education in the classes of female preschool teachers while the children of six of the mothers receive education in the classes of male preschool teachers.

The demographic characteristics of the children participating in this study are presented in Table 3.

Table 3.
Demographic Characteristics of the Children Include in the Study Group

| Participant code | Age | Child's gender |
|------------------|-----|----------------|
| MTC1 | 5 | Female |
| MTC2 | 5 | Male |
| MTC3 | 5 | Male |
| MTC4 | 5 | Female |
| MTC5 | 5 | Female |
| MTC6 | 5 | Male |
| FTC1 | 5 | Male |
| FTC2 | 5 | Female |
| FTC3 | 5 | Male |
| FTC4 | 5 | Male |
| FTC5 | 5 | Female |
| FTC6 | 5 | Male |

MTC: children in male teacher's class, FTC: children in female teacher's class

As seen in Table 3, there are 12 children in this study and all these children are five years old. Five of the children are female and seven of the children are male. Six of the children receive education in the classes of male preschool teachers and six of the children receive education in the classes of female preschool teachers.

Data Collection Tool and Data Collection Process

The data are collected by using a semi-structured interview form consisting of questions prepared in line with the opinions of experts in preschool education. The ethics committee approval number (E-60263016-050.06.04-112618) is obtained for the study before collecting the data. The participants are determined based on the voluntary participation principle. Voluntary participants are included in the study after they are informed about the subject and content of the study. Before the interviews, all participants are informed about the study. Written and verbal consent is obtained again by reminding the participants that they will be audio-recorded. Considering the interviews with children, parental consent, and verbal consent of children are obtained. During the interviews, eight open-ended questions were asked to male teachers, and three open-ended questions were

asked to the female teachers and mothers. The interviewed children are asked two open-ended questions. The children are also asked to make a drawing to describe their relationship with their teachers to reveal their views better. In this study, interviews with teachers and children are made face-to-face in a suitable room of the institution they work while the interviews with mothers are conducted over the phone. All interviews have been recorded using a voice recorder. On the other hand, the interviews with the parents were made over the phone and these interviews were also recorded with a voice recorder. The interviews have been lasted approximately 20-25 minutes.

Data Analysis

The interviews conducted by the researchers are transcribed and content analysis is conducted. To protect the privacy of the participants, code names are given to teachers as MT (male teacher) and FT (female teacher) for teachers, MTM (mother in male teacher's class) and FTM (mother in female teacher's class) for mothers, and MTC (children in male teacher's class) and FTC (children in female teacher's class).

Credibility and Ethics

To ensure reliability and validity, each stage of the study is explained in detail, direct quotations from the views of the participants are included, and the drawings of the children are presented.

Findings

Findings on the Views of Male Preschool Teachers

Findings on the Reasons Why Male Preschool Teachers Prefer the Preschool Teaching Profession

Three male preschool teachers participating in the study report that they prefer this profession because they believe that they can find a job easily. In addition, one of the teachers emphasizes that he prefers this profession because he believes that he could get on well with children.

The reasons why male preschool teachers prefer this profession:

“We need lower scores from the Public Personnel Selection Exam to get appointed.” (MT1)

“We thought we would get appointed easily after college.” (MT2)

“I thought it would be easy for me to find a job. I have chosen this profession because I know that I can get on well with children.” (MT3)

Findings on Male Preschool Teachers' Views on the Advantages and Disadvantages of the Profession

All the male teachers participating in the study (n=3) report that they can establish better authority over children as an advantage of the profession. One of the teachers reports that a male teacher is an advantage for children who cannot spend much time with their fathers.

Advantages of the profession according to male preschool teachers:

“We can provide better authority.” (MT1)

“Children are more meticulous when the teacher is male. Male teachers are more prescriptive and more disciplined. The fact that the teacher is male is compensation for the children who do not spend much time with their fathers.” (MT2)

Male teachers report that establishing too much authority, parents' not seeing the nursery class as an educational institution, male teachers' difficulty in communicating with female parents, lack of school-family cooperation, and the risk of abuse are among the disadvantages of this profession.

Disadvantages of the profession according to male preschool teachers:

“The disadvantage is that parents do not consider ‘nursery class’ as a place to receive an education.” (MT2)

“Thinking that it will not be welcome, I cannot communicate with mothers in the village as I'm a male teacher. I cannot provide school-family cooperation.” (MT3)

“The disadvantage is that I hesitate to physically touch children. I always keep the door of the classroom open. I am afraid of being misunderstood because of abuses.” (MT3)

Findings on the Views of School Administrators, Female Teachers, Mothers, and Children on Male Preschool Teachers (According to Male Preschool Teachers)

Male teachers report that they don't encounter a negative view from school administrators and their female colleagues, and they are only surprised because some administrators have not met a male preschool teacher before. However, they believe that parents are prejudiced against them, especially at the beginning of the semester, and this prejudice has decreased during the semester. Two teachers report that some parents don't want to enroll their children in the male teacher's class at the beginning of the semester. All the male teachers participating in this study reported that the children were afraid of them at first. Teachers believe that children are afraid of them because of their gender and that children in the class of female teachers are not so afraid.

According to male preschool teachers, the views of school administrators, female teachers, mothers, and children on male preschool teachers:

“I find the point of view of our school administrators positive; I can feel that they trust me. I don't have any problems with female teachers either... I don't hear any comments like he cannot make it, or he is not making it. However, it is not the same with the parents at the beginning of the semester. Although there are more enrolled children for other teachers (female), there are only two or three enrolled children for me. Later, the perspectives of parents have changed. The parents heard that I am good and have started to enroll their children in my classes. Children are more afraid of male teachers.” (MT1)

“Primary school administrators are surprised when they see male preschool teachers. In nursery class, the other teachers are not surprised because we share the same branch. As female preschool teachers see us in the faculty, they are used to seeing male preschool teachers. I don't have any negative experiences with them. Some of the parents thought that we couldn't make it. There were parents with sexist perspectives. Some parents think that things will be different if their children are enrolled in the class of a male teacher. But over time, prejudices are broken. Since the authority figure is male, the children are afraid of male preschool teachers. Since women have a more maternal approach, the children are not embarrassed in front of female teachers.” (MT2)

“School administrators and female teachers don't have a negative attitude because our male vice school principal is also a preschool teacher. I recognize a different and negative view of only one of my parents. I sense something like that. The female children in my class are shier than the male children in the first weeks. They have been crying.” (MT3)

Findings on Male Preschool Teachers' Views on the Generalization in the Preschool Teaching Profession (Predominantly Consisting of Female Teachers)

All the male teachers report that preschool teaching is generalized as a female profession, but it should not be generalized this way. Male teachers also have reported that this generalization is made because the Turkish name of the school or class is derived from the 'mother' word. One of the teachers has reported that he likes to be a minority in the profession and is happy when people are surprised.

The views of male preschool teachers about the generalization of the preschool teaching profession (predominantly consisting of female teachers) are as follows:

“Yes, there is a generalization. It was emphasized in the faculty that it was the 'main' (basic) class (instead of the 'mother' word) Men who are suitable for the profession should practice this profession.” (MT1)

“There is a generalization due to the Turkish name of these classes/schools. Parents’ approaches to the class and preschool teachers are different.” (MT2)

“Both men and women can practice this profession.” (MT3)

Findings on the Views of Female Preschool Teachers

Findings on Female Preschool Teachers’ Views on the Advantages and Disadvantages of Male Preschool Teachers in the Profession

All the female teachers participating in this study (n=3) believe that the most important advantage of male teachers in this profession is to provide better discipline. Considering the disadvantages, female preschool teachers have reported that male teachers have difficulties in understanding children, have problems solving problems and communicating with children, have difficulties communicating with mothers, and face the risk of abuse.

The views of female preschool teachers on the advantages and disadvantages of male preschool teachers in the profession:

“Women can act more emotionally when their motherhood comes to the fore. Male teachers can provide better discipline; this may be an advantage.” (FT1)

“As a disadvantage, male preschool teachers may not lower themselves to the child’s level because they are inherently more reserved in expressing their feelings.” (FT2)

“Male preschool teachers are perceived differently by the interns because there are always female teachers in the school environment. Under the control of male teachers, children adapt more easily and become disciplined. Mothers may have difficulty approaching male teachers and talking about themselves and their children. Since we are in close contact with the children, this can be misunderstood by the parents and put the teacher in a difficult position.” (FT3)

Findings on Female Preschool Teachers’ Views on the Generalization in the Preschool Teaching Profession (Predominantly Consisting of Female Teachers)

All the female teachers interviewed have reported that preschool teaching is generalized as a profession predominantly consisting of female teachers, but it should not be generalized this way. One of the teachers has emphasized that there is a general perception in society that the mother takes care of the children.

The views of female preschool teachers about the generalization of the preschool teaching profession (predominantly consisting of female teachers) are as follows:

“Anyone who has good communication with children can practice this profession, whether male or female.” (FT1)

“In this profession, it is necessary for the teacher to be warm-blooded, loving, and compassionate. If a male teacher has these characteristics, he can practice this profession, too.” (FT2)

“Due to cultural influences, there is a perception that the mother takes care of children, and the female teacher takes care of the students. There is a generalization that it is the duty of female teachers and preschool teaching profession belong to the female teachers, especially if it is a nursery class.” (FT3)

Findings on Mothers' Views on Preschool Teachers

Findings on the Expectations and the Reasons for the Expectations of the Mothers Regarding the Gender of Their Children's Preschool Teachers

Half of the mothers (n=3) whose children are enrolled in the class of a male preschool teacher have reported that they want the preschool teacher to be a female teacher before their children start school, while two mothers have reported that they have no expectations about the gender of the teacher, and one mother wanted the preschool teacher to be a male teacher. The mothers who want the preschool teacher to be a female teacher report that their children can communicate more easily with female teachers, female teachers have maternal instincts, and female teachers are more friendly and more compassionate. The mother, who wants the preschool teacher to be a male teacher, reports that she especially wants a male preschool teacher as she heard that he is very good in his profession.

Half of the mothers whose children are enrolled in the class of a female preschool teacher (n=3) have reported that they want their child's teacher to be a female teacher, while the other half (n=3) have reported that they do not have any expectations. Two mothers who want to have female preschool teachers for their children have reported that they prefer a female teacher especially because they are afraid of the risk of abuse. The mothers (n=3) who do not have any expectations about the gender of the teacher believe that the personality and professional characteristics of the teacher are more important than the gender.

The expectations and the reasons for the expectations of the mothers regarding the gender of their children's preschool teacher are as follows:

“I want the preschool teacher of my child to be male because I heard this teacher is very good.” (MTM1)

“I want a female teacher because women have a maternal instinct.” (MTM5)

“Gender doesn’t matter, it’s enough if the preschool teachers have characteristics such as understanding, constructive, solution-oriented, and loving.” (FTM2)

“As I have two daughters, I want a female teacher. After all, we all know the things happening in our country. I want a female teacher because I am afraid of the risk of abuse. I even wish all teachers were women.” (FTM5)

Findings on the Views of Mothers Whose Children Are Studying in The Classroom of a Male Preschool Teacher About the Teacher During the Learning Process

Most of the mothers (n=4) participating in this study report that they are satisfied with their teachers, their children go to school with pleasure, and they have positive perceptions in general. Although one of the mothers reports that she does not want to send her child after learning that the preschool teacher is a male teacher and even thought about changing her child’s class at the beginning of the semester, one of the mothers reports that she is happy after learning that the preschool teacher is a male teacher as the parents are too familiar with the female teachers and, therefore, she thinks that the female teacher discriminates among the children.

The views of mothers whose children are studying in the classroom of a male preschool teacher about the teacher during the learning process are as follows:

“At the beginning, I thought he was a good teacher and I still think so.” (MTM1)

“I had difficulties with female teachers in my other children before. The parents are too familiar with the female teachers. Female teachers discriminate against children. Now, no one can be too familiar with our teacher.” (MTM4)

“I think that a male teacher would not be concerned. I have fears that a male teacher cannot do as much as a female teacher. But I have changed my mind, a male teacher can be a preschool teacher too.” (MTM6)

Findings on the Views of Mothers Whose Children Are Studying in the Classroom of a Female Preschool Teacher About the Male Preschool Teachers

Most of the mothers (n=4) report that their views will not change, and they will not be prejudiced even if their children are in a male teacher’s class. Two of the mothers report that they will be uneasy and will have difficulty trusting because of the risk of abuse. A mother, who reports that her views will not change, expresses that she will be uneasy if she has a daughter (but she does not feel uneasy now because she has a son).

The views of mothers whose children are studying in the classroom of a female preschool teacher about male preschool teachers are as follows:

“My views will not change. If we are in harmony with the teacher and I believe that my child will be happy, I would like my child to study with a male teacher without worrying.” (FTM1)

“There would be no difference. However, if I had a daughter instead of a son, I would be worried about having a male teacher. At this age, the child does not fully know the privacy education and may not be able to distinguish between good and malicious touch.” (FTM2)

“I would have been more anxious if my child had been with a male teacher. I would try to get information about the teacher from the others. I would try to understand his way of speaking and his approach.” (FTM5)

“If my child was in a male teacher’s class, I would hesitate a little. I could not trust and I would get worried. Because of the risk of sexual abuse, I couldn’t trust. I would doubt and I couldn’t be comfortable.” (FTM6)

Findings on the Views of Mothers on the Generalization of Preschool Teaching as a Female Profession

All the mothers (n=12) believe that the preschool teaching profession is generalized as a female profession. Although 11 of the mothers interviewed report that preschool teaching should not be generalized as a female profession, one mother who has a child in a female teacher’s class believes that this profession should be generalized as a female profession because preschool teaching suits female teachers more. In addition to these, a mother who has a child in a male teacher’s class reports that she considers preschool teaching as a female profession before enrolling her child in a male teacher’s class.

The views of mothers on the generalization of preschool teaching as a female profession are as follows:

“It doesn’t matter; a teacher is always a teacher. Some of the parents have asked whether there is a male preschool teacher or not. They do not want to enroll their children. They should not make something up for everyone. For instance, blue should not be exclusively for men and pink should not be exclusively for girls.” (MTM4)

“I was one of those who made this generalization. After this teacher, I changed my mind.” (MTM6)

“I attribute preschool teaching more to female teachers. I wish it continues this way. It should be generalized.” (FTM5)

“I have never seen a male preschool teacher. It would be better if there were male preschool teachers. It shouldn’t be generalized. This generalization should change. Men can work in this field as well as in any field in the world. If there were cameras in the classrooms, parents would be more comfortable and make observations.” (FTM6)

Findings on Children’s Views on Preschool Teachers

Findings on the Expectations and the Reasons for the Expectations of the Children Regarding the Gender of Their Preschool Teachers

Half of the children in the study group studying in the classes of male teachers (n=3) thought that their preschool teachers would be female before school started, while the other half (n=3) thought that their preschool teachers would be male. Considering the reasons for the expectations of the children regarding the gender of their teachers, two of the children report that they expect male teachers because they are also male while two of the children (a female and a male) report that they expect a female teacher as they have female nursery class teachers.

Half of the children studying in the classes of male teachers (n=5) thought that their preschool teachers would be female before school started, while one of the children expected a male preschool teacher. It has been reported that the children expect female preschool teachers as they have female nursery class teachers (n=2), they love female teachers (n=1), and female teachers are beautiful (n=1). Moreover, one of the children expects a male teacher as he wants to be a teacher too.

The expectations and the reasons for the expectations of the children regarding the gender of their preschool teacher are as follows:

“I think my preschool teacher will be a male teacher. This is because I am also a male.” (MTC2)

“I think my preschool teacher will be a female teacher. This is because nursery class teachers are female, and other teachers are male.” (MTC5)

“I think my preschool teacher will be a male teacher. This is because I want to be a teacher too.” (FTC4)

“I think my preschool teacher will be a female teacher because women are so beautiful.” (FTC5)

The Views of the Children in the Classes of Male Teachers on Their Teachers

All the children (n=6) who are enrolled in the classes of male teachers report that they love their teachers very much. The reasons why children love their teachers are determined as doing

activities with the teacher (n=3), playing (n=1), chatting (n=1), having a good time (n=1), and seeing the teacher as a father (n=1).

The views of the children in the classes of male teachers on their teachers and the reasons for these views are as follows:

“I have a nice teacher. We perform activities and we have a good day.” (MTC2)

“I consider my teacher my father. I like performing activities and playing with him.” (MTC3)

The Views of the Children in the Classes of Female Teachers on the Assumption of Being in the Classes of Male Teachers

Although four of the children in the classes of female teachers report that there will be no problem even if the teacher is male and they will love their teacher, two of the children report that they may feel bad. One of the children reports that he/she will feel bad because he/she is afraid of males. Another child reports that he/she will feel bad as he/she believes that male teachers make them perform difficult activities.

The views of the children in the classes of female teachers on the assumption of being in the classes of male teachers are as follows:

“...I mean, I would feel good, teachers are always loved.” (FTC6)

“I would feel very bad. This is because I am very afraid of men.” (FTC2)

“I would think of difficult activities, homework, etc. Men would make use perform difficult activities done.” (FTC3)

Some Drawings Made by Children About Their Relationship with Their Teachers

To understand the views of the children about their teachers and their relationships with them more clearly, they are asked to make a drawing and explain it. Considering the drawings of the children, it is determined that the children have positive views and feelings about their teachers in parallel with the interviews.

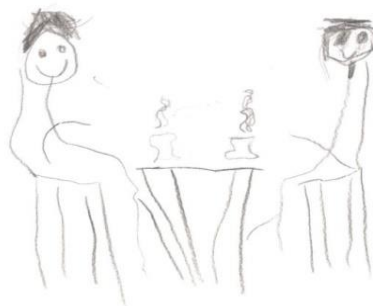
The Drawings Made by Children About Their Relationship with Their Male Teachers



“My teacher, me, my teacher’s child, and his wife. We went to the pool together.” (MTC1)



“There are raindrops, sun, clouds, and a rainbow. My teacher and I are holding hands, watching the rain.” (MTC2)



“We perform an activity with my teacher. Then, we sit down and drink tea.” (MTC3)

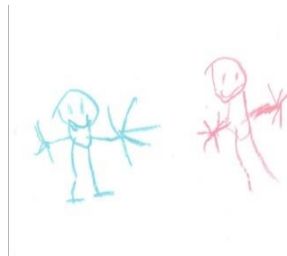
The Drawings Made by Children About Their Relationship with Their Female Teachers



“We go out with my teacher and get some air. We see the rainbow and feel happy. We see the flowers and the seeds blooming. We see the sun; we see the clouds. We also see my teacher’s house.” (FTC2)



“I went on a trip with my teacher. We play ball together. We walk around together.” (FTC5)



“This is my teacher, and this is me. I mean, all my friends got sick, and I was the only one who came to school. We played games and performed activities with my teacher.” (FTC6)

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

As a result of this study, it is determined that all the male teachers participating in this study prefer the preschool teaching profession as they believe they will find a job easily. Considering the other studies in the literature in parallel with the results of this study, finding a job and being appointed easily is one of the reasons why preschool teachers and teacher candidates prefer preschool teaching (Buldur et al., 2021; Karademir & Yılmaz, 2020). In the national education statistics report published by the Ministry of National Education in 2022, net enrollment rates by

academic year and age groups were 11.74% for 3-year-olds, 33.56% for 4-year-olds, and 67.17% for 5-year-olds in the 2015-2016 academic year while these rates were %11.45 for 3-year-olds, 29.77% for 4-year-olds, and 83.41% for 5-year-olds (MEB, 2022). In the related report, it was determined that the rate of schooling (especially considering the 5-year-olds) increased every year, except for the 2020-2021 academic year when the COVID pandemic was experienced. Therefore, in line with the increasing need for preschool teaching, it can be interpreted that preschool teaching is one of the branches with the highest quota for teacher appointments. In this study, it is concluded that male teachers prefer this branch due to their concerns about finding a job.

Both female and male teachers participating in this study report that the biggest advantage of male preschool teachers is to provide better discipline. One of the male teachers reports that male teachers are an advantage for children who cannot spend enough time with their fathers. According to the male teachers participating in the study, the disadvantages of the profession are that some mothers do not regard the nursery class as an educational institution and are afraid of being misunderstood due to the risk of abuse. A male teacher reports that he has difficulty communicating with the mothers as he is afraid of being misunderstood and that he cannot establish school-family cooperation. Similar to the views of male teachers, the female teachers participating in this study report that misunderstandings due to the risk of abuse and communicating with mothers can be a disadvantage for male teachers. In addition to these, some female teachers report that male teachers have difficulties in understanding children, and they might have problems solving problems and communicating with children. It is considered that the traditional gender expectation underlies this perception. In the traditional perception of gender, personality traits such as liking to serve others, being compassionate, loving children, and being dependent are attributed to women; traits such as leadership, aggressiveness, ambition, and competitiveness are attributed to men (Fine, 2011). Demirtaş et al. (2014) conducted a study with teachers and administrators. In parallel with the results of that study, the participants reported that a male preschool teacher could represent the father figure but could not reflect the love and compassion as much as a preschool teacher. Similarly, in another study conducted with teacher candidates, it was determined that preschool teacher candidates generally had a positive approach to this profession, although they had some sexist stereotypes about the profession (Öngören, 2019). In a study conducted by Haskan Avcı et al. (2019), it was determined that male preschool teacher candidates had difficulties in personal relationships and communication due to being in the minority in the classroom, and they faced the reactions of society and faculty members towards gender. As a result of analyzing the international literature, it is revealed that being a male preschool teacher brings some disadvantages. In a study conducted in Nigeria, some male

preschool teachers report that they do not like the way people treat them, although they like working in this field. One of the participants reported that preschool teaching was a profession suitable for females, and he was not proud of practicing this profession as a man although he liked working in this field (Amosun et al., 2021). In a study conducted in Shanghai, male preschool teachers report that female teachers are better at reading stories and teaching songs, and they are uncomfortable reading stories in a childish tone and by using gestures. It is reported that male teachers undertake physical education lessons and distribute tasks according to gender roles while female teachers working in the same school are interested in activities such as reading stories and teaching songs (Yang & McNair, 2017). In line with the results of the previous studies and this specific study, it is concluded that the gender perception that female teachers are more loving and compassionate than male teachers, mothers' inability to communicate comfortably with male teachers due to certain cultural codes, and concerns about abuse constitutes prejudice against male preschool teachers. According to Sumsion (2005), in societies where traditional masculinity norms are dominant, individuals are suspicious of men who prefer to work with younger children instead of entering the higher status and better-paid professions, and they harbor distrust of these men who ignore traditional gender roles and expectations. In addition, the search for maternal love and maternal attention, especially in younger age groups, explains the structuring of this field as a feminine field (Eagly & Crowley, 1986). However, the teaching profession is far beyond gender roles and includes the competencies of content knowledge, field education knowledge, legislative knowledge, planning education and training, creating learning environments, managing the teaching, and learning processes, measurement and evaluation, having national, spiritual, and universal values, approaching students, communication and cooperation, and giving importance to personal and professional development. To reduce this prejudice towards male teachers and to encourage individuals qualified for this profession, this profession should be introduced in detail to the students who will choose an undergraduate program at the end of secondary education, and male students interested in this profession should be encouraged to choose this profession. As the number of male preschool teachers increases, the perception that men can also do this profession can be normalized and the prejudices in question can be reduced.

In this study, it is concluded that male teachers do not encounter a negative point of view from the administrators and their female colleagues. However, it is understood that male teachers encounter a negative point of view from mothers at the beginning of the term, and this prejudice decreases over time. It is reported that children are also more afraid of male teachers, and this is because teachers are male. Supporting the statements of male teachers, some mothers report that they want female teachers for their children at the beginning of the semester because they are afraid

of the risk of abuse, and they think that female teachers have a maternal instinct. The mothers, who do not discriminate between genders, report that the personality and professional characteristics of the teacher are more important. In this study, it is determined that most of the mothers whose children are enrolled in the classes of male teachers have generally positive perceptions about male teachers, but one of the mothers consider changing her child's class.

One of the mothers also reports that she is prejudiced against male teachers and her ideas change after a while. Most of the mothers whose children are enrolled in the classes of female teachers report that their views will not change, and they will not be prejudiced if their children are enrolled in the classes of male teachers. Some of the mothers report that they will have difficulty trusting male teachers because of the risk of abuse. A mother, who reports that she will not be prejudiced if her child's teacher is a male teacher, also reports that she thinks this way as her child is male and that she will be worried about having a male teacher if her child is female. This finding demonstrates that not only the gender of the teachers but also the gender of the children is a factor in the teacher preferences of some mothers. In a study with similar results, it is revealed that parents think that a male teacher cannot practice this profession, they want to enroll their children in another school (class), and they consider whether the male teacher will be harsh with their children and whether he will create school phobia in their children when they first meet a male preschool teacher. However, it is revealed that they embark on the male teachers when their children start to receive education from male preschool teachers and male teachers work very devotedly to make themselves accepted. In this study, it is also concluded that the negative judgments of parents about male preschool teachers decrease as their education levels increase (Sak, 2005). Similarly, in a study conducted by Gülçiçek (2017) to analyze the perceptions of parents about male preschool teachers, it is determined that parents have positive and negative perceptions of their children's male preschool teachers at the beginning of the academic year. Considering the negative perceptions, parents report that they have concerns about male teachers about child abuse, inability to communicate with female children, and inability to deal with children's self-care. In addition, they consider male teachers' not being a mother as a disadvantage. Considering the positive perceptions, parents consider that male teachers have more control over their children and that not being a mother is an advantage for them. The results of this study and other studies in the literature demonstrate that the concept of trust remains at the forefront when it comes to male teachers for parents (Cruz et al., 2021), but the concerns and prejudices of the parents about male teachers at the beginning of the academic year decrease after a while and they embark on the male teachers during the education period. This finding reveals that parents have concerns and prejudices about the gender of the teacher rather than their professional competencies.

It is considered that these prejudices and concerns can be eliminated by including more male teachers at the preschool education level and allowing parents to encounter more examples of good male teachers. In addition, to reduce parents' anxiety about the teacher's gender and to strengthen teacher-parent communication, it is recommended that all teachers, regardless of gender, organize activities and meetings to meet parents and children before the semester starts. Thus, it is considered that teachers can share their professional perspectives with parents and make it easier for them to realize that teaching is a profession beyond gender. However, the parent group of this study is limited to mothers. It is recommended that future studies include fathers, examining fathers' views in detail, and comparing parents' perceptions of female and male preschool teachers.

All the teachers and mothers interviewed in the study believe that preschool teaching is generalized as a female profession. This finding is in parallel with the results of the study conducted by Yağbasan and Aksoy (2016). In that study, it is concluded that preschool teaching is attributed to a certain gender, firstly and dominantly “female” teachers come to mind when talking about preschool teaching, the gender of the preschool teacher is important for parents, preschool teachers should be female, and female preschool teachers have been an important factor in these perceptions since the establishment of nursery classes (Yağbasan & Aksoy, 2016). In this study, all teachers, and mothers (except for one of the mothers) report that preschool teaching should not be generalized as a female profession although mothers and teachers believe that it is generalized as a female profession. One of the female teachers reports that the perception that mothers take care of children, and female teachers take care of students as well as the cultural influences support this generalization. Most of the participants believe that everyone suitable for the profession, regardless of gender, can perform this profession. In a study conducted by Cameron (2001), it is concluded that preschool teaching is regarded as childcare and nutrition by parents and that female teachers are more suitable for this profession. In this regard, the results of this study are in parallel with the results of the abovementioned study. Today, as can be understood from the views of the participants, this perception is gradually being broken, and both genders are considered to be suitable for this profession although the generalization as a female profession continues.

Half of the children, who participate in this study and are enrolled in the classes of male teachers, report that they think their preschool teacher will be a female teacher and the other half think their preschool teacher will be a male teacher. Two of the children report that they expect a male teacher as they are male while the other two report that they expect a female teacher as their nursery class teacher is female. Most of the children enrolled in the class with a female teacher report that they think they will have a female teacher. Based on this finding, it is interpreted that the preschool teaching profession is generalized as a female profession not only by adults but also

by children. Children express their reasons for wanting female teachers as having had female nursery class teachers, their love for women, and women's being very beautiful. One of the male children, on the other hand, reports that he thinks he will have a male teacher because he wants to be a teacher too. It can be interpreted that some of the male children want to identify themselves with the male teachers. In early childhood, children tend to identify with adults of their gender and often choose playmates from children of their gender (Aubry et al., 2003; Bee & Boyd, 2010). Therefore, it can be interpreted that children need both male and female role models during the preschool education period. In a study conducted by Su (2017) with families in China and Taiwan, it is concluded that the presence of both male and female teachers in preschool education will affect children positively as children need both male and female role models. This result is in parallel with the results of this study.

All the children report that they love their teachers. The drawings made by the children also support the interviews and it is determined that the children have positive thoughts and feelings about their teachers. The children enrolled in the classes of male teachers express their reasons for loving their teachers as performing activities with the teachers, playing together, chatting, having a good time, and seeing the teacher as a father. Most of the children in the classes with female teachers report that there will be no problem if their teacher is male and that they will continue to love their teacher while one of the children reports that he/she will feel bad because he/she is afraid of men and the other believes that male teachers will make them perform difficult activities. In a study conducted with male teachers in early childhood education in Australia, the gender factor is not prominent in children's drawings of their teachers. It is determined that the focus of children is not on the gender role of their teacher, but on the role of the teacher (Sumsion, 2005). In this study, it is concluded except for two children that the role of the teacher in the classroom is more important for children than gender. If children see only female teachers in early childhood education from a young age, they will think that early childhood education is a profession specific to women. The presence of male teachers in preschool education institutions will prevent children from perceiving early childhood education as a profession specific to women (Sak et al., 2015). Children should not identify certain professions with gender and should assimilate the roles of men and women on an egalitarian basis. Therefore, there is a need for examples of cases where men and women can do all professions.

Ethical Statement

This research was ethically reviewed by Sivas Cumhuriyet University/Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Social and Human Sciences Committee and was approved ethically with the approval number E-60263016-050.06.04-112618 on 29 December 2021.

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