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**Preschool Children's Views about Their Teachers' Gender**  
Presentation on the SIG Gender Balance Research Conference, 7.9.2014,  
Hersonnisos/Greece

In this study, 45 children were interviewed, 21 from two male teachers' classrooms and 24 from female teachers. A semi-structured interview protocol was used for data collection. After data analysis, five main themes were determined: (1) Awareness of children about their teachers' gender; (2) Preferences of children related to teacher; (3) Emotions of children about teacher; (4) Relationship between teacher and parents. Individual answers of children will be presented and discussed. It is concluded that the teacher's gender may not be relevant for children or children may not prefer a teacher whose gender was different from their own teacher because they adapt to their teachers.

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**Preschool Children's Views about  
Their Teachers' Gender**

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Recently the number of male preschool teachers has increased in the area of preschool education which is one of female dominated job. The rate of male preschool teachers is **5,34 %** in Turkey (59940 Female and **3387 male**) . This rate is higher than the rate in many European countries. The rate of Turkish male preschool teachers increased very fast in last years. For example, although there were only 67 male preschool teachers in 1998-1999 academic year, this number increased to 1644 in 2008-2009 academic year.

It can be said that increase of male preschool teachers' population is a positive development because of its effects on preschoolers' right perception about male and female gender roles and meeting with male role models. If children see only females during education and care process of young children, they may think that educating children and caring of them is a female's job. Also, male should be in preschool institutions because of some other benefits such as being role model about gender equity, improving employees' rights and providing involvement of fathers in their children's education.

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Relationship between children and teachers determines achievement of the objectives of preschool education. Examination of children's perspective about their teachers' gender also may be helpful to understand their relationship. In the literature, the samples of most studies about preschool teachers' gender were teachers and teacher candidates. There is very limited research which focuses on gender of teachers and included children as the sample. Therefore, the aim of this study is to determine perspectives of preschool children who were educated by male and female teachers about their teachers.

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### **Method**

Basic qualitative research method was used in this study. A semi-structured interview protocol developed by the researchers was used as data collection tool. The interview form consists of 8 questions. The sample of this study is 45 preschool children. Nineteen children were from two male preschool teachers' classrooms while 26 children were educated by two female preschool teachers. At the beginning of the study, a consent form was signed by children's parents about permission of their children's participation to this study. One to one interviews were conducted with children at the appropriate place of the preschool institutions (teachers' room, library or guidance room). All data was read several times by two researchers. Word lists and word repetition methods were used for data analysis.

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### **Findings**

Four main themes were determined based on data analysis: (1) Awareness related to teacher's gender, (2) teacher preferences, (3) emotions about teacher, (4) relationships between parents and teacher. Most of children whose teachers were male said that their teachers were different from other preschool teachers based on his gender and they preferred a male teacher as a preschool teacher. Most of children whose teachers were female preferred a female teacher as a preschool teacher. Both groups of children emphasized that they did not want to change their teachers. Most of children who participated in this study stated that their favorite aspects of their teachers were activities conducted by their teachers.

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Three out of four children who stated they were afraid of their teachers were in male teachers' classrooms.

Although five of children whose teachers were female did not want their teachers to come to their (children's) home, all children in male teachers' classrooms wanted their teachers to come to their (children's) home. Whilst only one child whose teacher was male said that his parents did not like his teacher, five children who were female teachers' classrooms stated that their parents did not like their teachers.

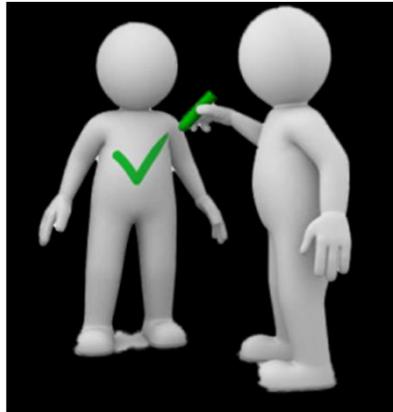
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### **Conculusion and Discussion**

Preschool children recognized their teachers' genders but it cannot be ignored that they have an expectation of that preschool teachers are female. This situation can be explained by children's experiences in preschool institutions. Preschool teachers are usually female and children think that this is the ordinary case. Children did not want to change their teachers because of the teacher's gender and they focus on the activities which they made together with their teachers. It can be said that the priority of children is what they do with their teachers rather than their teachers' gender.

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- Some children are afraid of their male teachers. It may be related to that children are threatened and intimidated by their fathers. Male adults may be a figure of punishment in children's mind. Therefore, mothers should not threaten their children with their male teachers and fathers. Based on children's comment, it can be said that male preschool teachers have a good relationship with both children and their parents. Male preschool teachers should be take part in preschool institutions because of their benefits for children, parents and early childhood education field.



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