

Female Preschool Teachers' Attitude toward Male Preschool Teachers while Hiring Job

Sevde Barış

sevde.baris@boun.edu.tr

Abstract

This research was conducted to understand the attitudes of female preschool teachers' towards male preschool teachers while hiring job. In the research there were two CVs which have all the same features except their genders. These CVs were given to female preschool teachers to assess them as hiring job. These questions were; Do you think this teacher would be a good teacher? Would you hire this person as a preschool teacher? Would you prefer this teacher as a teacher of your child? Would you think that children prefer this teacher as their preschool teacher? Do you think this person is happy as a preschool teacher?.Female preschool teacher ranked these questions 1 to 10 while evaluating. Participants of the research consisted of six participants from private schools and 24 participants were from government schools. By considering CVs, all female preschool teachers ranked five questions that were asked them about hiring job of that preschool teacher. According to independent sample t-test that there was a significant difference between attitudes towards male preschool teachers while hiring job. The result showed that female preschool teachers have negative attitudes towards male preschool teachers. In addition to these, working with a male preschool teacher before did not have a significant difference between attitudes of female preschool teachers.

Keywords

Male Preschool Teacher, Female Preschool Teacher, attitude

Introduction

Throughout the human history, gender has been one of the important factors which influence the division of labor. Many jobs have been labeled according to the gender lines; making some occupations women's job and some occupations men's jobs. Unfortunately,

education is one of the outstanding area which is labeled with as a “women’s job”. When the preschool education is examined in terms of division of labor, lack of male preschool teacher can be seen explicitly. In my research, research is conducted to understand female women preschool teachers’ attitudes towards male preschool teachers in early childhood education.

According to the National Center for Educational Statistics (2003), approximately 2% of the teachers in kindergarten through third grade are men. In preschool and childcare centers, the proportion is even less. Even in Western societies, where pre-school education is well-established, the rate of male teachers in pre-school education varies from 1% to %4 (as cited in Inan *et al.*, 2010; Sumsion, 2005). Rare exceptions include Denmark and Spain where by the mid-1990s; men accounted for up to 8% of early childhood educators. (Jensen, 1996)

It is not easy thing to say an occupational field is “gendered” so to understand which occupation is gendered there should be at least two conditions exist. First, there should be a significant “skew” (Kanter, 1977) to the gender distribution of the employees; it means at least 85% are men or women. Second, the work itself is typically embedded with gendered meanings and defined in gendered terms. (Kessler & McKenna, 1978; Leidner, 1991). In addition to these, Acker(1990, 1992)proposed a theory of gendered organizations by explaining with four sets of processes involved in the production and reproduction of a gendered organization. These four sets of process also help us to explain why there are so few male teachers in the early childhood education. These are (1) “symbols, images, and forms of consciousness” that create and justify gender divisions; (2) differential structural location of women and men; (3) “the internal mental work of individuals as they consciously construct their understandings of the organization’s gendered structure”; and (4) the interactions among individuals (Acker, 1992, pp. 252-253).

Firstly when the most prevalent images in the early childhood education field are examined it can be seen “mother-teacher” (Sugg, 1978, p iii) and “homosexual pedophile” (Reskin, 1991, p. 103.). In Turkey, kindergarten name called as “anaokulu” and which has a meaning of the school of mother. It has an embedded deep message related to early childhood education and how the education constructed. It gives a message that this is a safe place like your mother and this is next place that children come after their mothers’ lambs. A third, “Male Role Model” (Sargent, 2001,p. 117) also deserves attention. In early childhood education “mothering” using as a metaphor which represent image of teaching and childcare as women’s work. In addition to this, posters and public service announcements typically show women in early classrooms and, in the rare instance when men are shown, the men are presented in less nurturing positions than the women are, which, sadly, reflects he reality of how men oust behave around children.

One another reason of labeling this occupation as a women job is that there are negative constructs such as “homosexual” and “pedophile” that are used to structure the gendered nature of teaching. (Reskin, 1991) These terms attack attention of popular media and academic literature, and keeping the number of men teachers at a minimum level can be seen a good way to eliminate this risk. Being a male teacher becomes more and more difficult for male due to these prejudices. One of the first grade teacher Keith had an interview on the research of Sargent (2005) and he said; “I really love these kids. You know, I

just don't care anymore. I mean I know we're supposed to be kind of standoffish, but I can't be. These little folks need care and love and hugs. I even let them sit on my lap. And the researcher asked why "even"? And the answer is so impressive to understand what they feel as a male preschool teacher. The answer was "Women's laps are places of love. Men's are places of danger."

Another important problem for male preschool teacher is that there is expectation that they will act as male role models. In the research of Sargent, during the interview of male preschool teachers, three male expectations were seen. First is the notion that men will provide a living model of masculinity to boys who presumably lack a constant male presence in their lives. However, parents desire more specific model of masculinity from male preschool teachers for their children. In one of the interviews, a male preschool teacher use "traditional male" as the expectation of parents. That teacher explain some characteristics of traditional male such as showing no interest in art and poetry; be the man in their lives; have interest in athletics; be as a disciplinarian; and be an authority figure. It shows us that parents want male teachers who displays stereotypically masculine behaviors and attributes. As mentioned in the Sargent's article is that presence of a man in the classroom associated with the male role model who contribute to an increase in discipline and ,therefore, a decrease in the frequency of behavioral problems(particularly on the part of boys). Many participants of male preschool teachers in the research described a third variation of the male role model theme by noting the possibility of exposing girls to an "alternative" form of masculinity. In that point, participants typically described an existing condition at home under which girls are encountering men who are abusive and neglectful. Men who would choose to teach young children would bring a different, gentler form of masculinity to the classroom. When we think the responsibility, prejudices, expectation from male preschool teacher it is easier to explain the reason of lack of male preschool teachers.

At the same time, as several scholars (Coltrane, 1989; Laqueur, 1992; Rotundo,19993) have revealed, people have limited negative "fatherhood" image. Fatherhood, as a cultural metaphor, includes image images of the detached financial provider and disciplinarian (Goode, 1992). Acker's (1992, p. 253) also argues that there is a process is "the internal mental work of individuals as they consciously construct their understandings of the organization's gendered structure." This is also negative thing for male preschool teacher because they find themselves negatively sanctioned for trying to do a form of subordinate masculinity that they believe meets the needs of the children in their care. In addition to this, stereotypically, men are thought to be more assertive, task oriented, utilitarian, and authoritarian. The male preschoolers' position also can be explained by "self-fulfilling prophecy". Parents, society expect some things from male preschool teachers due to their gender. Male teachers may force to be more disciplinarians due to these expectations.

As it can be seen there should be some change in the number of male preschool teachers and in the article of Sumsion (2005) the debate of recruiting more men to early childhood education comprises at least three key clusters of arguments focusing on benefits for society, for the early childhood education and for children themselves. Firstly by saying benefits of society a Cameron and Moss(1988) have the meaning that there are some gender discourses and males in preschool education can change it by changing the meaning of caring by showing caring not only belong to women. As a second cluster, focusing on the possibility

that a higher male participation rate will benefit the early childhood profession; first, by enhancing its status and the status of those within the profession (Lyons et.l, 2003) and second, by improving workplace dynamics and staff relationship(Jensen,1998) This idea has a meaning that men maintain their traditional advantage in the workforce when they enter female dominated occupations and rise rapidly to more highly paid administrative positions (Murray,1996; Williams & Heikes, 1993). This idea can be the main reason of female preschool teachers' negative attitude toward male preschool teachers. It cannot be ignored that the variety the relationships dynamics between teachers is enhanced by gender differences but taking advantage of being male and rise rapidly cannot be accepted as normal and may be threat women preschool teacher and cause negative attitude towards male.

A third cluster of perceived benefits, focuses on the advantage for children. The explanation is relying on that men are needed in this field to provide positive male figures. This idea has a relation with the children who have single parent, absence of men in the home, long working hours (Jensen, 1996). In this sense, again male preschool teachers were seen as figure for compensating the meaning of "father". As it is discusses in the article of Sargent (2005), attributed women as mother figure and male father figure is not good for these teachers. This idea can be seen both as advantage in the article of Sumsion and disadvantage in the article of Sargent. My idea is also parallel with Sargent's arguments because labeling with these meaning with the gender of teachers consists the early childhood education field. Women teachers should not be seen as mother and also male teachers should not be seen as father. When we consider again the general image of father that is mentioned in Sargent article it is a burden for male teachers that they had to carry.

All the articles indicates the lack of male preschool teachers' and the reasons of it, parents' male preschool teachers' with regard to being a preschool teacher as a male. These guide me to search the answer of the attitudes of female preschool teachers in the field. My aim is to search female preschool teachers' attitudes toward male preschool teachers. My hypothesis is that female preschool teachers have a negative attitude toward male preschool teachers and this also affects occupation preference of male negatively.

Method

This study aimed to understand female preschool teachers' attitudes towards male preschool teachers. In the research there were 30 participants, all of them were female and working as a preschool teachers in Nazilli. There were two groups which consist of 15 female preschool teachers. Among the participants 24 teachers were working in government school and 6 of them were working in private schools. Female teachers in the sample were between the age of 22 and 53(mean= 30,23).

In order to understand female preschool teachers' attitudes towards male preschool teachers, participants divided into 2 groups. In the research samples received CV of a preschool teacher and in the study we asked their assessments of these CVs. In fact there were two CV who have the same features except gender. At this point, 15 female preschool

teachers evaluated the CV of male preschool teacher and 15 female preschool teachers evaluated the CV of female preschool teacher. (see Appendix A). To see the differences of the different gender CV assessments five main questions were asked. These five questions are listed below:

1. Do you think this teacher would be a good teacher?
2. Would you hire this person as a preschool teacher?
3. Would you prefer this teacher as a teacher of your child?
4. Would you think that children prefer this teacher as their preschool teacher?
5. Do you think this person is happy as a preschool teacher?

A Likert scale was used for the assessment and the assessment degrees from 1 (completely disagree) to 10 (completely agree). There were not any reverse items among the questions. I gave information about how they assess the scale; I gave them the CVs' of teachers and want them to read carefully. At the end of their assessment also the demographic information questions were given. In the demographic question education level, age, the institution that has been work, their experiment as a preschool teacher in terms of year and whether there is a male preschool teacher in their work beforehand. All participants answer the questions and there was not any missing.

Participants

There were 30 participants in this research and all participants were female. Participants consisted of preschool teachers who work in Nazilli. Six (20%) participants were from private schools and 24(80%) participants were from government schools.

Findings

Results indicated that the mean of participants ($n=15$) who receive the male CV was 31.47 ($SD=11,87$), and the mean of participants ($n=15$) who receive the female CV 40,87 ($SD=8,24$). According to independent sample t-test that the differences between these two means is significant $t(28) = -2.520$, $p < .05$. This result indicates that there is significant difference between the attitudes toward female preschool teachers and male preschool teachers. Female preschool teachers have more negative attitude toward male preschool teachers.

Results indicated that the mean of participants ($n=12$) who work with male preschool teacher beforehand was 35,75 ($SD=11,08$), and the mean of participants ($n=18$) who did not work with male preschool teacher beforehand was 36,44 ($SD=11,45$). According to independent sample t-test that the differences between these two means was not significant $t(28) = -1.65$, $p > 0.5$. This result indicated that attitude toward male preschool teacher does not change according to working with them beforehand.

Conclusion

This article is related to female preschool teachers' attitudes towards male preschool teachers. In this article I have presented some findings related to female preschool teachers'

attitudes towards male preschool teachers while hiring job. There were thirty (n=30) female participants from Nazilli and they assess CV of preschool teachers. Only different thing between two CVs' is that gender of the CV.

The conclusion reached is that female preschool teachers have a negative attitude toward male preschool teachers. In the demographic information form, there is a question about "working with a male preschool teacher beforehand in the same kindergarten", this question was asked to understand whether the attitudes towards male preschool teachers change or not. In the research, with this question I try to understand whether by working with male preschool teacher, this situation becomes normalize than before and the effects of it on attitudes of these female preschoolers. The result was insignificant that working with male preschool teacher beforehand does not have any effect on female preschool teachers' attitudes towards male preschool teachers.

In this research there are some limitations that may affect research and the results negatively. Firstly, sample size was one of the important limitations that affect the generalizing of the result. In addition to this, there were twenty-four (n=24) preschool teachers from government schools and six (n=6) preschool teachers from private institutions and the proportion of number of institution was not equal. If the number would be equal, it can increase the efficacy of the research. Thirdly, there are very few articles related to this topic in Turkey and while there was a need to statistical data or scale items, it was a negative thing to not benefit from more articles. Also there was not any scale related to this topic, so questions were prepared by the researcher with the help of Ryan Wise. It was also difficult for prepare questions and try to not miss any elements. This study was only conducted with female preschool teachers in Nazilli, so to generalize more clearly, in other cities it can be imply. To understand attitudes towards male preschool teachers, conducting this study with also father and mother of children can give wider perspective about the issue. At last but not least, the question of "why" can be added to understand more deeply the ideas of preschool teachers. Attitudes were assessed by interviews with female preschool teachers if there is enough time to do it.

References

- Anliak, S., & Beyazkurk, D. (2008). Career perspectives of male students in early childhood education. *Educational Studies* (03055698), 34(4), 309-317.
- Bittner, M.T., & Cooney M.H. (2001). Men in early Childhood Education: Their emergent issues. *Early Childhood Education Journal* 29(2) 77-82.
- Ciftci, M.A., Erden S., Ozgun O. (2011). I am a man, but I am a pre-school education teacher": Self-and social perception of male pre-school teacher. *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 15 (2011) 3199-3204.
- Sargent, P. 2005. The gendering of men in early childhood education. *Sex Roles*, 52(nos. 3-4): 251-59.
- Sumsion J. (2005). Male teachers in early childhood education: issues and case study. *Early Childhood Research Quarterly* 20(2005) 109-123.