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**Male Preschool Teachers' Parents Views about the Career of Their Sons**

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**Abstract**

This study investigates the views of the parents of male preschool teachers concerning their son's chosen career. Much research has been conducted in relation to views of male preschool teacher candidates, male preschool teachers and their female colleagues about their career choice. However, research related to views of male teachers' parents is limited. Preschool teaching is thought as a female dominant profession. However, recently, population of male preschool teachers is increasing. The low rate of male in the field of ECE is a strong social issue (Farquhar, 2012). Although career choices of young people show that gender discrimination in some jobs has started to decrease (Farquhar, 1997), the views of the older generation should not be ignored and should not be neglected by researchers.

This is a qualitative research project. Fifteen parents voluntarily participated in this study, comprising nine fathers and six mothers. A semi-structured interview protocol was developed to collect the data which was analysed via word-repetition technique and the main themes were determined. The purpose of the study was explained to the volunteers then before they were interviewed they signed the consent form. The findings elicited from the study give an insight concerning the views of the older generation in relation to the career choice of the younger generation. For instance, they want their sons to be a lawyer, an engineer or a doctor rather than being a preschool teacher. The results are relevant in the context of vocational orientation, mentoring, and especially for measures aiming at a better gender-balanced workforce.

**Keywords**

male preschool teachers, male preschool teachers' parents, parents' views, preschool education, qualitative study

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# **Male Preschool Teachers' Parents Views about the Career of Their Sons**

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## **Introduction**

Preschool teaching is thought of as a female dominant profession. However, recently the population of male preschool teachers has been increasing (Sak, Şahin & Şahin, 2012). Although this increase and career choice of young people show that gender discrimination in some jobs has started to decrease, the views of older generation should not be ignored and should not be neglected by the researchers.

## Introduction

Several research has been conducted in relation to views of male preschool teachers (Rentzou & Ziganitidou, 2009; Rodriguez, 1997; Shaham, 1991; Sumsion, 1999), their female colleagues (Clyde, 1993; Clyde, 1994; Sak, Şahin & Şahin, 2012) and male preschool teacher candidates (Anlıak & Beyazkürk-şahin, 2008; Beyazkürk, 2006; Fu & Li, 2010; İnan, Bayındır, Doğan-Temur & Bartan, 2010; Sakellariou & Rentzou, 2007; Sumsion, 2000) about their career choice. However, research related to views of male teachers' parents is limited.

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## Aim

Therefore, this study investigates the views of male preschool teachers' parents about their sons' career choice.

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## Participants

- ✓ Participants of this study were 15 parents whose sons have been working as preschool teachers.
- ✓ While nine of them were fathers, six mothers participated in this study.
- ✓ Ages of parents varied between 55 and 65+ (Table 1).

**Table 1.** *Age of parents*

Age	(n)
65 and 65+	2
60-64	4
55-59	4
50-54	3
45-49	2

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## Participants

- ✓ Parents graduated from high school (n=5), primary school (n=4), elementary school (n=2), college of higher education (n=1) or university (n=1). Also, two parents were illiterate.
- ✓ While most of mothers (n=5) were housewife, approximately half of fathers (n=4) were retired in this study. Also, there were two farmers, three officers among fathers, and one teacher among mothers (Table 2).

**Table 2.** *Jobs of parents*

Job	Mother (n)	Father (n)
Housewife	5	-
Teacher	1	-
Retired	-	4
Officer	-	3
Farmer	-	2

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## Participants

✓ As shown in Table 3, parents' number of children varied between three and eleven.

**Table 3.** *Number of children*

Number of children	(n)
11	2
9	4
6	3
5	1
4	2
3	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>15</b>

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## Data collection

- Data of the study was collected through a semi-structured interview protocol developed by the researchers. First draft of the protocol consisted of 4 questions related to demographic information of parents and 11 questions related to views of parents. Opinions of two field experts in qualitative research were asked. After they approved the draft, two pilot interviews were conducted. Since same responses were gotten for two questions, they were combined. Thus, last form of the protocol consisted of 14 questions.
- Before starting data collection, parents were communicated through their sons. Many parents were informed about the study but some of them accepted to be participants. Also, they were asked about audio recording of the interview process and the rationale of it was explained but none of them accepted it. Therefore, interviews were transcribed by hands.

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## Data analysis

For data analysis, interviews were written onto the computer and printed. Then, they were written and coded by two of the researchers. Word repetition technique was used for data analysis and coders tried to find frequency of use of unique words (Ryan & Bernard, 2003). At the end of analysis process, two main themes were determined: career choice and preschool teaching.

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## Findings

### Career choice

In relation to career choice, most of participant parents (n=12) stated that they did not make any contribution to their sons' choice. One of them said:

*"He didn't ask us anything related to his career choice. He is an educated boy and knows more than us. For instance, I still cannot speak and understand Turkish well. Thus, we couldn't make a contribution to his choices." (K<sub>5</sub>, mother)*

Only three parents emphasized that they influenced and contributed to their sons' career choice and one of them (K<sub>7</sub>, father) said that since there were many employment opportunities and long summer holiday, he directed his son for preschool teaching.

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## Findings

### Career choice

As related to reasons of their sons' career choice, some participants (n=9) stated that their sons chose this career because points of their university entrance exam were enough for only this department. One of the parents commented as:

*"I think his point was enough for preschool teaching. He wanted to be a lawyer and wrote it among his choices. However, he could be a preschool teacher."* (K<sub>5</sub>, mother)

Two parents emphasized that their sons chose this career because there were many employment opportunities and they could find a job easily. Also, one of the fathers (K<sub>9</sub>) said that preschool teaching was his son's own choice while a mother (K<sub>8</sub>) stated that her child chose this job since it was not a challenging work.

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## Findings

### Career choice

In relation to their favorite job for their sons, more than half of parents (n=9) mentioned that they wanted their sons to be a lawyer. One of the fathers said:

*"I wanted to be the father of a lawyer because it is a prestigious job."* (K<sub>10</sub>)

Also, parents said that they wanted their children to be a doctor (n=4), an engineer (n=2) and a math teacher (n=1). One of the mothers commented as:

*"I wish he were a doctor. He could treat me when I was ill."* (K<sub>5</sub>, mother)

Only one of the parents said that he wanted his son to be a preschool teacher.

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## Findings

### Career choice

In relation to their first reactions, more than half of parents (n=9) emphasized that they were pleased whereas three parents stated that they felt sorry. One of the pleased parents said:

*"I always told him to graduate from a university and to start working in public area. Also, I often said that wages and insurance were important and his job should provide for him with them. Thus, I was very pleased when I heard that he entered this department. I praised."* (K<sub>2</sub>, father)

One of the parents who felt sorry (K<sub>3</sub>, mother) said that at the beginning, she got sorry but then she tried to think good aspects of his job such as employment opportunities and being a path to other work such as academician and administrator. Also, three parents stated that it was not a surprise for them and they were expecting their sons to enter departments of preschool teaching or early childhood education.

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## Findings

### Career choice

In terms of changes related to their thoughts about their sons' career, approximately half of them (n=7) said that they had positive thought at the beginning of their career and their thoughts still did not change. Some parents (n=4) stated that at the beginning, they had negative thought related to their children's career choice but then their negative ideas changed to positive. Also, a mother and a father participating in the study said that their negative thoughts related to their sons' choices had not changed since the beginning of their career. Lastly, a mother and father who had positive thoughts about their children's career choice said that their thought changed to negative.

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## Findings

### Career choice

In terms of talking about their sons' career, most of parents (n=11) stated that telling other people about what their sons did were difficult for them. One of them (K<sub>9</sub>, father) said that he could not tell his son was a preschool teacher since the society scorned this job. Another parent (K<sub>8</sub>, mother) emphasized that it was difficult for her because she thought that preschool teaching was a kind job and appropriate for women. Also, two participants commented as:

*"I wish he were a doctor. Then, I would be proud of him more. I usually forget his job's name and say only 'teacher'." (K<sub>2</sub>, father)*

*"It is sometimes difficult to explain it for me. Since it is an appropriate job for women, I cannot tell 'my son is a preschool teacher.' I only say that he is a teacher." (K<sub>13</sub>, mother)*

On the other side, three parents stated that there were not any problems related to telling their sons' job. One of them (K<sub>3</sub>, mother) said that her son raised and educated young children, and influenced their whole life so his job was respectable.

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## Findings

### Career choice

In relation to appropriateness of their sons for their career, most of the parents (n=11) stated that their sons were appropriate for preschool teaching. One of them said:

*"My son loves children very much and he is patient. Also, he can design many materials to attract children's attention." (K<sub>3</sub>, mother)*

Some parents (n=4), however, emphasized that they were undecided about their sons' appropriateness for their career. One of them (K<sub>6</sub>, mother) said that her child loved children but spending all day together with them might difficulty for him.

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## Findings

### Preschool teaching

In relation to preschool teaching and gender, some participant parents (n=5) emphasized that gender of the teacher was not important. One of them said:

*"Preschool teaching is thought as a job for women but it does not mean that men cannot be good at this job. According to me, men and women have same chances to be successful in caring for and teaching young children."* (K4, father)

Another parent (K14, father) stated that preschool teachers were usually female but it was known that men were good at this job as well as women. Also, he added that there should not be gender discrimination.

Some parents (n=5), however, said that preschool teaching was more appropriate for women. One of them (K9, father) stated that a preschool teacher should be female because caring for a child was a women's work. Also, according to some parents (n=5), it was more appropriate for women but men could to it. For instance, one of them said:

*"Caring for children needs patience. Especially women are good at cleaning of children and classroom but men can do it."* (K3, mother)

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## Findings

### Preschool teaching

In terms of reaction of parents of children to male teachers, approximately most of parents (n=13) stated that parent might want their children's to be male. One of them (K<sub>4</sub>, father) said that if his son was a good teacher and cared for young children well, parents did not focus on his gender and wanted him to be their children's teacher. Another parent said:

*"Since preschool teachers are usually female, parents may be skeptical. Then, they start to recognize that men may be good at this job as well as a women. I mean that everything is related characteristics of teacher and his teaching skills."* (K<sub>5</sub>, mother)

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## Discussion

- According to findings, most of participant parents did not make any contributions to their sons' career choice. When education level of parents is considered, it can be said that most of them graduated from high school or lower levels. It may mean that they do not have enough information about university placement process and it may result in that male preschool teachers could not get any contributions from their parents.
- According to many parents, points of their university entrance exam were the basic reason for their sons to choose this career. It may be commented as that parents wanted to believe that if their sons could take a higher point in university entrance exam, they would choose another department or job. In other words, their sons chose preschool teaching as a career because of necessity.

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## Discussion

- Most of parents wanted their sons to be a lawyer or a doctor. According to them, preschool teaching is not a prestigious job. It may be related to that professions which bring much money are thought as more prestigious jobs in society. Since lawyers and doctors earn more money than teachers, parents may describe them as prestigious jobs.
- More than half of parents were pleased when they learned their sons' career choices. Preschool teaching means a good salary and health insurance for parents. Also, this explanation is valid for changes in parents' opinions in time and appropriateness of their sons for this job. Parents may have more positive thoughts related to their sons' career choice in time because of these benefits.

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## Discussion

- Most of parents stated that talking about their sons' career with other people was difficult for them. It may be related to rate of men in preschool teaching area. The current rate of preschool teachers is 5,34 % in Turkey (Mone, 2014) and it is still a female dominated job similarly with other countries.
- About preschool teaching and gender, participant parents have different views. According to some of them, gender of the teacher was not important while some parents said that preschool teaching was more appropriate for women. Also, there were participants who stated that it was more appropriate for women but men could do it. These different perspectives may be related to parents' world views. Although some parents represented old generation's conservative perspective (gender is important for choosing a career), some parents reflected more modern perspective (gender is not important for choosing a career).

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